Short Description: This session introduces WINHEC – the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium – to the world. WINHEC’s vision is to unite the Indigenous Peoples of the World in the collective spirit and synergy of self and cultural determination through the control of their own institutions of higher education. A crucial aspect of uniting these traditional peoples is leading edge technology and innovative telecommunications.

Main Description: The World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) was formed on August 5, 2002 at Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada amidst appropriate songs, prayers and ceremonies. The signatories signed the organizing document, “Declaration On Indigenous People’s Higher Education,” literally upon the ground as a symbol of their commitment to honoring Mother Earth and all who inhabit her. Founding members include representatives from Indigenous Nations from Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, continental United States, Canada, Alaska and Saamiland.

WINHEC has been a concept many years in the making, involving great minds and scholars who have dedicated their lives to Indigenous education. Initial discussions centered on the need for Indigenous educators to meet, to provide a forum, to advance the educational rights of Indigenous peoples, to create an accreditation body, to provide for the sharing of knowledge through exchanges of various types, and to advance the aspirations of Indigenous people to maintain and revitalize their languages, spirituality and cultures.

Now that WINHEC has been established, it is progressing rapidly with initial activities including the appointment of an Executive Body, the convening of a Working Group to develop a WINHEC Accreditation System, the adoption of an interim WINHEC Constitution, and the first Annual WINHEC Information Technology Summit. These exciting initiatives are helping to stimulate the discussion to create new technologies that honor, respect and celebrate ancient wisdom and traditions. WINHEC promotes IT of a new sort – Indigenous Technology, the merging of technology and tradition that preserves, rather than dismisses, ancient ways. We do not preserve our traditions, our traditions preserve us.