

# **“DECLARATION FOR HEALTH, LIFE AND DEFENSE OF OUR LANDS, RIGHTS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”**

**July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, Alamo, California**

We, Indigenous women from the regions of North America, Latin America, the Arctic, Caribbean and the Pacific, gathered June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 at the *INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SYMPOSIUM*, in Alamo, California, hosted by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and the North-South Indigenous Network Against Pesticides.

We recognize and thank the Indigenous Peoples of this land called California for welcoming us to their beautiful land.

We are traditional healers, midwives, youth and community organizers, environmental and human rights activists, teachers and traditional and cultural leaders. We are daughters, sisters, mothers, aunties, grandmothers and great grandmothers, youth and elders, members of great Nations who have always stood firm to defend our lands, our Peoples and our cultures.

We work in our communities, homes, health centers, tribal and traditional governments and Indigenous organizations, on the local, national and international levels. We recognize and appreciate the important contributions that all of us, and many other Indigenous women around the world, are making to defend our lands, rights and the health of future generations, as well as the generations who have come before us.

We have come together at this Symposium to share our information about the negative impacts of mining and drilling, mercury contamination, nuclear and uranium testing, processing and storage, pesticides and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), military dumping, toxic waste incineration, desecration of sacred sites and places, introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and foods and harvesting of our genetic materials. We have listened to each other's stories, and have also seen the tragic effects within our own families, communities and Nations of the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of toxic contamination.

These imposed, deplorable conditions violate the right to health and reproductive justice of Indigenous Peoples, and affect the lives, health and development of our unborn and young children. They seriously threaten our survival as Peoples, cultures and Nations. They also

violate our rights as Indigenous Peoples to subsistence, spiritual and cultural survival, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). As Indigenous Peoples, and as the defenders of our future generations, we have vocalized our opposition to these forms of contamination of our homelands, air and waters for generations in many different regions, but far too often we are ignored.

We have also shared our strategies and ideas about how to address these situations in our communities and around the world. We recognize that our fundamental, inherent and inalienable human rights as Indigenous Peoples are being violated, as are our spirits and life giving capacity as Indigenous women. Colonization has eroded the traditional, spiritual and cultural teachings passed down from our ancestors, our grandmothers about our sexual and reproductive health and their connection to the protection of the environment, our sacred life-giving Mother Earth. But we also recognize and affirm that many Indigenous women are reclaiming, practicing and celebrating these teachings. We commit to supporting these collective efforts now and in the future.

We have agreed to present the following values and principles that we recognize as a basis of this work as well as our collective recommendations for action, which we hope can begin to address the devastating inter-linking impacts we are facing in our communities and Nations, and bring about positive change.

We therefore adopt by consensus this DECLARATION for the health, survival and defense of ***OUR LANDS, OUR RIGHTS and our FUTURE GENERATIONS.***

**We recognize and affirm the following:**

Indigenous women are life givers, life sustainers and culture holders. Our bodies are sacred places that must be protected, honored and kept free of harmful contaminants in order for the new generations of our Nations to be born strong and healthy.

If the Earth Mother and the Sky Father are not healthy, neither are we.

Indigenous Peoples' lands, waters and air and all living beings are being misused and poisoned by corporations, States and their Territories, based on foreign and colonial concepts that disregard the sacredness of life.

Indigenous Peoples, and in particular women and children, are suffering the detrimental, devastating, multi-generational and deadly impacts of environmental toxins and contaminates that were unheard of in our communities prior to industrialization.

***These impacts include:***

Contamination of mothers' breast milk at 4 to 12 times the levels found in the mother's body tissue in some Indigenous communities;

Elevated levels of contaminants such as POPs and heavy metals in infant cord blood;

Disproportionate levels of reproductive system cancers of the breasts, ovaries, uterus, prostate and testicles, including in young people;

Elevated rates of respiratory ailments such as asthma and lung disease;

High levels of leukemia and other cancers in infants, children and youth;

Rare, previously unknown forms of cancer among all ages in our communities;

Devastating, and in many cases, fatal birth defects known to be associated with environmental toxins such as nuclear waste, mining, and pesticides, including the increasing birth of "jelly babies" in the most contaminated areas;

Developmental delays, learning disabilities and neurological effects on babies and young children which have lifelong impacts, associated with prenatal exposure to mercury, pesticides and other environmental toxins;

Increasing numbers of miscarriages and stillbirths, and;

High levels of sterility and infertility in contaminated communities.

The knowledge to heal our Peoples is within our own Peoples. While many diseases caused by colonization may need to be addressed by western medicine, we know that our own healing knowledge and practices, passed down to us by our grandfathers and grandmothers, is essential for the healing of our Peoples and our Mother Earth.

The protection of our health, lands, resources including air and water, languages, cultures, traditional foods and subsistence, sovereignty and self-determination and the transmission of our traditional knowledge and teachings to our future generations are inherent and inalienable human rights. These rights are affirmed in the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other international standards, and must be upheld, respected and fully implemented by States (countries) and their Territories, UN bodies, corporations and Indigenous Peoples of the world.

Sovereignty and autonomy in relation to our lands, territories and resources are intricately connected to sovereignty and autonomy in relation to our bodies, minds and spirits.

Protection of our human rights and the rights of all forms of life must be a priority for environmental and reproductive justice work.

We have seen that the introduction of extractive industries (mining, drilling, logging etc.) has resulted in increased sexual violence and sexual exploitation of Indigenous women and

girls in many communities, as well as increased alcohol and drug abuse, sexually transmitted infections, divisions among our families and communities, and a range of other social and health problems.

While many communities have maintained traditional systems which continue to value women's leadership, sexism in the larger society has had negative and lasting impacts within many Indigenous communities, including lack of recognition for the leadership role of Indigenous women in working for environmental protection and building strong communities.

The impacts of internalized colonization further include the loss of knowledge, awareness and access for Indigenous women to traditional reproductive health practices, birthing knowledge and healing practices, and even includes the criminalization of Indigenous midwives, healers and other traditional Indigenous health practices in many countries.

Foods distributed as commodities and other food aid programs by Government programs in Indigenous and tribal communities are unhealthy. They contain contaminants, GMO's and ingredients that cause food related diseases and adverse health effects including diabetes and obesity. Impacts of economic marginalization and poverty on Indigenous families and communities must be taken into account. However the recognition and application of Food Sovereignty, including access to our traditional lands and resources and food related cultural practices, are the only real solutions to the food needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Based on the above principles and values of shared agreement, we respectfully recommend to Indigenous communities, tribal governments and the leaders of our Nations, to the States and their Territories in which we live, to corporations and institutions, and to the United Nations system and international bodies, the following actions:

**Indigenous Peoples, communities, Nations, tribal governments and organizations:**

We will work with our children, families, communities and Peoples, and the traditional knowledge holders of our Nations, to strengthen, restore and transmit traditional knowledge and practices, languages, health care, birthing, care of children and food gathering and planting processes, and to support the restoration of our original instructions and ways which include respect for the role and the power of Indigenous women in families, communities, societies and Nations. Our traditional knowledge as Indigenous women must be protected from all forms of exploitation and commercialization.

We encourage the organizations and communities gathered here to help with the development and dissemination of educational materials and tool kits designed for communities explaining the links between environmental toxics and reproductive health and justice, what they can do to protect themselves and organize in response. We also encourage the development of training programs to inform Indigenous women of opportunities for their participation locally, nationally and internationally, and to build their capacity to become further involved as strong voices for their families and Nations.

We request that Indigenous Peoples and organizations who are knowledgeable and experienced in this field carry out education and capacity building for Indigenous Peoples, including women, youth and tribal leaders, to enable them to use, apply and implement international standards including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. In this way we can hold governments and corporations accountable to a minimum standard for upholding our rights as Indigenous Peoples and for carrying out negotiations regarding any and all activities that may affect us, based on the rights of self-determination and of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

### **The United Nations System and International bodies:**

All international processes including those of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its current process on the “Revised Draft Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising From Their Utilization”, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the current work of the UN Environmental Program for development of the globally-binding Treaty on Mercury, must use, apply implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the minimum standard. The full participation of Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, must also be formally and effectively implemented in these processes.

The United Nations Environment Program should establish a fund to specifically support the participation of Indigenous Peoples from impacted communities, in particular Indigenous women, in the current UN process of drafting and negotiating the Global Mercury Treaty.

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and other UN bodies and mechanisms addressing Indigenous Peoples’ rights are urgently requested to focus attention and collect information from Indigenous Peoples on the links between environmental contamination and reproductive health and justice, for the purpose of recommending effective solutions and remedies at the international level.

## **Corporations, Agencies and Institutions:**

Corporations must fully disclose to all Indigenous tribes, communities, Peoples and individuals who may be affected by or exposed to pesticides, mining, dumping, incineration and other forms of toxic chemical production, the complete known or suspected affects of the chemicals in question, the location and names of corporations producing them, any current or prior legal sanctions or cases filed against them, the Indigenous Peoples in the same or other countries who have experiences with the given process or corporation, names of parent companies, subsidiaries, successors, etc., so that informed decisions can be made.

Any new activities which include the use of contaminants such as chemicals or GMO seeds and plants, must be subject to the “precautionary principle”. This means that the burden lies with the government or corporation to prove that a process or chemical is safe and has no potential negative environmental, health or reproductive impacts in either the short or long term **before** the process or chemical is used or produced. Safeguards and emergency plans, agreed to by the impacted communities, must be established at the onset of the project.

We call for the development and implementation of standardized protocols and processes for collecting testimonies and information from Indigenous community members for submission to national and international bodies, studies, the media, etc. to protect Indigenous peoples’ privacy, confidentially and cultural knowledge, and upholding their right of (FPIC)

Collection or use of genetic or bodily materials including body fluids, tissues, and by-products of medical procedures, as well as all ancestral remains must include full disclosure about the intended and possible uses, distribution plans, and all other factors. All materials collected without FPIC must be returned immediately to the Indigenous Peoples from whom they were collected. Regarding any new collection or testing of human tissues, including ancestral remains, all materials must be taken only with the FPIC and the full involvement of the impacted Peoples and individuals. Test materials, data and cultural or personal articles are the property of the subjects and must be returned to them, along with the results, when the agreed-upon tests or studies are completed.

Data collection and testing of air, water, foods, plants etc carried out by community members themselves should be recognized as legitimate by governments and institutions, at the tribal, state and national levels.

As Indigenous peoples, we require access to reliable independent laboratories to support community documentation of environmental toxins and their health effects. The results of

this documentation will be owned and controlled by the affected communities to hold polluters accountable.

### **States and their Territories:**

States and their Territories must be accountable for the implementation, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, of all international Treaties, Standards and Conventions entered into including the Nation to Nation Treaties with Indigenous Peoples and Nations. Processes and mechanisms to ensure accountability must be put in place, with the full participation of affected Indigenous Peoples.

We reiterate the call for States, including the United States and its Territories, and the corporations they license, to immediately halt the production and export of pesticides and other toxics that are banned for use in the country of origin and for other countries to refuse to import these substances.

Where Indigenous communities are already impacted by environmental contaminants, immediate restoration and clean up programs must be implemented and funded by States and their Territories, along with the corporations which contributed to the contamination. Full agreement and direct participation of the affected community members regarding the plans and methods for clean up, waste disposal, monitoring of progress and full environmental and ecosystem restoration must be ensured.

Women, children and families who have suffered the impacts of toxic contaminants require special care. States and corporations which have allowed contamination to damage our communities must be held accountable to cover the costs and ensure that adequate care and services are provided, with the full participation and collaboration of the affected Indigenous Peoples. Preventative measures must be taken to ensure that new environmental contamination will not occur, in accordance with the precautionary principle.

### **Cross-Cutting:**

We support a moratorium on fossil fuel exploration, processing, extraction, transportation, storage, and use and support previous moratoriums called for by Indigenous Peoples as the first step towards the full phase-out of fossil fuels with a just transition to sustainable jobs, energy and environment and the protection of our peoples, homelands and ecosystems from the devastating impacts of climate change.

We support the implementation of a moratorium on development and use of all GMOs, in particular seeds, plants and animals, support the Indigenous Peoples' *"No Patenting of Life*

*Declaration*” and call upon tribal, state/provincial, national and Territorial governments and Indigenous peoples to establish GMO-free zones in their lands and territories.

We continue to call upon States and their Territories, agencies, national and international programs and institutions to immediately halt all collection of genetic materials in Indigenous communities, and return all genetic materials and samples to the communities from which they have been collected until all human, spiritual, cultural and health rights violations have been fully resolved to the satisfaction of the Indigenous Peoples involved, through the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent.

### **In Conclusion:**

We honor each other’s work, struggles, knowledge, perseverance, courage, compassion, expertise and warrior spirits. We accept our sacred responsibility to defend our Mother Earth, our children and our future generations. It is time we take a stand together to tell the world that what is happening today cannot continue into our future.

We commit to come together on a regular basis, to support each other’s struggles and to find ways to share information with each other. We will continue to help each other to get the word out about the struggles we are facing and the work we are doing, and to build and extend the important network we have created through this gathering.

Let us continue to work for all of the children of this world and for our generations still to come and to fulfill our responsibilities as culture holders. Our children have a right to be born healthy and to live in a clean environment. In order to heal our Peoples and Mother Earth, we have to continue to be who we are.

### **Affirmed by consensus of the participants in the Symposium on July 1, 2010:**

Alice Skenandore - Wise Women Gathering Place/LCO Ojibwa, Wisconsin

Andrea Carmen - International Indian Treaty Council/Yaqui

Anna M. Frazier - Dine' Citizens Against Ruining our Environment/Dine, Arizona

Carletta Sue Tilousi - Havasupai Tribe, Arizona

Catalina Garzon - Pacific Institute/Mwiska Nation, California

Catherine Carmen - Yaquis United for Mother Earth/Yaqui, Arizona

Celeste McKay - Native Women's Association of Canada/Metis Nation Canada

Charlotte Jane Kava - ACAT St. Lawrence Island/Native Village of Savoonga, Alaska Inupiat

Dianna Sue Uqualla - Havasupai Tribe, Arizona

Elvia Beltran Villeda - Red Indigena de Turismo de México/Hnahnu

Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan - Maori Women's Centre/Maori, Aotearoa (New Zealand)



Faith Gemmill - California Indian Environmental Alliance, International Indian Treaty Council, REDOIL/Gwich'in, Alaska, Pit River, Wintu California

Faustina Buitimea Gotogopicio – Jittoa Bat Natika Weria, Yaqui, Sonora Mexico

Jackie Keliiaa - California Indian Environmental Alliance/Yering Paiute and Washoe, California

Jackie Warledo - International Indian Treaty Council/Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Janeen Antoine – Lakota, Bay Native Circle, California

Native Youth Sexual Health Network - United States and Canada

Johnella LaRose - Shoshone Bannock/Red Road Farm California

Kari L. Shaginoff - International Indian Treaty Council, Chickaloon Tribal Government/Chickaloon Alaska

Katrina Maczen-Cantrell, Western Shoshone, California

Lindsey Schneider - Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA)/Turtle Mountain Ojibwe, California

Lori A. Thomas-Riddle - Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment, Gila River, Arizona

Lucy Hatathli-Nez - Dine' Citizens Against Ruining our Environment/Dine Nation, Arizona

Marian Naranjo - Tewa Women United, Honor Our Pueblo Existence/Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico

Maudilia López Cardona - Frente de Defensa Miguelense/Mam Maya, Guatemala

Michele (Shelly) Vendiola - Community Alliance & Peacemaking Project, Swinomish Nation, Washington

Monique Sonoque - Indigenous Youth Foundation and California Indian Basket Weavers Alliance/Chumash, California

Morning Star Gali – International Indian Treaty Council, Pit River Nation, California

Liselote Naniki Reyes Ocasio – United Confederacy of Taíno People (UCTP)/ Taíno, Boriken (Puerto Rico)

Sara Mendoza - Los Angeles Indian Peoples' Alliance/Otomi California

Kelatztli Mendoza - Otomi, Yaqui, California

Sherri Norris - California Indian Environmental Alliance/Osage, California

Shunkila Blackcalf - Native American Sisterhood Alliance at Mills College/Dine, Sicangu, Lakota, California