

THE MYSTIC LAKE DECLARATION

From the Native Peoples Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop II:

Indigenous Perspectives and Solutions

**At Mystic Lake on the Homelands of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Prior Lake,
Minnesota**

November 21, 2009

As community members, youth and elders, spiritual and traditional leaders, Native organizations and supporters of our Indigenous Nations, we have gathered on November 18-21, 2009 at Mystic Lake in the traditional homelands of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Oyate. This Second Native Peoples Native Homelands Climate Workshop builds upon the Albuquerque Declaration and work done at the 1998 Native Peoples Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We choose to work together to fulfill our sacred duties, listening to the teachings of our elders and the voices of our youth, to act wisely to carry out our responsibilities to enhance the health and respect the sacredness of Mother Earth, and to demand Climate Justice now.

We acknowledge that to deal effectively with global climate change and global warming issues all sovereigns must work together to adapt and take action on real solutions that will ensure our collective existence. We hereby declare, affirm, and assert our inalienable rights as well as responsibilities as members of sovereign Native Nations. In doing so, we expect to be active participants with full representation in United States and international legally binding treaty agreements regarding climate, energy, biodiversity, food sovereignty, water and sustainable development policies affecting our peoples and our respective Homelands on Turtle Island (North America) and Pacific Islands.

We are of the Earth. The Earth is the source of life to be protected, not merely a resource to be exploited. Our ancestors' remains lie within her. Water is her lifeblood. We are dependent upon her for our shelter and our sustenance. Our lifeways are the original "green economies." We have our place and our responsibilities within Creation's sacred order. We feel the sustaining joy as things occur in harmony. We feel the pain of disharmony when we witness the dishonor of the natural order of Creation and the degradation of Mother Earth and her companion Moon.

We need to stop the disturbance of the sacred sites on Mother Earth so that she may heal and restore the balance in Creation. We ask the world community to join with the Indigenous Peoples to pray on summer solstice for the healing of all the sacred sites on Mother Earth.

The well-being of the natural environment predicts the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual longevity of our Peoples and the Circle of Life. Mother Earth's health and that of our Indigenous Peoples are intrinsically intertwined. Unless our homelands are in a state of good health our Peoples will not be truly healthy. This inseparable relationship must be respected for the sake of our future generations. In this Declaration, we invite humanity to join with us to improve our collective human behavior so that we may develop a more sustainable world – a world where the inextricable relationship of biological, and environmental diversity, and cultural diversity is affirmed and protected.

We have the power and responsibility to change. We can preserve, protect, and fulfill our sacred duties to live with respect in this wonderful Creation. However, we can also forget our responsibilities, disrespect Creation, cause disharmony and imperil our future and the future of others.

At Mystic Lake, we reviewed the reports of indigenous science, traditional knowledge and cultural scholarship in cooperation with non-native scientists and scholars. We shared our fears, concerns and insights. If current trends continue, native trees will no longer find habitable locations in our forests, fish will no longer find their streams livable, and humanity will find their homelands flooded or drought-stricken due to the changing weather. Our Native Nations have already disproportionately suffered the negative compounding effects of global warming and a changing climate.

The United States and other industrialized countries have an addiction to the high consumption of energy. Mother Earth and her natural resources cannot sustain the consumption and production needs of this modern industrialized society and its dominant economic paradigm, which places value on the rapid economic growth, the quest for corporate and individual accumulation of wealth, and a race to exploit natural resources. The non-regenerative production system creates too much waste and toxic pollutions. We recognize the need for the United States and other industrialized countries to focus on new economies, governed by the absolute limits and boundaries of ecological sustainability, the carrying capacities of the Mother Earth, a more equitable sharing of global and local resources, encouragement and support of self-sustaining communities, and respect and support for the rights of Mother Earth and her companion Moon.

In recognizing the root causes of climate change, participants call upon the industrialized countries and the world to work towards decreasing dependency on fossil fuels. We call for a moratorium on all new exploration for oil, gas, coal and uranium as a first step towards the full phase-out of fossil fuels, without nuclear power, with a just transition to sustainable jobs, energy and environment. We take this position and make this recommendation based on our concern over the disproportionate social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and climate impacts on Indigenous Peoples, who are the first and the worst affected by the disruption of intact habitats, and the least responsible for such impacts.

Indigenous peoples must call for the most stringent and binding emission reduction targets. Carbon emissions for developed countries must be reduced by no less than 40%, preferably 49% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 95% by 2050. We call for national and global actions to stabilize CO₂ concentrations below 350 parts per million (ppm) and limiting temperature increases to below 1.5°C.

We challenge climate mitigation solutions to abandon false solutions to climate change that negatively impact Indigenous Peoples' rights, lands, air, oceans, forests, territories and waters. These include nuclear energy, large-scale dams, geo-engineering techniques, clean coal technologies, carbon capture and sequestration, bio-fuels, tree plantations, and international market-based mechanisms such as carbon trading and offsets, the Clean Development Mechanisms and Flexible Mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol and forest offsets. The only real offsets are those renewable energy developments that actually displace fossil fuel-generated energy. We recommend the United States sign on to the Kyoto Protocol and to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are concerned with how international carbon markets set up a framework for dealing with greenhouse gases that secure the property rights of heavy Northern fossil fuel users over the world's carbon-absorbing capacity while creating new opportunities for corporate profit through trade. The

system starts by translating existing pollution into a tradable commodity, the rights to which are allocated in accordance with a limit set by States or intergovernmental agencies. In establishing property rights over the world's carbon dump, the largest number of rights is granted (mostly for free) to those who have been most responsible for pollution in the first place. At UN COP15, the conservation of forests is being brought into a property right issue concerning trees and carbon. With some indigenous communities it is difficult and sometimes impossible to reconcile with traditional spiritual beliefs the participation in climate mitigation that commodifies the sacredness of air (carbon), trees and life. Climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management must be based on different mindsets with full respect for nature, and not solely on market-based mechanisms.

We recognize the link between climate change and food security that affects Indigenous traditional food systems. We declare our Native Nations and our communities, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, traditional lands and territories to be “Food Sovereignty Areas,” defined and directed by Indigenous Peoples according to our customary laws, free from extractive industries, unsustainable energy development, deforestation, and free from using food crops and agricultural lands for large scale bio-fuels.

We encourage our communities to exchange information related to the sustainable and regenerative use of land, water, sea ice, traditional agriculture, forest management, ancestral seeds, food plants, animals and medicines that are essential in developing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and will restore our food sovereignty, food independence, and strengthen our Indigenous families and Native Nations.

We reject the assertion of intellectual property rights over the genetic resources and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples which results in the alienation and commodification of those things that are sacred and essential to our lives and cultures. We reject industrial modes of food production that promote the use of chemical substances, genetically engineered seeds and organisms. Therefore, we affirm our right to possess, control, protect and pass on the indigenous seeds, medicinal plants, traditional knowledge originating from our lands and territories for the benefit of our future generations.

We can make changes in our lives and actions as individuals and as Nations that will lessen our contribution to the problems. In order for reality to shift, in order for solutions to major problems to be found and realized, we must transition away from the patterns of an industrialized mindset, thought and behavior that created those problems. It is time to exercise desperately needed Indigenous ingenuity – *Indigenuity* – inspired by our ancient intergenerational knowledge and wisdom given to us by our natural relatives.

We recognize and support the position of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), operating as the Indigenous Caucus within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), that is requesting language within the overarching principles of the outcomes of the Copenhagen UNFCCC 15th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) and beyond Copenhagen, that would ensure respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples, including their rights to lands, territories, forests and resources to ensure their full and effective participation including free, prior and informed consent. It is crucial that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is entered into all appropriate negotiating texts for it is recognized as the minimum international standard for the protection of rights, survival, protection and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, particularly with regard to health, subsistence, sustainable housing and infrastructure, and clean energy development.

As Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples living within the occupied territories of the United States, we acknowledge with concern, the refusal of the United States to support negotiating text that would recognize applicable universal human rights instruments and agreements, including the UNDRIP, and further safeguard principles that would ensure their full and effective participation including free, prior and informed consent. We will do everything humanly possible by exercising our sovereign government-to-government relationship with the U.S. to seek justice on this issue.

Our Indian languages are encoded with accumulated ecological knowledge and wisdom that extends back through oral history to the beginning of time. Our ancestors created land and water relationship systems premised upon the understanding that all life forms are relatives – not resources. We understand that we as human beings have a sacred and ceremonial responsibility to care for and maintain, through our original instructions, the health and well-being of all life within our traditional territories and Native Homelands.

We will encourage our leadership and assume our role in supporting a just transition into a green economy, freeing ourselves from dependence on a carbon-based fossil fuel economy. This transition will be based upon development of an indigenous agricultural economy comprised of traditional food systems, sustainable buildings and infrastructure, clean energy and energy efficiency, and natural resource management systems based upon indigenous science and traditional knowledge. We are committed to development of economic systems that enable life-enhancement as a core component. We thus dedicate ourselves to the restoration of true wealth for all Peoples. In keeping with our traditional knowledge, this wealth is based not on monetary riches but rather on healthy relationships, relationships with each other, and relationships with all of the other natural elements and beings of creation.

In order to provide leadership in the development of green economies of life-enhancement, we must end the chronic underfunding of our Native educational institutions and ensure adequate funding sources are maintained. We recognize the important role of our Native K-12 schools and tribal colleges and universities that serve as education and training centers that can influence and nurture a much needed *Indigenuity* towards understanding climate change, nurturing clean renewable energy technologies, seeking solutions and building sustainable communities.

The world needs to understand that the Earth is a living female organism – our Mother and our Grandmother. We are kin. As such, she needs to be loved and protected. We need to give back what we take from her in respectful mutuality. We need to walk gently. These Original Instructions are the natural spiritual laws, which are supreme. Science can urgently work with traditional knowledge keepers to restore the health and well-being of our Mother and Grandmother Earth.

As we conclude this meeting we, the participating spiritual and traditional leaders, members and supporters of our Indigenous Nations, declare our intention to continue to fulfill our sacred responsibilities, to redouble our efforts to enable sustainable life-enhancing economies, to walk gently on our Mother Earth, and to demand that we be a part of the decision-making and negotiations that impact our inherent and treaty-defined rights. Achievement of this vision for the future, guided by our traditional knowledge and teachings, will benefit all Peoples on the Earth.

Approved by Acclamation and Individual Sign-ons.