

STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY
SCAN! Indigenous Solidarity Committee
August 2023

As Indigenous peoples, we view all human activity with the understanding that water, land, animals, plants, fish and human beings are equal – human beings do not dominate the earth, but are part of the earth¹.

Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!) was established to confront the climate crisis. From the outset, SCAN! has sought to be informed by an Indigenous world view that broadens and deepens understanding of the interconnectedness of life, and that stresses the importance of working across generations. As seniors, we aspire to learn about, and draw inspiration from, Indigenous teachings about the responsibility of elders to work towards a livable earth for present and future generations.

SCAN! realizes and understands that securing and protecting Indigenous rights is crucial to addressing the worsening impacts of the climate crisis. Indigenous rights presuppose the enshrinement of a relationship of balance and reciprocity with the natural world. Furthermore, SCAN! recognizes the leading role of Indigenous peoples in addressing the causes of the climate crisis and to develop climate solutions that sustain the equitable flourishing of all life on earth. More specifically, our activism involves forcing governments, corporations and all institutions in Canadian society to take immediate, effective action.

To this end, we commit to learning from Indigenous teachings and practices of living with the natural world by sustaining respectful relations with land and water, plants and animals, and with each other. We commit to engaging with young decolonial climate justice activists and to amplifying the essential role of Indigenous peoples in initiating and implementing measures to address the climate emergency.

Colonial Capitalism Is a Key Contributor to the Climate Crisis in Canada

We and our governments are “settlers” who occupy, govern, and benefit from the wealth of lands from which Indigenous peoples were, and continue to be, dispossessed by colonial capitalism. For centuries, colonial laws and policies have marginalized Indigenous peoples’ values, world view, ways of living, and legal, social, cultural and spiritual practices. This has resulted in Indigenous peoples’ ongoing material impoverishment and loss of sovereignty. The purpose and outcome of these colonial laws, policies and practices has been named by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+) as *genocide*^{2,3}.

We in SCAN! recognize that there are critical differences within “settler” communities. For example, many immigrants and refugees are forced to leave other colonial contexts for racist, economic, religious, political, gender and sexual identity reasons. Furthermore, the wealth stolen from Indigenous peoples is unequally distributed within “settler” communities, with

corporations and investors getting the largest share and workers the smallest. SCAN! seeks to be informed by these diverse experiences within “settler” communities. Finally, SCAN! is in conversations with other Indigenous solidarity activists about ways to name our relationship of solidarity with Indigenous peoples, for example, as “allies.”

In addition, colonial capitalism has disrupted the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world, which is the very foundation of Indigenous ways of living. Resource extraction and ecological destruction have been the main drivers of settler economic development in the past and present. Fossil fuels, the largest contributors to the climate crisis, are extracted and transported in Indigenous territories. Indigenous peoples have suffered enormously from the consequences of resource extraction.

Respect for Indigenous Rights is Key to Solving the Climate Crisis

SCAN! supports the full and effective implementation by all governments in Canada of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁴, including rights to:

- sovereign-to-sovereign relationships with settler governments;
- the use, development & wealth of the territories they have traditionally occupied;
- free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) through their own traditional ways of governing with respect to all state or settler proposals affecting their territories, including all government climate policies;
- redress for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally occupied or used, and which have been taken, occupied, exploited or damaged without their FPIC;
- the right to redress can include restitution (Land Back) or just, fair, and equitable compensation (Cash Back)

To address the ongoing effects of colonialism, SCAN! supports the full and effective implementation of the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action² and the MMWG2S+ inquiry’s Calls for Justice³.

Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Knowledge Systems are Critical to Developing Solutions to the Climate crisis and Achieving Climate Justice⁵

Governments and non-government organizations and corporations will do well to listen closely to Indigenous peoples’ voices, and wisdom, and to observe their spiritual and political leadership. Indigenous leadership/participation is key to the successful development of all government climate policies, and to the implementation of all climate plans.

SCAN! commits:

- to listen to Indigenous analysis of the causes of continuous destruction of the environment, as well as to the actions deemed necessary to effectively address the climate crisis;

- to respectfully engage with Indigenous peoples and their campaigns related to Indigenous rights, the protection of environment and the honouring of the sacredness of all elements of life;
- to review SCAN! campaigns and projects for their intersection with Indigenous rights and campaigns;
- to work towards building a just and equitable relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples, with the mutual goal of an equitable flourishing all life on a livable earth.

Sources

1. Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land and, Rebuilding the Economy. James Lorimer & Company, Oct 6, 2017.
2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action. 2015; available from: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2091412-trc-calls-to-action.html>
3. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 2019; available from https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf
4. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. 2007; available from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf
5. Mission Statement. Indigenous Climate Action home page. Available from: <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com>