



### **Recommendations from the TEKEG JPAC Meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico**

After hearing the presentations and responses from the community in relation to strategic approaches to advancing disaster resiliency, we acknowledge the following and make the following recommendations:

1. We acknowledge the spirit of sovereignty and the long-standing relationship to specific lands and environments that ground the resiliency expressed by the Indigenous and local communities in Puerto Rico, and the importance of that identity in addressing disaster resilience. Indigenous peoples know the basics of disaster resilience. Government policy should therefore consider strategies that advance these innovative approaches: for example, traditional construction techniques used in traditional dwellings. Community resilience is about responding to the destruction of Mother Earth and the presence and engagement of Indigenous peoples can be important in addressing preparation for and response to extreme natural disasters. Education is also important and involving young people in these solutions is key.
2. Food and water security are key aspects of disaster resiliency. Traditional methods and community-based solutions are best addressed at the local level. Infrastructure funding must reach Indigenous authorities and state officials must support Indigenous nations and local communities in taking a leadership role. This advances the stewardship role and traditional practices of Indigenous peoples and local communities as part of their spiritual and cultural mandates, and longstanding relationships with affected territories. Women also play an important role in this leadership. For example, traditional agricultural approaches provide guidance with crops that possess climate resilience. Impact assessments must involve assessments of non-monetary losses. We need mechanisms that allow for assessments of cultural and social losses.
3. There needs to be joint jurisdictional cooperation across all governmental levels, which supports the vision and needs of Indigenous peoples and local communities. There is a role as well for academics but the leadership must be supported at the local level. Family-based communication strategies are key examples of this kind of support. Communities must be pro-actively trained and supported to develop infrastructure to allow for needed information flow, emergency medical care, emergency water management, immediate food security issues and forest fire management. Indigenous peoples and communities want to rely upon and adapt their



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traditional knowledge and ways to advance self-sustaining economies and investments for the betterment of all ecosystems and economies.

In light of these experience and comments, the TEKEG makes the following recommendations about their work plan for the future:

1. That the TEKEG continue in their commitment to assist the CEC in ensuring that the NAPECA projects successfully implement community engagement, which has been designed as part of those projects. The NAPECA grant process is a key mechanism for the CEC to explore new approaches for stakeholder engagement and communication in trinational environmental cooperation.
2. That the TEKEG review the completed reports from phase 1 of the TEK project and consider new and innovative approaches to engagement and communication, as well as to the implementation of the CEC's strategic and operational plans. In the last few years, the CEC has increased its engagement of Indigenous peoples in advice to JPAC and the Commission itself, through inclusion of their experiences, thus gaining a greater understanding of their vision for intervention and environmental cooperation, and for advancement of knowledge for the future. Each of the Parties have made advances in this regard—some initiatives being captured in the three national reports.
3. That the TEKEG consider the recommendations for phase 2 of the TEK project in relation to the online TEK Atlas and the evolving CEC strategic and operational plans. It is important to draw upon some of the models that have been demonstrated in the three countries to advance the CEC in its strategic and operational goals of disaster resiliency and enhanced stakeholder engagement and communication. The perspectives of Indigenous peoples and local communities will be important in the CEC's future work. In a crisis, such as we find ourselves, we must find efficiencies and avoid further damage to ecosystems.

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