

Alaska Natives voice climate-change concerns

On June 10, 2007, Alaska Native leaders shouted a call to action when they announced more than 150 climate-change resolutions to the National Congress of American Indians meeting in Anchorage. Among countless concerns, the resolutions emphasized:

- Alaska Natives have developed unique cultures that evolved over thousands of years.
- Warming permafrost... is undermining Alaska's roads, utility infrastructure... and buildings, affecting the availability of groundwater and surface water, and contributing to increased erosion along coasts and rivers
- Unpredictable weather, snow and ice conditions make travel and traditional hunting and fishing practices more hazardous and life-threatening.
- Climate change is ...already threatening many species of Alaska wildlife.
- Climate-related changes to the weather, food sources, and local landscapes undermine the social identity and cultural survival of Alaska Natives ... as well as the enormous cost of relocating flooded villages.



The gathering also asked the President and Congress to mandate a national program to reduce pollution causing climate change and “to develop renewable energy within a timeframe that prevents irreversible harm to public health, the community and the environment.”

“Tribal leaders are calling for action on climate change because Alaska's Tribes are the first to feel its catastrophic effects on traditional and customary subsistence economies and cultures,” said Heather Kendell Miller, a lawyer from the Native American Rights Fund.



Anna Davidson helped draft the resolutions because she believes global warming represents the greatest threat to Alaska Native cultures.

“I want my children to be able to subsistence hunt and fish, and to live in an Alaska that supports our traditional ways of life and our special environment,” the Yupik from the Bethel said. “Global warming is causing

massive disruptions to our communities, our peoples and our environment. Congress needs to act immediately.”

For more information, call Anna Davidson at Alaska Conservation Solutions at 907-227-7034 or e-mail upick2@aol.com; Heather Kendall-Miller at the Native American Rights Fund at 907-257-0505 or e-mail kendall@narf.org. This article originally appeared in The Delta Discovery newspaper, www.deltadiscovery.com.

Web sites

Impact of Climate Change on Alaska Native Communities

www.nativescience.org

www.nativeknowledge.org