

Indigenous Delegation Sounds Alarm on Homegrown Radioactive Pollution Crisis Events & Protest Planned in Washington, DC



Photo: A Geiger counter reading shows dangerously high levels of radioactive pollution at an elementary school playground near an abandoned uranium mine in Ludlow, South Dakota.
Credit: Clean Up The Mines.

Washington, DC — From January 25-28, 2016 Indigenous representatives from the Northern Great Plains & Southwest will be in the District of Columbia (DC) to raise awareness about radioactive pollution, an invisible national crisis. Millions of people in the United States are being exposed as Nuclear Radiation Victims on a daily basis. Exposure to radioactive pollution has been linked to cancer, genetic defects, Navajo Neuropathy, and increases in mortality. The delegation will speak about the impacts they are experiencing in their communities, which are also affecting other communities throughout the US.

"Native American nations of North America are the miners' canaries for the United States trying

to awaken the people of the world to the dangers of radioactive pollution”, states Charmaine White Face from the South Dakota based organization Defenders of the Black Hills.

South Dakota has 272 Abandoned Uranium Mines (AUMs) which are contaminating waterways such as the Cheyenne River, and desecrating sacred and ceremonial sites. An estimated 169 AUMs are located within 50 miles of Mt. Rushmore where millions of tourists risk exposure to radioactive pollution each year.

The delegation is warning of the toxic legacy caused by more than 15,000 AUMs nationwide, extreme water contamination, surface strip coal mining and power plants burning coal-laced with radioactive particles, radioactive waste from oil well drilling in the Bakken Oil Range, mill tailings, waste storage, and renewed mining threats to sacred places such as Mt. Taylor in New Mexico and Red Butte in Arizona.

Indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted as approximately 75% of AUMs are located on federal and Tribal lands.

"In 2015 the Gold King Mine spill was a wake-up call to address dangers of abandoned mines, but there are currently more than 15,000 toxic uranium mines that remain abandoned throughout the US”, said Ms. White Face. "For more than 50 years, many of these hazardous sites have been contaminating the land, air, water, and national monuments such as Mt. Rushmore and the Grand Canyon. Each one of these thousands of abandoned uranium mines is a potential Gold King mine disaster with the greater added threat of radioactive pollution. For the sake of our health, air, land, & water, we can't let that happen.”

The Clean Up The Mines! campaign is focused on passing the Uranium Exploration and Mining Accountability Act that would ensure clean up of all AUMs. The act was submitted as a draft to Congressman Raúl Grijalva (D–AZ) two years ago but has yet to be introduced to Congress. Currently, no comprehensive law, regardless of mining era, requires clean-up of all these dangerous abandoned uranium mines allowing corporations and the federal government to walk away without taking responsibility for the continuing harms they have caused.

"With adherence to out-dated, racist policies promoting colonialism, such as the 1872 mining law, Indigenous peoples across the country will continue to be oppressed, and we will continue to demand that our land be returned and restored to its original condition, to that of before the colonization by the United States,” stated Leona Morgan of Diné No Nukes. “The United Nuclear Corporation mill tailings spill of 1979, north of Churchrock, New Mexico left an immense amount of radioactive contamination that down-streamers, today, are currently receiving in their drinking water. A mostly-Navajo community in Sanders, Arizona has been exposed to twice the legal limit allowable for uranium through their tap--this is criminal!” said Morgan.

Diné No Nukes, which is participating in the delegation, is a collective focused on educating the general Navajo population about the issues created by US Atomic Energy Commission, as well as ongoing and new threats from the nuclear industry.

The delegation will hold a protest in front of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Headquarters in opposition to the proposed Clean Power Plan’s irresponsible support for deadly nuclear energy on Tuesday, January 26 at 10am.

The Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment (LACSE) and the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE), and Indigenous World Association (IWA), part of the delegation to Washington, DC, are asking Congress to take measures for cleaning up the estimated 489 abandoned uranium mines in New Mexico.

"These uranium mines cause radioactive contamination, and as a result all the residents in their vicinity are becoming nuclear radiation victims," states Petuuche Gilbert, a member of the Acoma Nation, LACSE, MASE, and IWA. "New Mexico and the federal government have provided little funding for widespread clean up and only occasionally are old mines remediated. The governments of New Mexico and the United States have a duty to clean up these radioactive mines and mills and, furthermore, to perform health studies to determine the effects of radioactive poisoning. The MASE and LACSE organizations oppose new uranium mining and demand legacy uranium mines to be cleaned up," said Mr. Gilbert.

Regarding the purpose of the trip and the presentations to audiences of all ages, Ms. White Face stated, "We believe that as more Americans become aware of this 'homegrown' radioactive pollution, then something can be done to protect all peoples and the environment."

Events:

All events are free, donations welcomed.

Monday – Jan. 25, 2016

Panel Discussion

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Georgetown University

White-Gravenor Hall Rm 211, 37th St NW & O St NW, Washington, DC 20057

[Facebook Event Link](#)

Tuesday – Jan. 26, 2016

Protest against Clean Power Plan

10:00 am

EPA Building

1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20004

[Facebook Event Link](#)

Enviro & Social Justice Organization Meet & Greet

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

La Casa Building

3166 Mount Pleasant St. NW, Washington, DC 20010

Wednesday – Jan. 27, 2016

65th Anniversary of the first nuclear detonation at the Nevada Test Site, now the Nevada National Security Site

Dinner & Presentation for Physicians for Social Responsibility, DC Metro Chapter

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

12717 Greenbriar Rd, Potomac, MD

(Please RSVP: mdpnhp@gmail.com)

Thursday – Jan. 28, 2016

Panel Discussion

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Nipponzan Myohoji Temple

4900 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20011

More info: cleanupthemines@gmail.com

Indigenous Delegation:

Northern Great Plains

Charmaine White Face (Oceti Sakowin), Defenders of the Black Hills

Harold One Feather (Oceti Sakowin), Defenders of the Black Hills

JD Buckley (Oceti Sakowin), Defenders of the Black Hills

Southwest

Tommy Rock (Diné), Diné No Nukes

Leona Morgan (Diné), Diné No Nukes

Petuuiche Gilbert (Acoma), Laguna and Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment & Multicultural

Alliance for a Safe Environment, Indigenous World Alliance

Klee Benally (Diné), Clean Up The Mines!, Indigenous Action Media

For more information: www.cleanupthemines.org/dc

Contact: cleanupthemines@gmail.com

THE INVISIBLE KILL **RADIOACTIVE** POLLUTION IN UNSUSPECTING PLACES

WASHINGTON, DC JAN. 25-28, 2016

Indigenous representatives from the Northern Great Plains are traveling to DC for meetings and presentations on the radioactive impacts in their communities

MONDAY – JAN. 25

Panel Discussion
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Georgetown University
White-Gravenor
building Rm 211

TUESDAY – JAN. 26

Protest at the EPA
Building
10:00 am
1200 Pennsylvania Ave
NW, Washington, DC

Enviro & Social Justice Org
Meet & Greet
6:00 – 9:00 pm
La Casa Building
3166 Mount Pleasant St.
NW
Washington DC

WEDNESDAY – JAN. 27

Physicians for Social
Responsibility
7:00 pm
DC Metro Chapter
Niagara Falls
49
W
11:30 am - 1:30 pm
12717 Greenbriar R
Potomac MD
(Dinner – RSVP
mdpnhp@gmail.com)

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