



Message of the World Health Organization (WHO)

## **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**

9 August 2011

Today, the World Health Organization joins other partners in celebrating the *International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples*.

Through a number of World Health Assembly resolutions, WHO is mandated to devote special attention to protecting and promoting the right of indigenous peoples to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. In close collaboration with indigenous peoples and other partners, WHO is working to improve indigenous peoples' health. WHO was delighted to address the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues at its tenth session as well as to host the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous peoples' Issues in September 2010 on the theme of "indigenous peoples' health".

This Day comes at an important time as the WHO and its partners prepare for the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), 19-20 September 2011. While disaggregated data remains scarce, evidence suggests that indigenous peoples are disproportionately burdened by NCDs. For example, while the overall smoking rate in Canada is 18%, it is estimated at almost 4 times that high among Inuit.<sup>[i]</sup> In Australia, rates of type 2 diabetes are 10 times higher among indigenous adults than the national prevalence among 25- to 50-year-olds.<sup>[ii]</sup> Improved data collection and disaggregation is one important step towards effective action along with strengthening culturally sensitive health systems and addressing the underlying determinants of health.

WHO reaffirms its commitment to working with indigenous peoples and other partners in advancing the right to health of indigenous populations all over the world.

For more information, please visit:

[http://www.who.int/hhr/activities/indigenous\\_peoples/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/hhr/activities/indigenous_peoples/en/index.html)

### References:

[i] Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control, Fact Sheet, Smoking among indigenous communities, available online at [http://www.ceitc.org.au/system/files/fact\\_sheet\\_international\\_rates.pdf](http://www.ceitc.org.au/system/files/fact_sheet_international_rates.pdf) (last accessed: 14 July 2011), referring to Environics Research Group and Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, 2004 Baseline Study among First Nations On-Reserve and Inuit in the North: Final Report. Ottawa: First Nations and Inuit Health Branch; and Health Canada, Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey 2009.

[ii] M.Cunningham, Chapter V, State of the World's Indigenous people, 2009, ST/ESA/328 referring to International Diabetes Federation, Draft Position Statement: Diabetes in Indigenous Children and Adolescents, prepared for the International Diabetes Federation Conference in Australia, November 2006; Nicolaisen, Overlooked and in Jeopardy: Indigenous People with Diabetes, Diabetes Voice, June 2006, Vol.51, 2.