

Proposed Charter of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers

Submitted by Chris Burnett
chris@regenerationtv.net

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"when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion."

-ethiopian proverb

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Preamble

We the peoples of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers have determined

to end the scourge of privatized news media systems that market our minds for the profit of advertisers, while simultaneously claiming objectivity, and

to expose the lies, exaggerations and biases of commercial media conglomerates whose rigid hierarchies are the antithesis of democratic participation in media production and cannot be trusted to represent the public good, and

to provide a global, open publishing system to individuals and communities who would otherwise not have access to media resources, and

to embrace transparency so that the audience can participate in the production process by writing, publishing, and critiquing editorial decisions.

We have therefore resolved to

Challenge the notion that news and information is simply a commodity to be pre-packaged and sold on a market, and

Develop participatory democratic structures for the proliferation of free information based upon principles of mutual aid and solidarity, and

Work to develop a global decentralized network that is respectful of local communities and traditions, that empowers individuals and groups to develop their own voice.

Accordingly, the charter working group, who have assembled in the city of San Francisco, through a participatory decision making process, recommend to the network at large, that we adopt the Charter of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers in order to establish a global decentralized network of autonomous collectives to be known as the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers.

Chapter 1

Mission Statement and Principles of Unity

Article 1

Mission Statement

The specific purpose of the Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers (CNIMC) is to facilitate the use of media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social, environmental and economic justice, and to develop a global decentralized communications network to provide a voice for the voiceless. It is also the purpose of this network to give expression to a wide diversity of social movements in order to assist the distribution of intellectual, scientific, literary, social, artistic, creative, human rights, and cultural expressions not covered by the commercial press.

We seek to expand the human social fabric in a meaningful and tangible way that is empowering for local communities. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people under-represented in media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the profit driven commercial media, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society. It is our goal to aid in a revolutionary social transformation of society that prioritizes people before profit. We seek to expand and develop our own working relationships in a manner that is non-hierarchical, autonomous, and based upon mutual aid and solidarity.

Article 2

Principles of Unity

1. The Confederated Network of Independent Media Centers (CNIMC) is based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy. The CNIMC is not derived from a centralized bureaucratic process, but from the self-organization of autonomous collectives that recognize the importance in developing a union of networks.
2. All IMC's consider free speech and open access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society, where information is not treated as a commodity.

3. All IMC's respect the right of activists who choose not to be photographed or filmed.
4. All IMC's, based upon the trust of their contributors and readers, shall utilize open digital publishing, allowing individuals, groups and organizations to express their views, anonymously if desired, without fear of censorship.
5. All IMC's shall be not-for-profit entities.
6. All IMC's recognize the importance of process to social change, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics, and, therefore, shall organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct, participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership.
7. All IMC's recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local group is the contribution of an individual's labor to the group.
8. All IMC's shall be committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships; to develop a pattern and practice consistent with the mission and purpose of the CNIMC, and to care for each other's needs.
9. All IMC's shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software.
10. All IMC's shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate based upon race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. Concomitantly, all IMC's shall work together collectively to decide policy in regards to racist, sexist, or discriminatory content exhibited on an IMC website or within a locality.
11. All IMC's, while recognizing the vast cultural traditions within the network, shall be committed to building diversity upon race and class lines within their locality.

Chapter 2

Membership Criteria

Article 3

Membership in the CNIMC will require each IMC and global working group to:

- a. Agree in spirit to the CNIMC Mission Statement and Principles of Unity,
- b. Have a minimum of five (5) members,
- c. Have a mission statement,
- d. Develop an editorial policy that is in alignment with the CNIMC Editorial Policy,
- e. Agree to the use of Open Publishing as described in the CNIMC Editorial Policies,
- f. Have a decision-making policy that is in alignment with consensus decision-making principles,
- g. Have a spokesperson(s) capable of representing the group to the Global SpokesCouncil meetings,
- h. Participate in key global lists that pertain to the health and vitality of the network,
- i. Have no official affiliation with any political party, state, or candidate for office,
- j. Have no endorsements of commercial products or services,
- k. Display a local version of the IMC “i” logo on their website and literature.

Article 4

1. Membership in the CNIMC is open to any group that accepts the Criteria for membership.
2. Membership of new IMC’s in the CNIMC will be confirmed by a meeting of the Global SpokesCouncil.

Article 5

The CNIMC recognizes that the movement for independent media is fundamentally a struggle for the dignity, respect, and self-determination of people whose voices are often overlooked by the powerful. The CNIMC claims no special privileges in the representation of individuals, groups or social

movements, but rather sees itself as an ally to people who are struggling for their own voices to be heard. It is in this spirit that the CNIMC recognizes that it is in solidarity with the thousands of allies, known and unknown, who may not have an interest in, or desire to become, a member of the CNIMC.

Chapter 3

The Network

Article 6

The CNIMC recognizes that its strength is derived from the self-organized, autonomous organization of people and resources that define the network. It is precisely this confederation, or union, of linked autonomous networks, that allows for the facilitation, production, and distribution of information and resources on a global scale. The CNIMC recognizes the value in cooperation and sharing of resources in order to enhance those who are most in need within the network.

Article 7

1. The CNIMC is composed of the following entities: all local IMC's, global working groups and the Global SpokesCouncil.
2. The CNIMC recognizes the following definitions as valuable to its organizational structure:
 - a. An IMC is an autonomous community based organization within the network that meets the membership criteria as defined in Chapter 2.
 - b. Global working groups are groups engaged in work directly related to the development and sustainability of the network, and meet the membership criteria as defined in Chapter 2.
 - c. The Global SpokesCouncil is a decision-making body composed of spokespersons chosen by each IMC and global working group.
 - d. The CNIMC is an adaptive, all-channel network whereby coordination and communications take place between as many groups as possible in order to enhance the flexibility, redundancy, and mutual aid within the network. In other words, communication and resource flow is not centralized or restricted from one particular group to another.
 - e. The CNIMC is composed of social and digital nodes within the network, both of which are critical to the operations of the CNIMC.
 - f. A social node can be defined as the human social fabric that is the backbone to the network, composed of autonomous individuals and groups from communities all over the world.
 - g. A digital node is the physical representation of the infrastructure of the network, and is a tool used to enhance our communications and our ability to distribute free information.

Chapter 4

Decision Making

Article 8

The CNIMC adopts the model of consensus for all decisions affecting the network. It is up to each local IMC, global working group, and the Global SpokesCouncil to determine how consensus will be implemented.

Article 9

1. The CNIMC recognizes that in order to function as an international project that empowers and receives power from self organized, autonomous groups, it will need to develop a flexible, fluid and effective decision-making structure that will harness the energy of individuals and groups at the local levels.

2. The CNIMC recognizes the following groups empowered to make decisions that directly affect the network: Local IMC's, global working groups, and the Global SpokesCouncil.

3. The CNIMC recognizes that there is an important need for a Global SpokesCouncil where spokespersons from each group are represented to make decisions that affect the network. It is also recognized that careful discussion and deliberation are necessary in order to decide what constitutes a global decision.

Article 10

1. Local IMC's and global working groups shall be responsible for the majority of decisions that get made on a day to day basis.

2. The Global SpokesCouncil shall be responsible for decisions that fall under the categories of global finance and the approval of new IMC's.

3. The CNIMC shall adopt, or initiate, the creation of global working groups, via the Global SpokesCouncil, in order to make decisions and implement specific tasks and projects for the network.

4. The Global SpokesCouncil shall make network related decisions accordingly:

- a. A local IMC, global working group, or the Global SpokesCouncil will initiate and formalize a proposal according to its own process.

- b. The imc-communications working group will ensure that the proposal gets distributed to all local IMC's and global working groups for discussion, and that a URL is posted indicating the location of the proposal to ensure transparency and openness.
- c. The proposal will get sent back to the Global SpokesCouncil for a decision where spokespersons are empowered to make decisions in the regular on-line meetings.

Chapter 5

The Global SpokesCouncil

Article 11

In order to advance the mission and purpose of the CNIMC, members of the local IMC's and global working groups agree to the formation of a Global SpokesCouncil, and acknowledge the benefits of developing a forum for the advancement and sustainability of the network.

Article 12

1. The Global SpokesCouncil shall be composed of members from each local IMC and global working group.
2. Each local IMC and global working group shall have one spokesperson on the Global SpokesCouncil.
3. The Global SpokesCouncil will meet once every two months, or as necessary, at a time that is reasonable for all regional IMC's. Meetings shall take place on-line and be announced on the appropriate list at least one week in advance.

Article 13

1. The Global SpokesCouncil can initiate proposals to be submitted to the local IMC's and working groups.
2. The Global SpokesCouncil may discuss issues related directly to the global network. Decisions made by the SpokesCouncil shall follow the procedures outlined in Chapter 4.
3. The Global SpokesCouncil is responsible for the confirmation of membership within the network of all new IMC's and global working groups.

Chapter 6

Editorial Policies

Article 14

1. The CNIMC is committed to the concept of open publishing, a participatory process of creating news that is transparent to readers where the working parts of journalism are exposed. Open publishing assumes the reader is informed and creative, and may choose to participate as a writer, editor or distributor. Open publishing assumes that a reader can decipher the quality of a story.
2. The CNIMC trusts the audience to publish, critique and distribute information within the network. Open publishing is not new; it is the electronic reinvention of the ancient art of story telling.
3. Open publishing is free software, providing free access to information and a forum for creativity.
4. The editorial process associated with open publishing is transparent and participatory. Readers can critique editorial decisions.
5. The CNIMC recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining a global publishing system that is accessible to the individual, as well as the right of that individual to remain anonymous.

Article 15

1. Open Publishing software is based upon the "Active" code found at <http://www.active.org.au/doc>.
2. CNIMC sites using Active must have Open Publishing on the main Newswire so that material uploaded to the local IMC site is not pre-filtered or edited. Everything gets published to the site.
3. The Editing and filtering process must happen after content is published to an Active based IMC site, not before. Content may be "hidden" according to the published editorial policy of the local IMC.
4. In order to keep the process as transparent as possible, hidden content will be available for viewing on another page with an explanation as to why the content was removed from the newswire.

5. Under special circumstances presented to the Global SpokesCouncil, the Open Publishing newswire may be one click away from the front page of the website.

Article 16

1. CNIMC websites shall not carry content having racist, sexist, or discriminatory content.

2. CNIMC websites shall not carry reports endorsing any political party or state, or considered to be commercial.

3. Reports within the CNIMC cannot be published twice and text published as a comment to a report can not be published again as an independent report.

4. Reports within the CNIMC can be reproduced and distributed so long as they mention the author and the source.

5. Copyrighted material can be published within the CNIMC so long as the copyright owner allows publication.

6. Editorial collectives at the local IMC's do not edit content but may perform small format changes in order to make information compatible with the website's technical standards.