

Indigenous Environmental Network Red Road to Copenhagen

DELEGATION PROFILES

The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) has undertaken a project initiative to bring a delegation of Indigenous peoples to the 15th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15th) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen, Denmark. The UNFCCC COP 15 is scheduled for December 7-18, 2009. This initiative will bring accumulated traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples from North America coming from climate-energy impact zones and persons experienced in linking an indigenous rights-based framework to climate policy. For more information about the IEN delegation's goals and work at Copenhagen, see the *IEN Red Road to Copenhagen*.

IEN Head of Delegation

Tom Goldtooth is the Executive Director of the IEN. Tom is Dine' and Dakota and lives in Minnesota. Since the late 1980's, Tom has been involved with environmental related issues and programs working within tribal governments in developing indigenous-based environmental protection infrastructures. Tom works with indigenous peoples worldwide. Tom is known as one of the environmental justice movement grassroots leaders in North America addressing toxics and health, mining, energy, climate, water, globalization, sustainable development and indigenous rights issues. Tom is one of the founders of the Durban Group for Climate Justice; co-founder of Climate Justice NOW!; a co-founder of the U.S. based Environmental Justice Climate Change initiative and a member of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change that operates as the indigenous caucus within the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change. Tom is a policy advisor to indigenous communities on environmental protection and more recently on climate policy focusing on mitigation, adaptation and concerns of false solutions. Tom networked with the Society for Threatened Peoples, and other researchers and writers on publishing a booklet for Indigenous peoples on False Solutions of Climate Change. Tom co-authored the REDD Booklet, an indigenous publication reporting the risks and dangers of the implementation of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) within indigenous territories.

Canadian Indigenous Delegation – Issue Tar Sands Development

Issue: The tar sands are found beneath boreal forest, a complex ecosystem that comprises a unique mosaic of forest, wetlands and lakes. Canada's boreal forest is globally significant, representing one-quarter of the world's remaining intact forests. Beyond the ecosystem services it provides (cleansing water, producing oxygen and storing carbon), it is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including bears, wolves, lynx and some of the largest populations of woodland caribou left in the world. Its wetlands and lakes provide critical habitat for 30 per cent of North America's songbirds and 40 per cent of its waterfowl. If currently planned tar sands development projects unfold as expected, approximately 3,000 square kilometers of boreal forest could be cleared, drained and strip-mined to access tar sands deposits close to the surface, while the remaining 137,000 square kilometers could be fragmented into a spider's web of seismic lines, roads, pipelines and well pads from in situ drilling projects. Studies suggest that this scale of industrial development could push the boreal ecosystem over its ecological tipping point, leading to irreversible ecological damage and loss of biodiversity. The environmental consequences of oil production from Alberta's tar sands are major, beginning with its effect on climate change. North America's transition to oil from the tar sands not only perpetuates, but actually worsens, emissions of greenhouse gas pollution from oil consumption. North America's transition to oil from the tar sands not only perpetuates, but actually worsens, emissions of greenhouse gas pollution from oil consumption.

While the end products from conventional oil and tar sands are the same (mostly transportation fuels), producing a barrel of synthetic crude oil from the tar sands releases up to three times more greenhouse gas pollution than conventional oil. This is a result of the huge amount of energy (primarily from burning natural gas) required to generate the heat needed to extract bitumen from the tar sands and upgrade it into synthetic crude. The energy equivalent of one barrel of oil is required to produce just three barrels of oil from the tar sands.

Clayton Thomas-Muller is the Canadian Indigenous Tar Sand Campaign Organizer for IEN. Clayton, of the Mathais Colomb Cree Nation also known as Pukatawagan in Northern Manitoba, Canada, is an activist for Indigenous rights and environmental justice. Based out of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Clayton is involved in many initiatives to support the building of an inclusive movement for Energy and Climate Justice. He serves as board chair of the Collective Heritage Institute (CHI), which hosts the annual Bioneers Conference in Marin, California.

George Poitras is a Mikisew Cree member and served as the Chief from June 1999 to June 2002. It was during this time that he initiated legal action against the Federal government for their lack of consultation with the Mikisew Cree on a proposed winter road that would traverse the traditional lands of the Mikisew Cree. This legal action led to a successful, unanimous Supreme Court of Canada decision that is cited as a precedent-setting case and as a standard for government consultation with First Nations. George brings extensive experience and knowledge on Treaty, Aboriginal and Constitutional Rights of First Nations to his role as Consultation Coordinator. He is internationally recognized in his work highlighting the grave threat of Canada's tar sands to the health and well-being of his community.

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger is the Freedom from Oil Campaigner for the Rainforest Action Network (RAN). Eriel is a Dene woman belonging to the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation of Northern Alberta. In her work with RAN, Eriel works from Alberta targeting Tar Sands development and the banks that fund it. Eriel has dedicated herself to advocating for environmental justice for her traditional First Nations community, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in Fort Chipewyan, volunteering and working alongside various environmental organizations.

Alaska Native Delegation

Issues: The Alaska Natives are in the Arctic region of North America who is experiencing escalating climate and weather changes resulting in rapid melting of sea ice and permafrost that has caused land erosion, villages sliding into the sea, concerns of relocation, deaths and negative impact to their food sovereignty. Most Alaska Natives in rural areas still maintain traditional subsistence food diets. On the basis of the fossil record and climate history of Alaska, they are expecting future periods of cooler, drier climates that will result in shrinkage of forest boundaries, lowering of altitudinal tree line, and expansion of tundra vegetation into lower elevations. Boreal forests, which cover 17% of the Earth's land surface area, are found in Alaska's south-central and interior regions. Models consistently project large-scale transformation of Arctic landscapes, where the northern edge of the boreal forest advances into the tundra. Even with these projections, concerns for Alaska's boreal forests from projected climate changes include: a loss in the moisture needed for forest growth; insect-induced tree mortality; increased risk of large fires; interference with the reproduction of white spruce, a biological and economic concern; and the changes caused by permafrost thaw e.g., slumping of land and wetland development from thaw water. All these projected changes to the biodiversity of Alaska, homelands to the indigenous Alaska Natives, who still maintain traditional lifestyles to the land, will greatly impact their future. Major petroleum corporations, with support of the United States are continuing to expand oil and gas development in the ecological sensitive areas of Alaska, including efforts to drill offshore. Any future oil spill will devastate the life of Alaska Natives.

Faith Gemmill is the Executive Director of Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL). Faith is a Pit River/ Wintu and Neets'ain Gwich'in Athabascan from Arctic Village, Alaska. Faith previously worked on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation for over ten years as a representative, public spokesperson and Gwich'in Steering Committee staff to address the potential human health and cultural impacts of proposed oil development and production of the birthplace and nursery of the Porcupine Caribou Herd which is located within the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Faith continues as a public spokesperson, press and tribal liaison and human rights advocate. In her current role at REDOIL, Faith coordinates a regional network of Alaskan Natives fighting oil and gas development in Alaska. Faith also serves on the advisory board of Honor the Earth.

Colleen Swan is a lifetime Inupiaq member of the Native Village of Kivalina. Born to Joseph & Lona Swan, Colleen has seven sisters, three brothers, six children and seven grandchildren. She has worked as Tribal Administrator for the Native Village of Kivalina for 18 years and has sat on the Kivalina City Council since October 2008 and the Northwest Arctic Borough Economic Development Commission since 2008. Colleen has been involved in environmental and climate change issues for many years. She headed up the efforts to mitigate damage to Kivalina's environment due to environmental contamination from mining and climate change damage. She is a spokesperson for the Native Village of Kivalina on the climate change lawsuit filed against oil and energy companies, has provided testimony before the Alaska Climate Impacts Assessment Commission Hearing (July 2007), and has provided testimony before US Senate Field Hearing on Climate Change (October 2007) to Senator's Stevens of Alaska and Landrieu of Louisiana, which is now in the Congressional Record.

Crystal Annette Frank is a young Gwich'in Athabascan woman from Arctic Village, Alaska. The community of Arctic Village has been at the forefront of the battle to keep oil development out of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. She is currently a volunteer with the REDOIL network.

Dine' Delegation from Southwest United States

Issues: The indigenous Dine' (Navajo) are one of the largest indigenous tribes in the United States. The Dine' resides in the southwestern region of the U.S. that is rich in minerals, such as oil, natural gas, coal and uranium. The U.S. government has allowed the encroachment of mining and energy companies for over 40 years to develop the Dine' lands, creating environmental and health devastation and loss of aquifer water resources. The Dine' still maintain traditional indigenous lifestyles and areas such as Big Mountain where large energy corporations such as Peabody Energy have created loss of land and relocation of Dine' and nearby Hopi families from their homelands. Climate change has resulted in years of drought conditions and climatic changes to the biodiversity, desert and plateau ecosystems and the forested areas of the mountain areas. The Southwest region has often been framed as the "Energy Battery of Southwestern and Western United States".

Jihan Gearon is the lead Energy and Climate Organizer for IEN. Jihan is Diné (Navajo) and African American and she grew up in Fort Defiance, located on the eastern part of the Navajo reservation in Arizona. She is a graduate of Stanford University with a Bachelors of Science in Earth Systems and a focus in Energy Science and Technology. Jihan is an aggressive advocate of Indigenous Peoples rights and environmental justice. She is an active organizer, speaker, and writer on Indigenous Peoples and environmental justice, energy, climate change, and climate justice. In her position as Native Energy Organizer at the Indigenous Environmental Network, Jihan works to build the capacity of communities throughout the U.S. and Canada who are impacted by energy development and climate change. Jihan is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative and the Coordinating Committee of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance.

Wahleah Johns is the Co-Director of the Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC). She is Salt clan born for Red Bottom People, her maternal grandparents are Manygoats and her paternal grandparents are Towering House. She comes from the Navajo (Dine) tribe that is located in northern Arizona. She is from the community of Forest Lake, which is one of several communities atop the Black Mesa region. Her community is one near the operation of Peabody Western Coal Company's Black Mesa mining operations. Wahleah has grown up seeing the harsh effects of coal mining on her community - from the relocation of her people to the present issue of groundwater depletion and land exploitation. She has been working BMWC from its beginning. She is a strong advocate for indigenous peoples' rights, environmental justice and restorative justice. Wahleah is also a part of a number of climate and environmental justice networks who are addressing global climate change and environmental racism in indigenous and people of color communities all over the world.

Nikke Alex the Navajo Green Jobs/Youth Organizer for BMWC. She is Navajo originally from Dilcon, Arizona. She has worked in various social movements and has worked with Indigenous communities around the world. Nikke has carried out independent research in both uranium mining and coal mining on the Navajo Nation. Her research focused on the social impacts of mining on Navajo families. Currently, she works with the Black Mesa Water Coalition as a Navajo Green Jobs & youth organizer.

Ryan Johnson is Navajo and from the community of Forest Lake which is one of several communities atop the Black Mesa Region. His community is near the operation of Peabody Western Coal Company's Black Mesa mining operations. Ryan is currently a volunteer for BMWC.

Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara – Three Affiliated Tribes Delegation

Issue: An oil refinery is being proposed to be built on the land of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold in North Dakota. The crude oil that will feed this refinery is coming from the tar sands in Alberta. Canada will be shipping its dirty oil to be refined on the indigenous peoples in this land. They are not going to get the energy, only the pollution. Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people are already experiencing disproportionate environmental fallout from oil development and from the burning of lignite coal in power plants that surround their lands. Several community members are sick and witnessing people, even babies, dying from unprecedented rates of cancer. This is the U.S. tribe that in 1837, the smallpox plague struck. Almost half the Hidatsa and 7/8ths of the related Mandan tribe died in those years. The US Secretary of the Interior in 1948 forced the sale of 155,000 acres of the North Dakota reservation to flood them by the Garrison Dam and Reservoir, devastating the rich farmlands and livelihood of these indigenous peoples. Now climate change and near drought conditions are drying the landscape, negatively affecting their livestock and agriculture economy, depletion of aquifers and river levels.

Kandi Mossett is the Tribal Campus Climate Challenge Organizer for IEN. Kandi is Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara from North Dakota. She graduated from the University of North Dakota's Earth Systems Science and Policy Program in 2006. She began working for IEN in 2007. Since then, over 30 tribal colleges have been engaged in the TCCC and have worked on projects ranging from light bulb swaps and

community tree plantings to small-scale community solar panel installations and community gardens. The

TCCC's goals are to support initiatives within tribal colleges that connect students to environmental

justice and climate justice issues in their communities in line with Indigenous traditional knowledge and belief systems.

Loren White, Jr. is Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan from White Shield, North Dakota. Loren is a member of the Environmental Awareness Committee (EAC) of Fort Berthold Indian reservation. EAC is a grassroots group formed in opposition to the proposed building of the first new U.S. oil refinery.

Indigenous Youth Delegation

Ben Powless is Mohawk from Six Nations in Ontario, currently living in Ottawa, Canada. He is currently studying Human Rights, Indigenous and Environmental Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. He is heavily involved with IEN, focused on climate change and resource extraction in Indigenous territories. He has spent time working in Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua on human rights and development issues. He is also a founder of the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition and on the national council for the Canadian Environmental Network. He has also spent time living in Mexico, and speaks Spanish.

Daygot Leeyos Edwards is a young female lyricist and Music producer from Oneida Nation, of the Wolf Clan. One of her passions is to produce music that empowers, educates, and uplifts our consciousness. Her lyrics and music reflect the struggles and triumphs of being a spiritual human being. Collecting Soundbytes along her travels, she mixes together collages of words and melodies to deliver messages and inspiration to all listeners.

Aurora Conley is Ojibwe from the Bad River Indian Reservation in Wisconsin, and recently worked as Executive Assistant for Honor the Earth in White Earth, Minnesota, and a non-profit leader in the Native environmental movement. Aurora has organized, campaigned, and advocated for environmental and climate justice throughout Indian Country across the Midwest, including extensive outreach to tribal communities on renewable energy and environmental justice facilitating solar installation and youth education. Aurora is a volunteer firefighter and first responder for the Bad River Volunteer Fire Department. She hopes to work more extensively with Midwest Native communities to build a more sustainable future.

Gemma Givens is of Mayan and Yaqui heritage from Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. Adopted as an infant, she was raised in an Irish American family and at age fourteen adopted again into a family of a father of Mescalero-Apache, Yaqui and Zuni descent and a mother of Yaqui, Mexican, Cherokee and Choctaw and Dutch descent. Following her passion for social, environmental, and political justice Gemma became an activist in 2006. Her work has focused on indigenous issues. At the 2009 Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change in Anchorage, Alaska she attended as a youth participant. In 2008, she interned at the International Forum on Globalization in San Francisco where she met world-renowned activists. Her love of photography has steered her towards photojournalism. Gemma is currently a reporter for Reznets.org and is a 2009 graduate of the American Indian Journalism Institute at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. She currently writes and is an editor for the Third World and Native American Student (TWNAS) Press at the University of California Santa Cruz where she will begin her second year in mid September. She will represent a delegation of 30 youth in Copenhagen with Sustain US; The US Youth Network for Sustainable Development. Gemma will work within the communications subgroup.

IEN Technical Team

Alberto Saldamando is a lawyer working with the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) working from San Francisco, CA. Alberto is an expert on indigenous and human rights and participated many years in the drafting of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The IITC focuses on dissemination of information regarding the U.N. and opportunities for involvement to grassroots Indigenous communities, and works to educate and build awareness about Indigenous struggles among non-Indigenous Peoples and organizations.

Heather Milton-Lightening is the Alberta, Canada based tar sands organizer for IEN. Heather is Cree, Nakoda, Blackfoot, and Ojibwe and is from the Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada. She has been organizing with Indigenous youth since 1994 through the Grand Council (Student Council) of Children of Earth High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba-Canada. She is a member of Native Youth Movement since 1995. She is on the board of the Ruckus Society, and an advisory council member of the Indigenous Peoples Power Project.

Sharon Lungo is the Program Director for the Ruckus Society. Sharon is the daughter of immigrant parents from El Salvador. Born and raised in Los Angeles, her activism was sprouted from the movement for open space in her community. Sharon has been engaging in Non Violent Direct Action since the age of 18. She also serves as a local coordinating committee member of the Global Women's Strike, an international network with a presence in 80 countries. Sharon has been a volunteer trainer with Ruckus since 2000 and came on staff in 2007.