

**Statement by the Participants of the “Defining Fire” Ceremony
Karakol Valley, Republic of Altai, Russia
June 20-23, 2011**

We, participants of the Uchurlu-Ot (Defining Fire) Ceremony, united in the expression of free will, for the good cause of protecting Nature and the Spirit of the Altai Mountains, recognizing:

- The diversity of cultures as equal in importance to and crucial for the protection of diversity in the natural environment and among all forms of life;
- That every culture, every nation, every person, and every living creature has its own unique functions and knowledge of significance to the entire planet;
- The diversity and interdependence of all elements of the Universe;
- Our responsibilities towards Mother Nature as holders and stewards of Her wisdom for future generations,

have conducted the Defining Fire Ceremony to stimulate the protective forces of the sacred Karakol Valley, to receive power and knowledge for ensuring the temporal and spiritual continuity for generations to come and maintaining our peoples with the energy transmitted to us by our ancestors.

We have called on the Spirits of Altai and the Spirits of our Native Lands to consolidate our powers for the protection of our Sacred Earth from the destructive invasion of modern civilization in all its representations: governments, official religions, and commercial structures.

We, Stewards of the Earth, do feel and know that the neglect, destruction and distortion of age-old traditions of local peoples, who continue to maintain their original way of life, poses serious threats to Mother Nature and therefore:

- We appeal to the President of Russia and the State Duma of the Russian Federation:
 - To immediately adopt a comprehensive Law on Sacred Sites that will guard lands designated as sacred from privatization, from unregulated developments and to confer the right to manage these lands only under the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous and local communities that maintain traditional culture and ways of life.
 - To consider during the next meeting of the Council on the Development of Local Self-Governance under the President of the Russian Federation the issues of latent conflicts between local and Indigenous communities and representatives of official religions and new age movements caused by the erection and imposition of religious symbols on mountain passes, river crossings, springs and other culturally significant places that have been worshiped by Indigenous peoples for generations; to charge appropriate officials with the task of the development of legal mechanisms for prevention of such conflicts.

- We appeal to the International Community
 - To fully support and assist in the conservation and sustainable development of Sacred Sites including establishment of requirements for states to strictly comply with the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international legal mechanisms
 - To fully integrate into state aspirations of ‘development’ and ‘democracy’ mechanisms for encouraging and incorporating the customs and wisdom of Indigenous and local communities (ILCs) to ensure the maintenance of traditional ways of life and to manage Sacred Sites, and to endow ILCs with the sovereign authority to approve or deny any activities or developments, including with regard to religious symbols or institutions which are alien to their traditional worldview.
 - To establish the Worldwide Fund for Protection of Sacred Sites WFPSS.

- We appeal to the Indigenous Peoples' Communities:
- To revive and strengthen the relationships with Sacred Sites, which are sources of knowledge, power and health not only for Indigenous Peoples, but for the whole of humanity;
- To activate Sacred Sites through Ceremonies aimed at the creation of protective shields against careless or destructive acts of cultural hegemony and forced homogenization of cultures;
- To strengthen connections around the world among sacred sites and enhance their potential to ensure intergenerational links through Ceremonies planned and conducted simultaneously;
- To use traditional knowledge more pro-actively in defending our rights for maintaining traditional ways of life and protection of the integrity of Sacred Sites.

By the right to call on the Guardian Spirit of the Karakol Sacred valley given to us by this Ceremony, we warn about established protection and urge you not to destroy the integrity of the graves of our ancestors and the sanctity of our sacred sites.

We, Indigenous Peoples, responding to the urgent demand by Mother Nature for protection are now employing our own rules and the power bestowed on us by Tengri that we have reserved for this time of great need.

Chair of the Council of Uchurlu-Ot Ceremony

D. Mamyev