

Water is Life

In not so long ago times, the Earth was moist and fertile – life was abundant, flourishing. Cultures evolved, peoples prospered, and species grew. Now, too many landscapes are stricken with drought and our remaining waters are polluted. Too many places and peoples are thirsty and do not have access to clean water. The world is becoming dry and barren. It is dying.

1. *Echoing* that Indigenous Peoples have advanced Water as a human right, and as a right of our common Mother Earth, within these fora for many years, and we urgently do so again, recognizing the global crisis of our world's water status.
2. *Calling* for the recognition of Water as essential to all Life; that it is crucial for bio-cultural diversity and for all aspects of the world community's survival and well-being, including assuring our physical health, and nurturing our spiritual development, and central for the continued vitality of Indigenous cultures and sustainable livelihoods and economies.
3. *Recognizing* water as a critical element for our physical, cultural, and spiritual survival that is a core principle deeply embedded within our unique cultures and identities, and a reflection of our enduring relationships with our lands and territories, and for the continuity of future generations.
4. *Affirming* our inherent and aboriginal rights to water and control over our water and territories, as well as the principles articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples including the right to self-determination, we assert our right to free, prior and informed consent to any proposed development that impacts Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories, and our waters.
5. *Considering* the far-reaching and ever unfolding impacts of climate change, we recognize that Water is the most vulnerable element of all forms of Life at this critical and transforming time. Working together is essential for the good of the world community - human and all our relations on Earth.
6. *Recognizing and upholding* the Right of Water itself, to live and flow as an essential element and contributing member of the world community for the health and well-being of all.
7. *Affirming* that Indigenous Peoples are ready to work together with all those who want to protect water and to secure the well-being of our common Mother Earth.

Therefore, we take the position and call for the World Water Forum (WWF) and the Alternative World Water Forum (FAME) take immediate action this year to:

1. Take a position against **Aquacide**: the killing of the waters by dams, diversions, privatization, deprivations, extractive industrial and mega-agricultural developments, hydro-fracking, toxics and pollution, and other ways that inhibit or preclude Water's ability to nurture and support Life. This includes working to immediately halt Aquacide by all forms of exploitation, commodification, and other assaults that impede or destroy the life giving quality of Water.
2. Support a world expert study on the influence of transnational corporations on states' decisions and policies regarding Indigenous Peoples' right to access to and the protection of Water from exploitation, commodification or diversion. This study shall ensure full and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and consider all waterways including springs, streams, rivers, lakes, aquifers, inland seas, shorelines and the open seas, and especially the Great Lakes of North America and its watersheds, which hold nearly 1/4 of the world's potable water.

3. Review their platforms and engagement processes with states and all other parties on water regulation and the treaties, land claims and any agreements that have been entered into with or impact Indigenous Nations and Peoples' lands and territories. Further, that this review shall include the direct participation of Indigenous Peoples at all levels and should take into consideration and uphold the sanctity of water for Indigenous Nations and Peoples. (Recalling recommendation 53 of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 6th Session, 2007).
4. Initiate a close review and assessment of Water allocation, regulation, and access policies and practices that affect the rights of Indigenous Nations, the health of our Peoples and ecosystems, and that of our future generations. This high level meeting can explore and establish indicators of Water Well-being for Indigenous Nations, and the world community. This is particularly urgent now due to the increasing negative impacts on water due to climate change. (Recalling recommendation 78 of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 7th Session, 2008).
5. Adhere and align all initiatives related to Water with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and including aboriginal and treaty rights to Water for Indigenous nations and peoples.
6. Create a collaborative definition with Indigenous Peoples and Nations of a "green economy" that recognizes Indigenous Peoples' rights and does not commodify forests, water, biodiversity, etc, into culturally and/or ecologically-destructive market systems.
7. Affirm President Evo Morales' call in 2008 for a UN Convention on Water, and further, that Indigenous Peoples fully participate in the development of that convention as decision makers.



Founded in 1977, the **Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development** is an Indigenous Peoples' organization (social profit/non-profit) dedicated to promoting and maintaining the uniqueness of Native Peoples and the sovereignty of our distinct nations. It is the oldest Indigenous Peoples' organization of its kind (in the United States of America) that was developed by and for Indigenous Peoples. Through integrated programs, Seventh Generation Fund provides direct support to community based initiatives and tribal nations for their self-determination and to recover and sustain traditional relationships to land, community, and collective spirit.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts and to illuminate on the critical issue of Water, Indigenous Peoples, and world well-being.

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Celebrating 35 years of Indigenous Peoples' Philanthropy

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