

AN INDIGENOUS VOICE ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND WARMING

November 1, 1998

(Declaration Attached)

Indigenous Peoples of the Turtle Island of North America recently completed a four day gathering, "**Circles of Wisdom, Native Peoples/Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop**" held in **Albuquerque, New Mexico** within what is known as the United States. The Indigenous Peoples of North America sent over 180 delegates to share ideas on the impact of climate change and climate variability on Indigenous Peoples and all life on Mother Earth. The Indigenous Peoples worked together to offer solutions to reduce global warming and contribute to the restoration of sustainable economies on Native homelands for our future generations.

This gathering was a historic gathering that enabled a meeting between the Indigenous elders, governmental, environmental, educators and many other community leaders and United States scientists involved in identifying the impacts of climate change. Both advice and action were offered from spiritual and scientific perspectives to restore balance to Mother Earth. The gathering provided a teaching and reminder to the scientists working on climate change issues that these things were foreseen and global warming is being caused by unsustainable technologies and developments throughout the world.

We have been delegated as an ad hoc group of the Indigenous Peoples in attendance at this gathering to prepare and send the following **ALBUQUERQUE DECLARATION** to appropriate contacts in attendance at the **Conference of the Parties Four (COPs-4) at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC)** being held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 2-13, 1998. We are requesting the FCCC allow a voice for Indigenous Peoples be added to the global discussions on the impacts of climate imbalance to all life on the sacred Mother Earth.

On behalf of the delegates at this Albuquerque gathering (partial list of delegates attached), we are sending this **ALBUQUERQUE DECLARATION** throughout the world for global dissemination. The words within the **PREAMBLE** and other parts of this declaration is a **CALL FOR ACTION** that the people of the world must open their eyes to the dangerous situation ALL humans are in - if we continue this path of unsustainable developments - we may not have a future for our children.

Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper, Chief, Onondaga Nation

Tom "Mato Awanyankapi" Goldtooth, National Coordinator, Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)

Patrick Spears, President, and Bob Gough, Secretary, Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (ICOUP)

Jackie Warledo, Field Representative, International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), IEN Board member and staff of Greenpeace Native Toxic Lands

THE ALBUQUERQUE DECLARATION

FROM THE "CIRCLES OF WISDOM" NATIVE PEOPLES / NATIVE HOMELANDS CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP-SUMMIT, NOVEMBER 1, 1998,ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCES OF THE PARTIES FOUR (COP-4) OF THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (FCCC), BUENOS, AIRES, ARGENTINA, NOVEMBER 2-13, 1998

PREAMBLE

As Indigenous Peoples, we begin each day with a prayer, bringing our minds together in thanks for every part of the natural world. We are grateful that each part of our natural world continues to fulfill the responsibilities that have been set for it by our Creator, in an unbreakable relationship to each other. As the roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, we are allowed to live our lives in peace. We are grateful for the natural order put in place and regulated by natural laws.

Most of our ceremonies are about giving thanks, at the right time and in the right way. They are what was given to us, what makes us who we are. They enable us to speak about life itself. Maintaining our ceremonies is an important part of our life. There is nothing more important than preserving life, celebrating life, and that is what the ceremonies do. Our instruction tells us that we are to maintain our ceremonies, however few of us there are, so that we can fulfil the spiritual responsibilities given to us by the Creator.

The balance of men and women is the leading principle of our wisdom. This balance is the creative principle of Father Sky and Mother Earth that fosters life. In our traditions, it is women who carry the seeds, both of our own future generations and of the plant life. It is women who plant and tend the gardens, and women who bear and raise the children. The women remind us of our connection to the earth, for it is from the earth that life comes.

We draw no line between what is political and what is spiritual. Our leaders are also our spiritual leaders. In making any law, our leaders must consider three things: the effect of their decisions on peace; the effect on the natural order and law; and the effect on future generations. The natural order and laws are self-evident and do not need scientific proof. We believe that all lawmakers should be required to think this way, that all constitutions should contain these principles.

Our prophecies and teachings tell us that life on earth is in danger of coming to an end. We have accepted the responsibility designated by our prophecies to tell the world that we must live in peace and harmony and ensure balance with the rest of Creation. The destruction of the rest of Creation must not be allowed to continue, for if it does, Mother Earth will react in such a way that almost all people will suffer the end of life as we know it.

A growing body of western scientific evidence now suggests what Indigenous Peoples have expressed for a long time: life as we know it is in danger. We can no longer afford to ignore the consequences of this evidence. We must learn to live with this shadow, and always strive towards the light that will restore the natural order. How western science and technology is being used needs to be examined in order for Mother Earth to sustain life.

Our Peoples and lands are a scattering of islands within a sea of our neighbors, the richest material nations in the world. The world is beginning to recognize that today's market driven economies are not sustainable and place in jeopardy the existence of future generations. It is upsetting the natural order

and laws created for all our benefit. The continued extraction and destruction of natural resources is unsustainable.

There is a direct relationship between the denial of Indigenous Peoples land and water rights, along with the appropriation without consent of Indigenous Peoples' natural resources, and the causes of global climate change today. Examples include deforestation, contamination of land and water by pesticides and industrial waste, toxic and radioactive poisoning, military and mining impacts.

The four elements of fire, water, earth and air sustain all life. These elements of life are being destroyed and misused by the modern world. Fire gives life and understanding, but is being disrespected by technology of the industrialized world that allows it to take life such as the fire in the coal-fired powered plants, the toxic waste incinerators, the fossil-fuel combustion engine and other polluting technologies that add to greenhouse gases. Coal extraction from sacred earth is being used to fuel the greenhouse gases that are causing global climate warming.

Because of our relationship with our lands, waters and natural surroundings which has sustained us since time immemorial, we carry the knowledge and ideas that the world needs today. We know how to live with this land: we have done so for thousands of years. We are a powerful spiritual people. It is this spiritual connection to Mother Earth, Father Sky, and all Creation that is lacking in the rest of the world.

Our extended family includes our Mother Earth, Father Sky, and our brothers and sisters, the animal and plant life. We must speak for the plants, for the animals, for the rest of Creation. It is our responsibility, given to us by our Creator, to speak on their behalf to the rest of the world.

For the future of all the children, for the future of Mother Earth and Father Sky, we call upon the leaders of the world, at all levels of governments, to accept responsibility for the welfare of future generations. Their decisions must reflect their consciousness of this responsibility and they must act on it. We demand a place at the table in discussions that involve and effect our future and the natural order and natural laws that govern us.

THEREFORE

We, the participants in the "Circles of Wisdom" Native Peoples / Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico of the United States, in the traditional territory of the Pueblo Peoples, express profound concern for the well being of our sacred Mother Earth and Father Sky and the potential consequences of climate imbalance for our Indigenous Peoples and the significance of these consequences for our communities, our environment, our economies, our culture and our relationships to the natural order and laws.

Indigenous prophecy now meets scientific prediction. What we have known and believed, you also now know: The Earth is out of balance. The plants are disappearing, the animals are dying, and the very weather --rain, wind, fire itself -- reacts against the actions of the human being. For the future of the children, for the health of our Mother Earth, Father Sky, and rest of Creation, we call upon the people of the world to hold your leaders accountable.

We submit this declaration to the Fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) being held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 2-13, 1998. We wish to add our voices to ongoing global discussions regarding the impact of climate imbalance on forests, oceans, plants, animals, fish, humans and biodiversity.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles are self-evident and guide our beliefs and actions.

- Mother Earth, Father Sky, and all of Creation, from microorganisms to human, plant, trees, fish, bird, and animal relatives are part of the natural order and regulated by natural laws. Each has a unique role and is a critical part of the whole that is Creation. Each is sacred, respected, and a unique living being with its own right to survive, and each plays an essential role in the survival and health of the natural world.
- As sovereign Peoples and Nations, we have an inherent right to self-determination, protected through inherent rights and upheld through treaties and other binding agreements. As Indigenous Peoples, our consent and approval are necessary in all negotiations and activities that have direct and indirect impact on our lands, ecosystems, waters, other natural resources and our human bodies.
- Human beings are part of the natural order. Our role and responsibility, as human beings, is to live peacefully and in a harmonious balance with all life. Our cultures are based on this harmony, peace and ecological balance which ensures long term sustainability for future generations. This concept of sustainability must be the basis of the decisions and negotiations underway on national and international levels.
- The Creator has entrusted us a sacred responsibility to protect and care for the land and all of life, as well as to safeguard its well being for future generations to come.
- Indigenous Peoples have the right and responsibility to control access to our traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, which constitute the basis for the maintenance of our lifestyles and future [The Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples];

CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous Peoples of North America were invited by neither the United States nor Canada to participate in the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change.

In June 1997, more than 2,000 U.S. scientists, from over 150 countries, including Nobel Laureates, signed the Scientists Statement on Global Climate Disruption which reads, in part, the "accumulation of greenhouse gases commits the sacred earth irreversibly to further global climate change and consequent ecological, economic, social and spiritual disruption" (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, December 1995). Climate imbalance will cause the greatest suffering to the Indigenous peoples and most pristine ecosystems globally.

The migration of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) through the air and water pathways continues from warmer southern climates to the colder climates of the Great Lakes and Arctic climates of North America and the Arctic Circle. Increased temperatures and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) disproportionately impact indigenous Peoples, through their food web systems, causing health and ecosystem impacts.

Within the next 20 years, temperatures over land areas of North America, Europe and Northern Asia will increase as much as 5 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit over today's normal temperatures, well in excess of the global average (IPCC Report 1998). This increase in temperature will cause the sea level to rise (5-25 feet over the next 500 years), drying out North America's soil moisture (20 - 50%), and result in major increases in the summer heat index (10 - 25 degrees F).

The burning of oil, gas, and coal ("fossil fuels") is the primary source of human-induced climate change. The increasing demand and use of fossil fuels continues to have adverse impacts on natural forests. Natural forests are critical parts of the ecosystems that maintain global climate stability. The continued large-scale taking of fossil fuels results in numerous impacts on these vital areas through deforestation and pollution from drilling operations and ultimately forest degradation from the global climate imbalance. The mining and drilling for coal, oil, and gas, as well as other mineral extractions, results in substantial local environmental consequences, including severe degradation of air, forests, rivers, oceans and farmlands. Cultural impacts, forced removal, land appropriation, destruction of sacred and historical significant areas, breakdown of Indigenous social systems, and violence against women and children are too often the outcomes of fossil fuel development on Indigenous Peoples. Fossil fuel extraction areas are home to some of Mother Earth's last and most vulnerable Indigenous populations, resulting in accelerated losses of biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and ultimately in ethnocide and genocide.

ACTIONS

We request that the potential consequences of climate imbalance for Indigenous Peoples and our environments, economies, culture, place and role in the natural order be addressed by:

1. Establishing and funding an Inter-sessional Open-ended Working Group for Indigenous Peoples within the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC);
2. Provisions for case studies be established within the framework of FCCC that would allow for assessing how climate changes effect different regions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; assessing climate changes on flora and fauna, freshwater and oceans, forestry, traditional agricultural practices, medicinal plants and other biodiversity that impact subsistence and land-based cultures of Indigenous Peoples; and other case studies that would provide a clearer understanding of all effects and impacts of climate change and warming upon Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
3. Indigenous Peoples have the right, responsibility and expertise to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessments, case studies, within national and international policy-making activities concerning climate change impacts, causes and solutions;
4. Within the FCCC, establish protocols that would actively promote international energy efficient and sustainable forms of development, including the widespread use of appropriately scaled solar energy and renewable energy technologies as well as sustainable agricultural and forestry practice models;
5. Mandating a moratorium on new exploration and projects for extraction for fossil fuel reserves in pristine areas. Exploration and development in the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples of the world must be done with the full consent of Indigenous Peoples, respecting their right to decline a project that may adversely impact them;
6. Imposing a legally binding obligation to restore all areas already affected by oil, gas, and coal exploration and exploitation by the corporations or public entities that are responsible. This restoration must be done such that Indigenous Peoples can continue traditional uses of their lands.

This is a partial list of Indigenous groups, and Spiritual Leaders in attendance at the Albuquerque Workshop in support of the Declaration. Additionally, near fifty individuals endorsed the Declaration

(list of individuals available upon request). There were some Tribal governmental representatives in attendance that didn't have time to confirm their Tribal Council support, but were supportive of the Declaration.

Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force - Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora Nations

Native Coalition for Cultural Restoration of Mount Shasta and Medicine Lake Highlands Defense

Columbia River Alliance for Economic and Environmental Education

Intertribal Council on Utility Policy

International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism

International Indian Treaty Council

Native American Council of New York City

Roundtable of Institutions of People of Color

Dine' Citizens Against Ruining the Environment (CARE)

North American Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Project

Alaska Council of Indigenous Environmental Network

Great Lakes Regional Indigenous Environmental Network

Oklahoma Regional Indigenous Environmental Network

American Indian Chamber of Commerce of New Mexico

Seventh Generation Fund

Sapa Dawn Center

Anishinabe Niijii

Gwiichin Steering Committee

Eastern Cherokee Defense League

White Clay Society of Gros Ventre

Shundahai Network

American Indian Law Alliance

Traditional and Spiritual Leaders:

* Oren Lyons, Onondaga * Kendall Rice, Potawatomi * Arvol Looking Horse, Lakota

* Marvin Stevens, Kickapoo * Tom Stillday Jr., Red Lake Ojibway

* Johnny Jackson, Yakama Cascade Band * Corbin Harney, Western Shoshone

* Jake Swamp, Mohawk * Albert Yazzie, Navajo * Richard Dalton Sr, Tlingit

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