



TRIBAL PRIORITIES FOR SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America.



Photo Credit: Protectors of the Salish Sea

EXPAND INSTITUTIONS ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE SCIENCE

Institutions include the policies, formal agreements, customs, and governing bodies that guide the interactions between people and the natural world. Strengthening and expanding the rights of Indigenous Peoples in climate governance and climate science will mitigate carbon emissions and climate impacts on Tribes. International climate governance institutions, such as the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), impact Indigenous Peoples. The 2016 Paris Agreement is a landmark international framework for controlling rising temperatures and mitigating climate effects. Tribes are vulnerable to climate impacts on culture and livelihoods. By rejoining the Paris Agreement, the U.S. has an opportunity to reengage with international climate leadership and strengthen climate governance.

Effective action to manage climate change requires expanding international and national institutions. Internationally, black carbon degrades Arctic snow and ice and harms high latitude Indigenous lifeways. Upholding international agreements to manage black carbon and ensuring Tribal representation in the Arctic Council can help to sustain the culture, livelihoods, and overall well-being of Arctic Indigenous Peoples. From a Tribal perspective, national policy needs include: food security, including marine, freshwater, and land-based traditional foods; energy security; Tribal Sovereignty; the treatment of Indigenous immigrants; and direction to the Department of Defense to coordinate with Tribes located near military installations in hazard planning. Overall, restoring U.S. leadership in climate governance requires a focus on issues other than military matters alone.

Indigenous rights, as asserted in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), should be recognized in climate governance, including the rights to: self-determination; participating in decision-making through tribally chosen representatives; and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. For instance, climate change is harming the abundance of salmon, which are central to the culture and livelihoods of many Tribes. International treaties, such as the Columbia River Treaty, affect resource access and management. Affected Tribes should be able to fully participate in related negotiations.

Indigenous rights should also be widely recognized in Western climate science. Traditional Knowledge often is not valued for its capacity to assess climate impacts and enable Tribes to self-determine appropriate solutions. Inadequate funding for participation of Indigenous experts in scientific, policy, and decision-making arenas compounds the problem.

Climate change affects resources that are critical to Tribal livelihoods, culture, and community well-being. Managing climate impacts and achieving carbon neutrality requires expanding governance and science institutions. In particular, wider recognition is needed regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples as essential elements of climate governance and climate science. Congress has an opportunity to restore leadership internationally and domestically by expanding institutions that promote Tribal participation in climate decisions at international, national, regional, and local scales.

TRIBAL PRIORITIES THAT CONGRESS SHOULD CONSIDER:

>> Climate governance and rights of Indigenous Peoples

- **Ensure that all U.S. and international climate actions comply with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***, including these rights: self-determination; their lands, territories and resources; development in accordance with their own needs and interests; and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.
- **Reengage international leadership by rejoining the *Paris Agreement*** of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- **Include Tribal representatives in U.S. delegations** to international negotiations, such as UNFCCC meetings, and governing bodies, such as the Arctic Council.
- **Ensure Tribal representation in cross-border negotiations** affecting Tribes, for instance, negotiations about the Columbia River Treaty.
- **Reduce black carbon pollution in Arctic areas** through strengthened regulations and oversight by the State Department and Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Empower women and girls** to generate climate solutions through capacity-building programs and direction for full participation in international climate negotiations.
- **Direct the Department of Defense to develop administrative rules to coordinate with Tribes** located near military installations to develop climate resilience plans. Provide related financial and technical resources.
- **Expand national security institutions** to include food security (including marine resources), energy security, and human rights of Indigenous people at the southern border.



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TRIBAL PRIORITIES THAT CONGRESS SHOULD CONSIDER (Cont'd.):

>> Climate science and rights of Indigenous Peoples

- Tribal Climate Change Principles: Responding to Federal Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change) into climate policies and programs. Its principles fall into four themes: Strengthen Tribal Sovereignty in the Climate Change Era; Support Tribes Facing Immediate Threats from Climate Change; Ensure Tribal Access to Climate Resources; and Traditional Knowledges and Climate Change.
- Direct federal land management and science agencies to adopt an expanded definition of scientific knowledge that includes Indigenous and Traditional Knowledges (ITK), while adhering to the principle of [Free, Prior, and Informed Consent](#). Incorporate ITK in agencies' database development, analyses, and management plans.
- Provide resources for Indigenous students to prepare for climate science careers through study and training in colleges and universities. Holistically define climate science training: include support for study about culture and history, field-based experience, and interaction with elders.
- Data resources: Direct federal science agencies to provide Tribal Nations with detailed, high resolution climate projection information appropriate to expanding knowledge about climate impacts on their lands.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[ATNI Tribal Review of the Congressional Action Plan](#)