



World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference to Take Place on Seneca Territory in 2023

The 4th World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference (“WISPC”) will take place on Seneca Territory in November 2023. The theme for this year’s conference is “Bringing the Children Home.” As our Native Nations continue to struggle with preventing and recovering from the impacts of suicide amongst our people, the Seneca Nation hopes that the conference will be an opportunity for our sister nations to gather with other Indigenous communities from across the world to share cultural-based approaches focused on combatting suicide.

The inaugural conference was held in 2016 in Rotorua, New Zealand within the Māori territory. At this conference, the Turamarama Declaration was signed. The Turamarama Declaration acknowledged the grief associated with suicide, recognized avenues to promote indigenous resilience, identified opportunities to decrease risks to suicide, and challenged local, national, and international authorities to take definitive measures to reduce suicide amongst Indigenous people. The Declaration also encouraged Indigenous people to work together to provide an integrated response and collective, networked leadership to address the issue of suicide. The second WISPC took place in 2018 and was hosted by the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention at the University of Western Australia in Perth, Australia. The third WISPC was hosted by the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba and held virtually from Manitoba, Canada in 2021.

The Seneca Nation is coordinating the fourth 2023 WISPC and is hoping that USET and other Native Nations will join us in this effort to bring together a gathering of Nations to share experiences and cultures, and discuss strength-based approaches to suicide prevention.

WISPC conferences focus on Indigenous culture and the role it plays in preventing and recovering from the impacts of suicide. The conferences focus on:

- Protective factors through building identity, resilience, and culture;
- Ways of preventing suicide reducing risks;
- Sharing stories and knowledge; and
- Showcasing wise practices on the spectrum forum of prevention and intervention encompassed by culture and Indigenous knowledge.

The 2021 conference theme was “Strength in our Communities” and programming was centered on the following items: culture/language/land, data & policy, 2SLGBTQQIA+, Youth, Elders, Creative Expression through Arts, Healing, Lived Experiences, Intergenerational Connections, and Community Collaborations & External Partners. The Seneca Nation will continue to give a platform for the youth voice (speaking their truth about suicide), as well as a voice for our elders (our Knowledge Keepers).

At the conclusion of the 2021 conference, a report detailing the outcomes found that a cultural foundation is central to suicide prevention and life promotion. Additionally, the report found that there is a shift from suicide prevention, which is deficit based, to life promotion, which is asset based. The report detailed eleven calls to action to continue to foster a supportive environment for Indigenous groups and individuals.