

**Memorandum of TEKEG
Recommendations to Parties, CEC, JPAC
Wilmington, NC, June 26, 2024**

In hearing the presentations and responses from the community in relation to strategic approaches to advancing environmental justice in North America, we emphasize the following:

1. Indigenous peoples have ancestral and inherent ties to their traditional lands, knowledge, and practices that have been passed down through millennia. Those ties are spiritual in nature and inform modern identities and cultures. Despite displacement and disenfranchisement of their traditional lands over the last few hundred years, those spiritual covenants, cosmovisions, and responsibilities to the lands of North America will never expire. Emotional, mental, spiritual, and cultural binds continue, notwithstanding the fact that farms have now been established or cities have grown upon those lands. Indigenous peoples continue to be the voice of ancient Mother Earth in North America. There is not a corner of North America for which the hearts of Indigenous peoples do not continue to beat. Indigenous populations have been advancing protection of the environment since early days of contact with outside communities and persons, and as a result have acquired intergenerational knowledge in how to do this.
2. The Environmental Justice (EJ) movement embraces the principle of equality and fairness in the access to natural resources. EJ began as a grassroots social movement, originating from this beautiful county in North Carolina, led by a local Black community facing the reality that their community had been selected as the site for the dumping of PCB-polluted soil. The leadership of this local community formed an EJ network to take on these struggles, which have blossomed into a global movement toward restitution and protection from environmental injustices that are overly burdensome on Indigenous Peoples and territories and other vulnerable communities. Early EJ concepts included consideration of environmental racism. Indigenous peoples were part of the early formation of EJ networks. The EJ movement challenges the diversity of intersectional issues arising from assertion of human rights, collective rights, Indigenous rights, and environmental advocacy in varying historical and cultural contexts. Young people are essential participants in these movements. If there is no justice for Indigenous peoples, there is no environmental justice. Indigenous peoples' TEK should be the foundation of EJ movements.
3. The parties to the CEC are addressing environmental justice in unique ways. They acknowledge that we are facing global climate, biodiversity loss and pollution challenges and that these circumstances are impacting disadvantaged communities in disproportionate ways. Listening to the communities and consulting with those most affected by environmental management decisions is an essential step forward and public education is a key tool. Enacting constitutional protections and implementing legislative and regulatory systems are required to ensure Indigenous peoples and disproportionately-impacted local and vulnerable communities have access to remedies. Co-developing policy on environmental management with those most impacted by environmental decision-making ensures that the values, perspectives and needs of those communities can be best met. It is important that youth are engaged and play a leadership role in addressing global climate matters. The role of Indigenous peoples must be reflected and institutionalized in the planning and decision-making of CEC work.

In light of these experiences and comments, the TEKEG makes the following recommendations concerning its work plan for the future:

1. That the TEKEG shall continue to advance the establishment of a principle-based approach to meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge in the work of CEC generally, including in EJ institutional development, and to develop associated guidelines.
2. That the TEKEG shall advocate for increased capacity within the CEC, as reflected in the Strategic Plan, to ensure that Indigenous peoples and communities are engaged and networked so they can participate meaningfully in dialogues on CEC priorities and are advanced as leaders in finding solutions and remedies to environmental challenges.
3. That the TEKEG shall document issues in environmental management contexts that are facing Indigenous peoples and make recommendations to the CEC as part of a public education context, the path that the CEC has taken in its institutional development to increasing the effective elevation of Indigenous peoples' values and voices in the work of North American environmental management.
4. That the TEKEG shall support the CEC to ensure that the CEC plays a meaningful role in the leadership development of young people from Indigenous communities and identifies existing resources and networks to do this.