



Keepers of the Water II

- ELDERS' RESOLUTION -

RESOLUTION ON WATER TO LEADERSHIP · SEPTEMBER 27, 2007 · FORT ST. JOHN, BC

As stewards, we the Elders at the Keepers of the Water II: Keeping the Peace conference, recognize and affirm the resolutions from the Elders at Thebacha (August 20, 2007; see Appendices 2-4). We acknowledge that the United Nations (2003) has recognized that water is sacred and there is a human right to safe drinking water. We are convinced that our Leadership has heard our words in the past, that we are saying again that water is important, and that our resolutions are to be taken seriously. We are going to the people to carry our message about the water, about our rights to clean and safe water.

In some places in our traditional lands, we see animals and fish that are sick. We see this, we report this and the government does not listen to us. The Pine Beetles are killing our forests and there are problems from that (more wind, water runs out without growing forests).

In our communities, there is hardship. When our younger people are not taught our traditions, we are becoming dependent and becoming spoiled, we are no longer disciplined in our lives. Money is taking over our lives, changing our values and undermining our values toward one another.

Chemical water treatment is not the answer. Safe and secure drinking water is an essential human right, and we have the right to ensure treatment measures are natural and meet First Nations standards for being healthy. All water is sacred and has a spirit. We as First Nations know that we share that with all of life and we know how to respect and care for this spirit.

Together we are strong. Chiefs should be chosen with care and work with us as Elders. We stress that our leadership must lead by example. Accountability is to our peoples; to our traditional lands and waters.

Talk to youth about what is going on today, what we see here today. We as elders know that our children and grandchildren are interested and we must talk to them now as we know it is the way we learned as children. We know as Elders that we set examples for our youth, that we must guide our Chiefs to be effective and caring leaders. We need our youth to learn and be well educated in our traditions and in many things for the future to ensure our inherent rights as nations.



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First Nations must ensure effective discussions with the governments for the respectful implementation of Treaties, in protection of water. All Provincial governments (Ministers) must be made aware of inherent Treaty and Aboriginal rights. Water was never negotiable. We never gave up those things that we are as a people, including our lands and waters. We will never forget this nor will we abrogate these rights. The Honour of the Crown must be upheld when it comes to water.

Working in unity, we hereby inform our First Nations leadership of Treaty 8 and other treaties working together as Indigenous peoples that we are working for the collective good on water.

We commit here today to go back to our communities and start the process to work on protecting our water as an Elders group, to put this process into action including at our communities. We will commit to ensure BCRs and Tribal Council resolutions are put in place. That these actions will be brought into operations by the Dene Tha Keepers Gathering in 2008.

This resolution was drafted by the Elders on September 27, 2007 in Fort St. John, as gathered at the Keepers of the Water II, accepted by the Elders gathered at the Bear Flats (September 28, 2007) and read to the Conference of the Whole (September 29, 2007).



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MEETING NOTES

- Aboriginal lands and title need to be enforced
- enclosure of Aboriginal lands have to stop.
- relationship of Aboriginal peoples to government is by working together, all of Treaty 8, 33 Nations, Treaty 11 is about 14 Nations.
- draft two resolutions today, we present them to the conference tomorrow, direction to Chiefs and leadership, in a year we will meet in August in Dene Tha country, last leg of the Keepers, all our work is being done this winter, to send something to the United Nations (First Nations).
- Meeting in New York, why was Canada's position like that? Because Canada read the clause about all Indigenous Peoples are entitled to lands to survive on, not governments say, our lands, if we lived only on reserve you wouldn't have enough land, you go out on the traditional lands and Canada would then have to guarantee that, and this government in Canada went against it now (they drafted it for four years, past Canadian governments).
- Elders participation at meetings, how far did that go? For Treaty 8 meetings one goes, but meeting with Ministers there should always be an Elder there. How things are now, concerns are brought up in what is going on in different organizations (social and health issues), concerns are represented as OK, but what comes back to the grassroots? Where is Treaty 8 coming into our communities with services? On-going discussions but what is being done? Medical/health care, education.... Meetings go on and resolutions go on the shelf and collect dust.
- Recently, Chiefs' meeting in Kelowna? We are coming to ATC consultations with AB govt. because of development. The AB govt. wants to consult but they don't know anything about Treaty rights (they play dumb), 5 Chiefs and IRCs in Kelowna about consultation, we are not done, at a stage when AB Justice is willing to make changes, it is written and we are making changes. Chiefs are thinking about funding for another year.
- We signed no Treaty, and we are paying no taxes, it is our land.
- Education with the general public about Aboriginal and Treaty rights to correct misunderstanding and lies. Live by the Treaties
- Thebacha resolutions, there is a preamble as well

PARTICIPANTS

Chief Rolland Willson, Councilor Clarence Willson, Elders Pat Marcel, Charlie Voyageur, Alec Bruno, Shane Adam, Lionel Lepine, Therese Tuccaro, Fort McKay Celina Harpe, Harriet Janvier, Jack Askoty, Violet Clarke, Betty Willson, Patricia Chaingee, Jesse Stanyer, Howard D Cardinal, Cathy Dokkie, Julie Dallaire, Keith Cooper, Max Desjarlais, Tommy Attachie, Rosie Field, Margaret Attachie, Art Napoleon, Chris Paci.