
TITLE: **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas - Pathway to Canada Target 1: Conservation 2020 Initiative**

SUBJECT: Environment

MOVED BY: Chief Harvey McLeod, Upper Nicola Indian Band, BC

SECONDED BY: Chief Melvin Hardy, Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), ON

DECISION Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

- i. Article 25: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and use lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regards.
- ii. Article 29 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of their 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.
- iii. Article 32 (2): States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent 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.

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- iv. Article 32 (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 world is in the midst of a growing global biodiversity crisis that has significantly disrupted the sacred relationship of First Nations with Mother Earth and has resulted in a critical imbalance in the environment and all living beings.
- C. Indigenous peoples have been diligent and ingenious cultivators of biological diversity through their traditional practices and economies rooted in natural law since time immemorial.
- D. First Nations share inherent rights and responsibilities and associated knowledge systems and traditional laws to protect and defend Mother Earth.
- E. No relationship is more valuable to First Nations than that with the natural environment and the wildlife contained within.
- F. First Nations are uniquely positioned through their intimate relationship with the land, traditional ways of knowing, and management practices to lead efforts to protect, conserve and sustainably manage the environment and biodiversity contained within.
- G. The unique relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the environment is recognized as an essential role within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including the importance of traditional knowledge in the protection and conservation of the environment and its species.
- H. The Crown has the duty to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations on matters impacting First Nations rights. The honor of the Crown is always at stake in these situations.
- I. Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 23/2017, *Parks Canada Pathway to Canada Target 1: Conservation 2020 Initiative* mandates the AFN's involvement in the Pathway Initiative.
- J. The AFN has agreed to continue its participation in the Pathway to Canada Target 1 Initiative to the extent that it could provide a forum for further engagement on conservation and protection.
- K. The AFN is committed to the promotion and protection of Treaty and inherent rights of First Nations and to advancing the collective interests of First Nations relating to self-determination, stewardship, protection and conservation of the environment.
- L. First Nations require effective tools and capacity to ensure environmental protection for the lands, waters, air, and future generations.

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Support the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) continued involvement in the Pathway to Canada Target 1: Conservation 2020 Initiative.
2. Direct the AFN Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE) to establish an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas sub-working group that will work collaboratively to identify priorities, issues and concerns as they relate to the establishment and implementation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.
3. Direct the AFN to engage with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to support the ongoing establishment and implementation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas as one mechanism to support First Nations leadership in environmental conservation, protection and management.
4. Call on the Government of Canada to recognize, respect and fully implement First Nations inherent rights, Treaties, Title and jurisdiction, including First Nations knowledge systems, laws, governance, and management systems as a primary means of protecting Mother Earth.
5. Direct the AFN to urge the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada to ensure the full and effective participation of First Nations in all aspects of environmental conservation and protection through dedicated resources to enhance capacity and leadership in governance and management processes including policy, program and regulatory decision making processes.

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