ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 17, 18 & 19, 2012, TORONTO, ON

Resolution no. 20/2012

TITLE:	National First Nations Water Strategy
SUBJECT:	Water, Environmental Stewardship
MOVED BY:	Chief Byron Louis, Okanagan First Nation, BC
SECONDED BY:	Chief Joe Noganosh, Magnetawan First Nation, ON
DECISION:	Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

A. Water is the lifeblood of all Creation and is an inherent gift from the Creator. Without it humanity will cease to exist.

B. First Nations in Canada have a direct and long-standing relationship with the land, waters and all natural resources and are the stewards of Canada's lands and waters.

C. Water jurisdiction in Canada is a complex and multijurisdictional issue involving multiple players and authorities at the First Nation, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels.

D. The Crown holds a fiduciary and constitutional obligation to ensure that First Nations are able to enjoy their aboriginal rights to access clean water.

E. There is a clear treaty right to water which has never been extinguished.

F. First Nations consider access to potable water to be a basic human right, and safe water is necessary for First Nations to continue economic and cultural practices such as fishing, gathering medicines, and holding ceremonies.

G. Many economic sectors such as forestry, mining, agriculture, oil and gas, and construction can affect water quality and quantity, both inside and adjacent to First Nations traditional territories, and the scale of these activities is increasing.

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H. The AFN Water Rights Conference on March 5 , 2012 identified the need to develop a collective First Nations Water Strategy that promotes the sacredness of the water resource, recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and maintains the long term integrity of water sources.

I. A National First Nations Water Strategy should consist of several elements, including addressing and asserting rights and jurisdiction, water and watershed management, and communications to ensure a cooperative and comprehensive First Nations led approach to water protection.

J. First Nations require human and financial resources to build capacity that will allow them to fully participate in community development planning, water management, watershed management, and implementation of their water rights.

K. The AFN respects the declarations and protocols of other First Nations organizations and wishes to complement existing and ongoing work related to water;

L. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has been endorsed by Canada and in Article 25 states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

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

1. Direct the AFN to further development of a National First Nations Water Strategy.
2. Direct the AFN to facilitate dialogue and seek input from First Nations and technical working groups to develop the comprehensive First Nations Water Strategy.
3. Direct the AFN to report to the Chiefs in Assembly at the December 2012 Special Chiefs Assembly on a National First Nations Water Strategy for ratification and direction on implementation.
4. Call upon the AFN to engage with all levels of government to ensure that First Nations engagement, accommodation and consultation processes are accountable, respectful and appropriate prior to the implementation of any legislation, policies, and regulations that may impact Aboriginal and treaty rights, First Nations governance authorities or stewardship of watersheds in or near their traditional territories.
5. Insist that all work on this most sacred of issues consider and employ all necessary protocols and ceremonies pertaining to water as it relates to First Nations across Turtle Island.

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