



Luk'ae gha Tsin'aen Nek'eltaeni
Thank you Creator for Salmon Declaration
**2nd Indigenous Peoples' International Gathering to Honor, Protect and
Defend the Salmon**
Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax (Chickaloon Native Village)
Ahtna Athabaskan Nation
August 5th, 2017

This is a Tyonek story: We are Dena'ina. In the old days, the women of our villages made all the tools and nets, and processed all the fish the men could catch. Our villages were huge and the salmon were abundant, and everyone was fed. When the first king salmon of the year was caught, everyone would stop fishing, everyone would go home to purify with a steam bath and put on their best clothes and beads. Then they would go down to the river and offer the guts of the first salmon back to the river as an offering, and then they cut the first fish without cutting any bones, especially the backbone, and served a small piece to everyone. They would preserve the backbone, and then they burned it respectfully in a fire, because the backbone represents the family, the tribe. In that way, both our families and the salmon would come back and stay strong.

On August 4th and 5th, 2017, we came together to reaffirm our identity as Salmon Peoples and Peoples of the Earth whose cultural identity and physical and spiritual health and survival depends on the vitality of our traditional foods. We are committed to defending and protecting our ancestral homelands and waters where we have lived and died, and today we continue to fish, hunt, and gather since time immemorial in what are now known as the Arctic, North American, Latin American, Caribbean and Pacific regions.

We thank the Ahtnahwt'aene Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax (People of Chickaloon Village) and the Ya Ne Dah Ah (ancient teachings) Tribal School for welcoming us with such kind and generous hospitality. We also thank the International Indian Treaty Council for helping us to come together to share our information, experiences and successful strategies to protect Salmon and other traditional food sources, and to defend our rights to health, culture, ancestral knowledge and ways of living, subsistence, self-determination and free prior and informed consent.

We are grateful and thankful to the salmon and all the animals and plants that give their lives so that we can live. The histories of our families and Peoples, what we have suffered and how we have resisted and survived, are intertwined with the history, survival and life cycles of the salmon and the other traditional foods that make us who we are. We have also experienced their struggles to survive destructive developments including mining, damming and contamination of their birthing and spawning rivers. We also share the threats they are facing today such as climate change, environmental toxics, actions of governments and corporations that totally disregard ancestral rights, and the continued imposition of extractive industries in our ancestral homelands.



We affirm that the survival of future generations as Sovereign Peoples depends on Food Sovereignty and the Survival of the salmon. If we don't pay attention to what is happening to Earth, to our Peoples, and to the Salmon, these sacred things will be lost. In some places, we are hanging on by a very thin thread. It is scary to us to think about our future generations not having fish, only having stories about fish. It is up to us to work together to see what we can do, affirming that 'we don't eat coal, we eat fish.' We don't survive on oil, we survive on caribou and moose.

We celebrate and work for the Salmon's return and restoration to their ancestral birthplaces, just as we celebrate the return and restoration of Indigenous Peoples who experienced genocide and forced removals. We affirm that all birthing places are sacred, including the great rivers and small streams where the Salmon spawn and the oceans where they live and grow. Indigenous Peoples living along the sea coasts, and along rivers, streams and tributaries are at the heart of this struggle. We will continue to uphold our sacred responsibilities to protect these rivers, oceans, watersheds and eco-systems. We will continue to dance, sing, chant, drum and pray for the Salmon.

We recognize and honor the leadership and vision of our elders and ancestors that sacrificed and risked their lives so that our ancestral knowledge, practices, languages and ways of life would survive. We also commit to uphold our sacred responsibilities in this regard. We recognize that the rights which support and ensure our Food Sovereignty are inherent and affirmed in Treaties and international standards including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also recognize the need for the healing of historical and the inter-generational trauma and impacts of colonization which have undermined our Food Sovereignty and divided our Peoples. We are committed to the healing and restoration of our families, communities, Nations, ecosystems, cultures and food systems which are inter-related and interdependent.

We have heard from each other about the compounding threats to the health and survival of the salmon and other fish, plants, animals and Peoples. These include: damming of rivers and streams, diversion and depletion of waterways, discriminatory laws and policies, Treaty violations, environmental contaminants like mercury and pesticides, extractive industry developments including coal, oil and gold mining, deforestation, large-scale commercial harvesting, industrial agricultural and urban sprawl, waste dumping, genetic modification and the devastating impacts of climate change. We have also identified the urgent need to continue transmitting the ancestral knowledge passed down to us by our ancestors to our youth and new generations.

Based on these understandings, we commit to develop, strengthen and implement strategies to protect and restore the Salmon and our Food Sovereignty. These include to:

- 1) Restore Salmon streams and rivers including removal of existing harmful barriers and obstructions, use new non-invasive technologies to support salmon return, and halt new construction that threatens subsistence use places, elements and beings;
- 2) Assert our Inherent, Sovereign and Treaty Rights to manage, control, defend and protect the Salmon and their habitats including by adopting and enforcing Indigenous Nation laws and ordinances;



- 3) Demand cleanup of current contaminated sites including mercury and other contaminants from past mining and military toxic waste;
- 4) Halt extractive industries, including fossil fuel extraction, production, burning, incineration and waste dumping that causes climate change and habitat contamination; and hold mining companies, industrial agriculture, military and other contaminators accountable for cleanup and restoration of habitats and waterways;
- 5) Oppose large scale commercial fish farming and genetic modification of Salmon and other traditional food sources;
- 6) Halt and prevent river and watershed depletion, diversion and non-sustainable water use;
- 7) Share information and provide education about the importance of Salmon with other Indigenous Peoples, governments and the outside world;
- 8) Teach our children and future generations their languages, origin stories and traditional relationships to build their passion to protect all that makes us who we are;
- 9) Continue to provide education and inter-generational information-sharing opportunities within our communities and Nations through workshops, trainings, networking and alliance-building;
- 10) Practice and transmit our languages, songs, stories, clan relationships, ceremonies and food knowledge to our children, youth and future generations; and continue to rely on the wisdom and guidance of our elders;
- 11) Strengthen and reestablish Indigenous International trade, marketing, barter and exchange relations between our Nations and across colonial borders;
- 12) Encourage and empower the active participation of our children, youth and young adults in the ongoing struggles to protect our lands, plants and animals, waters and ways of life, and build their appreciation for the value of producing and eating traditional foods;
- 13) Ensure that all decisions which could affect our fisheries and other traditional and customary foods are made with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and with our Free Prior and Informed Consent, as affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- 14) Demand that the rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect and defend Salmon and other traditional food and medicinal plants and animals be fully recognized, upheld and implemented at the local, state/provincial, national and international levels;
- 15) Use international mechanisms and human rights bodies to hold States and corporations accountable for violations of our inherent rights including to subsistence, Free Prior and Informed Consent, health and Food Sovereignty;
- 16) Transfer the burden of proof and responsibility for damages and threats from Indigenous Peoples to corporations, their subsidiaries and successors, and governments; replace policies based on “acceptable risk” with the precautionary principle requiring proof that substances are safe for humans, plants, animals, water and fish before they are allowed to be produced, used, imported and exported or released into the environment;
- 17) Implement national and international policies and laws that prohibit the production, release and commerce of toxic chemicals that cause endocrine disruption, reproductive and multi-generational harms and that are subject to long range transport with disproportionate impacts on Arctic Indigenous Peoples;



- 18) Call for the implementation of Indigenous Nations, state, federal and international laws and policies that protect the environment, uphold human rights including the right to free prior and informed consent; and a halt to laws and regulations that prohibit and criminalize Indigenous Peoples for exercising their inherent rights to fish, hunt and gather;
- 19) Develop indicators, assessment tools and community-based monitoring and research models that are culturally appropriate and based on our traditional and ancestral ecological knowledge for measuring and improving our Food Sovereignty, health and well-being, implementation of our rights and the vitality of the places, elements and beings required for traditional and customary use;
- 20) Request Alaska Community Action on Toxics to carry out a study in collaboration with Chickaloon Village Traditional Council of the fish and traditional and customary places, animals and plants in the Matanuska-Susitna watershed for mercury and other toxins, including those resulting from runoff from the abandoned Independence Gold Mine, and collaborate on next steps for further action;
- 21) Continue to build and strengthen our alliances including by developing regional, national and international Inter-tribal Fish Commissions, Consortiums, Coalitions and Treaty-based Partnerships to ensure that our collective voices are amplified and included in all decision-making and negotiations that would affect our rights, lands, future generations and traditional and customary lifeways;
- 22) Ensuring that the voices of Salmon Peoples and other Indigenous traditional food producers and knowledge holders are included and respected in United Nations bodies and processes addressing issues that impact us. These include the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Committee on Food Security/Civil Society Mechanism, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Chemical Conventions (Stockholm, Rotterdam, Basel and Minamata), and all UN human rights bodies and fora that hold States accountable for violations of rights;
- 23) Utilize and strengthen our traditional knowledge for mitigation, adaption and prevention of climate change within our own communities, and participate in developing ways to share and exchange this knowledge with others on the conditions that our cultural rights, free prior and informed consent and traditional ecological knowledge are respected, a just transition away from fossil fuel use and production is implemented, and States' commitments to reduce global temperature increases are respected;
- 24) We call upon the legal systems to evolve to focus on restorative justice, a rights-based approach, and respect for Indigenous traditional legal systems, and for academic institutions to abandon their attitude of information extraction with regards to Indigenous Peoples knowledge systems;
- 25) Call upon Indigenous Nations to adopt and implement the Paris Agreement in accordance with their own traditional understandings;
- 26) Support Indigenous human, Treaty, environmental and subsistence rights defenders who face criminalization, racism, intimidation, persecution and other threats for exercising their inherent rights to protect and defend their traditional lands, waters, cultures and ways of life, including by documenting and disseminating specific incidents in this regard; and
- 27) Continue to organize International gatherings to protect and defend the Salmon in order to share information, build unity, develop joint strategies and provide mutual support, including proposing a 3rd International Indigenous Peoples Salmon Gathering hosted by the Upper Columbia United Tribes.



We thank the Christensen Fund, Cultural Survival Keepers of the Earth Fund and the Lush Foundation as well as the traditional Ahtna fishers, culture bearers and community members whose contributions made this gathering possible.

We invite all civil society allies to support this Declaration in solidarity and to further its implementations.

We recognize that we are facing threats, but we also affirm our spiritual connections and commitments for ongoing and future work to ensure our collective survival. We will continue to keep our hearts and minds strong, understanding that the work to protect the Salmon and our Indigenous ways of life begin with us.

***Adopted by Consensus of the participants, August 5th 2017,
Chickaloon Village Traditional Ahtna Territory, Alaska***