

Declaration of the Sacred Tus Us (Burney Falls), April 28th, 2013

We have gathered April 26-28th, 2013, at Tus Us (Burney Falls in Northern California), a sacred place of the Iss/Pit River People, to reaffirm and rejuvenate our commitments to revitalize, protect and defend all that defines us and gives us life as Indigenous Peoples. We have shared information about threats to our sacred Indigenous territories, lands, waters, ceremonial places, rights and ways of life, and discussed strategies and solutions to move us forward.

We have agreed to the following:

1. Wherever Indigenous Peoples have put their feet on the ground is sacred. All that has been given to us by the Creator is sacred. Land, air, water, and sun are the sacred sources of life and the basis for the natural LAWS for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and all our relatives of the natural world. Our traditional foods and the birthing and spawning places of the future generations for all forms of life are also sacred places, the sources of new life for future generations. The sacred relationships we hold among us and with Mother Earth and all life are reaffirmed through our ceremonies, songs, dances, creation histories and clan relations. These are the teachings that link our ancestors with our future generations in an unbroken flow since time immemorial. We have listened throughout this gathering to the voices in the Tus Us which confirm and commit us to this sacred responsibility.
2. As the human Nations we recognize our unwavering responsibility to the sacred places and lifeways that sustain our spiritual identity. We affirm this commitment as expressed in Article 25 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as follows: *"Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard."*
3. We have heard with outrage and profound sadness examples shared by our brothers and sisters at this gathering about the ongoing desecration of these sacred places including our lands, waters, ancestors' resting places, and ceremonial grounds. We recognize that current US laws do not respect or protect these places. We demand that these places be respected, protected and used only in accordance with our traditions, protocols, teachings, cultures and spirituality. We also recognize that our rights have been affirmed in this regard in national and international laws and human rights standards, including in Nation-to-Nation Treaties, Indigenous Nations laws, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Tribal resolutions, including the Pit River Nation resolution adopted on February 15, 2013.
4. We recognize the urgent need to address the crises facing Indigenous Peoples in many regions of the world regarding their sacred places, cultural practices and spirituality, including threats to and destruction of their sacred places and structures, ceremonial areas, objects, ancestral remains, birthing places, food and medicinal gathering areas and sacred items. In this regard we endorse and support the following strategies which have been presented during this gathering.

5. We call on the United Nations, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the UN Human Rights Committee, Special Rapporteurs, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other international processes and mechanisms to implement and enforce the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We support the work of the Advocates for the Protection of Sacred Sites, Indigenous Environmental Network, International Indian Treaty Council, Pit River Nation, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development, The Morning Star Institute, Wahoga Alliance, Western Shoshone Defense Project, Wetlands Protection Organization—Wakarusa Haskell Wetlands and others, to carry our concerns, defend our rights and sacred areas and include the voices of our traditional and grassroots Peoples in these and other international processes.
6. We call on the United States and its subsidiary governments (state, county and municipal), transnational corporations and other non-Indigenous entities to respect our human rights in this regard. We call for the full and effective implementation and enforcement of their legally binding human rights obligations under human rights conventions to which the US is a State party including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly Articles 11, 12, 25, 26 and 37 in their legislation, policies, guidelines and operating practices for the protection of sacred places, cultural heritage, sacred lands, ceremonies and observances.
7. We affirm the courageous actions of Indigenous Peoples to protect San Francisco Peaks in Northern Arizona, USA. We support the continued efforts of the impacted Tribal Nations and the IITC to address these concerns at CERD. We express our appreciation to the CERD for taking a firm stand on this issue, as well as the situation of the Western Shoshone, and we commit to continue to support the work of these and other Indigenous Peoples in this regard.
8. We support the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma in their efforts for the protection of their historic, ceremonial and burial grounds known as Oce Vpofa Hickory Ground (Wetumpka, Alabama) and will assist them to address this issue at UN bodies upon their request.
9. We note in particular the increasing threats of hydraulic fracturing, geothermal development and the wide-ranging destructive impacts on Indigenous sacred places, including Sah Tit Lah/Medicine Lake Highlands near Mount Shasta in Northern California. Sah Tit Lah is essential to the cultural practice and identity of the Pit River, Modoc, Wintu, Shasta and other Indigenous Nations of the region. We continue to stand firm with the Indigenous Peoples of this region to oppose any destruction, desecration or disturbance of this sacred area and other areas of potential effect.
10. We recognize and fully support the ongoing struggle of the Western Shoshone to protect their sacred lands and prayer areas recognized by the Treaty of Ruby Valley from multiple forms of desecration and degradation including mining, deforestation, military activities, water theft and contamination and proposed nuclear waste storage. We stand in support of and honor the longstanding work of the traditional Western Shoshone, in particular Carrie and the late Mary Dann as human rights defenders and true heroes of all Indigenous Peoples.

11. We support Indigenous Peoples in exploring other avenues of advocacy such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with particular regard to sacred places, traditional knowledge, cultural rights and spirituality. These include the implementation in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples of UNESCO Conventions such as the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the World Heritage Convention, the Convention for the Preservation of Underwater Cultural Heritage and many other conventions and standard setting instruments. We call for recognition of Indigenous Peoples' nominations for World Heritage sites and for placement on these conventions. Any proposed UNSECO policy regarding Indigenous Peoples shall be developed in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

12. We will continue to work to promote the protection of sacred medicines and medicinal and cultural plant gathering areas, particularly from pesticides, Genetically Modified Organisms, logging and other environmental contaminates, as well as respect for and protection of Indigenous sacred medicines and healing practices. We strongly support the rights of Indigenous Peoples to own, control and freely access these places and gather their medicines, foods and other cultural materials without interference.

We will continue to stand firm together in our commitment to support each other and to defend our sacred places and ways of life. We will remain true to who we are and to our sacred instructions. In this way we will be like a mighty river that rises and falls, but flows forever.

Adopted by Consensus, April 28th 2013, Sacred Tus Us (Burney Falls)

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~~and Mustafa~~ ISS AWT
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Carson Bill, Defender of Western Shoshone Rights

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