Declaration of Kinship and Cooperation among the Indigenous Peoples and Nations of North America through the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians.

We, the people knowing that the Creator places us here on Mother Earth as sovereign nations and seeking to live in peace, freedom, and prosperity with all humanity in accordance with our own traditional laws are united in our sacred relationship with the land, air, water, and resources of our ancestral territories. We are bound by common origin and history, aspiration, and experience, and we are brothers and sisters, leaders, and warriors of our nations.

We, the Assembly of First Nations, and the National Congress of American Indians meeting in joint assembly as the largest convocation of indigenous leadership in North America in the 20th century, make the following declaration.

From time immemorial, the lands that are known as Canada and the United States of America have been and continue to be the sacred home of Indigenous Peoples and Nations.

While our Indigenous Peoples and Nations have distinct identities, cultures, languages, and traditions, we have also been guided by many common purposes and beliefs, which have been shaped by many common experiences.

We have all retained the inherent rights to self-determination. In shaping our own identities, we will remain faithful to the time-honored traditions of our ancestors, and we will work to secure the greatest possible freedom, dignity, and prosperity for our descendants.

We have all known ourselves as people who live in harmony with our environment and cherish and protect our traditional homelands.

We have all experienced outside encroachment upon our traditional homelands, and we have striven to coexist with other peoples and cultures in peace.

Others' bands have drawn boundaries between the Canda and the United States. These arbitrary lines have not severed, and never will, the ties of kinship among our peoples.

We are hereby resolved to affirm and to strengthen those bonds of mutual respect, cooperation, and affection.

As friends and allies, we Indigenous Peoples and Nations will go forward with greater strength and wisdom as we interact with other governments in our region, our hemisphere, and our world.

Here in the sacred lands of the Coast Salith Peoples, the summer of 1999, the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians meet in joint assembly. In spirit, it has been not a first encounter, but a reunion. We affirm that the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians each drive their authority from their constituent nations and shall continue to represent them in a constitutional and democratic manner. We authorize our national organizations, to inform, assist and support each other in the areas of common concern, including;

> Achieving the full recognition, protection, and implementation of the existing legal and political rights of our constituent nations, including those founded in our own national laws, the laws of Canada and the United States, and the laws of the wider international community;
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> Ensuring that as laws and institutions further develop in various domestic and international forums and councils, the voices of our nations are included and respected;
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> Prioritizing the practice and preservation of our spiritual and cultural expressions;

Supporting the education of our citizens in our lifeways and in the common knowledge of human-kind;

Raising our children in the living traditions of our peoples and protecting their primal connections with their families, communities, and natives;

Advancing the economic and social well being of the citizens of all our nations, whether or not they are living within their traditional homelands, while preserving out traditions of sharing and social justice;

Protecting and promoting the right of our citizens to move freely across the border of Canda and the United States while retaining full recognition of their stats as members of indigenous nations;

Our national organization are authorized and encouraged to identify from time-to-time specific matters on which to focus their collective efforts toward this declaration. The means of cooperation shall involve contacts between the national organizations of various lands, including leaders, officials, or staff.

Each of our national organizations has the authority to establish and receive diplomatic revisions to foster further understanding and cooperation. Our national organizations may choose to enter into specific or general agreements in accordance with our respective constitutions. The national organizations may also seek to strengthen the relationships among our people by facilitating exchanges among the representation of our collective peoples, groups and associates, and individual cultures.

We are resolved at this the first ever joint assembly of our national organizations that we shall commence again on many occasions and that the spirit of understanding and fellowship among our people that we have experienced shall grow ever stronger as we take our full and rightful place in the community of all nations.

Let it be resolved that member nations from the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians, having met in joint assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, affirm the forgoing in honor of our ancestors and for the sake of future generations, at a declaration of international Indigenous understanding among our nations and organizations.

Certifications

On behalf of the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians in solidarity mutual respect and friendship we the undersigned attest that this declaration represents the collective interests of those convened in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada on Friday July 23, 1999.