



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
Virtual on Zoom
March 7 & 8, 2024

Resolution 04/2024

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR HOSTING REGIONAL SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS GATHERINGS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Moved BY: KUKPI7 FRED ROBBINS, ESKETEMC FIRST NATION

SECONDED BY: CHIEF ARNOLD LAMPREAU, SHACKAN INDIAN BAND

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the UN Declaration), which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implementing through legislation, affirms:

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

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Article 31: (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (2) In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

Article 32: (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources; (2) States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources; (3) States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

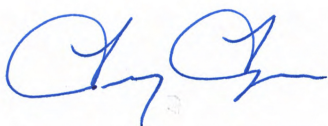
B. The Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada include:

Call to Action 13: We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.

Call to Action 14: (i) Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them; (iii) The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal language revitalization and preservation.

- C. Language, traditions, culture, and ceremony are the foundation of First Nations identity. They are the sacred and crucial link between the people of these lands and the lands themselves.
- D. Colonial governments attacked and prohibited ceremonies, traditional governance and decision-making structures through legislation, policies and Canada's residential school system, contributing to the erosion of First Nations' identity, cultures, language and relationships. These intergenerational impacts are still experienced by First Nations in BC today.
- E. Despite this dark legacy and ongoing harms, First Nations in BC are revitalizing traditional laws, languages, governance and ceremonial practices and articulating our knowledge systems, natural laws and worldviews so that Crown governments and all people can benefit from the wisdom of our ancestors, and support a new path of recognition and respect for our cultures and jurisdiction, including our Rights, Title and Treaty Rights;
- F. The climate and biodiversity crises pose significant threats to the security, culture, and way of life of First Nations across British Columbia. With extreme and unprecedented climate events occurring more frequently across all regions of BC, these crises are exacerbating historical vulnerabilities and environmental impacts on First Nations communities
- G. Spiritual Knowledge Keepers gathered in ceremony from November 17th to 19th, 2023 in Tsleil-Waututh Territory to discuss the current climate crisis, its underlying causes, roles and responsibilities and its profound impacts on the Land and all living beings. Observers from federal and provincial governments, youth, leaders and organizations were invited to witness the ceremony. The Knowledge Keepers conveyed crucial messages and directives to care for the lands and waters for future generations;

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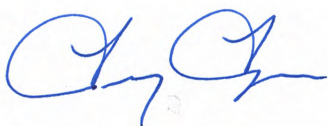
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- Climate change is a tiny aspect of a larger problem rooted in human greed and the disconnection of people and nature, resulting in environmental degradation, ecological imbalance, species extinction, destruction, and ongoing injustice;
 - Approaching climate action from the heart is critical to standing up for our lands, culture, way of life and future survival. First Nations have thousands of years of knowledge that comes from the intrinsic relationship we have with our territories and ecosystems. The inclusion of this knowledge, natural law and ceremony is essential to the success of policies and climate action.
 - We must understand the relationships between things as the priority, not the things themselves. Breaking down silos within government, among First Nations, and in our ways of thinking while also fostering relationships between First Nations and non-Indigenous decision-makers and communities is crucial in combating climate change.
 - Revitalizing culture, language, and Ceremony and restoring First Nations' responsibility for the Land through self-determination, jurisdiction, and self-governance is urgently needed.
- H. Western approaches to shaping legislation and policies primarily concentrate on mitigating the symptoms and consequences of climate change, often overlooking the critical analysis and solutions of the root causes that give rise to greenhouse emissions, global warming and the current ecological crisis in the first place.
- I. By Resolution 04/2019, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directed the BCAFN to work with the First Nations Leadership Council to prepare a First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan (BC FN Climate Strategy). By Resolution 06/2022, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully endorsed the BC FN Climate Strategy;
- J. By Resolution 05/2021, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directed the BCAFN to support First Nations Community-Based Climate Leadership.
- K. By Resolution 03/2023, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directed the BCAFN to facilitate the development of a BC First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda in BC (BC FNCL Agenda), including to work with the Government of Canada to build capacity and progressively vest authority and resources for climate action on the hands of First Nations.
- L. Little formal support exists for First Nations to gather in ceremony to support healing, build relationships and collectively discuss solutions, roles and responsibilities to the climate crisis. First Nations leadership and Knowledge Keepers who attended the Knowledge Keepers Gathering requested that BCAFN coordinate regional ceremonies on climate change across BC.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls upon Crown governments and the general public to acknowledge that the climate crisis is a symptom of a broader problem rooted in the disconnection of people and nature as well as the infringement of our title and rights has resulted in ecological imbalance, species extinction, destruction, and ongoing injustices such as the continuing impacts from settlers and development on First Nations' rights;
2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly reminds Crown governments of First Nations sovereignty, Title and Rights and that climate action must fully acknowledge First Nations title, rights and treaty rights and responsibilities be

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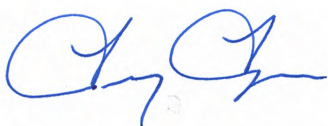


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rooted in each Nation's natural laws and First Nations Knowledge and that healing Mother Earth requires healing humans and rebuilding trust, connections and relationships with nature and ourselves;

3. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly is mindful that the prohibition of ceremonies, languages, traditions and the painful history of residential schools have legacies which continue to impact First Nations today and calls on Crown governments to recognize that reconciliation means restitution of First Nations' identity, grounded in ceremonies, protocols, spirituality, languages and ways of knowing and being;
4. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on Crown governments for ongoing financial support to First Nations communities to engage in ceremonies and to preserve, revitalize and strengthen languages, First Nations Knowledge and traditional laws as part of building climate resilience;
5. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief and BCAFN staff to work with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council to seek financial support to facilitate regional Spiritual Knowledge Keepers Gatherings on Climate Change; and
6. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly mandate BCAFN that First Nations Knowledge, including the lessons from the Knowledge Keepers Gatherings, must guide the implementation of the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan and the development of the BC First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda.

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