

Climate Change, Traditional Knowledge and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Rising Voices 5, Boulder Colorado, April 13, 2017



Traditional Corn Altars, Tsalie Arizona and Oaxaca Mexico

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Chief Deskaheh

Haudenosaunee (Cayuga)



Ratnaha

Maori Spiritual Leader



**Went to the League of Nations in
1923 & 1925, denied access**

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In 1977 IITC received UN Consultative Status, and upgraded to General Status by ECOSOC in 2011

***“Indigenous Peoples should speak for and represent themselves before the world community.”
- IITC’s Guiding Principles***



Nicole Yanes and Sewa Carmen present an intervention on Access to Justice for Indigenous Youth, UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, July 2014, Geneva



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Inherent Rights



“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”

--- Preamble, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948



“Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources”



--- Preamble, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007

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In 2003, IITC carried out a global consultation in coordination with FAO to identify the main obstacles to Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples. 128 completed questionnaires were received from communities, food producers, organizations, and knowledge holders in 29 countries, representing over 5000 persons



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Obstacles Identified by Indigenous Peoples:

1: Denial of Land and Water Rights



**Fresh Water Aqueduct from Oviachi dam to
Ciudad Obregon, Rio Yaqui, Sonora Mexico**

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Environmental Contamination



St. Lawrence Island Alaska



Ft. Chipewyan, Alberta Canada



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Pesticides Cause Impaired Lives or Death for Many Yaqui Children



Cristian Molina age 13,
died May 15th, 2008,
with his mother in Potam Pueblo Sonora
Mexico 2006

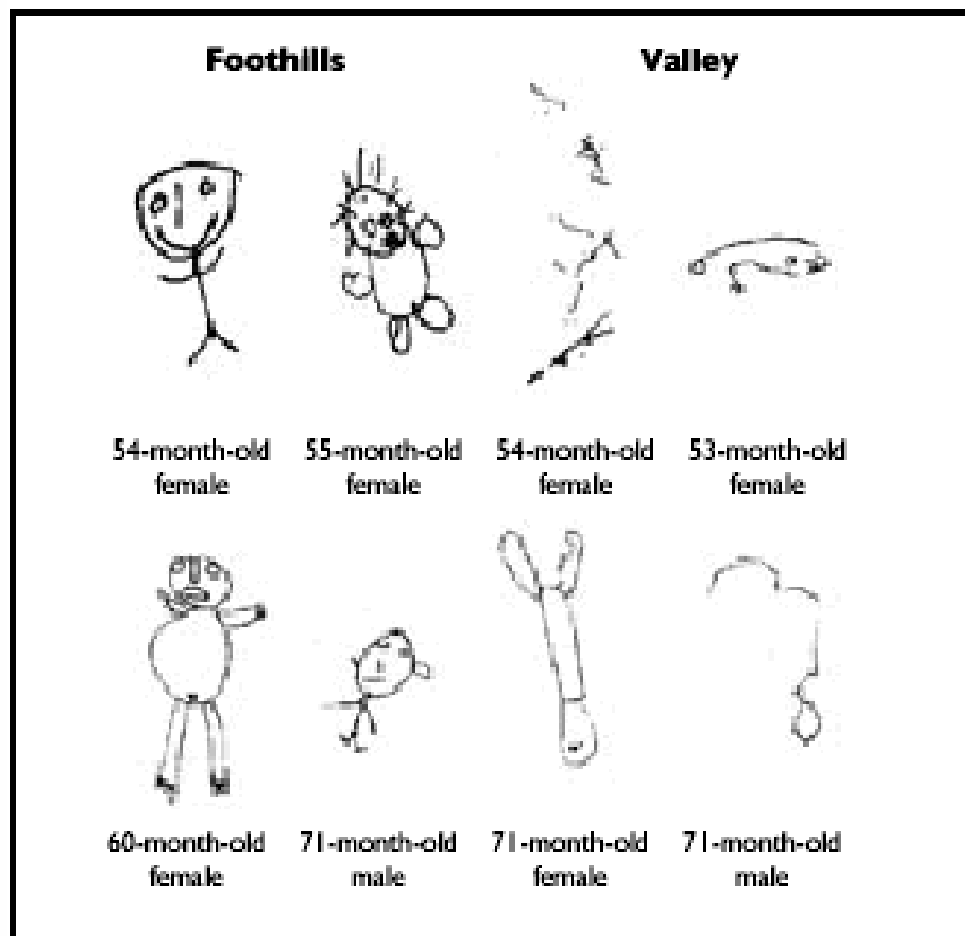


Juan Antonio Rodriguez, age 2,
died April 11, 2013,
shown his grandmother in Vicam Rio
Yaqui Sonora Mexico; January 2013



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Rio Yaqui, Mexico May 2006

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Imposed Development and Denial of Free, Prior & Informed Consent

In 2008, the Treaty Chiefs of Alberta adopted a resolution calling for a Moratorium on expansion of tar sands extraction.



**Syncrude Mildred Lake Tar Sands
mine Northern Alberta, Canada**

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**Diseased fish,
Athabasca Delta and
Lake, 2010**

Loss of Language, Practices & Ways of Transmitting Traditional Knowledge to New Generations



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**...and Climate Change mainly caused
mainly by burning fossil fuels**

***“Climate change constitutes the single most
important threat to food security in the future” --
UN Rapporteur on the Right to the UN Human
Rights Council, March 2009***



Vital Food Plants & Animals Threatened

Once, more than a million spring-run Chinook lived in the waters of the Central Valley in California. In 2010 there were less than 10,000, a decline of 99%. Researchers at UC Davis predicted the effect of climate change on the Chinook salmon. In all the scenarios, even the hopeful ones, spring run Chinook failed to survive until 2099.



Mexico: Changing weather patterns include dramatic decreases in summer rainfall directly impacting traditional agriculture. Growing capacity of traditionally important crops such as corn is decreasing dramatically in many regions



History is Made: the UN General Assembly Adopts the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, September 2007



Geneva, 1977



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New York

September 13th, 2007

After more than 30 years of struggle



Indigenous Peoples and supporters protest in front of the New Zealand, Canadian and Australian UN Missions, New York, August 30th, 2007



PRESS STATEMENT: 22 OCTOBER 1996 2:00 P.M. at the United Nations in Geneva Switzerland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Indigenous Peoples Representatives Walk Out Of the UN Inter-Sessional Working Group on the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples!



Hunger Strike in Geneva, December 2004

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The Declaration is the “Minimum Standard”

“The rights recognized herein constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.”

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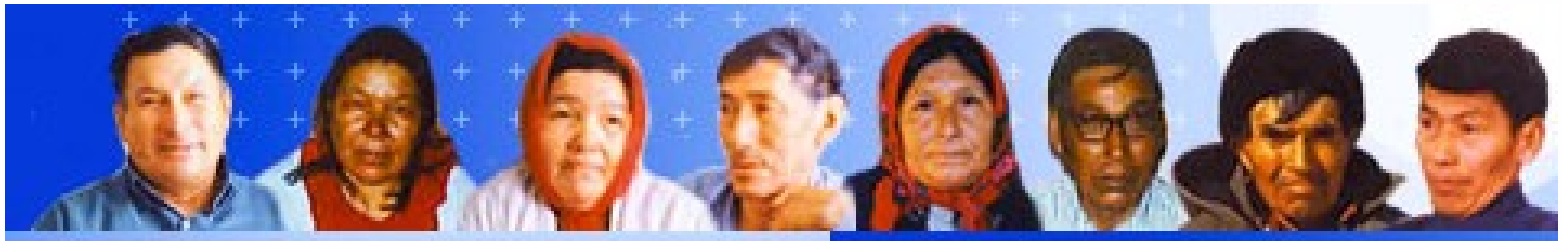


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Article 3:

Indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.



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Lands, Territories and Resources



“Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired...”

--- Article 26, para 1.

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Spiritual Relationship with Traditional Lands and Resources

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.”



-- *Article 25*

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Subsistence Rights and Traditional Economies

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.”

***-- Article 20,
paragraph 1***



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Right to Health and to Traditional Health-Related Practices

“Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals...” --- *Article 24*



Environmental Protection and Productive Capacity of Lands

Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources...

-- Article 29, para. 1



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Article 32: FPIC and Development

“States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources...”



Standing
Rock
Water
Defenders



Consent is a Treaty Right

FORT LARAMIE TREATY, APRIL 29, 1868

ARTICLE 16. The United States hereby agrees and stipulates that the country north of the North Platte River and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains shall be held and considered to be unceded Indian territory, and also stipulates and agrees that no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same; or without the consent of the Indians first had and obtained, to pass through the same;

--- *TREATY WITH THE SIOUX -- BRULÉ, OGLALA, MINICONJOU, YANKTONAI, HUNKPAPA, BLACKFEET, CUTHEAD, TWO KETTLE, SANS ARCS, AND SANTEE-- AND ARAPAHO 15 Stat., 635. Ratified, Feb. 16, 1869. Proclaimed, Feb. 24, 1869*



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Traditional Knowledge: Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including...seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts.



**Opening Ceremony,
3rd International
Indigenous Peoples
Corn Conference,
Tecpan Guatemala,
March 7 - 9, 2017**

Solutions from within our Nations: Restoring our Original Seeds

Seed sharing
and trading, 2nd
International
Corn
Conference,
Okmulgee,
Oklahoma,
September, 2014



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Buffalo role in Preventing, Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change



- Buffalo withstand a range of climate conditions, and support Native grasses which prevent erosion, hold soil moisture
- Local food sources have a lower “carbon footprint”
- Buffalo Nations Treaty, 2014
- Buffalo will be the basis for Tribal Nations’ food sovereignty, health, and cultural survival in the future



In October 2015, 100,000 cattle died in an early blizzard in South Dakota.

No buffalo deaths were reported!

Protecting our Sacred Places



“Tule marshes absorb more than ten times more carbon than a pine forest”

-- Dr. William Carmen (Yaqui) Wildlife Biologist



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Elders Teaching Our Youth



**Ya Ne Dah Ah Tribal School,
Chickaloon Village, Alaska**



Tucson, Arizona

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Declarations of GMO, Pesticides and Extractives-Free Food Sovereignty Zones

We fight land theft, deforestation and other threats to our food sovereignty. We are committed to protect and defend our remaining Indigenous lands to educate and preserve our lands for Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Our lands must be free from genetically modified seeds and plants and all forms of chemical contamination and toxic pesticides so that our way of life is protected, nurtured, and shared --

Adopted at Shiprock Dine' Nation, August 13, 2016



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-- *Dine' Hataali Avery*
Denny, September
20th, 2013.

IITC's North America Indigenous Peoples Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change "Road to Paris" Questionnaire received, 213 responses representing 318,000 individuals from July – November 2015, and provided input for our positions at COP 21



Video interview with Duane Chili Yazzie of the Diné/Navajo Nation presented at the Indigenous Peoples Pavilion at COP 21



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- ***94% of respondents affirmed that Climate Change was very important or important to their community/Peoples/Tribe/Nation.***
- ***98% of respondents said they have seen impacts of Climate Change on their environment, weather, food systems and/or land base.***
- ***96% affirmed that their own Peoples' Traditional Knowledge and practices can be useful in addressing or responding to the impacts of climate change.***



**UNFCCC
COP 21,
Paris
November
30 –
December
12, 2015**

Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognized in the UN Paris Agreement

“Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, **the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples**, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations...”

*-- Preamble, the Paris Agreement, adopted by consensus
December 12, 2015 to go into force in 2020*



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The Paris Agreement recognized Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Knowledge and called for establishment of a new “Exchange Platform”, now underway

Paragraph 136: “Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.”



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Indigenous Knowledge Holder's Recommend:

“...that the new Platform for Traditional Knowledge Exchange under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is developed with the full and equal participation of Indigenous Peoples from all regions and especially our knowledge holders and traditional food producers and in a manner that fully respects our rights, traditional indigenous sciences and the richness of our ancestral knowledge”.

--- Declaration of Tecpan, March 9, 2017



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**“Coal is the Liver
of Mother Earth.
It has to stay in
the ground so she
can be healthy.”**

**-- Dine
elder Roberta
Blackgoat**



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Cheoque Utesia, Thank you very much



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