

## United Confederation of Taino People

"A Unified Taino Nation"

• Boriken (Puerto Rico) • Kiskeya (Dominican Republic) • Cuba • Barbados • Bimini (U.S.)

04.30.2009

To: Hon. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D - NY) 478 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON DC 20510 Fax: (202) 228-0282

Re: Indigenous Taino People Support the Shark Conservation Act of 2009

Takahi (Greetings) Hon. Senator Gillibrand:

On behalf of the indigenous **Taino People** and Nation represented by the United Confederation of Taino People, it is our hope that this message finds you well and in good spirit.

The Taino People are an indigenous "American Indian Nation" whose ancestral homelands extend throughout the Caribbean Islands to the southern area of Florida in the United States. As such our people have traditionally maintained a special relationship with the ocean and all its creatures who we consider our relatives. In particular, our people have a reverent relationship with **sharks** of many varieties and we have many names for them in our ancient language including **Tiburon**, **Kakaia**, **Kakaia**, **Kakoneta**, and **Karite** to name a few. As many of our people are fisher folk, we understand that many shark species play a critical role in the ocean as a top food predator. It is also our understanding that while sharks have been able to survive periods of global mass extinctions; they have not evolved to withstand overfishing by humans. The increased catch of sharks has resulted in devastating changes throughout the world oceans.

The growing demand for shark products, especially for shark fins, has led to drastic declines in shark populations around the world. Some populations have declined by as much as 99% in the past 35 years.

With this urgent reality in mind, we would like to bring to your attention to the Shark Conservation Act of 2009 (S. 850), which is awaiting action in the U.S. Senate. This bill would require that sharks be landed with their fins still attached. This would solve enforcement issues and facilitate better data collection for use in stock assessments and quota monitoring. It also closes a loophole on the transfer of fins at sea, which we have learned allows some bad actors to circumvent the current law. Additionally, the bill allows the U.S. to take actions against countries that have weaker protections for sharks.

In closing, we join our voices in solidarity with individuals and conservation organizations such as OCEANA in requesting that you support the bill S. 850, the Shark Conservation Act.

Our relatives the sharks are depending on us and our present and future generations cannot afford to lose such a vital part of the world's living oceans.

Oma'bahari, nabori'daka (With respect, I am at your service),

Roberto Mukaro Agueibana Borrero, President, UCTP - OIRRC