



ISQAQAVUT, Yohani
Chairman, Council of Aboriginal Affairs

Date of Birth: July 28, 1953

Education: Graduate in Theology, Yushan Theological College and Seminary (1973); BA Religion and Social Work, Tainan Theological College and Seminary (1977); MA in Divinity, Tainan Theological College and Seminary (1986)

Career: Yohani Isqaqavut, an aboriginal Bunun native from Nantou in central Taiwan — and an ordained Presbyterian minister — became an Executive Member of the Service Centre for Indigenous Peoples in Taichung in 1978 and then Director of the Indigenous Student's College Centre, Taichung, in 1985. In 1989 he became an Executive Member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church until accepting the position of Dean of General Affairs at Yushan Theological College and Seminary in 1998. He maintained this post until being appointed Chairman of the Council of Aboriginal Affairs in 2000.

Responsibilities of Office: The 5 year-old Council's mandate is ostensibly to promote the advancement of aboriginal people in Taiwan in the areas of political participation, education and culture, social welfare, economics and land affairs. While this may appear an impossible wide swath of responsibility, it is a vast improvement over the sub-ministerial priority given to aboriginal affairs before 1996. The Council has since its creation been busy extracting responsibilities from other ministries and agencies, in areas such as land administration, national parks, economic development, social welfare, educational and cultural affairs.

Policy Orientation: Like many Presbyterians, Yohani maintains a strong "Taiwanese" identity, and he is known to ally himself with the "localization" faction of Lee Teng-hui supporters among both the KMT and DPP. He has since taking office last year been extremely active in realizing his mandate to promote aboriginal consciousness both in Taiwan and in many trips abroad. He has since last year built a credible international outreach program with delegations of dancers, carvers, artists and tribal leaders, including several to Canada. Since the 9-21 earthquake in 1999, he has also spent considerable energy on efforts to revive an aboriginal consciousness that he and other leaders say has been threatened since the quake destroyed much of their income-earning infrastructure, forcing them into urban Chinese culture in increasing numbers.

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