



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Hybrid - In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 32/2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND JOINT CLIMATE ACTION BETWEEN FIRST NATIONS IN BC AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORLDWIDE

MOVED BY: CHIEF LYNDA PRICE, ULKATCHO FIRST NATION

SECONDED BY: CHIEF JAMES HOBART, SPUZZUM FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states:

Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 8: (1) Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture; **(2)** States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: **(a)** Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; **(b)** Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources; **(d)** Any form of forced assimilation or integration;

Article 25: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relations with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters, and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard;

Article 29: (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall

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establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination;

- B. Indigenous Peoples worldwide have experienced consistent patterns of historical injustices and racism resulting from the colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, and the doctrines, policies and practices that supported colonialism. These ideologies often promoted the supposed superiority of certain groups or individuals based on national origin, race, religion, ethnicity, or cultural distinctions.
- C. International action and solidarity between Indigenous Peoples have been immensely important in the struggle against colonialism, including in the drafting, advocacy and eventual adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- D. International exchange between Indigenous peoples has provided opportunities for First Nations in British Columbia to learn about many diverse experiences from around the world and to mutually strengthen efforts to advance recognition of Indigenous rights here and elsewhere, including at the United Nations.
- E. Exchange between Indigenous Peoples worldwide continue to be a source of inspiration and strategy in support of the struggle to end all forms of colonialism, to seek redress for the injustices suffered by Indigenous Peoples to date, and to realize the full implementation and respect for the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- F. It is unequivocal that human activities have warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. The average temperature of the Earth's surface has reached 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels and will continue to increase as more GHG emissions are produced. Larger climatic extremes and changes are anticipated with every incremental increase in global warming, including more heatwaves, precipitation, wildfires, floods and droughts, and disruptions in the global water cycle (IPCC AR6, 2021).
- G. In 2019, the Chiefs-in-Assembly at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) declared a First Nations Climate Emergency (Resolution 05/2019), recognizing “that the climate crisis constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals and peoples, and that we will accordingly utilize our local, national, and international forums and partnerships to keep global warming below 1.5°C;”
- H. Indigenous Peoples worldwide are uniquely vulnerable to the climate emergency. When compounded by the alarming loss of biodiversity, ongoing environmental degradation, and the often precarious living conditions endured by Indigenous communities worldwide, climate destruction presents a dire and pressing threat to the very survival of Indigenous communities, particularly remote communities, women and children, whose territories face severe disruption. The complex crisis jeopardizes not only traditional food sources and livelihoods but also languages, traditions, cultures, and fundamental rights.
- I. Indigenous peoples are recognized as crucial contributors to effective climate action for several reasons. Their deep traditional ecological knowledge, accumulated over centuries, is essential for understanding, adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of climate change and can inform climate strategies and policies. Their profound spiritual and cultural connections to their lands and natural surroundings inspire a strong commitment to protecting the environment and ecosystem functions. Indigenous territories hold 80 percent of the world's biodiversity, and their land-based and

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stewardship practices prioritize sustainability to help conserve biodiversity, which is crucial for carbon sequestration and ecological balance. They also contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable land use and clean energy development. Indigenous peoples exhibit climate adaptation leadership and resilience, offering valuable lessons for global efforts. Furthermore, their values, worldviews, and governance systems contribute to rethinking the cultural causes of climate change and shaping climate policies worldwide.

- J. The severity of climate change and its inequality urge bold and decisive actions, including establishing robust global partnerships and collaboration across sectors and societies at the global, national and local levels. These partnerships must actively recognize and respect Indigenous knowledge systems while fostering horizontal collaboration with non-Indigenous knowledge systems. The co-production of knowledge must be consistent with Indigenous protocols and guidelines, always prioritizing the recognition and respect of Indigenous peoples interconnected rights.
- K. Building bridges and collaboration between Indigenous peoples across the globe is essential to fighting the climate emergency and empowering Indigenous communities to address shared challenges, protect rights, and assert self-determination and cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. By building partnerships, Indigenous peoples could:
- **Find strength in unity and solidarity** to strengthen efforts to end all forms of colonialism, seek redress for ongoing injustices, amplify collective voices and advocate more effectively for environmental integrity, Indigenous human and inherent rights, interests, and concerns at local, national and international forums. Partnerships could provide a platform for joint advocacy and influence on climate policies, legislation and decision-making at different levels and forums, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other venues where Indigenous peoples are under-represented.
 - **Sharing Indigenous Knowledge, practices and wisdom accumulated over generations**, which can be crucial for addressing climate challenges, including environmental conservation and sustainable resource management.
 - Fostering **the preservation and revitalization of languages, cultural practices, and traditions**. Sharing cultural experiences and stories helps maintain cultural identities and strengthen connections to ancestral heritage.
 - Enabling Indigenous communities to **pool resources, both financial and human**, to address shared issues such as land rights, economic development, healthcare, and education.
 - Enhancing **the climate resilience of Indigenous communities**. Collective responses could lead to more robust strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation.
 - **Sovereignty and Self-Determination**. By forming partnerships, Indigenous communities could assert their sovereignty and self-determination more effectively. This allows them to make decisions about their own governance, development, and future.
- L. Indigenous peoples and organizations have been tirelessly engaging in lobbying and advocacy internationally to elevate Indigenous voices, raise climate change awareness and advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protection, Indigenous rights and climate justice. Indigenous People participate through the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) at the UNFCCC and through the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) at the CBD.

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- M. Based on Canada's commitment to both the Paris Agreement and the G7 2030 Nature Compact, Global Affairs Canada has established the *Partnering for Climate* program, which allocated \$15 million to help achieve the climate action objectives of Indigenous Peoples abroad by supporting the partnering of Indigenous Peoples in Canada with Indigenous Peoples in developing countries around the world.
- N. Article 72 of the *Canada United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action plan 2023-2038* proposes actions to enhance the participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making on matters which would affect their rights and to advance Canada's contribution to the work of the entities of the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations.
- O. In 2021, BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution no. 05/21: *Supporting First Nations Community-based Climate Leadership*. This resolution, among others, directs the Regional Chief and BCAFN staff to pursue advocacy opportunities regarding climate change and sovereignty at multiple scales, including United Nations (UN) mechanisms related to climate response and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and building relationships to enable mutual learning with Indigenous Peoples from other parts of the world.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly reaffirms that First Nations' traditional knowledge, teachings and practices of sustainable management and conservation serve as positive contributions in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, as well as First Nations' community-based climate actions.
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief and staff to convene Indigenous Knowledge keepers worldwide to gather and provide key direction in ceremony to discuss climate stabilization and achieving climate justice
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly reaffirms Resolution 05/2021 *Supporting First Nations Community-based Climate Leadership*, which includes a mandate that directs the BCAFN to pursue advocacy opportunities regarding climate change and First Nations sovereignty at multiple scales and building relationships to enable mutual learning with Indigenous Peoples from other parts of the world.
4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief and staff to support the development of partnerships between First Nations in BC with Indigenous peoples abroad, and in particular for projects which:
 - i. Build relationships to act in unity and solidarity for the well-being of Indigenous peoples and the integrity of the environment worldwide
 - ii. Support collective action and advance climate leadership
 - iii. Strengthen the recognition of Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems, worldviews and values as contributions to addressing the climate emergency
 - iv. Advance the recognition and protection of Indigenous rights, assert sovereignty and self-determination both domestically and internationally
 - v. Strengthen Indigenous Peoples' representation in climate change forums and intergovernmental fora

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- vi. Prioritize the voices of Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples in climate action.
- 5. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief and staff to engage in international advocacy at multiple scales, including at the United Nations (UN), such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- 6. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia to support international Indigenous partnerships and to provide more funding for the representation of Indigenous peoples in international conferences, particularly youth, women and gender-diverse members from First Nations communities in British Columbia.

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