



## The North American Guiding Principles in Relation to the Incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

*Proclaimed by the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Experts Group (TEKEG) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)*

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It is well established in international fora and acknowledged by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), that Indigenous Peoples have an essential role and responsibility to play in environmental management, conservation, sustainable development, protection and restoration of ecosystems and the conservation of biodiversity. This role in environmental management is not limited to their locales and regions but also arises broadly from their long history and unique knowledge and relationship with their traditional lands, territories and the associated natural resources to which they are spiritually, culturally and economically connected. Their unique knowledge of land and environment originates from years of living on their traditional lands and territories.

The CEC recognizes the value of embracing the wisdom and experience of Indigenous Peoples and the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) which flows from such wisdom and experience. The CEC also remains committed to the development of policy tools and approaches to increase engagement of Indigenous Peoples and consideration of TEK in its work.

As part of the mandate of the CEC, and pursuant to Article 3(6)(a) of the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation among the Governments of Canada, the United Mexican States, and the United States of America (ECA), the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) has established and assigned responsibilities to the *Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG)* which includes the provision of advice and guidance to the Council on opportunities to apply TEK to the CEC's operations and policy recommendations and guidance on the application of TEK to ongoing CEC work.

Based on the outcomes of shared work and in dialogues with Indigenous Peoples and communities since the formation of the TEKEG, the TEKEG recommended to the Council the adoption of the following North American Guiding Principles in relation to the Incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the work of CEC:

**Guiding Principle 1:** The CEC recognizes and respects the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples, as recognized and affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and as applicable, the *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989* (Convention No. 169), including in relation to the management of their lands, territories and associated natural resources.

**Guiding Principle 2:** The CEC recognizes and respects the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, and recognizes the importance of free, prior and informed consent when accessing and integrating Indigenous knowledge in CEC activities and decisions.

**Guiding Principle 3:** The CEC recognizes and respects the forms of government and social organization, as well as the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples as leaders in decision-making processes related to the incorporation and consideration of their knowledge and in the management of their territories and associated natural resources.

**Guiding Principle 4:** The CEC recognizes and respects the development of meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities based on mutual understanding, cooperative dialogue and collaborative partnerships.