



Native American Youth and Family Center

5135 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland OR 97218 | p 503-288-8177 | f 503-288-1260 | www.nayapdx.org

Testimony to the House Energy and Environment Committee Carbon Pricing (House Bills 3470, 3252 and 3250)

April 14, 2015

**Donita Fry, Portland Youth and Elders Council Organizer
Native American Youth and Family Center**

Founded in 1974 by the community, for the community, the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) is home to more than 380 tribal affiliations and voices who are rooted in sustaining tradition and building cultural wealth. We provide culturally-specific programs and services that support our people in personal success and life balance through cultural identity and tradition. Our continuum of lifetime services create a wraparound, holistic healthy environment that is Youth Centered, Family Driven, and Elder Guided. There are more than 40,000 Native Americans living in the Portland metropolitan area.

Climate change impacts represent a threat to the way of life for Native American communities and families in Oregon. NAYA and the Portland Youth and Elders Council (PYEC), a grassroots advocacy group housed at NAYA, encourage the State of Oregon to support pricing carbon emissions as a responsible, effective and efficient way to protect our communities. Given the disproportionate effects of climate change on communities of color and low-income communities, it is essential that any carbon pricing program in Oregon has strong equity and environmental justice provisions.

While we have contributed little to the causes of climate change, American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and communities face disproportionate risks including increased vulnerability of our unique rights, cultures, and economies. The environmental impacts of climate change and some of the proposed solutions threaten Indigenous people's ways of life, land rights, subsistence, financial resources, cultural survivability, and future growth. For example, NAYA is located in the Cully neighborhood, the largest and most diverse neighborhood in the Portland area. Our neighborhood residents are more likely to have low incomes, yet Cully's climate resilience infrastructure is nearly nonexistent compared to more affluent neighborhoods. This type of inequity is increasing. We believe that action is necessary to prepare and protect our communities and families against climate change impacts, now and for future generations.

An equitable carbon pricing program in Oregon will offer protection from disproportionate financial impacts while creating economic and cultural opportunities for communities of color. Our communities already demonstrate these programs. For example, through combined efforts of

Empowering the lives of Native Americans in the Portland area

the Portland urban Native American community and residents of Cully neighborhood, we have begun transforming a 25 acre brownfield into a park, which includes an inter-tribal gathering garden. This garden allows our Indigenous community to convene, cultivate indigenous foods and materials for cultural practices and traditions, and revitalize the associated knowledge, skills and ethics in an urban landscape. Oregon's carbon pricing program can build on existing efforts like Cully Park, make strategic investments in clean energy solutions and energy efficiency programs, and provide relief from higher energy and fuel bills for lower-income households and communities of color.

An equitable carbon pricing program in Oregon should include the following elements: 1) Protect households and communities from impacts, 2) Reinvest a portion of the revenue to provide economic opportunities, and 3) Make the policy development and implementation process inclusive and accountable.

There are a number of important principles that should be reflected in any climate change policies, including an equitable and just carbon pricing program in Oregon. These include:

1. Protect people and the planet - Science should determine the limit of carbon emissions and the timeline under which emissions reductions need to occur, ensuring that we prevent the worst environmental and economic consequences of climate change.
2. Maximize benefits – Oregon's carbon pricing program should strengthen existing and create new pathways into prosperity and increase opportunity for Oregon's workers and communities.
3. Minimize impacts - Assist low and moderate-income families as well as communities of color in meeting their basic needs.
4. Make the process inclusive and accountable - Ensuring policy is equitable requires the involvement of those Oregonians who might be disproportionately impacted and their advocates. A mechanism for measuring and reporting on community reinvestment will help make climate policy more accountable and transparent.
5. Increase resilience to climate impacts - Assure that those who are most vulnerable to the direct effects of climate change are able to prepare and adapt.
6. Ease the transition for workers - Workers in older industries that are highly reliant on carbon based energy – and the communities in which they're concentrated – must be provided with the assistance and tools necessary to make the transition to the emerging low carbon economy and to be competitive for good jobs within it.
7. Limit climate pollution and invest in solutions - Revenues generated by putting a price on climate pollution should be used to invest in the public good by ensuring an inclusive and fair transition to a high-road clean economy, which advances the needs of workers, consumers, families, and diverse urban and rural communities while protecting the planet.

The Native American Youth and Family Center and Portland Youth and Elders Council supports the development and passage of an equitable carbon pricing program in Oregon, which protects communities of color from financial impacts and reinvests in our communities.