



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-12-065

TITLE: Supporting of the First Stewards Coastal Peoples Organization

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, the indigenous people were and are the First Stewards of the lands and waters of North America, Alaska and the Pacific Islands, having lived in these areas millennia before the establishment of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Tribes of the Northwest Coast, Alaska and the Gulf Coast, and the Great Lakes and Hawaiian Islands, convened on July 17-20, 2012, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC, and the First Stewards: Coastal Peoples Address Climate Change Symposium; and

WHEREAS, the Symposium reemphasized the First Stewards' awareness of the interconnectedness of the clouds, forest, valleys, land, streams, fishponds, sea, lakes, canyons and other elements of the natural and spiritual worlds, and the use of their expertise and methodologies to assure responsible stewardship of them; and

WHEREAS, the First Stewards have experienced changes, including the deterioration of their culture, language, values, and land tenures systems, that have resulted in over-development of the coastlines, alteration of freshwater streams and lakes, destruction of life-giving watersheds, decimation of reefs, and the decline of marine and terrestrial species; and

WHEREAS, these changes to the natural world have been exacerbated by climate change and jeopardize the very fabric of indigenous societies; and

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NCAI HEADQUARTERS

1516 P Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202.466.7767
202.466.7797 fax
www.ncai.org

WHEREAS, the First Stewards from the West Coast have witnessed that the glaciers, which nourish our rivers and spirits, have retreated and disappeared; that ocean acidity and hypoxia jeopardize the marine ecosystems, which support our culture, health and economies; that weather events are more frequently severe and unpredictable; and that our treaties and inherent rights are at risk due to the inability of regulatory agencies to meet their trust responsibilities to sustainably manage resources, in consultation with Native Americans, that support our cultures' resilience to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the First Stewards from Alaska found that our native plants and animals and fish are increasingly diseased and displaced; and over harvesting of seaweed is an increasing concern; and our northern waters are facing expanded resource development and vessel traffic; and that these changes to our air, lands, waters, and ice are endangering our subsistence way of life and consequently our cultures, languages, and health; and

WHEREAS, the First Stewards from the Pacific Islands are facing invasive species, erosion, changing rainfall, intensified typhoons/hurricanes, tsunamis/tidal waves, and warming of the ocean, air, and land, as well as regulations that do not reflect indigenous expertise and consequently have unforeseen impacts on the environment and our culture; and

WHEREAS, the First Stewards representatives from the Great Lakes, East Coast and Gulf of Mexico noted environmental concerns regarding the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and cultural concerns regarding the disappearance of sacred plants and found that their climate change adaptation plans including restoration efforts, such as dam removal, and traditional management methods, such as prescribed burning, are being obstructed by local, state and federal attempts to define them and limit their native rights.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NCAI supports and reinforces the First Stewards call on the United States government to formally recognize native peoples' expertise and to consult with our tribal governments and indigenous communities for guidance in all policies that affect our way of life and to support our management efforts, which will strengthen America's resiliency and ability to adapt to climate change, and that this resolution be sent to the President of the United States and appropriate Congressional Committees and government agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports the First Stewards to become incorporated in order to organize future symposia and to effectively act upon resolutions; and

BE IT FINALLY 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 2012 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center from October 21-26, 2012 in Sacramento, California, with a quorum present.



President

ATTEST:



Recording Secretary