
Assembly of First Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 11, 12, & 13, 2023; HALIFAX, NS**

Resolution no. 36/2023

TITLE: Urgent and Transformative Climate Action through the AFN National Climate Strategy

SUBJECT: Environment, Lands and Waters

MOVED BY: Judy Wilson, proxy, Osoyoos Indian Band, B.C

SECONDED BY: Chief Terry Richardson, Papineau First Nation, N.B.

DECISION Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) 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 used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.
 - ii. Article 29 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the 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 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
 - iv. Article 32 (2): States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to

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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.

- v. 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 climate crisis is significantly altering First Nations' relationships with the lands the Creator has bestowed upon First Nations and upon which First Nations have inalienable rights as entrenched in Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982), affirmed in the UN Declaration, and confirmed in Treaties and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and the Crown.
- C. In 2016, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Elders' Council released an Elders' Statement on Environment and Climate Change articulating that: Mother Earth is in a climate crisis. We therefore insist on an immediate end to the destruction and desecration of the sacred elements of life based on the human obligation to care for the land and for future generations.
- D. In the face of this crisis, First Nations have been active leaders, both domestically and internationally, drawing on the science, knowledge, and ways-of-life shared by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, men, women, youth, and leadership to advance First Nations-led solutions that restore balance with the natural world, including through numerous resolutions from the First Nations-in-Assembly.
- E. Reports, such as those by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2023), the United Nations Environment Program's Emission Gap Report (2022), and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Synthesis Report, prepared by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), have articulated the current state of crisis facing the world.
- F. Canada's Changing Climate Report (2019) has confirmed that Canada has already warmed by 2.3°C and is projected to warm, on average, at double the magnitude of the rest of the world.
- G. In 2019, the First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 05/2019, Declaring a First Nations Climate Emergency, to cement the leadership of First Nations and provide concrete direction to the AFN to develop a First Nations-led climate strategy, and host national gatherings to advance local, domestic, and international climate advocacy.
- H. Central to this work has been the advancement of a First Nations Climate Lens (Climate Lens); a concept used to describe the unique climate risks facing First Nations, as well as the leadership that First Nations bring to the climate conversation because of their reciprocal relationship with the land, water, and air.

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- I. The Climate Lens includes four components – natural law, context, impacts, and action—that, when combined, bring into focus how First Nation solutions can re-frame the climate conversation towards transformative and systemic change.
- J. The Climate Lens has been central to the organization of two AFN National Climate Gatherings, in March 2020 and in September 2022, in addition to fifteen webinars and two national surveys, leading to the development of the AFN National Climate Strategy.
- K. The AFN National Climate Strategy is an enabling document that discusses the application of the First Nations Climate Lens to federal climate policy, and then introduces seven priority areas of action focused on uplifting the self-determination and leadership of First Nations in developing climate solutions.
- L. Similar processes have been led by First Nations at the regional level, including British Columbia and Yukon, producing region-specific First Nation climate strategies.
- M. First Nations-led climate solutions stand in profound contrast to the ways in which Canada, the provinces and territories, and many businesses aspire to address the climate crisis. Instead of an overreliance on technology and markets, First Nations emphasize how climate solutions must be rooted in an understanding of natural law and a recognition that we must restore balance to our relationships with the land, water, and all life on the planet. This understanding is key to the AFN National Climate Strategy.
- N. Green-washed solutions advanced by opportunistic governments and industry must not further compound the climate crisis, nor displace or detrimentally affect First Nations or other Indigenous Peoples globally.
- O. Climate change has caused many groundwater wells to dry out during times of drought.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

- 1. Reaffirm the declaration of a First Nations Climate Emergency, calling for:
 - a. A recognition that the climate crisis constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, air, ice, animals, and peoples;
 - b. Local, national, and international communities, governments, organizations, and movements to safeguard the inherent, Treaty and constitutionally protected rights of First Nations, respect First Nations knowledge systems, and uphold Treaties and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and the Crown; and
 - c. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments to take urgent and transformative climate action that meets the requirements outlined in the reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and

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Canada's *Changing Climate Report* (2019) to reduce emissions in Canada by 60% below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

2. Fully endorse the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Climate Strategy and its seven key priority areas of action:
 - a. Prioritize First Nation Knowledge Systems, health, languages, cultures, and spiritualities.
 - b. Recognize, respect, and position First Nations inherent jurisdiction and inherent right to self-determination as central to climate decision-making at all levels.
 - c. Address capacity needs to support First Nations governance and their role as climate leaders.
 - d. Ensure First Nations self-sufficiency in food, water, and energy.
 - e. Close the natural and built infrastructure gap.
 - f. Ensure First Nations are equipped to mitigate, prevent, respond, and recover ~~respond~~ to all emergencies.
 - g. Leverage the First Nations Climate Lens to reform federal, provincial, and territorial legislation, regulation, policy, and programs.
3. Call on the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work directly, and in full partnership with, First Nations rights and title holders to implement self-determined First Nations climate priorities, including, but not limited to, those outlined in the AFN National Climate Strategy.
4. Direct the AFN to work with First Nations rights and title holders to advocate to the federal, provincial, and territorial governments for sufficient and sustainable funding to First Nations to implement their own strategies in a manner consistent with Article 39 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
5. Call on the federal government to compensate First Nations with new or additional lands for any lands that First Nations may lose due to climate change.
6. Direct the AFN to use the AFN National Climate Strategy in national and international contexts as an advocacy tool, including with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

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