

## **NW Social Forum Planning Committee Reply to Statement by Indigenous Programming Committee**

September 28, 2004

To the members of the Indigenous Programming Committee of the Northwest Social Forum:

As members of the Northwest Social Forum (NWSF) planning committee, we deeply appreciate the members of the Indigenous Programming Committee and other indigenous leaders who brought their wisdom, their concerns and their issues to the planning process of this first-ever Northwest regional social forum.

Truly, it is with deep regret that we receive the message that the Indigenous Programming Committee will no longer participate in the NWSF.

As individual planners, we know and understand the hard work and level of commitment required to create programming, reach out to communities, and engage others in a process that is largely unknown. Resources and adequate time for planning are stretched thin, and we're all challenged to create the most compelling and worthwhile programming possible.

From the beginning, organizers involved in planning the Northwest Social Forum (NWSF) recognized that participation – individual and collective – would be based on a commitment to an ongoing, long-term – and sometimes difficult – process to bring together diverse movements and peoples. In April, we strengthened this commitment by collectively developing the NWSF Charter of Principles and Operational Guiding Principles.

Because of our commitment, we take responsibility for oversights, misstatements, and transgressions, and for less-than-adequate accountability and responsiveness to concerns raised by the Indigenous Programming Committee, and we apologize. The event – and the process by which it is coming together – is a huge undertaking and learning process for all of us.

An important piece for everyone planning and participating in this event is to honor indigenous peoples as we all gather on their traditional lands. This has been central to developing the Forum, and we believe that the Forum will be less than it could have been without the Indigenous Programming Committee participation. The strong presence of indigenous wisdom is important. We respectfully invite indigenous participation in whatever way is considered appropriate.

As we move forward – as we must - we reaffirm our most sincere intent to respect and stay within the process we have all committed to and bring the movements and communities together and to celebrate our strength in working together.

We ask that either during the forum, or at another time, we gather to hear from each other about how we might work together in the future in respectful and effective ways, and how we might heal the wounds that have occurred. The intent of a social forum is to move us all down the road of understanding and respect, and we hope that this difficult time can bring learning and new ways to work together.

We're heartened by the final sentence of the Committee's statement, saying that the Committee "remains committed to building meaningful and respectful relationships with those who uphold the vision and principles of the Northwest Social Forum." We, too, remain committed to those ideals and trust they will provide a foundation for our next steps in learning, understanding, and future collaboration.

Sincerely,

The Planning Committee of the NWSF.