

Statement from Indigenous Delegates at the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) 2025

This week more than 1800 people from more than 90 nations gathered in Meanjin. We acknowledge this place as the traditional lands of Turrbal Peoples and Yugara Peoples and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. More than 140 Indigenous delegates travelled to the conference from around the world.

We assert that:

- As Indigenous Peoples, we are connected to the lands, waters, skies and oceans of our Traditional Territories. While these relationships differ across contexts, they are often characterised by reciprocal relationships and mutual obligations to human and non-human (or more-than-human) kin.
- The natural world continues to be degraded by intersecting and linked crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and colonialism. Indigenous communities, who have contributed the least to these crises, are on the frontline of their impacts, with our lives, livelihoods and cultures disproportionately impacted.
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge of our places and the species with whom we share kinship, informed by ongoing and evolving relationships with Country, is best placed to lead the recovery of nature.

We ask the Conservation Biology community:

- To support the leadership of Indigenous People in conservation and to reform conservation spaces so they are governed in ways that uphold cultural safety and respect for Indigenous rights, laws, knowledge systems and authority.
- To value Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as highly as Western science, recognizing its deep-rooted, place-based

insights and contributions to biodiversity conservation.

- To ensure that the research community upholds the spirit and intent of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including by respecting Free, Prior and Informed Consent, enabling mutual benefit-sharing, and protecting Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property in all stages of research.
- To identify and dismantle structural barriers within academic publishing that marginalise Indigenous-led research and limit its recognition in peer-reviewed literature.

We call on governments around the world:

- To fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Global Biodiversity Framework, through binding domestic legislation and accountability mechanisms.
- To adequately and equitably resource Indigenous communities to care for our Customary Territories in ways that uphold our rights, economies, and cultural responsibilities.

Decision makers must do better to fulfil international commitments by enacting meaningful law reform that ensures equitable futures for generations to come, not only for Indigenous Peoples, but for all communities and the Earth.

