

BONDING WITH THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The 5th Triennial World Indigenous People's Conference for Education was held on the Big Island of Hawaii in Hilo with 2,500 delegates and 3,000 family and group members, drawing media attention to this locale. Its theme was *Aia Na Ha'ina I Loko O Ka Kou* (The Answers Lie Within Us).

In this The Year of Victory in the Community, Hilo's SGI-USA members participated in this historic event. The issue of the rights of indigenous peoples struck an important chord with native Hawaiian and SGI-USA district leader, Kimo Awai, who teaches Hawaiian studies and is also a *kumu* (teacher of) *hula*. Mr. Awai took the initiative to involve his SGI-USA hula group, which includes non-SGI members, to volunteer their talents for the WIPCE.

Months of preparation and rehearsals took place in Hilo. Numerous meetings with community leaders and volunteers were held to work out the strategic details. The culmination of the opening day events was the parade of nations with delegates from 25 countries dressed in native costumes. Indigenous groups came from as far away as India, Peru, Israel, Norway, Slovenia, Japan, Australia, Africa, Spain, Japan, Canada, the Pacific Rim Islands and from the United States. SGI members from Australia and Japan were also part of the international contingent.

—*JOANNE TACHIBANA and
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