

# *Climate Change and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

## *OHCHR Expert Group Meeting*

### *October 6 - 7, 2016, Geneva*



# Food and Well-Being are Human Rights



**“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself & of his family...including food”**

**-- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights***  
***December 10, 1948***



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# The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.”



-- Article 20



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# **Environmental Protection and Productive Capacity of Lands**

**Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources...**

**-- Article 29, para. 1**



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# Traditional Knowledge: Article 31



1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora...



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# How is Climate Change impacting our Rights and Ways of Life?



***“Climate change constitutes the single most important threat to food security in the future”*** UN Rapporteur on the Right to Food Olivier de Schutter 2009 report to the UN Human Rights Council



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# Extreme Weather Events

Moore Oklahoma, May 2013



The central part of the US is the only place on Earth that lies directly in between an Arctic land mass and a tropical ocean



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# Vital Food Plants & Animals Threatened

Once, more than a million spring-run Chinook lived in the waters of the Central Valley in California. In 2010 there were less than 10,000, a decline of 99%. Researchers at UC Davis predicted the effect of climate change on the Chinook salmon, and even in the most hopeful scenarios, the spring run Chinook failed to survive until 2099.



# Forests are Dying and Burning



Montana



California



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# Arctic Ice is Melting and Sea Levels are Rising



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Alaska

**Changing weather patterns include dramatic decreases in summer rainfall. Growing capacity of corn is decreasing dramatically in many regions of Mexico and the US**



# Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Knowledge- and Rights-Based Responses



***Tule marshes absorb more than ten times more carbon than a pine forest***

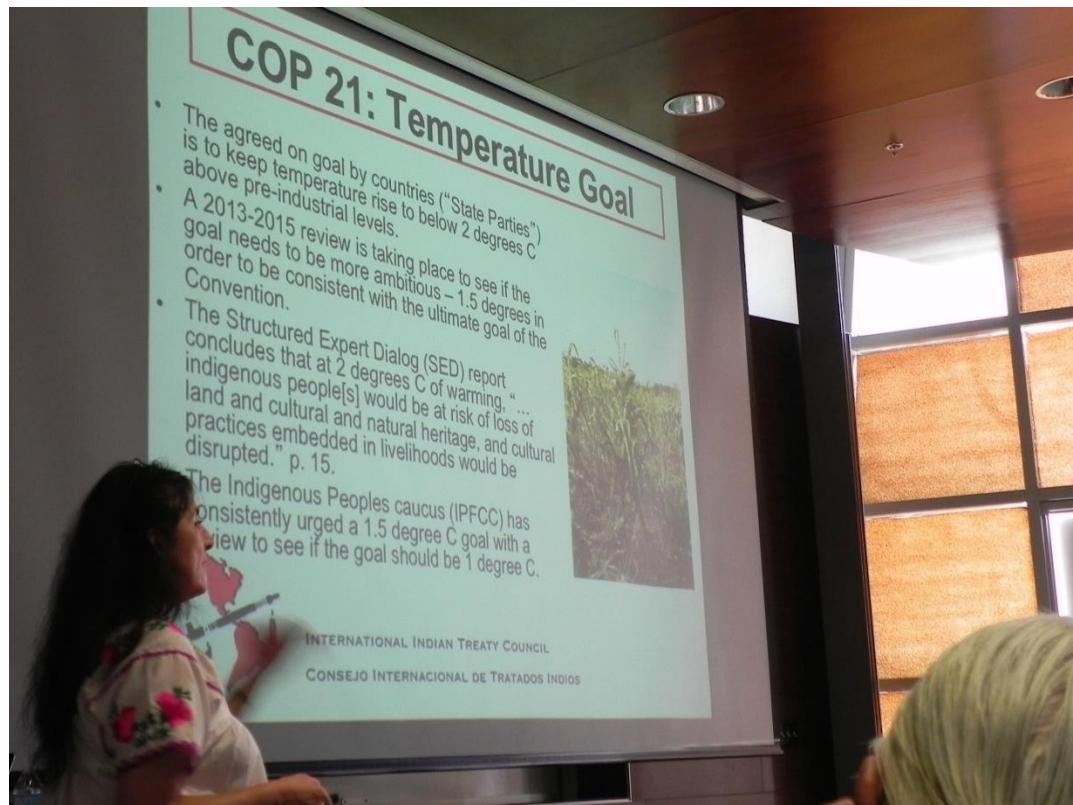
-- Dr. William Carmen (Yaqui) Wildlife Biologist

# Tribal and First Nations Coming Together to Share Information and Develop Survival Plans



**Grand Chief Tony Alexis, Treaty 6 First Nations, Alberta Canada, speaks at the NCAI Consultation on Climate Change, San Diego California, October 17, 2015**

# Shiprock New Mexico, Southwest Consultation, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015



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# North America Indigenous Peoples Climate Change Questionnaire, 213 responses representing 318,000 individuals, July – Nov. 2015



**Video interview with Duane Chili Yazzie of the Diné/Navajo Nation presented at the Indigenous Peoples Pavillion, COP 21**



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- *94% of respondents affirmed that Climate Change was very important or important to their community/Peoples/Tribe/ Nation.*
- *98% of respondents have seen impacts of Climate Change on their environment, weather, food systems and/or land base.*
- *96% affirmed that their own Peoples' Traditional Knowledge and practices can be useful in addressing or responding to the impacts of climate change.*



**Indigenous  
Peoples  
collective  
actions at  
COP 21, Paris  
November 30  
– December  
12, 2015**

# The Paris Agreement recognizes Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Knowledge & Practices

The Paris Agreement, in “Non-Party Stakeholders”, paragraph 136, *“Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and **indigenous peoples** related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.”*



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# **Seed Sharing and Trading, 2<sup>nd</sup> International Indigenous Peoples Corn Conference, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, September, 2014**



# Elders Teaching Survival Skills



Ya Ne Dah Ah Tribal School, Chickaloon Village, Alaska



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# Buffalo's role in Preventing, Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

- Buffalo are resistant to a wide range of climate conditions
- Support resiliency of Native grasslands which prevent soil erosion, hold ground moisture
- Local food sources have lower “carbon footprint”,
- Will be key to food sovereignty and health for Tribal Nations’ survival in the future



100,000 cattle died in an early October, 2015 blizzard in South Dakota. ***Not a single buffalo death was reported.***



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**Oil Palm Plantation in  
Sumatra caused relocation**



**Dakota Access Pipeline  
protests, USA**

**Real climate change solutions will protect human rights, respect Indigenous Peoples' lands and ways of life, uphold FPIC and take significant and immediate action for a just transition away from fossil fuels**

**“Coal is the Liver  
of Mother Earth.  
It has to stay in  
the ground so she  
can be healthy.”**

-- Dine elder

**Roberta  
Blackgoat**



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# Cheoque Utesia, Thank you

