

INTERIOR ALLIANCE

Southern Carrier
St'at'imc Secwepemc
Nlaka'pamux Okanagan

c/o Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
Suite 304 - 355 Yellowhead Highway
Kamloops, British Columbia, V2H 1H1
Tél. : (250) 828-9789 Téléc. : (250) 374-6331
Courriel: mail@interioralliance.org

WATER IS LIFE: PROTECT WATER NOW! Indigenous Declaration on Water July 8th, 2001 Musqueam Territory

As Indigenous Peoples, we raise our voices in solidarity to speak for the protection of Water. The Creator placed us on this earth, each in our own sacred and traditional lands, to care for all of creation. We have always governed ourselves as Peoples to ensure the protection and purity of Water. We stand united to follow and implement our knowledge, laws and self-determination to preserve Water, to preserve life. Our message is clear: Protect Water Now!

As Indigenous Peoples, we recognize, honour and respect Water as a sacred and powerful gift from the Creator. Water, the first living spirit on this earth, gives life to all creation. Water, powerful and pristine, is the lifeblood that sustains life for all peoples, lands and creation. We know that by listening to the songs of the Water, all creation will continue to breathe. Our knowledge, laws and ways of life teach us to be responsible at all times in caring for this sacred gift that connects all life. In ceremony and as time comes, the Water sings. Her songs begin in the tiniest of streams, transforms to flowing rivers, travels to majestic oceans, and thundering clouds, and back to the earth, to begin again. When Water is threatened, all living things are threatened. Our hearts cry when we see the ways in which people, through governments and multinational corporations, destroy the Water in their greed. As Water has given us life, we must fight for the life of Water. We must continue to hear her songs and protect this sacred gift from the Creator. We must be prepared.

In this time, we see that our Waters are being polluted with chemicals, pesticides, sewage, disease and nuclear waste. We see our Waters being depleted or converted into destructive uses through the diversion of Water systems to different lands, unsustainable economic, resource and recreational development, the transformation of excessive amounts of Water into energy, and the treatment of Water as a commodity, a property interest, that can be bought, sold and traded in global and domestic economies. We see our Waters governed by imposed foreign, colonial and inhumane laws and practices that disconnect us as Peoples from the ecosystem. These laws do not respect that life is sacred, that Water is sacred.

Throughout Indigenous territories worldwide, we are witnessing the increasing scarcity of fresh Waters and the lack of access that we and other life forms such as the land, forests, animals, plants, marine life, and air have to our Waters. In these times of scarcity, we see governments creating commercial interests in Water that lead to inequities in distribution and prevent our access to the life giving nature of Water. When Water is disrespected, misused and poorly managed, we see the life threatening impacts on all of creation. We know that our Rights to Self-Determination, jurisdiction, knowledge and laws to protect the Water are being disregarded, violated and disrespected. We hear the sad and painful songs of the Water, of the land and our peoples. We hear the Waters call for protection now.

As Indigenous Peoples, we express our power, to protect the Water and call on all others concerned to open your minds and hearts and listen to our protection song, our message and support the calls for actions that follow:

We recognize that Water is a sacred gift from the Creator that gives, sustains and nurtures all life on earth. We recognize the need to share our understanding that Water is sacred and essential for the survival of all life on earth.

We recognize that as stewards of the lands and waters, and as sovereign peoples who will never sell nor trade their rights to Water, we Indigenous peoples retain inherent rights and responsibilities to protect Water.

We recognize that our knowledge and sustainable practices are essential links to the protection of Water. We recognize Indigenous governments and their jurisdiction to develop laws and treaties to protect Water.

We support the implementation of Indigenous legal systems in this effort. To retain our connection to our Waters, we must have the right to make decisions about Waters at all levels.

We resolve to communicate and express our power, our common interest to protect Water and life, through the building of Water alliances and networks worldwide.

We support all Indigenous peoples and grass roots movements that organize to protect Water based on their ancestral teachings and laws, and who also respect the role of Indigenous elders, women and youth to protect Water.

We call for the creation of an international monitoring body to track the trade of Water in relation to Indigenous peoples.

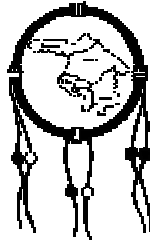
We resolve to use and develop indigenous, domestic and international mechanisms to hold corporations, domestic governments and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund accountable for their actions that threaten the integrity of Water, our land and our peoples. Systems of restoration and compensation have to be put in place to restore the integrity of water and eco-systems.

We seek support and solidarity for the opposition to any free trade agreements that purport to privatize Water and trade Water as a commodity, including the North American Free Trade Agreement and the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas.

We endorse declarations and treaties that enshrine the goals stated above such as the Cochabamba Declaration and the Treaty Initiative of the Council of Canadians representing genuine efforts by concerned citizens, communities and grass-roots peoples to protect water.

On this 8th day of July, 2001, the international community and indigenous peoples assembled at the International Conference on Water for People and Nature organized by the Council of Canadians, endorsed the Indigenous Declaration on Water.

The Preparatory Workshop on Free Trade with Indigenous Property and the Workshop on Indigenous Peoples and Water at the Water for People and Nature Conference were organized by:



INTERIOR ALLIANCE
Southern Carrier
St'at'imc Secwepemc
Nlaka'pamux Okanagan