



Bering Sea Elders Group

BERING SEA ELDERS GROUP

RESOLUTION 2019-2

TITLE: RESOLUTION REQUIRING RESEARCHERS AND FUNDERS TO ENGAGE WESTERN ALASKA COMMUNITIES IN A CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE APPROACH ON ALL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND TO DIRECTLY FUND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS, TRIBES, AND NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS FOR SUCH EFFORTS

Whereas, the Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG) is an organization comprised of designees of 38 federally recognized Tribes on the west coast of Alaska; and

Whereas, through our federally recognized Tribal governments, we have the right to participate fully in all levels of decision-making in policies that affect our Tribes, our Indigenous Knowledge, and to exercise our government-to-government rights as Tribes; and

Whereas, the Bering Sea is the integral part of our identity as Yup'ik, Cup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inupiaq people, and the water is as important to us as the land; and

Whereas, the Bering Sea Elders Group was formed more than a decade ago out of a mutual concern in our regions about the threats to the health and well-being of the Bering Sea; and

Whereas, the Tribes that are members of the Bering Sea Elders Group represent Cup'ik, Yup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inupiaq people who rely on subsistence and commercial fish, marine mammals, birds, berries, and other traditional and irreplaceable resources found in the Bering Sea and surrounding lands; and

Whereas, as Traditional Knowledge holders, our people hold a living body of knowledge that we have passed on from generation to generation. Our knowledge of our lands, waters, air, and our relationship with each has been developed over millennia and is invaluable; and

Whereas, our Traditional Knowledge is part of, and used in, everyday life, and is inextricably intertwined with our peoples' identity, culture, values, and way of life; and

Whereas, we, as the continual inhabitants of Western Alaska every day see first-hand the profound and devastating effects of climate change on our lands, waters, air, and communities; and

Whereas, our rapidly changing climate is the focus of many researchers from governmental, academic, non-profit, and for-profit entities; and

Whereas, this research is often the basis for decisions made by state and federal agencies that greatly affect our lands, waters, air, communities, food security, and sovereignty; and

Whereas, research conducted on, near, or about our lands, waters, air, and communities is almost always designed, conducted, and published without notice to our regions' peoples and Tribes and without our involvement or consent; and

Whereas, Traditional Knowledge and western scientific knowledge are equally valuable and Traditional Knowledge holders and western researchers are equally valuable; and

Whereas, a variety of research and advocacy projects purport to focus on building the resilience of our communities but are proposed and crafted without our input or our vision of our resilience and our future; and

Whereas, large amounts of monies have been dedicated to the aforementioned research; and

Whereas, these monies often stay with non-Indigenous institutions and Traditional Knowledge-holders are rarely compensated for their expertise or involvement; and

Whereas, for research projects that do involve monies for Traditional Knowledge holders and Tribes, those monies are often funneled through non-Indigenous organizations; and

Whereas, Tribes and Indigenous organizations have extensive experience conducting research, managing federal monies and grant monies and, unless requested, do not need non-Indigenous organizations to administer money for them in a pass-through capacity; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group requests that all research conducted on, near, or about our lands, waters, air, and communities be done using a true co-production of knowledge approach where we are equals in the design, conduct, analysis, implementation, and publication of the research, and management of research data and information; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group requests that all researchers receive prior consent from a community's Tribe prior to developing a project, and that researchers respect a Tribe's decision to decline tribal permission to work in a community; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group requests that all institutions and individuals funding research in our regions require grantees to develop research projects using a co-production of knowledge approach; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: the Bering Sea Elders Group requests that all institutions and individuals funding research in our regions fund our communities directly or through Indigenous-lead organizations.

ADOPTED by the tribally designated Elder Representatives of the Bering Sea Elders Group, and signed on behalf of those Tribes during its Annual Summit held in Anchorage, Alaska on this 20th day of September, 2019.