
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
July 23, 24 & 25, 2019, FREDERICTON, NB

Resolution no. 05/2019

TITLE: Declaring a First Nations Climate Emergency

SUBJECT: Climate Crisis; Environment; Emergency

MOVED BY: Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm, Vuntut Gwitch'in First Nation, YK

SECONDED BY: Chief Aaron Sumexheltza, Lower Nicola Indian Band, BC

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 people 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 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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- 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. Reconciliation is about resolving impacts that affect First Nations holistic relationships with the environment and the land.
- C. In 2016, the 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 way-of-life shared by Elders, knowledge keepers, women, youth, and leadership.
- E. In accordance with our traditional teachings and sacred relationship with Mother Earth, First Nations recognize the importance of taking personal and collective responsibility for our actions, patterns of consumption, and efforts to restore balance.
- F. Science is finally catching up to this information as several recent reports, such as the *Special Report on Global Warming under 1.5°C* by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and *Canada's Changing Climate Report (CCCR)*, have articulated the current state of crisis facing the world. In Canada, the climate has warmed 2.3 degrees and is projected to warm, on average, at double the magnitude of the rest of the world.
- G. In particular, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) now predicts a temperature rise of 3° C or more at the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, which means two-to-three times higher in the Arctic, with devastating impacts for First Nations in northern Canada.
- H. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the climate crisis is a direct driver of the 60% decline in global wildlife populations experienced since 1970, setting into motion impacts that will be felt for the next 10 million years and have serious repercussions for the exercise of First Nations inherent and constitutionally-protected rights and responsibilities.

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- I. In response, First Nations are taking responsibility into their own hands. The leadership is exemplified by the Vuntut Gwitch'in First Nation, which, with the support of their community and Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm, have declared a state of emergency. The declaration, titled "Yeendoo Diinehdoo Ji'heezrit Nits'oo Ts'o' Nan He'aa," translates directly to "After Our Time, How Will the World Be," saying the traditional way of life in Old Crow is under threat from the climate crisis.
- J. Based on this leadership, the federal House of Commons adopted the following motion: "*Canada is in a national climate emergency which requires, as a response, that Canada commit to meeting its national emission target under the Paris Agreement and to making deeper reductions in line with the agreement's objective of holding global warming below two degrees Celsius and pursuing efforts to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.*"
- K. In light of the current trajectory of Canada's climate plan, the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (PCF), does not sufficiently meet the necessary targets, putting Canada on a pathway to 4°C of warming.
- L. Restoring a safe and stable climate requires a whole-of-society 'climate mobilization' at all levels of government on a scale not seen since World War II to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors that is just, equitable, and empowering for First Nations and marginalized populations in Canada and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the unhoused.
- M. The term "Just Transition" is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable, and just for all its members. Core to this is equity, self-determination, culture, tradition, deep democracy, and the belief that people around the world have a fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, healthcare, and shelter.

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

- 1. Declare a global climate emergency.
- 2. Recognize that the climate crisis constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals and peoples, and that we will accordingly utilize our local, national, and international forums and partnerships to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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3. Call on local, national, and international communities, governments, organizations, and movements to safeguard the inherent, Treaty and constitutionally protected rights of First Nations, respect Indigenous knowledge, and uphold Treaties and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and the Crown.
4. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to call on the 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 Canada in a Changing Climate to reduce emissions in Canada by 60% below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.
5. Call on the AFN, with guidance from the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), AFN regions, First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, women, youth and leadership, to develop a First Nations-led climate strategy, within six months, to achieve the objectives above and simultaneously address income inequality within First Nations as part of the mobilization for a just transition, and to host a National Gathering to advance local, domestic and international climate advocacy.

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