

Sacred Land, Poisoned Peoples

**Pre-conference: „Uranium Mining, Health and Indigenous Peoples,“
26 August 2010, on the occasion of the IPPNW World Congress
„Nuclear Abolition: For a Future!“ at the University of Basel**

Around the globe, some seventy-five percent of uranium mining takes place on the lands of indigenous peoples. The largest uranium reserves are found in Canada and Australia; uranium is also mined throughout Latin America and in Kazakhstan, Niger, Russia, Namibia and Uzbekistan. Exploration for further uranium ore bodies is presently underway in Tanzania, Mali, and the Amazon region of Brazil.

The identities of indigenous peoples are strongly tied to their surroundings. Uranium mining upsets indigenous cultures by defiling sacred sites, by contaminating local sources of subsistence, and by threatening the health of coming generations. Open pit uranium mining regularly contaminates water tables; tailings retain up to 80% of the original ore body's radioactivity. The most common fatal consequence is lung cancer (attributable to the radon released into the atmosphere during the mining and onsite milling processes). Nonrespiratory carcinogenic outcomes include leukemia, stomach cancer, liver cancer, cancer of the intestines, kidney cancer, and skin cancer. Regions hosting uranium mining exhibit collateral spikes of psychic disorders and genetic damage.

Though the consequences of uranium mining add up to a glaring violation of human rights, authorities and the media fail to take any serious notice.

This conference will offer representatives of indigenous peoples endangered by uranium mining a distinguished European venue to tell their stories. They will have the opportunity to strengthen their action networks by meeting with politicians, members of NGOs, and, from around the globe, people struggling to end uranium mining exactly as themselves.

A „Talking Stick“ will help make palpable the far-flung cultural diversity of the conference speakers. Whoever holds the stick has our ears, our attention. The conference will be structured like a journey around the globe – Germany – Canada – USA – India– Africa – South America – Russia... Experts will act as interpretive stewards along our travels by supplementing eyewitness accounts with results from the most recent scientific studies impacting the conference's complex of themes: uranium, radiation, health.

Indigenous speakers and resource experts asked to attend include:

Michael Beleites, regarding uranium mining in East Germany (Wismut); Gordon Edwards and Robert Del Tredici from Canada; Manuel Pino (Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico) and Charmaine White Face (Lakota Nation, South Dakota) from the USA; Rebecca Wingfield-Bear (Kupa Pita Kungka Tjuta) and Yvonne Margarula (Kakadu Nation) from Australia; as well as Chris Busby und Inge Schmitz-Feuerhake. We are still working to find representatives from Africa, Kazakhstan, and India.

Conference language: English

Conference organizers:

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Our Goals:

- Alerting the public.
- Provide important information concerning the toxic consequences of uranium mining in the lives of indigenous groups and peoples.
- Strengthen the world-wide anti-nuclear indigenous network.

Our Target Audience:

The Congress aims to attract:

- interested members of the general public, decision-makers in politics and business, environmental, human rights, peace and developmental aid advocates and activists, as well as scientists, instructors, university and high school students, and representatives from across the media.

The pre-conference is conceived as a preparatory gathering to proceed the 19th International World Congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), University of Basel, August 27-29. The World Congress, which will be made up of between 600 and 800 participants from all five continents, is centered around the theme: „Nuclear Abolition: For a Future!“. Pre-conference findings will figure prominently into the World Congress discussion and proceedings. The World Congress and its preparatory gatherings are joint offerings for the members and friends of all sixty sections of the IPPNW worldwide.
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