

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

2006 ANNUAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION 06-20

TITLE: CLIMATE CHANGE IN ALASKA

WHEREAS: Alaska Natives have developed unique cultures that evolved over thousands of years, molded, in part, by environment and climate, and climate change is likely to have significant impacts on the availability of subsistence foods such as salmon, whales, seals, caribou, berries, plants, and waterfowl that present serious challenges to subsistence ways of life in Alaska and other regions; and

WHEREAS: As stated in the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, there is international scientific consensus that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere have a profound warming effect on the Earth's climate. The 2001 Third Assessment Report from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the 2000 U. S. Global Change Research Program's (USGCRP) First National Assessment, and Snowchange 2005 (an international indigenous meeting on climate change) indicate that climate change has begun; and

WHEREAS: Over the past 40 years, annual temperatures in Alaska have increased 4 degrees F and over the next 100 years, under a moderate emissions scenario, the annual average temperatures are projected to rise 5-9 degrees F over land and up to 13 degrees F over the oceans; and

WHEREAS: Warming permafrost throughout most of Alaska is undermining Alaska's roads and utility infrastructure, pipelines and buildings, affecting the availability of groundwater and surface water, and contributing to increased erosion along coasts and rivers; and

WHEREAS: Unpredictable weather, snow, and ice conditions make travel and traditional hunting and fishing practices more hazardous, thus endangering our lives; and

WHEREAS: Climate change is impacting entire ecosystems and is threatening many species of Alaska wildlife by changing habitat, insect populations, snow and ice cover, unpredictable weather, changes in precipitation and water levels in rivers and lakes, and increased air and water temperatures that are creating diseases in plants, wildlife and fish; and

WHEREAS: The increase in air and sea temperatures will result in a significant rise in sea level caused by melting ice that will adversely effect Alaskan communities and ecosystems by exposure to more intensified storm driven waves; and

WHEREAS: Climate-related changes to the weather, food sources, and local landscapes undermine the social identity and cultural survival of Alaska Natives and create new challenges for community health and rural infrastructure; rural economies that will be affected, including commercial fisheries, oil and gas development, tourism, and timber harvesting, as well the challenges of covering the enormous cost of relocating flooded villages; and

WHEREAS: Actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency provide local benefits by decreasing air pollution, creating jobs, reducing energy use, saving money, and preventing melting permafrost from eroding away homes, shorelines and entire villages; and

WHEREAS: The International Polar Year (IPY) will commence in 2007 and end in 2008, during which scientists and institutions across the Arctic will focus on global climate change research in the Arctic, with an emphasis on local monitoring.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Delegates to the 2006 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives that the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., and all of our Alaska Native leadership consider the following courses of action:

1. Urge the Alaska Congressional delegation, the United States Congress and the President of the United States to move forward on a national, mandatory program to reduce climate change pollution and promote the development and adoption of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies within a timeframe that prevents irreversible harm to public health, the economy and the environment.
2. Urge the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor of Alaska to promote, through legislation and regulations, the development and adoption of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies within a timeframe that prevents irreversible harm to public health, the economy and the environment.
3. Support active involvement and participation of Alaska Native communities and organizations in scientific research, monitoring, planning, and policy-making related to climate change projects and initiatives in Alaska, and notifying all appropriate domestic and international agencies and institutions of this position.
4. Support the creation of forums for Alaska Native communities and organizations to deliberate on and plan for climate change impacts in their areas.
5. Urge the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. to consider establishing a Climate Change Committee within AFN's Board structure to deal with questions of climate change policy and other appropriate issues.
6. Develop a comprehensive strategic plan to assist Alaska Native communities and organizations assess and plan for climate change impacts to cultures, economies, community well-being, human health, fish, wildlife, habitat, and environment.

SUBMITTED BY: ALASKA NATIVE SCIENCE COMMISSION & INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL, AKIAK NATIVE COMMUNITY, CHITINA NATIVE CORPORATION, KAWERAK, INC., SHAKTOOLIK NATIVE CORPORATION, BRISTOL BAY NATIVE ASSOCIATION, ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

CONVENTION ACTION: AMENDED AND PASSED

