



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PDX-11-036

### TITLE: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Climate Change

**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indians/Alaska Natives are entrusted by our ancestors with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that has been an accumulation of centuries of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission; and

**WHEREAS**, climate change is a threat to American Indians/Alaska Natives' culture, resources, and well-being that is currently impacting hunting, fishing, gathering, economic infrastructure, reservation locations, usual and accustomed areas and natural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, indigenous nations are in a unique and venerable position in regards to climate change, as their land bases provide few opportunities to relocate or expand or cope with changing climate; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal rights established under treaties, executive orders and other legal instruments are fixed to specific parcels of land, so that it is unclear what tribal rights to resources might shift away from their reserved lands; and

**WHEREAS**, furthermore, tribal rights to hunt, fish and gather that are established and guaranteed under treaties, executive orders, and other legal instruments may be rendered moot by these shifts, or may need to be adapted by transferring harvesting rights to non-traditional species; and

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**WHEREAS**, the current Administration has taken strides that support Tribal measures to cope with climate change, including, but not limited to, the Council on Environmental Quality Climate Adaptation Task Force Report, which calls upon all federal agencies to incorporate climate change into their programs and involve tribal governments in those efforts, and the Department of Interior *Secretarial Order 3289 - Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America's Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources*; and

**WHEREAS**, as stewards, American Indians and Alaska Natives possess the traditional ecological knowledge, as well as knowledge of western science and legal and political systems, and experience in governance; and

**WHEREAS**, with this experience American Indians and Alaska Natives are prepared to be managers in addressing adaptation and mitigation policy and laws impacting trust resources and this capacity will provide direction for agencies, laws and policy to recognize tribal rights to shifting species and resources.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI urges the United States, its agencies, scientists and all relevant organizations to include Tribes in all climate change policies, programs, and activities from the very start, and at all levels; and recognize and respect Tribal traditions, ordinances and expectations regarding access to and use of traditional ecological knowledge, based on prior and informed consent; and build and enhance Tribal capacity to address climate change issues; to provide adequate and proportional funding for Tribal climate change adaptation and mitigation; and consult with Native Sovereign Nations as decision makers with all policy, regulations and laws related to climate change effects on important tribal cultural, natural and sacred resources; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2011 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon on October 30 – November 4, 2011, with a quorum present.

  
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President

**ATTEST:**

  
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Recording Secretary