

The Fourth Way: An indigenous contribution for building sustainable peace and prosperity in the Americas

Four Worlds International and United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
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Overview

Stage 1 – Laying the Foundation

The Fourth Way: An Indigenous Contribution for Building Sustainable and Harmonious Prosperity in the Americas, was first shared publicly with trusted relatives at the Healing Ourselves, Our Communities, and Mother Earth Spiritual Gathering on Earth Day, April 22, 2006, at the Daybreak Star Cultural Center in Discovery Park, Seattle, WA. It was also simultaneously shared at three other related spiritual gatherings across North America and with trusted relatives via email.

The Fourth Way is a result of an in-depth consultation process, beginning on October 2001, with Indigenous leaders and communities across the Americas and beyond, as well as with other concerned parties, we present The Fourth Way with full faith and confidence that it embodies a sacred path to ending escalating cycles of poverty and violence and helping to build sustainable and harmonious prosperity in the Americas.

The Fourth Way is rooted in the Sacred Prophecies and Teachings of the Ancient Ones who walked the Americas long before the arrival of Columbus. With the Spiritual Foundation already prepared in many places and by many Relatives who have walked the path before us, the actualisation of Stage 1 will move rapidly and the next three stages will be revealed and fulfilled at the proper time.

The Fourth Way is an effort to address what we view as the unfolding crisis of this new century, a crisis of many dimensions where our Mother Earth and its inhabitants simultaneously face the prospect of environmental degradation, violent conflict, competition for ever scarcer resources and markets, economic insecurity, societal and political upheaval, and an increase in poverty and hopelessness. We view the Fourth Way as a “Strategic Security Document” presenting greater potential for peace and security than heavy-handed military or diplomatic approaches. We point to the Fourth Way and the Sixteen Principles as laying the foundation for formulating a response that will benefit the entire Human Family.

In The Fourth Way, we clearly point out that Indigenous Peoples have the vision, the Guiding Principles and values, the growing capacity and collective resources to co-create with other members of the Human Family a peaceful and harmonious future for all of our children and grandchildren. We submit that Indigenous people hold a critical key to peace, security, and sustainable well-being for all members of the Human Family. We believe our collective future is at stake.

The Fourth Way: the context

“Out of the blue” on a beautiful fall day in September 2001, mass terrorism came to New York and Washington and with it the end of the presumption of peace in the new century. The United States has now invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, forcing regime change, and finds itself bogged down more and more in the Middle East as an occupying power battling stubborn insurgencies as costs spiral. The proclaimed multi-generational “War on Terrorism” has stretched many liberal democracies almost to the breaking point from growing tension between freedom and security brought on, in part, by the pressure of asymmetrical warfare represented by home-grown insurgencies and stateless terrorists willing to commit suicide to injure or kill Westerners.

At the same time, out of sight in the global south, movements opposed to globalisation and the “Washington Consensus” – as represented by the neo-liberal policies of the United States, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank – were gaining supporters, overthrowing governments, and then, suddenly, winning elections. In Venezuela (which is a major energy producer), Hugo Chavez was elected President on a platform of independence from global capitalism, opposition to globalisation and neo-liberalism, all while aligning himself with the poor and the dispossessed, many of whom were Indigenous or mestizo. Announcing the arrival of a “Bolivarian independence movement” to spread across the Americas, President Chavez openly battled entrenched interests aligned with the United States.

Central to developments in the global south are newly restive and resurgent Indigenous movements in Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico. Most recently, Evo Morales, an Aymara Indian, was elected as the first Indigenous President of Bolivia with the first majority vote that country has seen in years. All eyes are now on Peru, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Mexico. Although armed struggles continue in Colombia, with rebel groups such as ELN and FARC pursuing their multi-decade guerrilla war, focus has now shifted to growing Indigenous political power in the hemisphere. In fact, in every nation-state in the Americas, including the Caribbean, there is some form of an Indigenous movement emerging and joining with others across the Americas.

An indigenous perspective

The Indigenous peoples of Mother Earth, who still have a connection to their land, language, culture, history and spiritual traditions are the poorest and most socially and politically marginalised populations in every country in which they reside. They have the poorest health, the worst levels of infant and child mortality, they are the most exposed and vulnerable to environmental pollutants, they have the lowest levels of education and the highest levels of perceived powerlessness, political oppression and frustration. Indeed, many Indigenous peoples have been, and are still being, pushed into extremes of poverty and misery, or even to the brink of extinction in some regions, all in the name of “progress” or “development”.

Millions of Indigenous people have watched helplessly as their traditional means of livelihood were wiped out by unsustainable environmental practices used by large transnational fishing, timber, oil, mining corporations, by plantation style agricultural operations, and by large government-subsidised agribusiness corporations usurping agricultural markets in their countries. Hundreds of thousands of Indigenous small farmers can no longer earn a basic income because of the intentional destruction of local agricultural markets through predatory global trade practices dictated by the agribusiness industry. These farmers have joined the millions of illegal immigrants flooding into the United States. When viewed through the eyes of Indigenous people, these conditions are not exaggerations; they are the unembellished facts of life.

Indigenous response

Over the years, there have been a variety of responses among Indigenous people to this cruel set of conditions, ranging from assimilation, passive resignation and resistance. At the same time, there has always been a powerful core of Indigenous elders and spiritual leaders who advocated holding on to the ancient spiritual vision of the oneness of the human family, and the teaching that the way out of this period of oppression and suffering Indigenous peoples have endured is not through violence, but rather through healing the trusts that were broken, and through building constructive partnerships with all nations and peoples. These elders and spiritual leaders have continued to believe in the ancient prophecies, including the Reunion of the Condor and the Eagle, the Time of the Eighth Council Fire, the Return of the White Buffalo, the Emergence of the Fourth World and the fulfillment of Black Elk's Daybreak Star Prophecy that views the Human Family as the Children of one Mother and one Father nourished and shaded by the same sacred Tree of Life. In the past, their wise voices and vision were often overcome by those who had been unjustly abused and who understandably advocated resistance and violence.

We observe that many armed conflicts around the world are rooted, at least in part, in tribal differences. Many of these tribal conflicts are fuelled and funded by competition between various powers for valuable resources such as petroleum, as well as by the production and sale of illegal drugs. The majority of the world's current natural resource development – including oil and gas production as well as agriculture and other related economic activities – take place on or near traditional Indigenous lands. Future exploration and production will require further involvement of Indigenous peoples.

If this collaborative involvement does not take place we could witness a weakening Latin American economic system increasingly destabilised by a long war on terrorism, along with a faltering North American economy, a flourishing and expanding drug trade, and the growing dysfunction of governance systems and related institutions. We could also witness the growth of violently opposing ultra-right and ultra-left insurgent groups along with increasing social unrest fuelled by an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor (both across the south, as well as within many North American cities and Indigenous communities) which could very seriously destabilise the Americas and with it our collective supply of energy, food, and other resources needed for our survival.

It is important to note a 2006 World Bank report that stated the gap between rich and poor in Colombia, the strongest ally of the U.S. in Latin America, is exactly as it was in 1938. In fact, the concentrations of wealth and poverty rates in Colombia are even more extreme than its neighbors. Moreover, there are more than 3 million internally displaced people (refugees) resulting from the civil strife in Colombia (the most of any country in the Americas), the vast majority of whom are Indigenous. All of this is very troubling in light of the fact that Colombia receives more financial and military support from the U.S. than any other country in Latin America. Obviously, a new approach is required. The continued denial of the legitimate aspirations of Indigenous peoples and the marginalised poor will continue to feed increasingly violent conflict.

The real issue is this: how can such tribal peoples be drawn away from extremist ideologies and toward a more constructive and harmonious development path? It will be necessary for anyone who wants to support peacemaking to understand the history, culture, values and aspirations of the tribal people who live in these places.

Indigenous analysis

In our conversations with Indigenous leaders across the Americas they provide the following analysis:

A. Our people are facing grinding poverty and have endured the ongoing suppression of selfdevelopment efforts by our own governments (i.e. the governments of the nation states in which they reside, including many Native communities within Canada and the U.S.). Now, in some countries, there is hope for change. What will the reaction of the world community be? Will self-development and new leadership be supported or crushed by violence, assassination or lack of support?

B. Many Indigenous people see only four options:

1. *Assimilation* – to give up our Indigenous identity, our history, our culture, our spiritual beliefs and our way of life, and become part of the blended homogenous mass. Some of our people have tried to do this and, and most of them lost their land and remain marginalised, poor and increasingly desperate.
2. *Resignation* – to accept powerlessness, poverty, victimisation, sickness and despair as our destiny; in other words, to give up.
3. *Resistance* – to enter into organised struggles to defend our lands, our families and our lives, and to win concessions from our governments. Resistance can range from non-violent protests to armed struggle and can include participation in the black market for drugs and weapons.
4. *Empowerment and Constructive Development* – to create organised Indigenous and related social movements focused on promoting the healing, well-being and prosperity of the people and on electing and supporting leaders who are truly responsive to the majority of the people; leaders who will not only improve education, health care, infrastructure and economic development, but will also

work to create social and political “spaces” within the countries where Indigenous people reside, for true participation in an inclusive and equitable project of rebuilding nations.

This approach is not merely political in nature. It also implies a systematic reclamation and recovery of Indigenous cultural foundations, identity and language, and the re-anchoring of social, economic and political change in the spiritual and cultural values and traditional knowledge at the heart of Indigenous cultures. This approach in no way implies a retreat into the historical past, but rather it is an active engagement of the challenge of shaping the future of nations within the framework of life-preserving, life-enhancing, and sustainable values and patterns of action in harmony with all members of the human family.

C. Indigenous leaders noted that those Indigenous groups that have taken up arms get a great deal of attention. It still remains to be seen whether or not those who participate politically and win elections will achieve anything. If not, armed struggle will be all that is left.

We know that some areas of Latin America have been destabilised by inappropriate interventions leading to armed conflict and increasing communal violence, much of it fueled by exclusion from the political and economic system and by competition for resources and the drug trade. A lack of economic alternatives now allow drug cartels to operate with relatively unencumbered freedom along the spine of the Americas though Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean and into the heartland of North America. A multi-year “war on drugs,” the expenditure of billions of dollars, the application of hazardous defoliants, increased militarisation, and dramatic losses of civil liberties has had little effect on either the price or availability of illegal drugs. This war has, however, curtailed civil rights, increased drug addiction, poverty, ill-health and marginalisation and has driven more people into the arms of extremists and criminal movements across the Americas. Is this simply another failed policy, or were the outcomes we now see intentional? Certainly when the “War on Drugs” policy was being introduced across Latin America, Indigenous people tried to warn of these outcomes, and their communities have suffered greatly from what has occurred.

Towards implementing the Fourth Way strategy

In our work across the Americas over the years, we have had the opportunity to sit in community level meetings with thousands of Indigenous people and their leadership from many different tribes and nations. What we have seen and heard in these meetings is the same consistent message:

1. The vast majority of Indigenous peoples want what most people everywhere on Mother Earth want: peace, freedom from poverty and disease, an end to oppression, a respect for their cultures, languages, and Mother Earth, a reasonable level of sustainable prosperity and well-being for their families and communities, access to education (including higher education), opportunities to sustainably and harmoniously participate in the global economy, and a meaningful voice in shaping the policies, programmes and conditions that impact their lives.

2. Governments, and the people who have held the reins of political and economic power in their countries often present a stone wall of ignorance, prejudice and greed, with no significant will to understand the appalling realities and conditions of Indigenous peoples, and no real awareness that their own wealth production activities (in oil, gas, agriculture, forestry, mining, etc.) are, at best, cutting Indigenous people out of any opportunity for economic advancement, and, at worst, setting into motion environmental, economic, political and social forces that are directly destroying the lives of Indigenous communities. With new leadership coming to power across the hemisphere, it is important that political change be supported and channeled in a positive direction.
3. As viewed through the eyes of many Indigenous people, the forces of globalisation centered in the institutions and programmes of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and large transnational corporations, and manifested as well in many so-called aid and development programmes that also seem to be driven by the policies of the wealthy and powerful, and these policies (it is perceived) are creating and perpetuating the intolerable conditions with which Indigenous people are now living. This perception continues despite the supposed efforts of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to increase their focus on the role of spirituality and culture in development.
4. Indigenous people are increasingly becoming organised and politicised in their efforts to pressure governments and international institutions for change. Their organisations and movements are powerful enough to directly challenge and destroy the legitimacy and power of some governments. Indigenous people have been successful recently in electing leaders who have pledged their support for changing this pattern. Will these new government leaders be successful? Now, as governments elected with Indigenous participation and leadership takes power, it is critical that they succeed, and that the movement of harmonious constructive development through spiritual empowerment spread across the Americas. Indigenous people across the Americas are asking: what will be the response of the developed world to these new political movements? Will they be supported or undermined and opposed? Will we see constructive engagement and development or a new cycle of militarisation, assassinations and military coups?

An indigenous cultural and spiritual awakening and growing unity

Despite the challenges, there is a spiritual awakening occurring throughout the Indigenous world. With this awakening, a powerful new spirit and energy is being released within the Indigenous world. This empowering spirit has its roots in the Indigenous peoples' strong belief in the promises of ultimate justice and renewal found within Indigenous prophecies. However, this growing, animating, dynamic and empowering spirit can be directed towards rapidly and systematically building a new world civilisation, beginning in the Americas or it can be co-opted and translated into further insurgencies, violence, and terror. The choice is ours. The ancient prophecies

are steadily moving toward fulfillment. This development should be welcomed and supported, as the prophecies also speak of how this fulfillment will benefit the entire human family by helping to usher in an era of global peace prosperity and well being.

So what is the “Fourth Way”?

The Fourth Way consists of a multi-pronged strategy for empowering Indigenous peoples to move toward sustainable peace, prosperity and well-being, taking into account the history, culture and values of Indigenous communities. The Fourth Way entails the following lines of action:

I. *Constructive diplomatic work*, both from the top down and from the bottom up, to empower Indigenous people and to assist governments and national as well as international institutions to make critical policy and programme shifts (out of enlightened self-interest) that will help to create an enabling environment for viable partnerships to be built between Indigenous peoples across the hemisphere and between Indigenous people and the governments of the countries in which they reside. This diplomatic work would, as well, assist Indigenous leaders to move past feelings of mistrust and suspicion, and into a process of consultation leading to constructive partnerships.

What is needed are new strategic initiatives that will allow Indigenous people to contribute to and receive a just share of the wealth of the nation states in which they reside, but which also does not require those now in positions of wealth and power to feel that they will lose everything. The guiding principle of these strategic initiatives should be harmonizing the extremes of wealth and poverty. We see each government's diplomatic corps playing a critical role in this aspect of the work, in partnership with specialists in Indigenous peoples' development.

II. *Partnership Building*

Extensive and sustained partnership building work is needed.

- a. Inter-Indigenous partnerships. These will entail partnerships between Indigenous people and nations across the America's for mutual assistance in development, economic cooperation and educational activities. These partnerships and related activities should include exchange programmes in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish through the creation of language institutes (especially for young people); as well as scholarships and internships focused on building Indigenous capacity and developing Indigenous leadership necessary to implement the Fourth Way;
- b. Indigenous to government. Constructive partnerships must also be developed between Indigenous people and the government of the countries in which they reside, aimed at giving Indigenous people a real voice in shaping the policies and programmes that impact them. These partnerships must ultimately result in significant improvements in the social and economic life of the Indigenous communities;

- c. Indigenous institutions and international development agencies. Collaborative working partnerships are also required between appropriate Indigenous institutions and selected NGOs, international development and funding agencies, focused on various aspects of development assistance and capacity building;
- d. North-south Indigenous peoples partnerships. Finally, collaborative working partnerships need to be developed between Indigenous people in the north (Canada and the United States) and their counterparts in the south, to allow for the sharing of knowledge, capacity and resources for mutual aid, trade and development.

Indeed this connection existed for centuries, before it was broken apart by European colonisation and the subsequent decimation of Indigenous nations across the Americas.

III. *The creation of effective participatory governance institutions and mechanisms* through which Indigenous people can negotiate constructively with governments and the business community to address their ongoing needs and concerns, and through which they can manage and direct their own development programmes and processes.

IV. *Targeted and sustained development assistance to support comprehensive social and economic development programmes in the heart of Indigenous nations* that focus on such critical issues as education, social and economic development, leadership, governance and institution building, and civil society. The focus should also be on strengthening, food production and food security, business and enterprise development, sustainable environment and resource management, primary health care, cultural revitalisation, and building and preserving a culturally appropriate social safety net. This targeted aid must be sustained for at least a decade, as capacity is built and a self-sustaining process of development is fostered.

Diffusing violence and terror and the Fourth Way

The plight of Indigenous people in the Americas is chillingly similar to the realities and conditions of many tribes and nations of people in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

Again, it is critical that we acquire the desire to understand what the world looks like when viewed through the eyes of people who have known little else but debilitating insecurity and poverty, and who feel powerless to change their situation for themselves or their children. When viewed through such eyes, oil operations in many countries in Africa such as Sudan and Nigeria and much of the developing world are seen to enrich governments that a majority of people do not want, and that serve no one's interests but those of corrupt authorities. At the same time, billions of dollars of wealth of these countries flow out, never to be seen again while majorities of the people remain poor. This pattern has been repeated in region after region around the world.

The Iraqi war has increased not decreased terrorism. The immediate and short-term solution may be to search out and destroy terrorist cells and networks, and the people who support them.

But in the long term, the root causes of political violence and terror are connected to the social and economic conditions of the world's peoples, and the lack of justice and reciprocity these populations perceive. Ask yourself, will we achieve peace through force or through justice? The Fourth Way Strategy and analysis respects human dignity, calls for the empowerment of people and comprises a framework for action that can be implemented anywhere in the world where sustainable development and nation building constitute critical lines of action in diffusing terror, violence and poverty, and creating conditions that lead to constructive development, spiritual empowerment, social justice and economic prosperity.

Conclusion

Ending terror and or violence cannot be accomplished by military means alone. We must also assist in empowering people to achieve a socially just and reasonable measure of wellbeing and prosperity in their lives. Recent experience in Iraq seems to show that a heavyhanded military "solution" may make situations much more difficult to resolve. Indeed much of what is needed to eliminate the scourge of terror and violence from the face of the Earth is related to empowering people to become engaged in constructive processes of change, and in bringing processes of harmonious development and social and economic justice to the dispossessed and the poorest in every region of Mother Earth.

The Fourth Way is not merely a strategic option, or an alternative path for Indigenous peoples of the Americas (as well as people like them elsewhere in the world) to take instead of assimilation (i.e. giving up their Indigenous identity and becoming part of the marginalised poor), resignation (i.e. accepting that it is their fate to be poor and miserable) or resistance (i.e. using struggle and violence to force change). It is the only option that will lead to sustainable peace and prosperity, and it is therefore an essential component in the struggle to end violence and poverty.

At this uncertain crossroads in human history, Indigenous peoples and their allies have a unique and powerful role to play as a champion of peacemaking and sustainable development, which are critical lines of action in diffusing violence and poverty across the Americas and around the world.

We know that the Governments of Canada and the U.S., as well as other governments, face difficult and expensive decisions, and that national security must have a very high priority. We submit that the Fourth Way *is* a strategic security initiative. From an Indigenous perspective, the Fourth Way offers a strategic option for Indigenous peoples to provide the spiritual leadership to support the transformation of frustration, violence, hopelessness and poverty into sustainable and harmonious processes of constructive development, initially in the Americas and then around the world.

An indigenous-to-indigenous call for action

Whether or not all the nation states, multinational corporations or international development agencies that surround us are willing or able to participate with us at this time in developing The Fourth Way, our Indigenous peoples and allies need to immediately move forward in rebuilding and reunifying the Americas.

1. We have the ancient prophecies and a clear vision of an emerging future of social justice and collective prosperity for the Americas that we will, as promised, cocreate with all members of the Human Family. This new era will occur as sure as the sun rises every morning.
2. We have a spiritual foundation of guiding principles and values that enabled us to survive a great spiritual winter that was filled, at times, with the utmost of human cruelty, violence, injustice, abuse, and physical and cultural genocide. In spite of this, throughout the Americas more and more of our Indigenous relatives are reawakening to their spiritual identity and are healing their sacred relationships with all members of the Human Family. In fact, a large majority of all the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere have some degree of Indigenous ancestry.
3. Together, with our allies, we have the developing cultural, spiritual, scientific, technological, industrial, social, economic and agricultural capacities needed to cocreate and rebuild our tribes and nations stronger than ever before.
4. Our Indigenous peoples, with the support of our allies, have the collective material resources to bring our greatest dreams and visions to reality. Collectively our growing social capital, our land base, our natural resources including water, petroleum, natural gas, timber, rare minerals and gems, fishing and hunting rights and those rights and resources we have still to justly acquire, will soon enable us to become a major economic and spiritual force not only in the Americas, but around the world. For example, the Indigenous peoples of the Eagle (Canada and the U.S.), along with our allies, have the collective resources to directly support our Indigenous relatives of the Condor (Latin America) in developing their natural resources and social capital in a manner that supports our collective prophecies and vision of a rapidly emerging future with social justice and economic prosperity for all members of the Human Family. At the same time, as it was with the original Union of the Condor and Eagle, the Indigenous peoples of the South have many sacred gifts to share with their Indigenous relatives of the North.

The primary challenge that stands before us as Indigenous peoples in rebuilding the Americas is disunity. Therefore, the primary purpose of Stage 1 of The Fourth Way is laying the spiritual foundation for unity. Once this foundation is manifested, with hard work and dedicated devotion, everything else will naturally unfold as foretold by the Ancient Ones.