

# INDIGENOUS PRINCIPLES OF JUST TRANSITION



INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

A Just Transition affirms the need for restoring indigenous life ways of responsibility and respect to the sacred Creation Principles and Natural Laws of Mother Earth and Father Sky, to live in peace with each other and to ensure harmony with nature, the Circle of Life, and within all Creation.

A Just Transition acknowledges that Indigenous sovereignty is not defined by non-Indigenous laws, rules and regulations; or by dominant society forms of governance, economic development, and corporate structures. The relationship between Indigenous Nations and the United States and Canada is nation-to-nation and not merely government-to-government.

A Just Transition requires a system change for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to become true caretakers of the places in which they live, including writing new laws that recognize the rights of local ecosystems to maintain their vital cycles and eliminate harmful projects. These systems of Earth-Law or Earth Jurisprudence focuses on our responsibilities to foster natural ways and preempt corporate rights, property ownership, and financial speculation.

A Just Transition acknowledges the Earth is a living female organism – our Mother. Water is her lifeblood. The Earth and Father Sky, with its air and atmosphere, are the source of life to be protected, not merely a resource to be exploited, degraded, privatized and commodified.

A Just Transition requires the need for US and Canadian governments to create policies that harmonize the duty to consult with Indigenous Nations and their peoples with the terms of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). FPIC is a basic underpinning to protect indigenous rights and interest that provides Indigenous Peoples with adequate and accessible information and whereby consensus and consent is determined in accordance with Indigenous Peoples' customary laws and practices and free from any external manipulation or coercion. This includes participation in setting the terms and conditions addressing the economic, societal, cultural, spiritual and environmental and climate impacts

A Just Transition calls for the rejection of all market-based mechanisms that allow the quantification and commodification of Earth's natural resources and processes, rebranded as 'ecosystem services', carbon trading, carbon offsets and financialization of Nature. These mechanisms have given way to the "financialization of Nature" process, which separates and quantifies the Earth's cycles and functions – such as carbon, water and biodiversity – for turning them into "units" to be sold in financial and speculative markets. Indigenous Peoples here on Turtle Island and Indigenous Peoples all over the Earth see the commodification and quantification of natural resources and processes as flawed and as false solutions

A Just Transition includes the preservation and revitalization of our Indigenous languages that comprise accumulated ecological knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and indigenous traditional knowledge of building and maintaining sustainable communities. Language is our pathway to a sustainable living future.

A Just Transition acknowledges Indigenous traditions that tell us that all economic activity must be rooted in an understanding and respect of our sacred relationships with Mother Earth and Father Sky. We have our place and our responsibilities within Creation's sacred order. The interdependence of humans and nature is primary. We recognize that there is no separation between how we treat nature and how we treat ourselves; the demand for the recognition of Indigenous rights and the Rights of Mother Earth are the one and same.

A Just Transition establishes the necessary elements of an economic system consistent with the Rights of Mother Earth to include: Immediately reducing production and consumption levels to within the natural order of Mother Earth; The full restoration of ecosystems, primarily allowing nature to heal itself; Elimination of economic systems and strategies that prioritize economic growth, and profit, and private acquisition of resources and wealth, above all other values; The elimination of substances that are toxic, persistent, and bioaccumulative; Zero waste systems for production, use, and decomposition known as cradle-to-cradle living; Recognition of sacred relationships with place, and; in all economic decisions and human activities, the wellbeing of Mother Earth and the Circle of All Life is primary.

A Just Transition recognizes our Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and assertion of self-determination to control and manage our ancestral lands, waters, and territories and all natural resources inclusive of our own laws, values, customs and traditions. Our lands and territories are at the core of our existence – we are the land and the land is us; we have a distinct spiritual and material relationship with our lands, waters and atmosphere-sky and territories and they are linked to our survival.

A Just Transition acknowledges the voices of Indigenous Peoples when they speak out for humanity to respect and take responsibility to protect the sacredness of water, air, land and the Circle of Life. Just transition recognizes the Rights of Nature or Rights of Mother Earth that seek to define equal legal rights for ecosystems to exist, flourish, and regenerate their natural capacities. Recognizing these rights places obligations on humans to live within, not above, the natural world, of which we are only one part, and to protect and replenish the ecosystems upon which our mutual well-being depends. It is necessary to transform our human relationship with nature from property-based to a legal rights-bearing entity.

A Just Transition adopts production mechanisms that use Toxic Use Reduction (TUR), Best Management Practices (BMPs), Precautionary Principles, No Harm Principles, as well as Zero Waste while moving forward a Just Transition model driven from the bottom up.

A Just Transition recognizes that Indigenous Nation authority does not just extend to the boundaries of the reservation/reserve. It extends over the respective traditional territories. This includes Treaty lands and un-ceded lands and waters taken without consent. This authority extends not only to hunting, fishing, food, plant and medicine gathering, but also to our sacred sites and protection of our watersheds and airsheds, as well as below ground.



# INDIGENOUS PRINCIPLES OF JUST TRANSITION



A Just Transition acknowledges the feasibility of transitioning to an economy in the U.S. and Canada based completely on renewable energy, with no carbon dioxide emissions.

A Just Transition means to leave more than 80% of known fossil fuel reserves under the soil and beneath the ocean floor and ban all new exploration and exploitation of oil, tar sands, oil/gas shale, coal, uranium, and natural gas, including transportation infrastructures.

A Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build cultural, social, economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations.

A Just Transition encourages our Indigenous leadership to assume their role in supporting a just transition to a green economy, energy democracy, sustainable housing, education, community health care, clean energy and energy efficiency, sustainable community planning and natural resource management systems based upon indigenous science and traditional knowledge.

A Just Transition recognizes that strategies were first forged by labor unions and environmental justice groups, rooted in people of color and low-income communities as well as Indigenous lands; who jointly saw the need to phase out industries that were polluting workers, community and Mother Earth; and at the same time provide just pathways for workers to transition to other jobs. It was rooted in workers defining a transition away from toxic polluting industries in alliances with fence line and frontline communities.

A Just Transition recognizes the role US and Canadian governments have played, as policy, for some Indigenous Nations to be invested in benefit-sharing of, and becoming economically dependent in fossil fuel, uranium and other extractive industrial developments. In these cases, it is a necessity for these colonial governments to provide financial support for an economic just transition for these Indigenous Nations, retraining of their Indigenous workers and ecological restoration to communities impacted by these dirty energy developments.

A Just Transition demands that every job pays a livable wage and stable income that protects workers, and provides a good standard of living and pathways out of poverty.

A Just Transition is food sovereignty. The seed is the first link in the food chain of our indigenous heritage crops. The protection of our native seeds is seed sovereignty. Food sovereignty promotes health through food, especially traditional foods that Indigenous Peoples relied on prior to colonization. Food sovereignty is about decolonizing Indigenous diets as we strive to maintain our right to healthy and culturally appropriate foods hunted, fished, gathered and grown through ecologically sound and sustainable methods.

A Just Transition is our right to define our own food and indigenous agricultural systems. Food is a gift from the Creator. The right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies and institutions. Food sovereignty includes a restorative framework for indigenous-based policy reform in hunting, fishing and gathering rights and forestry, fisheries, rangeland, environmental conservation, health, agriculture, and rural and community development.

A Just Transition acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples can make changes in our lives and take positive actions as individuals, families, clans and traditional societies and within Indigenous Nation tribal programs. In order for reality to shift, in order for solutions to major problems to be found and realized, we must transition away from the patterns of an industrialized mindset and confront one of the symptoms of colonization called Internalized Oppression. Just transition recognizes a decolonization process that incorporates physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual strategies since the body, the mind, heart and the soul are affected directly by colonialism. Just transition requires the healing from historical trauma.

A Just Transition recognizes the need for Indigenous ingenuity - Ingenuity - inspired by our ancient intergenerational knowledge and wisdom given to us by our natural relatives. Western science can work with indigenous traditional knowledge keepers to restore the health and wellbeing of our Mother Earth and Father Sky. Our traditional knowledge systems must be respected, promoted and protected; our collective intellectual property rights must be guaranteed and ensured. Our traditional knowledge is not in the public domain; it is collective, cultural and intellectual property protected under our customary law

A Just Transition acknowledges that as Indigenous Peoples it is our responsibility to the rights of our future generations to uphold a future life of harmony, peace, equity and justice.

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