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DEFINING INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR OWN TERMS

BY: The Delegation of the World Indigenous Business Forum 2016

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan- At the seventh annual World Indigenous Business Forum in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, a delegation of Indigenous business leaders from across the globe resolved to define Indigenous Development in their own terms. Following an impassioned keynote by Dr. Ernesto Sirolli in which he highlighted the lackluster entry in Wikipedia for “Indigenous Development”, a delegation of individuals from Indigenous communities across the globe rallied to write a description that would accurately reflect what they do. Facilitated by the Sirolli himself, a pioneer in sustainability, the group produced the following resolution statement, in English and Spanish, that was accepted unanimously by the entire forum:

CHANGE OF THE DEFINITION OF INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

In consideration of the cosmology of indigenous populations as exemplified by the common knowledge of its people, and the application to every aspect of life from politics to economics to science, spirituality, morality and philosophy, our definition of Indigenous Development is:

Indigenous development is the organized effort by Indigenous Peoples to honor, enhance, and restore their well-being while retaining a distinctiveness that is consistent with their ancestral values, aspirations, ways of working, and priorities on behalf of all Future Generations. Their efforts also strive to share a holistic model of livelihood that respects the Creator, the Earth and promotes sustainability now and for the generations to come.”

Though this may seem like a small step to some, building consensus among Indigenous communities and empowering them to seize control of their own Nations is a focus of many organizations across the world. To have a definition of what it is Indigenous People would like for themselves allows these groups to narrow their focus and provide services that respond directly to the needs of the populations they’re serving.

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