

# **GAPA interim policy statement in support of Indigenous-led aspirations for effective alcohol policy**

## **Preamble**

Indigenous peoples worldwide experience significant and intergenerational alcohol-related harm and inequity. This poor and unacceptable state of affairs has persisted for some time, suggesting that policies perpetuate, rather than curb, alcohol-related harm among Indigenous populations. Significantly, these policies also fail to sufficiently take account of the colonial history and considerable socio-economic impacts that Indigenous peoples typically share, and which continue to affect Indigenous peoples lives and communities.

Alcohol harm is one of many consequences and symptoms of imperialism, that continues to be perpetuated by the structural bias inherent within predominantly colonial systems. This means that policies produced by these systems will inevitably produce different outcomes for Indigenous peoples if cultural difference, diversity and the unique socio-historical circumstances of Indigenous peoples are not specifically taken into account in the policy development process. Even worse, such policies may create further harm for Indigenous peoples by perpetuating experiences of disempowerment and racism. Furthermore, commercial interests and influence in alcohol policy, and inadequate government responses, have also tended to thwart or diminish any Indigenous-led efforts to control alcohol use and effects in their communities.

In 2023, the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), in recognition of these issues, provided a space at GAPA's international conference for Indigenous peoples to connect, discuss shared and unique issues, and identify a way forward. The outcomes of this initial conversation have formed the basis of GAPA's interim policy statement in support of Indigenous-led aspirations for effective alcohol policy.

## **The Global Alcohol Policy Alliance:**

- a) acknowledges the significant and inequitable alcohol-related harm among Indigenous and First Nations peoples, and the considerable policy and knowledge issues and gaps pertaining to Indigenous and First Nations peoples in the alcohol area.
- b) recognises that Indigenous and First Nations peoples' alcohol-related issues, solutions, and priorities of action are likely to differ from other population groups, and that alcohol policy for Indigenous and First Nations peoples must address both the significant alcohol-related harm that Indigenous and First Nations peoples experience, and the wider social and systemic issues that perpetuate this harm.
- c) considers that Indigenous and First Nations peoples ought to be enabled and sufficiently resourced to lead and define a way forward to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm in their communities.
- d) endorses the call for action from the 2023 Indigenous forum to ensure that:
  - i) policy is developed from a whole of community and critical Indigenous and First Nations perspective and that this perspective must be effectively sought and incorporated into policy
  - ii) international, national and local policy development on alcohol reform enables Indigenous and First Nations peoples to be self-determining
  - iii) policy acts to de-normalise alcohol in global society
  - iv) alcohol policy effectively responds to, and addresses, the extensive, inequitable, and intergenerational harm to all Indigenous and First Nations communities
  - v) the alcohol industry is excluded from the development of alcohol policy
  - vi) Indigenous-led and Indigenous-centred research and evidence informs global alcohol policy and is sufficiently resourced and supported

- vii solutions for addressing alcohol-related harm among Indigenous and First Nations peoples tackles the wider social and systemic issues, including the continuing impacts of colonisation.
- e) supports the establishment of an Indigenous and First Nations peoples' global collective, as recommended by the 2023 Indigenous forum, to:
  - i put in place plans to ensure that future generations of Indigenous and First Nations peoples are protected from alcohol-related harm;
  - ii lead and advocate for Indigenous and First Nations peoples' rights and perspectives to be effectively incorporated in alcohol policy globally; and
  - iii review and refine this interim policy statement.