



Pel' son' mehl Ney-puy
("Big Doings with the Salmon")
Indigenous Peoples' International Gathering to Honor, Protect
and Defend the Salmon,
June 21st, 22nd and 23rd, 2013
Hehl-keek 'We-Roy (*Klamath River*), Yurok Nation Territory,
Northern California

We are Salmon Peoples. Our traditional homelands and waterways, where we have lived and fished since time immemorial, are in what is now known as Northern California and the Pacific Northwest (US), British Columbia (Canada), Alaska and the Islands of the Pacific.

The cycles of our lives and the countless generations of our Peoples are merged with the life cycles of the Salmon. Salmon is our traditional food but also defines who we are. Our spiritual and cultural existence and the survival of our future generations are based on the survival of the salmon and the exercise of our sacred responsibilities to protect the rivers, oceans, watersheds and eco-systems where they live. The health of the Salmon is one with the spiritual, cultural, and physical health of our Peoples.

We declare that birthing places of all life are sacred places, including the rivers and streams where the Salmon spawn and the oceans where they live. We recognize and honor the leadership and vision of those in the distant and recent past that stood up, faced violence and prison, and risked their lives in historic struggles to protect the Salmon and assert our rights and sacred responsibilities in this regard. These brave warriors achieved historic gains in the recognition of our inherent and Treaty rights to use and protect the Salmon. We also recognize that in many places, such struggles are still underway or are in need of revitalization.

We assert our Human Right to Food and Food Sovereignty that encompasses our cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental and political well-being. We recognize that the rights which support and ensure our Food Sovereignty are inherent and affirmed in Treaties and international standards including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We affirm that "the denial of the Right to Food is a denial of our collective indigenous existence".

We recognize the need for the healing of the inter-generational wounds and trauma that still exist in our communities as a result of the repression we have suffered defending our rights, as well as the impacts of colonization which also undermined our Food Sovereignty and divided our Peoples. We are committed to the restoration of our families, communities, Nations, ecosystems, cultures and food systems which are inter-related and interdependent.

In sharing our experiences at this gathering, we have identified a number of threats to the survival of the Salmon as well as to the lifeways of our 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 and gold mining, “fracking”, logging and deforestation, industrial fish farming and large-scale commercial harvesting of salmon, expansion of industrial agricultural and urban sprawl, sewage and waste dumping, nuclear and radioactive contamination of air, land and water, genetic modification and the devastating impacts of climate change. We also have identified the urgent need to continue transmitting the traditional knowledge passed down to us by our ancestors related to Salmon fishing and preparation, including canoe and basket making and other essential skills, to our youth and new generations.

We recognize the essential importance of continuing to come together to share our struggles as well as our ideas and solutions with other Indigenous Salmon Peoples. We recognize and commit to support each other’s work to protect and restore the Salmon and the waterways where they live. These include:

- Salmon Stream/River restoration including removal of existing dams and halting new dam construction;
- Assertion of Tribal Nation Rights and Treaty Rights and Responsibilities to manage, control, defend and protect the Salmon runs;
- Cleanup of current contamination including mercury from past gold mining, and current mining;
- Halting extractive industries, especially fossil fuel extraction and production (coal, tar sands, oil etc.) that causes and contributes to climate change and habitat contamination;
- Continue to impose large scale commercial fish farming and all genetic modification of Salmon and other Indigenous traditional food sources;
- Halting and preventing river and watershed contamination, depletion, diversion and all non-sustainable water use that impacts Salmon;
- Sharing information and providing education about the importance of Salmon to the survival of our Peoples with other Indigenous Peoples and the outside world;
- Teaching our children and future generations their origin stories and traditional relationships, building their respect and passion to protect all that makes us who we are;
- Continuing to organize and provide educational and information-sharing opportunities through workshops, trainings, networking and alliance-building among Indigenous Salmon Peoples and Nations;
- Practicing and passing on our languages, songs, stories, clan relationships, ceremonies and food related knowledge and practices to our children, youth and future generations;
- Ensuring that decisions affecting our traditional fish and fisheries are made with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, respecting and upholding our right to Free Prior and Informed Consent;
- Asserting our inherent rights, including cultural rights to protect and defend Salmon and other traditionally used food and medical plants and animals for future generations and ensuring that





these rights are fully recognized, upheld and implemented at the local, state/provincial, national and international levels.

We give our heartfelt Wok-hlew' (thank you), to the Yurok Indian Nation for allowing us to meet on their homelands on the shores of the beautiful Hehl-keek 'We-Roy (Klamath River) and Tewolew (Pacific Ocean). We express appreciation to the International Indian Treaty Council, Indigenous Youth Foundation, Yurok Wellness Court, Advocates for the Protection of Sacred Sites and the Pit River Tribe for sponsoring this important gathering. We also thank the Christensen Foundation, First Peoples Worldwide Keepers of the Earth, Yurok Language Department, Yurok Tribe, Northern California Indian Development Center, traditional Yurok Nation fishers and the many individuals whose contributions and work made this gathering possible.

We will continue to keep our hearts, minds and commitments strong. We have shared the threats, but also the spiritual connections and some of the solutions and ideas for future work to ensure our collective survival. The changes that are needed to protect the Salmon and our Indigenous ways of life begin with us.

*Adopted by Consensus, June 23rd 2013, Yurok Nation Traditional Territory,
Northern California*

