

Rising Voices: Collaborative Science for Climate Solutions



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNFCCC 21st COP

“We include, we understand, we act.”

– *Rising Voices Youth Climate Initiative* Mission Statement

This document presents a series of recommendations for managing the impacts of our planet’s changing climate on Indigenous communities.

The recommendations are distilled from discussions among over 150 engaged Indigenous leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental experts, students, scientific professionals, and citizens from across the United States who are part of the Rising Voices community. The *Rising Voices: Collaborative Science for Climate Solutions Program*, housed at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, promotes and facilitates more culturally diverse science and approaches for adaptation solutions to high-impact weather and climate events, climate variability, and climate change.

Rising Voices is a U.S. initiative responding to recent national and international calls for meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and knowledge systems. Indigenous peoples are particularly adversely affected by climate change’s impacts to their environments and traditional, cultural, and spiritual livelihoods, practices, and beliefs. Thus, climate change challenges Indigenous self-determination and ways of life that are respected by the provisions of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and International Labour Organization Convention No. 169.

On behalf of the Rising Voices community, we are providing a list of recommendations to those gathered at the UNFCCC 21st Conference of Parties and for dissemination around the world for communities, organizations, agencies, and governments to consider as focused examples of governmental actions as they pursue and implement urgent climate adaptation.

Rising Voices Recommendations

- ***Human Rights of Safe, Viable Communities:*** In the spirit of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, **create a Forum on the “Human Rights of Safe, Viable Communities.”** The Forum will work to bring about and manage the Climate Migration Task Force and other Rising Voices recommendations. The Forum will focus on the first priority of adapting in-place, and help to determine the necessary interim measures in the process of communities’ decisions for in-place adaptation and/or relocation, if the communities themselves determine adapting in place is no longer a viable option. Given the urgency of issues faced by Indigenous communities, we strongly recommend that this be considered as a ***near-term action***.
- ***Migration: Convene a Climate Migration Task Force.*** An international Task Force on Climate Migration will address the identified need to establish a legal mechanism, institutional framework, and financial support to directly support marginalized communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who are facing displacement due to climate change impacts and who desire to migrate safely and with dignity. The Task Force will guide government-to-government relationships and frame relocation based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and for *communities*, not just individuals. It will also consider the rights and potential consequences for

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host communities. Because many Indigenous communities are urgently threatened with displacement, we strongly recommend that this be considered as a *near-term action*.

- **Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledges: Support inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, insights, and knowledges in agency-led and nationally and internationally appointed assemblies concerned with natural resources, environmental management, and policy.** The free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples should be respected when these assemblies are formed and engagement with Indigenous peoples is included, as per the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Recognize, value, and support the wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and lived experience of Indigenous relationships with the environment. Indigenous peoples have a rich knowledge of their environment that is important for filling in lack of data and for developing adaptation and sustainable strategies. Because this underlies all cross-cultural work with Indigenous communities and because several efforts already address this, we recommend this goal in the **near-term**.
- **Youth: Create a Climate Change Service Corps to enhance capacity building of youth leaders.** The capacity of our youth – who will be the ones to carry on in the face of climate change – needs to be enhanced through mentorships, scholarships, and internships with local federal agency affiliations in multiple countries. The Climate Change Service Corps will strengthen resilience amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities around the world for the *near- and long-term*.
- **Indigenous Water Network:** Water has a spiritual relationship for diverse Indigenous peoples around the world. **Establish a collaborative, international Indigenous Water Network** based on examples such as the Yukon River Intertribal Watershed Council and the Indigenous Rivers Network in the United States that will facilitate multi-government action across scales to manage water resources. Because this will entail significant intergovernmental negotiations, we recommend it be a goal in the *medium-term*.
- **Health: Create a “One Health” Initiative.** Indigenous peoples’ concept of health is broader than physical health. The term “*one health*” encompasses human and community cultural, mental, spiritual, and physical health, as well as the health of the Earth, air, lands, waters, and wildlife. A “one health” initiative will recognize these links and provide a framework for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scientists and decision-makers to take health considerations into account in all management decisions. Because this will entail significant intergovernmental negotiations, we recommend it be a goal in the *medium-term*.
- **Ecological renovation: Community-to-community exchanges.** Ecological restoration is not a relevant/viable approach; instead, we need ecological renovation, which includes populations coming together in the same “canoe” – a metaphor for our common voyage into an uncertain future. A need exists for inclusion of citizen scientists and a community voice in phenology, with place-based observations from local communities, as well as institutions and biologists’ voices. There is a need for community-to-community exchanges of knowledge and experiences, as a means to help each other plan, like a database of observations, experiences, and adaptations. Because this will entail significant relationship building, we recommend it be a goal in the *medium- to long-term*.

RISING VOICES WEBSITE: www.risingvoices.ucar.edu

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