

2nd International Indigenous Peoples Corn Conference
VCE OHFVNKV EN HEROMKV (*“Corn is a Gift from the Creator”*)

The Okmulgee Declaration
September 9th, 2014

We are Indigenous Peoples, elders, youth, farmers, human rights and food sovereignty activists, traditional knowledge holders and community members from North America, Central and South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. We gathered at the 2nd International Indigenous Peoples Corn Conference in Okmulgee Oklahoma, Muscogee Creek Nation on September 8th and 9th 2014, co-coordinated by the International Indian Treaty Council and the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative.

We begin by giving thanks to the Muscogee Creek Nation for welcoming us to this beautiful land.

We give thanks with one voice to the Creator who gave us sacred Corn to use, to eat, to pray with and to sustain our lives. The Corn feeds our bodies and our spirits. It ties us to who we are and to our Mother the Earth. To talk about Corn is to include all plant and animal life, water and land, the sun, moon and stars, and all aspects and stages our lives as human beings.

Our sacredness as human beings and as Peoples is based on our relationship with Mother Earth, the seed goddess, and the abundant gifts from the Creator, which are the sources of life, healing and knowledge. As Corn Peoples, we have a profound unbreakable relationship with the sacred corn mother/father and its four sacred colors. We understand that our sacred foods work together with our songs, stories and ceremonies that honor and give thanks for the corn, beans, squash, herbal medicines and the animals that sustain our lives. The life-giving seeds and pollen of the Corn, of all plant and animal life and of human beings are inter-linked and interconnected.

Our Food Sovereignty is based on our right to self-determination as Indigenous Peoples. If we are not able to feed our own Peoples we cannot live as truly sovereign Peoples. We recognize that as part of the process of the colonization we have experienced, our traditional foods, seeds, ways of life and food systems were deliberately undermined.

Our cultures are alive. Our ancestral calendars, prophecies and the instructions our elders and ancestors provide the knowledge of how to use our traditional foods, how the corn came to us and what it means in our lives. We have to come back to the source of that knowledge and live it on a daily basis to keep it strong.

We know that many of our Peoples are facing the loss of our traditional foods. The reality we have to face is that, in addition to the threats coming from outside, many of our Peoples do not remember how, or don't have the time to grow and prepare their original foods. This has brought many new physical, mental and emotional sicknesses to our peoples. These include diabetes, cancer and also spiritual sicknesses that cause despair resulting from being disconnected to our traditional sources of identity,

life and strength. Our original Corn seeds and pollen, and the spirit they carry, will heal us if we take the time to restore them in our lives. We still have this knowledge and capacity within our Peoples and they are needed more now than ever.

We recognize both our Peoples and our traditional Corn are experiencing threats from industrial contaminants, fracking, mining, nuclear contamination, pesticides, climate change, and toxic waste incineration and dumping as well as the erosion of our original education and teaching systems, and our languages which allow the transmission of our knowledge to new generations.

We affirm our commitment to continue our Peoples' millennial knowledge, traditional sciences, technologies and practices that care for the corn, seeds, land and water and ensure our survival. We know that our native seeds are better, healthier, stronger and more resistant to insects and climate changes than the genetically modified corn. To grow and thrive they don't need toxic chemicals which poison our air, land, water, and bodies. When we use genetically modified or chemically contaminated corn for our ceremonies, what are we doing? What is the effect on us and on the spirit of the corn? How can we understand those impacts to our traditional and sacred relationships?

We recognize, assert and affirm our inherent rights to maintain the productive capacity of our lands and resources, including our water and food resources, and to continue our local and traditional food systems, food sovereignty and traditional livelihoods.

As Sovereign Nations we know that we have the inherent right to make our own laws to protect the land, water, air, cultural heritage and biological diversity required to maintain and restore our Food Sovereignty. We have right to enforce these laws and to require that Countries, states/provinces and corporations also respect them on the lands we have traditionally owned, occupied used or acquired. In this regard we recognize and congratulate the successful efforts of the Indigenous People of Vicente Guerrero to achieve the adoption of a law prohibiting genetically modified seeds in the State of Tlaxcala Mexico and call for this to be used as a model for legislation in other states and countries.

It is an essential priority that we commit to teach our children how to practice these ways, to speak their languages, save and plant seeds, and understand our sacred relationship to the Corn. This new world is taking our children away from this knowledge. It is our responsibility to call our children to us, to be sure that they get everything they need to know to survive and protect what the Creator has given us. This is a passion we all have to have.

We affirm that is our inherent, collective right to keep our traditional Corn and other traditional foods, seeds, water, land and air free from industrial contamination and genetic modification. We support the Declaration and Implementation of Indigenous Peoples Food Sovereignty Zones in our traditional lands and territories consistent with the rights affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Articles 3, 4, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34 and 37.

We reaffirm the Declaration of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec "La Lucha Sigue, El Maiz Vive" from the 1st International Indigenous Peoples Corn Conference in 2012 and appreciate the resolution adopted by the

Muscogee Creek Nation, the host nation for 2nd International Indigenous Peoples Corn Conference, to endorsing and adopting it.

We recognize, thank and congratulate the Mayan Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala for working successfully to repeal the law that permitted Monsanto to carry out activities in that Country on September 5th, 2014.

We affirm our support for the “Declaration of a GMO- and Pesticide-Free Zone, Diné Nation Territory, from the Indigenous Peoples “Corn is Life” Gathering September 19 – 21, 2013, and the Declaration of a Food Sovereignty Zone to protect Indigenous flora and fauna free from GMO’s, Pesticides, mega-projects and contaminating industries by the General Assembly of the Otomi Indigenous community of San Francisco Magu, Mexico in on August 31 2014.

We reaffirm the Declaration of the Traditional Authorities of Rio Yaqui Sonora Mexico of 2006 addressing the use of toxic pesticides and asserting free prior and informed consent in the Yaqui Territory and will support the Yaqui Nation, Traditional Authorities and community members to continue to advance its implementation.

We support the Declaration of Tesuque Pueblo adopted in in 2006 implementing a GMO free zone in the Pueblo territory.

We affirm the resolution adopted by the mid-year 2014 session of the National Congress of American Indians, spear-headed by Tesuque Pueblo, to protect native seeds from activities of large agro-business corporations including introduction of non- traditional seeds and other threats.

We support the Declaration of Nabusimake of 2013 by the Arhuaso Indigenous Peoples to protect all natural seeds and to call for support for Indigenous caretakers of seeds in Columbia.

We encourage and support other Indigenous Nations, Peoples, communities and organizations to adopt and implement similar Declarations in accordance with their own decision making processes.

We reiterate our call for a halt to the production and export of banned pesticides by the US and the import of such pesticides by the US, Mexico and other countries

We affirm our collective right to free prior and informed consent in accordance with the UN Declaration on the right Indigenous Peoples regarding development projects, administrative and legislative measures that might affect our rights, our lands and resources, our ways of life and our food sovereignty.

We affirm our inherent and Treaty Right to Food. We also affirm our Treaty right to establish maintain and revitalize our traditional trade routes and trade relationships across and through the colonial borders with our relatives across these borders north to South, including the transport of traditional food plants, seeds and medicines. We call upon the International Indian Treaty Council and other

Indigenous organizations, Nations and States to facilitate these rights as affirmed in article 36 and Article 37 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We call on the United Nations to implement an International year of Corn and World Bio-Cultural Heritage to follow up on the International year of Quinoa, to focus international attention on threats to Corn caused by current policies and practices, and advance solutions from the international, country and grass roots/Tribal nation levels with a focus on protecting the traditional knowledge, seeds and practices of Indigenous Peoples.

We call on Indigenous Nations, tribes and communities to develop education programs for the youth that includes food sovereignty based on traditional values, healing and Nation building rather than assimilation.

We call on all Tribal Nations, Indigenous governments and authorities to choose sustainable economic development models and endorse Tribal and Federal programs that support food sovereignty, increase access of their tribal citizens to traditional foods, support local traditional food producers and oppose programs and projects that contribute to the destruction/contamination of our land, waters and seeds and traditional foods.

We call upon the UN Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and other UN human rights mechanisms to recognize and support Indigenous Peoples and Communities collective resistance to activities that destroy and threaten food sovereignty, land, water and resources as human rights defenders, and request that the International Indian Treaty Council assist with the submission of such cases in order to protect these Peoples and communities.

It is time to stand up together and do what is right for our mother/father the Corn, for our Peoples and our future generation. If the corn survives lives and thrives, so will we as Corn Peoples, now and into the future.

We pledge to continue working together as an International Indigenous Food Sovereignty Alliance and to support the formation and strengthening of such alliances on the Tribal/community, regional National and International levels to continue sharing our knowledge, successes, seeds and strategies and working together for the well-being of our Peoples.

We resolve to continue to fulfill our commitments and responsibilities in accordance with our original instructions and cultural teachings. We commit to uphold and defend life.

Adopted by consensus, Okmulgee, Muscogee Creek Nation, and Oklahoma September 9th, 2014.

Further Adopted by Consensus of the 40th Anniversary International Indian Treaty Council Conference, Okemah Oklahoma, September 12th, 2014