SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
DECEMBER 6, 7 & 8, 2011, OTTAWA, ON

Resolution no.65/2011

TITLE:	Support for Renewal of Federal Fisheries Inland Habitat Programs
SUBJECT:	Fisheries
MOVED BY:	Chief Salomée Mackenzie, Nation Anishnabe de Lac Simon, QC
SECONDED BY:	Isadore Day, Proxy, M'Chigeeng First Nation, ON
DECISION:	Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The Government of Canada has discontinued the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program (AIHP), which is the Department's only capacity funding program for First Nations in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and parts of Quebec.

B. The Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program enabled First Nations to: maintain and manage sustainable and productive fisheries ecosystems; build technical capacity to engage in fish habitat decision making; undertake fish habitat policy analysis; and create new opportunities for youth to engage in fisheries.

C. The Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program has achieved progress in creating capacity and opportunity but has not yet met its full potential.

D. First Nation organizations participating in the AIHP will need further support to continue to complete ongoing multiyear projects and maintain capacity to engage in fish habitat issues.

E. Healthy fish habitat is a prerequisite for First Nations to practice their rights to fisheries protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, and the Crown has legal obligations to engage in meaningful consultation on any decisions or actions impacting those rights.

F. Section 8(j) of The Convention on Biological Diversity sets an international legal obligation on party states to "respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and

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promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge," and Canada is a party to the agreement.

G. Section 32 of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources," and Canada has endorsed this Declaration and all principles enshrined within.

H. The Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program enabled First Nations and government to achieve mutually beneficial goals related to habitat sustainability and natural resource stewardship in a manner consistent with the aforementioned international agreements endorsed by Canada.

I. First Nations and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have mutual interests in promoting healthy fish habitat, and the AIHP enabled the cost-effective realization of these interests.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Call on the Government of Canada to continue their investment into First Nation inland fisheries habitat activities and community-run sustainable ecosystem programs through the Aboriginal Inland Habitat Program. or through the creation of a new program administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans with a similar mandate;
2. Request that the Government Canada honours its international legal obligations in the Convention on Biological Diversity and its international commitment to the principles within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by ensuring support for programs that allow First Nations to practice stewardship and decision making over their inland and freshwater fisheries resources;
3. Direct the Assembly of First Nations to undertake negotiations with the Government of Canada to design new programs that supply capacity for innovative First Nation led projects, activities and organizations that promote sustainable inland fisheries habitat.

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