

JAN-DEC  
2012

# INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES 2012

DISPATCHES FROM THE FOURTH WORLD



A PUBLICATION BY INTERCONTINENTAL CRY

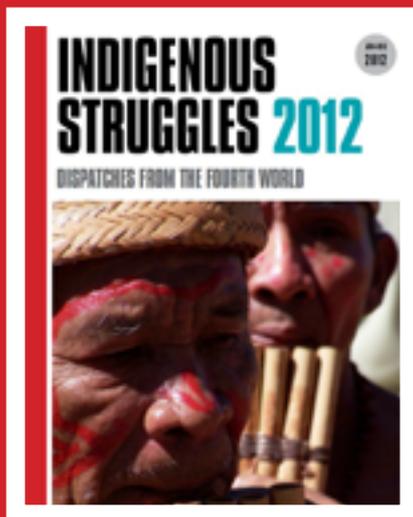
# **INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES 2012**

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JANUARY-DECEMBER 2012



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Intercontinental Cry gratefully acknowledges its contributors, editors, sustainers, translators, and everyone else that helps us. Without you, we would not be able to continue our vital efforts. Special thanks to Jay Taber for the editorial support and Natalie Lowrey for the inspiration.

## CREDITS

INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES 2012 was written, edited and designed by Intercontinental Cry.



In a climate of constant racism and aggression, Indigenous Peoples are struggling around the world to reclaim their lands, defend their cultures, assert their rights and to quite simply defend the Earth. It is a life and death struggle led by more than 450 Indigenous Nations who want nothing more than to live in peace and friendship alongside the world's Nation States and their populations.

However, many of those Nation States, despite signing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, continue to press on with their disparate ways alongside corporations, NGOs, military and paramilitary organizations and international institutions to exploit, neutralize and extinguish Indigenous Peoples for little more than trinkets.

Intercontinental Cry (IC) is dedicated to this struggle. We are an independent group of volunteers who provide critical news and commentary to support and strengthen the global indigenous movement.

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# INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES 2012

**I**t has been a monumental year for the global Indigenous movement, to say the least. During the course of 2012, Indigenous Peoples led more than a thousand protests, occupations, blockades and other essential actions around the world, to turn back the tide of colonialism, to protect cultures and lands, to assert basic rights and, quite simply, to defend the Earth.

It was almost impossible to keep up with it all. Almost. Most impressively, there was the Nasa's expulsion of military personnel from their territory in Colombia, the group of villagers in India who enforced the destruction of Monsanto test crops; a dozen solid victories against the tar sands and associated pipelines; And let's not forget the sudden appearance of #idlenomore in Canada and the equally sudden establishment of new Indigenous governments in Nigeria, Australia and West Papua.

There were just as many tragedies: Ethiopia started a full-scale assault against the Anuak Peoples; China announced plans to forcibly "settle" 1.5 million nomads; and Israel passed the controversial Praver Plan, paving the way for the theft of Bedouin lands. Hundreds of leaders were also killed around the world in a desperate attempt by governments, corporations, and military bodies to extinguish Indigenous resistance.

Another tragedy was the sheer amount of silence that surrounded these life-and-death struggles despite their overwhelming significance to global politics, economics, human rights, and environmental issues. That is precisely why we decided to publish this annual briefing: to give you a chance to know this global struggle as it unfolded in 2012.

However, we wish to point out that INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES is far from being a complete archival record. Rather, it is a collection of events based on our monthly report, "Underreported Struggles". This

annual briefing includes all the monthly reports we published in 2012, which have been revised and extended after a thorough review of more than 2000 articles, reports and press releases.

In order to make this briefing as timely as possible, we limited our coverage to two main subjects:

- 1) the policies and practices of governments, corporations, NGOs, military and paramilitary organizations, international institutions and settler populations; and
- 2) the efforts of Indigenous Nations to hold those parties accountable for any actions that threatened traditional lands, cultures, communities, livelihoods and basic rights.

We did not, for instance, include much about food sovereignty, poverty, gender equality and women's rights or the global effort to reclaim indigenous languages. It was very difficult to exclude anything from this report; but we had to draw the line somewhere.

We also limited our coverage of each event to a single paragraph, which means it will be up to you to take the time to learn more about these events. We hope you will take that time out, to inform yourself and support these struggles as best you can

In closing, let me just say that there is no one struggle that's greater or more important than the rest. Indeed, there is but one struggle: the struggle for life itself. We're in this together.

Sincerely,

John Ahniwanika Schertow  
 Publisher & Editor  
[www.IntercontinentalCry.org](http://www.IntercontinentalCry.org)



IN BRIEF

# JANUARY 2012

## INTRODUCTION

SUDAN PREPARES FOR 'FINAL ASSAULT' ON NUBA PEOPLES; TIBETAN VILLAGERS HALT MINE ON SACRED MOUNTAIN; CHIPPEWA STAND AGAINST CONTROVERSIAL MINING BILL

**T**he Triqui women and children who spent 17 months living on the sidewalk outside the Oaxaca's governor's palace in southern Mexico, attempted once again to return home. The still-displaced Triqui people abandoned their community in September 2010 after months of intense paramilitary violence in their community. In December, the governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cue, promised to protect the families if they returned to San Juan Copala. Previous attempts to return home were met with blockades.

Major construction on the Belo Monte Dam commenced on the Xingu River, signaling a new phase in the Brazilian government's intentions to sidestep environmental legislation and human rights conventions to build the world's third largest hydroelectric dam. In response to the work, local protestors paralyzed the fledgling dam site, affirming that resistance to the project was far from over.

The US government rejected a proposal by TransCanada Corporation to build the controversial Keystone XL

pipeline which would bring tarsands crude from northern Alberta to refineries in Texas. The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation applauded the decision, stating its hope that Canada would take a similar position over the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline and Shell Canada's proposed open pit mining projects.

Eight Orang Asli in Malaysia were arrested by the police for trying to set up a blockade and prevent loggers from entering their village in Gua Musang, Kelantan. The villagers were standing against the agricultural project of the local government which would require the cutting down of forest trees in their ancestral land. The blockade was their second attempt to stop the logging after failing to negotiate with the state government.

Black Hills Sioux Nation Treaty Council won a key judgment against RainDancer Resource Management, a company that wanted exclusive rights to economic development on allotted lands. The Company, with its close ties to the oil industry, had a keen interest in funding an 'off shore' or 'central' bank that would, they asserted, be protected by the Sioux Nation's treaty rights and sovereign immunity. The company was barred from conducting any business on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Despite the welcomed shift in Colombia's policy toward Indigenous Peoples, the Awa and Embera Peoples continued to face routine violence at the hands of armed actors in the region. In the first few weeks of January alone, 7 men and women were assassinated in 4 separate attacks, two women and a 12-year-old girl were raped, and two Awa leaders barely escaped an attempt on their lives.

Tibetan Villagers successfully halted a controversial mining operation that threatened Kawagebo, one of the most sacred peaks in the Tibetan world. In the midst of rising tensions, on January 23, a vice-official from the prefecture government heeded the Tibetans' concerns and ordered a Chinese company to close its mine and remove all equipment out of the village.

Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, gave renewed hope to Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The Prime Minister pledged to implement the historic (CHT) Peace Accord treaty, which brought an end to decades of violence in the region. The 1997 Treaty promised recognition for the rights of the indigenous peoples in CHT.

Indonesian security forces continued to maintain a "disproportionate" military offensive in the remote Paniai district of West Papua, intensifying the displacement of tens of thousands of villagers who fled from several weeks of village burnings in December. This was despite Indonesian President Susilo Bambang

Yudhoyhono ordering the immediate suspension of the offensive and withdrawal of all non-organic security forces on December 12.

Papua New Guinea repealed a series of amendments to the country's environmental act, finally restoring the rights of local peoples to their land and to pursue legal action against environmentally destructive resource based projects. The welcomed move came just a few weeks after the Supreme Court opened the legal floodgates for the Metallurgical Corp of China's plan to dump 100 Million Tonnes Of Toxic Waste into the Bismarck Sea.

Around 30 Indigenous representatives met in Copenhagen to discuss the best way to secure Indigenous Peoples' full participation in the 2014 UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. As the representatives knew all too well, the UN is notorious for sidelining Indigenous Peoples at high level meetings and conferences, despite the impact such gatherings tend to have on our rights and our quality life for Indigenous Peoples.

At least four villagers in Cambodia were injured when security guards for a rubber plantation opened fire on a crowd of 200 people who had assembled to block bulldozers from clearing their land. Witnesses said that the private security guards--who were wielding AK-47s--opened fired without warning.

Laura Baymarrwangga, senior traditional owner of Murrungga Island and one of the last remaining Yan-nhangu speakers, set a powerful example for all of Australia. The 95-year-old woman created a series of projects to secure the future of her language and her people under a grassroots effort known as the Crocodile Islands Initiative (CII). These projects included the Crocodile Islands Ranger (CIR) program which provides "coastal surveillance and bio-security" on the islands; the development of a Web-based Yan-nhangu Ecological Knowledge (YEK) DataBase; and a Yan-nhangu dictionary project for kids.

An undercover journalist blew the top off a disturbing controversy in the Andaman Islands. British journalist Gethin Chamberlain, while pretending to be a tourist, recorded a conversation in which a tour operator informed him that it would cost 25 to 30,000 rupees (\$480-\$580) to go 'see' the Jarawa, one of the Indigenous Peoples of the Andaman Islands. The recording confirmed that the notorious 'human safaris' were still taking place in the Union Territory of India. Chamberlain also obtained a shocking video in which Jarawa women and children are being treated like "circus ponies" by a police officer.

Leaders from two Garifuna communities began pursuing legal action against a Canadian citizen over

several fraudulent land sales along the north coast of Honduras. The Garifuna said that Randy Roy Jorgensen, president of the Canadian pornographic video store chain Adults Only Video, was in possession of several contracts that were obtained illegally.

The US Department of Interior finalized protections to stop new mining and mineral exploration on more than a million acres of land around the Grand Canyon National Park. The welcomed news arrived as thousands of mining claims threatened to industrialize the region. The moratorium, however, did nothing to stop existing uranium mines from being re-opened.

In a landmark victory, the Soliga tribe in India's Karnataka state finally had their ancestral land rights recognized – even though that land is now surrounded by a tiger reserve. In 1974, the Soliga were evicted from their homes by the local government in order to protect the state's wildlife. They were subsequently denied the right to collect, use and sell forest produce from within the reserve, known as the Rangaswami Temple Sanctuary.

As the struggle to defend the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory And National Park (TIPNIS) in Bolivia lingered on, another struggle to stop yet another controversial road emerged – in southeastern Peru. The proposed Purus - Iñapari road would connect the Purús, the very headwaters of the Amazon and one of the world's most remote, most intact and most culturally important natural areas, with the newly paved Interoceanic Highway in Madre de Dios.

The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa began working alongside several NGOs to stop a controversial mining bill that would gut existing environmental protections and effectively silence the public in order to streamline mining projects in the state of Wisconsin. The mining company GTAC, who helped author the bill, was pushing for a massive 20-mile long, 1/3 mile deep open-pit iron mine an arm's stretch away from the Bad River Indian Reservation.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) decided to reverse its 2010 recommendation to suspend mining activity at Goldcorp's Marlin gold mine, sounding an alarm that the IACHR may be turning into a useless body human rights. It was the second time in less than 12 months that the IACHR gave in to a government's demands, at the expense of indigenous peoples.

Loggers in Brazil reportedly captured an eight-year-old girl, tied her to a tree and burned her alive. The log-

gers were said to be doing business with the Gwaja's neighbours, the Guajajara, when they encountered the young girl who had wandered away from her village to play. At the time it was reported, government officials had declined to investigate the barbaric murder.

An exploration project in South Australia was blocked by a court ruling in favour of the land's traditional owners. Argonaut Resources and its joint venture partner, Straits Resources Ltd, were planning to drill for copper, gold and iron-oxide after receiving ministerial approval. South Australian Supreme Court ruled, however, that the traditional owners were not properly consulted before the approval was issued.

A Samburu community accused the African World Life Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Kenya Wildlife Service and others of trampling on their rights and



scheming to illegally evict them from their lands in Laikipia East District, Kenya. The Community also appealed to the Centre for International Human Rights Law and Advocacy (CIHRA) to pursue any legal means necessary to hold the violators accountable for the unlawful actions.

Following several high profile cases of police violence and killings of activists protesting land grabs in Indonesia, a new alliance emerged to demand the repeal of laws that enabled the State to expropriate people's lands and resources. The alliance, which brought together Indigenous Peoples, farmers, workers and landless people as well as supportive NGOs also set their sights on demanding new laws to secure lands and ensure ecological justice through agrarian reforms and the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights.

The Oakland Institute (OI) and its partner organization, Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), uncovered several reports on Ethiopia where Indigenous Peoples and other local communities were being

Photo Credit  
alaina.buzas



coerced and forcibly removed from their lands to make way for large-scale agricultural plantations. In doing so, the government aggravated a food crisis in the region while laying the groundwork for even more famine in Ethiopia. USAID was helping to fund the displacement effort with US taxpayer money.

The government of Sudan began taking steps towards what appeared to be a 'final assault' on the Nuba Peoples in South Kordofan. The U.S.-based Satellite Sentinel Project released a series of images indicating that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) had surrounded the remaining local civilian population in the Nuba Mountains and closed off existing evacuation routes used by Nuba refugees to flee constant aerial and artillery bombardments. The Nuba Peoples feared the worst.

The Ngok Dinka, meanwhile, filed a formal complaint before the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism and to six UN Special Rapporteurs over the Government of Sudan's refusal to admit its human rights violations against them. Such violations included the forced displacement of over 10,000 people in May 2011.

According to an online petition, the villagers, who have a rich and very old tradition of community conservation, won legal recognition to their lands in 2006 after a decade-long struggle with the government. Their land is a recognized global biodiversity hotspot that also happens to be prone to earthquakes. The government seems content to ignore all of this so that it can serve the water needs of Mumbai, the capital city of Maharashtra.

Indigenous Peoples in Australia celebrated the 40th anniversary of the 'Aboriginal Tent Embassy' first established under a beach umbrella on the lawns of Parliament House in 1972. The Tent Embassy brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from all over Australia to protest government policy. Today, it's an international symbol of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

Brazil's Indian Agency (Fundação Nacional do Índio or FUNAI) approved the demarcation of some 146,000 hectares of land for the Xavante Peoples. The area was illegally sold to private interests in the 1950s and, to accommodate the new non-indigenous owners, the Indigenous residents were tossed out. The recent FUNAI decision means the non-indigenous occupants

within the 146,000 hectare area must now leave.

Barriere Lake Algonquins and allies rallied in front of the Crown and First Nations leadership' meeting in Ottawa to demand Canada recognize Barriere Lake's Customary Government. In April 2010, the Minister of Indian Affairs used section 74 of the Indian Act to impose a foreign system of governance at Barriere Lake in an effort to evade signed agreements and recognizing the First Nation's legitimate leadership.

Members of the Bukidnon-Tagoloan tribe held a ceremony to assert their ownership of ancestral territory and reclaim a sacred spring that had been long forgotten. During their absence from the site, a privately-owned hog slaughterhouse was constructed close by the spring.

The Federation Of Native Communities Of The Ampiyacu (FECONA) Peru condemned the actions of David Nilsson, Australia's so-called "carbon cowboy", who defrauded indigenous peoples under the guise of providing benefits through the use of carbon credits. In a public statement, FECONA exposed the individuals fairly intricate scam and urged others to "become informed" before signing any kind of documents.

An Ecuadorean appeals court upheld a ruling that Chevron must pay damages totalling \$18.2bn for its devastating oil pollution in the Amazon (The original ruling ordered Chevron to pay \$8.6bn in damages; the amount was more than doubled after the company failed to make a public apology). Chevron said that the judgement--which set the stage for the seizure of the company's assets--was "illegitimate" and "a fraud".

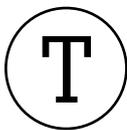


IN BRIEF

# FEBRUARY 2012

## INTRODUCTION

MALAYSIAN COMMUNITIES DEMAND HALT TO PROPOSED DAMS;  
MEXICO JUDICIARY RULES IN FAVOR OF THE WIXARIKA; NEW BILL  
PROPOSED IN ISRAEL TO TURN PRAWER PLAN INTO LAW



The Wixarika people--after campaigning for seventeen straight months to protect their sacred territory--were granted a major reprieve by the federal courts in Mexico.

First Majestic's Silver's plan to exploit the minerals that lie dormant in the sacred territory of Wirikuta was formally suspended. The courts also ruled that no further mining permits within Wirikuta will be granted as long as the Wixarika's concerns remains unresolved.

Indigenous activists in Taiwan sent up smoke signals in a symbolic action to demand the government make amends for wrongful policies against indigenous peoples and to create an inclusive constitution for all of Taiwan's Peoples. The annual relay of smoke signals was taken up a total of 46 indigenous communities. In response to the event, the government promised to heed the call of tribal peoples for self rule and do its best to help resolve the issue of systematic encroachment of their traditional lands.

Security forces in India shut down a series preparatory meetings where food supplies were being organized for an important religious festival in Orissa, India. The now-famous Dongria Kondh tribe was trying to get ready for their Niyamraja ritual. During the ceremony, the Dongria Kondh take an oath never to leave their sacred mountain, which continues to face threats by the equally-infamous UK company Vedanta Resources.

A Nyoongar Tent Embassy was established in response to a Billion dollar proposal by the Western Australia government that would have forced the Nyoon-

gar People to surrender their land title, permanently. Many of those involved in the Embassy were local Indigenous activists who had just finished commemorating the 40th anniversary of the iconic Aboriginal Tent Embassy in front of the Old Parliament House in Canberra. The City of Perth, however, considered the Nyoongar Tent Embassy to be illegal. On at least three separate occasions they tried to shut it down.

Malaysian communities asked the government to immediately halt their plans to build twelve new hydro-electric dams in Sarawak and to hold a referendum on dam construction. The call arrived on the heels of an important conference that was organized by the newly formed Save Rivers Network. Participants at the conference similarly called for an end to the dams, which threatened to displace tens of thousands of Indigenous peoples. Conference members also called for government to start promoting micro-hydro, solar, wind and biomass energy generation instead of mega-dams.

Some members of the Keeseekoowenin First Nation blocked a road near Riding Mountain National Park to protest the destruction of fishing nets by unknown persons. "Some of the nets were sunk because the lines had clearly been cut. We've followed (net) tracks for miles and miles that have been pulled up by Skidoos and we can't recover them," a spokesperson said. The RCMP said they're monitoring the blockade; however, they said nothing about investigating the sabotage.

The Triqui people of San Juan Copala are returning to the Palace of Governance in Oaxaca de Juárez after a series of shameful moves by the Oaxaca government.

Things were finally starting to look up for the Triqui, who had finally secured an agreement with Oaxaca Governor Gabino Cué that would provide an armed escort to accompany the Triqui on their return home. Unfortunately, a string of bad faith moves followed; including an unrealistic set of conditions, and, if you can believe it, a police blockade to stop the Triqui from proceeding.

In northwestern Indonesia, a group of villagers were gunned down after confronting a palm oil company that claims to own the villager's land. The company, MAI, unlawfully brought four pieces of heavy equipment onto the disputed land, despite a long-standing court judgement that sided with the villagers. During the confrontation, MAI security officers who were joined by The Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) opened fire, killing five. The Brimob also arrested five others.

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a disappointing district court decision to dismiss a 2009 lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Save the Peaks Coalition had originally challenged a USFS move to allow the use of treated sewage effluent on the San Francisco Peaks, a mountain that's sacred to more than a dozen Indigenous nations. In the decision, Ninth Circuit Judge M. Smith alleged that the "case represents a gross abuse of the judicial process" because they essentially rehashed the first lawsuit. The Court of Appeals also reversed a previous panel's ruling that the USFS approval violated the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

The indigenous Wapichan people of Guyana came forward with a new grassroots proposal that would allow them to care for 1.4 million hectares of pristine rainforest on their traditional territory. The Wapichan's proposal, which centered on a digital map they created using GPS technology, would also secure their traditional economic practices as well as sites of cultural, spiritual and biological importance in the region. Given the industrial threats to Wapichan territory, the proposal came none too soon.

The Belize Department of Geology and Petroleum announced that it would order US Capital Energy to halt all illegal seismic work on a Maya community's lands and remove all markers it placed along a seismic trail that cut through it. At the time it was reported, the community was still waiting for a written copy of the Geology and Petroleum Department's order to US Capital.

A proposed bill in Israel would turn the controversial

Prayer Plan into law, paving the government's way to dispossess the Bedouin People of their lands and relocate them to impoverished townships. The controversial bill was almost completely ignored by both local and international media as well as pro-Palestinian support groups.

Members from five Mapuche-Pehuenche communities occupied a municipal government office over the lack of water in their communities. The protest was reportedly sparked by a bidding process that was delayed because of 'irregularities' including possible intimidation and coercion.

A total of 47 villagers were arrested and another 5 needed hospital treatment after hundreds of Indian police and Vedanta security guards confronted a peaceful demonstration in the state of Orissa, India. The villagers had come together to protest against a new toxic mine waste dump that threatened to disrupt their way of life.

One Ngobe protester died and several more were injured and arrested during a series of confrontations with Panamanian police forces. The demonstrators were standing up to the government's decision to re-



move a law that provided environmental protections to their lands. Following the assault, a noteworthy agreement was reached in which all the detained protesters would be freed, all the injured would receive medical attention, the family of the student leader who died would get compensation, and a full human rights investigation would be carried out over the way the protests were handled. A second agreement followed which assured that no mining exploration or exploitation will take place in the Ngobe Comarca (communal territory).

Ngobe highway blockade. Photo Credit Jennifer Kennedy

Tenzin Choedron, an 18-year-old Tibetan nun, became the latest Tibetan to die in protest against the Chinese government. On February 11, Tenzin Choedron set



herself on fire, just a few kilometers outside of the remote town of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in occupied Tibet. She was the 21st confirmed Tibetan to self-immolate since February 2009. The areas in Occupied Tibet where the immolations took place are considered no-go zones to foreign reporters, but a British newspaper journalist managed to enter Ngaba to document what was happening.

A land deal between Paraguayan authorities and a private land owner ensured that the Enxet community of Yakye Axa can finally return to a normal way of life. The deal brought an end to a struggle that lasted nearly two decades, during which time the community was forced to live right beside a major highway without access to water or regular food supplies.

On the second anniversary of a landmark ruling by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), Minority Rights Group International condemned the Kenyan government's lack of commitment towards ensuring justice for the Endorois people and urged authorities to immediately restore ownership of their ancestral lands around the Lake Bogoria National Reserve. Although the Commission recognized,--for the first time in the continent--indigenous peoples' rights over traditionally occupied land and their right to be involved in, and benefit from, any development affecting their land, the Endorois still had no land title, and received no compensation for the loss they suffered.

In Costa Rica, the Bribri community of Alto Durigna opposed the implementation of the controversial mechanism known as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) in their territories. The community, settled close to the border of Panama, was alarmed about the intention of the Fondo Forestal de Fomento Forestal to commodify roughly one thousand hectares of forest land that surrounds two important places in the Bribri's cosmology.

Rio Tinto, one of the most notorious mining companies around, did something good for a change. After more than over ten years of discussions with the Cheslatta Carrier Nation, the company announced that it would hand over 11,690 acres of former reserve land. In April, 1952 the First Nation was forced to surrender the lands to make way for the construction of a reservoir to power the Kemano hydroelectric dam.

The O'odham Peoples sent out a call to help defend their most significant and sacred ceremonial site located in Quitovac, Sonora, Mexico. The company Silver Scott Mines Inc. proposed to develop an open pit mine that would detrimentally impact the area as well as the health of the O'odham. The request urged people to do "everything possible to stop this proposed open pit mine".

The world's biggest wildlife conservation groups--including the World Wide Fund (WWF), Conservation International and the Nature Conservancy--agreed to greenwash industrial agriculture in exchange for a few vague promises of habitat protection, sustainability and social justice.

The prime minister of Cambodia signed a sub-decree to protect 480,000 hectares of the Prey Lang forest, a region of vital social and economic importance to the Kuy Peoples (Prey Lang means 'Our Forest' in the Kuy language). While greeted with some satisfaction from environmental groups, Kuy Kuy themselves were deeply concerned over the prime minister's decision to not only prohibit environmentally destructive projects in the area but also the Kuy's right of access. Under the sub-decree, it is illegal to collect, vines, roots, medicinal plants and more from the forest.





IN BRIEF

# MARCH 2012

## INTRODUCTION

AUSTRALIA PASSES LEGISLATION TO STORE NUCLEAR WASTE ON INDIGENOUS LAND; HIMBA PEOPLE REACH OUT TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY; MUSQUEAM FIRST NATION HALTS CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CONDOMINIUM

**M**exico's Supreme Court issued a surprise judgement that a Tarahumara (Raramuri) community in the state of Chihuahua possessed the constitutional right to participate in the decision-making of any project that would affect them. The high court also stated that relevant national law is similar to the International Labor Organization's Convention No. 169, a legally-binding international agreement that protects the rights of indigenous Peoples Mexico is among the 22 nations

to ratify ILO 169.

The National Indian government approved the first of two Russian-designed nuclear reactors at Koodankulam (Kudankulam) in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The unsettling move was met with a massive uprising involving up to 20,000 locals and protests around the country. The government's response was severe: As an initial response, thousands of armed policemen began terrorizing the local

protesters. As many as 3,000 people were arrested. A media blackout was also in effect throughout the duration of the arrests.

Nyoongar activists were repeatedly confronted by police on Heirisson Island, where a Nyoongar Tent Embassy had been established. Since the Tent Embassy began in opposition to a government proposal that would force the Nyoongar to permanently surrender their land title--there were at least 6 confrontations in which police arrested activists, seized their property and dismantled the Embassy. The determined Nyoongar and their allies, however, refused to back down.

Naga Youth in Burma formed a new group to resist the construction of the Tamanthi Dam which is located at Homlin township in Naga area, Myanmar. Once completed, the Dam reservoir would flood some 1400 sq kms, permanently displacing 53 Naga villages, 15 villages inhabited by both Naga and Kuki people and 14 Kuki villages. At least 2400 people were already relocated at gun point.

Fishermen in Palawan were urged to follow the traditional sustainable fishing methods of the Tagbanua people. Over the years, destructive and careless fishing practices depleted the population of Irrawaddy dolphins, bringing them to the edge of extinction. The Tagbanua, who consider dolphins to be messengers, limit themselves to catching certain fish species based on the position of the moon or the tide. They also share their catch among neighbors and relatives, avoiding wastage and overfishing.

The Chinese government introduced a new policy that placed almost every Buddhist monastery in Tibet under the direct rule of government officials. The officials would be permanently stationed in each religious institution. According to official documents, the new policy was described as "critical for taking the initiative in the struggle against separatism," and aimed to "ensure that monks and nuns do not take part in activities of splitting up the motherland and disturbing social order."

The Australian government passed new legislation to allow nuclear waste storage at a remote indigenous community in the Northern Territory, a decision that indigenous groups and environmentalists vowed to fight. Muckaty Station was nominated by the Northern Land Council in 2007; But since then several traditional owners argued they were not properly consulted and did not give their consent.

In Ecuador, A group of women led protests against a Chinese-financed Canadian copper mining project, the first large-scale mine under a new government mining policy. The women said the project would damage Amazonia's fragile ecosystem, affecting "for all time the territory of indigenous people and nature".

CONAIE also came forward against the mine as well as President Correa's plans to let companies carry out large-scale mining projects. In response to CONAIE, the Ecuadorian government mounted a march of its own, on International Womens' Day.

Dozens of Musqueam First Nation members and supporters joined forces to halt the construction of a new 5-storey condominium that threatened an ancient village and midden site known as cusnaum. After successfully preventing contractors from entering the site, the demonstrators set up a blockade camp to maintain a permanent presence at cusnaum, also known as Marpole Midden. The camp was dismantled on March 14 to make way for a three-week period of negotiations.

Representatives of Moro and Lumad communities in Mindanao signed a five-point kinship covenant in a gathering filled with remembrances of historical relationships and aspirations for peace and unity in the island. The inspiring covenant cited mutual recognition and respect (kilalaha), mutual sharing of information (sayuda), cooperation (buliga), mutual protection and preservation of life (uyaga), and mutual obligation to help the needy (pagbatunbatuna).

Quebec police dismantled a blockade that was organized by a group of Innu citizens to protest the construction of hydro transmission lines through their traditional territory. No one was injured during the court-backed offensive, which the Innu passively tried to resist. The blockade/checkpoint went up soon after Innu representatives walked away from negotiations with the Hydro company.

Indigenous Peoples throughout Sarawak came together for the sake of their ancestors and future generations. Under the banner of "Save Sarawak Rivers" (SAVE Rivers), affected Indigenous Peoples like the Kenyahs, Ibans, Penans, Bidayuh and Ukits joined with local organizations and concerned individuals to halt the construction of new hydro dams and other plans to bring 'dirty industries' to Sarawak.

The Indigenous Peoples Confederation of Honduras (CONPAH) released a statement calling on the government of Honduras to withdraw a REDD proposal submitted to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. The statement declared that the Honduran government failed to consult local Indigenous peoples, whose land would be used for various forestation programs, before submitting the proposal.

Tomkav, a Luiseno village and burial site in Northern San Diego County, was desecrated by developers working for Pardee Homes and Palomar College in San Marcos, CA. During the course of work, many archeologically significant discoveries were made,



and dozens of Luiseno burials were unearthed; but rather than halt work the construction activities were increased. To make matters worse, the construction workers actually celebrated their work, laughing and giving each other high fives as Luiseno Elders and others watched on.

The Himba people, who have long seen their rights trampled upon by the Namibia government, turned to the United Nations and the international community to intervene on their behalf. A statement signed by all 36 Traditional Himba Leaders revealed a lengthy list of abuses concerning rights to land, cultural identity, lack of consultation relating to mining and dam construction, land grabbing, interference in ancestral tribal institutions and routine oppression.

It was announced that the “Federal Republic of West Papua” had been registered with the UN Security Council in order to receive international recognition. The land of West Papua was unceremoniously handed over to Indonesia in the 1960s, after considerable pressure by the USA. The Peoples of West Papua were denied the right to choose their own futures. While Indonesia is unlikely to recognize the new government, it was certainly a step in the right direction: for West Papua.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) exposed the unprecedented challenges facing the Dukha Peoples--Mongolia’s reindeer herders--from unregulated mining, logging, water pollution and, climate change to controversial tourism practices and the reduction of herding practices; most of which can be pin-pointed to one single event: the transformation of Mongolia to a market economy.

The German government killed a motion that urged the Bundestag (the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany) to acknowledge the genocidal massacre of Indigenous People in Namibia’s colonial past. Following an extermination order from German General Lothar von Trotha in 1904, more than 70,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama people were killed in a concerted effort to rid the country of its Indigenous population.

The Winnemem Wintu embarked on an ambitious project to create a multidimensional map of their sacred sites using state-of-the-art technology, Google Earth, oral history recordings and photographs. The project aim was to depict the tribe’s historical and spiritual connection to the land, which could be used to teach future generations and protect their sites from encroaching development.

The State of Israel began to consider a new bill that would turn the Praver Plan into law, paving the way for Israel to dispossess the Bedouin Peoples of their land and relocate them to impoverished townships. The proposed bill, like controversial plan and the Bedouin



themselves, meanwhile, continued to be ignored by the international community, including the Palestinian solidarity movement.

Photo Credit: Physicians for Human Rights - Israel

A group of Lakota were arrested for trying to stop two tarsands pipeline trucks from crossing the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. The trucks, which carried over \$2.5 million in mining equipment, were travelling from Texas to the tarsands in northern Alberta, Canada. The owner of the equipment chose to cut through Pine Ridge to avoid paying the state of South Dakota a \$50,000 fee per truck.

The province of Ontario declared 23,000 km<sup>2</sup> of traditional Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) land off limits to mining companies, the single largest withdrawal in Ontario’s history. The impressive move, however, was not without controversy. The province failed to consult the First Nation before making the decision, a fact the KI strongly spoke out against.



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IN BRIEF

# APRIL 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

WINNEMEM CHALLENGE U.S. FOREST SERVICE TO PROTECT WOMEN DURING SACRED CEREMONY; CANADA WITHDRAWS THIRD-PARTY MANAGER FROM ATTAWAPISKAT; INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT MINISTER REJECTS VEDANTA'S PLAN TO EXPAND CONTROVERSIAL MINE

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The Vancouver-based company, Curis Resources, Canadian mining company started pursuing a license for a new in-Situ copper mine in Florence, AZ, which borders the southern edge of the O'odham Gila River Indian community. The proposed mine would pump roughly 10 billion pounds of toxic sulfuric acid into the ground over the course of 20 years, seriously jeopardizing O'odham water resources and sacred sites.

Chile's Supreme Court ratified a lower court ruling that rendered Goldcorp's environmental assessment for the El Morro mine null and void, due to a number of irregularities including the company's failure to properly consult the Diaguita Huascoatinos Indigenous and Agricultural Community, whose lands would be destroyed if the mine is built. Goldcorp later announced that it would not stop working until it received an order declaring the Resolution of Environmental Quality, a kind of environmental permit, to be without effect.

An oil spill in northern Russia damaged fragile reindeer pastures in yet another blow to the Nenets people. Vladimir Bezumov, chief of the local office of the Russian Environmental Agency, estimated that some 2,000 tons of oil gushed out of an exploratory well, damaging as much as 14,000 square meters of land. The indigenous communities said their traditional way of life has been devastated by the oil industry. "There is no future for us. People are dying. If oil companies behaved correctly, they would ask us, where drilling is possible and where not... now all the rivers are blocked here, and fish has nowhere to go."

India's environment minister shot down a proposal by UK-listed Vedanta to expand its Orissa alumina refinery. The welcomed decision was widely viewed as the end of the highly-controversial Nyamgiri mine project. However, a regional peoples' organization issued a stark warning: "...Vedanta might try all other tricks to accomplish its dirty agenda...[It] might find a back door [by coming] up with a joint venture project with L&T to mine Kutru Mali and Silji Mali near Kashipur to feed its Lanjigarh plant..."

A delegation of Winnemem from northern California challenged the U.S. Forest Service to protect indigenous women from racial slurs and physical harm during coming of age ceremonies planned for the summer. Caleen Sisk, Winnemem Chief and Spiritual Leader, explained that the Tribe's past two Coming of Age Ceremonies were disrupted by racial slurs, alcohol use, and indecent exposure from passersby in motorboats who refused to honor a voluntary closure. These boaters, Chief Sisk explained, also endanger the physical safety of young tribal members who swim across the river as part of the ceremony.

In a major turn-around for the opponents of the Chinese-owned Ramu Nickel Mine in Papua New Guinea, the Minister of Environment and Conservation ordered the company, MCC, to halt work so he could further examine the environmental impacts of the mining project's tailings pipeline. The widely opposed Ramu nickel cobalt mine has "alot" of environmental risks associated with it.

The Amazon Defense Coalition condemned shocking

claims by a lawyer representing Chevron. Speaking before a panel of international investment arbitrators, the lawyer asserted that all 30,000 people affected by Chevron's 16 billion gallons of oil pollution in Ecuador are and have always been "irrelevant". The lawyer also asserted that no Ecuadorians had been harmed or were in danger of being harmed (there are hundreds upon hundreds of cancer cases).

Human-rights groups turned to Canada's highest court in an effort to sue a Canadian mining company on behalf of the victims of a massacre that took place in the Congo 8 years ago. The groups alleged that Anvil Mining Limited provided logistical support to the Congolese military who raped and murdered people as it crushed a rebel uprising in 2004, killing as many as 100 people in the port city of Kilwa.

The Philippine government's House Committee on National Cultural Communities (NCC) said it would investigate reported rights violations of thousands of indigenous peoples who have been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands to make way for the military. For those who haven't been removed, war games, weapon testing, and various military operations continuously disrupt daily lives.

Several prominent indigenous organizations across India began a campaign to pressure mainstream political leaders to nominate a tribal leader for the country's next President. As noted in a memorandum by one of the campaigning organizations, "In India's 65 years of independence, we have had Muslim, Sikh and Scheduled Caste President from the minority section of society, but the people of India have never had a President, Vice-President or Prime Minister from the Adivasis (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples) of this country". During that same time frame, 65 years, Indigenous Peoples have been continuously "neglected, suppressed, oppressed, marginalized and exploited."

A mining company was accused of deliberately desecrating a sacred site in central Australia. According to a lawsuit by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, OM Mining was fully aware that the site known as "Two Women Sitting Down" was unstable and could be damaged if mining activities in the area continued. The company however, did not stop their work or take any serious measures to ensure the site's security. The rock formation, which carried enormous spiritual and cultural meaning and significance for the Warramungu people, was split in half.

The Pit River Tribe in northern California affirmed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is the third Nation in the United States to do so (others being Gila River in 2008 and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma in 2010). In a resolution, Pit River also affirmed its inherent right to self-determination and the full recognition and effective implementation of the rights identified in the Declaration which will enhance relations between the Pit River Tribe and the United States.

In northern Ontario, Attawapiskat First Nation finally got some news worth celebrating. Aboriginal Affairs (AANDC) Minister John Duncan announced the withdrawal of the third-party manager that was imposed on the northern community last year in response to a widely-publicized housing crisis. Attawapiskat welcomed the move, but not without criticizing claims by AANDC as to the 'effectiveness' of the third-party manager. The First Nation also said it won't back down from the lawsuit against the government for imposing third-party management in the first place.

The Hitorangi clan of the indigenous Rapa Nui people carried out a peaceful protest in response to an esoteric conference that was being held at Hanga Roa



Hotel, a building that sits on the Hitorangi clan's ancestral land. Two years ago, the Rapa Nui occupied the hotel--along with 17 government buildings--in an effort to reclaim their ancestral land rights on the island of Rapanui (also known as "Easter Island" and "Te Pito te Henua", the Navel of the World).

Photo Credit: Rapa Nui Press

Indigenous leaders in Peru came out against the government's newly-enacted Prior Consultation Law that many groups have applauded around the world. The leaders' greatest concern was that the legislation--"intended to prevent social conflicts by improving dialogue with communities"--would not be legally binding. The Legal Defense Institute also pointed out that several ambiguities are present in the law, which



could provide loopholes and lead to arbitrary interpretations that favour industry. Peru's largest indigenous organization, AIDSESEP, said it intends to have the law repealed.

Two people died and three others were injured following a confrontation between indigenous peoples and loggers in Panama. Leading up to the confrontation, a group of Wounaan had attempted to destroy logging equipment that was being used to cut down Cocobolo trees (a type of rosewood that's prized around the world). The loggers, employees of Maderera company, were supposed to suspend their activities as per an order by the government. Following the confrontation, Police carried out a raid to evict the illegal loggers.

Dioncounda Traore, the civilian transition president of Mali, pledged "total war" against the Tuareg rebels who seized control of the country's northern region, an effort that led to a military coup against Mali's democratically-elected former President. He stated to a cheering crowd, "We won't hesitate to wage a total, relentless war to regain our territorial integrity and also to kick out of our country all these invaders who bring despair and misery." The vast region that was seized, is a part of Azawad, the Tuareg's ancestral territory.

Hopi and Navajo former leaders responded to Senate Bill 2109, the so-called "Navajo and Hopi Little Colorado River Water Rights Settlement Act of 2012". The controversial bill would ensure that non-Indian corporate interests could continue to exploit local fresh water resources in exchange for the Hopi and Navajo's right to that same water.

A major alliance was founded in Nepal that brought together some 60 different indigenous nationalities to push for identity-based federalism with autonomy in the country's new constitution. A representative of the alliance warned that they would soon begin to carry out indefinite strikes throughout the country if the government remained indifferent to their crucial demands.

The Malaysian government asserted that Orang Asli Peoples are not Indigenous Peoples and that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) applies to all Malay citizens. When asked what the Orang Asli are considered, given that the Malays are indigenous people, an official answered that they were merely 'Orang Asli' or 'Aboriginals'. The term Orang Asli means "natural people."

Two people died and three others were injured following a confrontation between indigenous peoples and loggers in Panama. Leading up to the confrontation, a group of Wounaan had attempted to destroy logging equipment that was being used to cut down Cocobolo trees (a type of rosewood that's prized around the world). The loggers, employees of Maderera company, were supposed to suspend their activities as per an order by the government. Following the confrontation, Police carried out a raid to evict the illegal loggers.

Six Penan communities sent letters to the Norwegian CEO of Sarawak Energy (SEB), the Malaysian power company behind the controversial Baram mega-dam in Sarawak to demand that all work surrounding the dam be halted. If completed, the 1,200 MW dam would flood the Penan's heavily depleted ancestral lands, affecting a total of 20,000 people and a rainforest area exceeding 400 km<sup>2</sup>.

A group of Achuar delegates travelled to Canada to confront a Canadian oil company, Talisman Energy, for oil drilling in their ancestral territory in the Peruvian Amazon, without their consent. In 2008 the company's CEO promised that "Talisman will not work in Peru in areas in which it does not have an agreement with the community." The Achuar demanded the company to honor its word.

The Tuareg-led National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Mouvement National De Liberation de l'Azawad - MNLA) took advantage of a military coup in Mali, by taking control of ancestral lands that were taken from them in the 1800s. The MNLA had already been working to seize the lands alongside the Islamist group the Ansar Dine, when a group of military personnel became fed-up with the government's handling of the situation. The Soliders arrested the country's president and suspended the constitution, creating a power vacuum that allowed the MNLA to secure their remaining lands almost effortlessly.



IN BRIEF

# MAY 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

### US JUDGE THROWS OUT QUECHAN REQUEST FOR INJUNCTION AGAINST WIND PROJECT; WINNEMEM WINTU CLOSE DOWN MC-CLOUD RIVER DURING WAR DANCE

**T**he Chilean Supreme Court unanimously rejected arguments made by the Hito clan of the Rapa Nui people in a case about lands on Easter Island. For years, the Hito clan has attempted to regain control over a parcel of land that was traditionally in their possession, what is currently the site for a luxury hotel on the Island. The Supreme Court's rejection included statements that, in 1888, all inhabitants on Easter Island became illegal squatters.

The Canadian-based Anuak Justice Council (AJC) called on South Sudan President Salva Kiir to provide safety to the Indigenous Anuak Peoples. As explained in the AJC petition, the newly-established government was cooperating with the Ethiopian government in the deportation of seventeen Anuak from the Alari Refugee Camp. Once in Ethiopia, AJC warned, the Anuak group "... are certain to face imprisonment, torture and maybe death under the dictatorial leadership of Meles Zenawi."

A U.S. Federal judge threw out the Quechan Nation's request for an injunction against the controversial Ocotillo Express Wind Project in California. The Quechan filed the injunction days after the Bureau of Land Management gave "fast-track" approval for the project. In their petition, the Quechan explained that, by approving the project, the Department of Interior violated a bulky set of federal laws, regulations, and policies. The 10,150-acre project area contains 287 archaeological sites and at least 12 burial sites, all of which would be likely desecrated or destroyed by the massive wind farm.

Dozens of environmental justice activists led by Haudenosaunee citizens successfully shut down Enbridge Line 9 hearings in London, Ontario. Members of the National Energy Board had traveled to hear presentations from major oil conglomerates and environmental NGOs. After successfully disrupting the meeting, Haudenosaunee representatives explained that they had not been consulted about the pipeline plans, which would negatively impact their lands.

Members of the Musqueam First Nation and their supporters shut down traffic on the Arthur Laing Bridge in Vancouver, BC, Canada. The action came after weeks of organizing to protect ancient burial grounds at the foot of the bridge. BC Premier Clark, however, continued to refuse to do the right thing, for the Musqueam.

A new Mining bill was brought before the Parliament of India that would bury the rights of Indigenous communities to their lands. "The very premise of the scheme," commented Binda Karat, "replicates the patron-client relationship, which has reduced tribal communities into recipients of charity, instead of recognition as owners of the land and its resources."

According to a leaked report obtained by the Guardian, an environmental consultancy firm withheld evidence that "Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation" (so-called "Uncontacted Tribes") were located in an area where the UK oil company Perenco operated. The revelation arrived just a few weeks after E-Tech International released a highly critical report on the company's "1970s-era" project plans.

The Wixarika (Huichol) People slammed Mexico's measures to protect thousands of acres of their sacred land. Despite being hailed as a victory by the media and the general public, the Wixarika leadership stated that it was nothing more than a "media ploy", because it only amounted to one percent of their land.

Winnemem Wintu members joined with other Indigenous Peoples and environmental activists to shut down Lake Shasta in conjunction with the Tribe's four-day War Dance (H'up Chonas in the Winnemem language) at the site where they have held their Coming of Age ceremonies for thousands of years. The War Dance signified the tribe's spiritual commitment to defend--at all costs--the ceremony from heckling, flashing and other disruptions by recreational boaters.

After decades of struggle, Indigenous Peoples in El Salvador finally gained recognition in the country's constitution – a first step towards recovering their community identity, which they have been denied by the state and by society at large. As reported by IPS News, Article 63 of the constitution would be modified to acknowledge indigenous languages and other expressions of indigenous culture.

Construction began at the Arizona Snowbowl ski area, near Flagstaff, Arizona. Earlier this year, Indigenous activists lost their stand against the development project that would use treated wastewater to generate snow on the San Francisco Peaks. However the plan also became the subject of new talks between the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service following the discovery that a federally endangered plant could be threatened.

The Tao people spoke out against a nuclear waste storage facility on Orchid Island off the coast of Taiwan. Four years after the first Taiwanese nuclear power plant was built (in 1970), the Taiwan Atomic Energy Council decided to dump its nuclear waste at Orchid Island, where the Tao people (Yami) have lived for generations. More than twenty years later, the radioactive waste barrels have eroded with rust.

The ministers of the Supreme Court of Paraguay withdrew the tenure of settlers who were illegally permitted to invade Indigenous Land in the 1960s. As a result of the decision, the Pataxó Hã-Hã-Hãe, after nearly a century, were ensured full occupation of the territory demarcated in 1938.

The O'odham community of Gila River came out in full

force against the proposed Florence Copper Project. In addition to ever-growing grassroots opposition, The Gila River Tribal Council voted 15-0 to oppose the project. A resolution from the Tribal Council cited the possible impact on water resources.

The Paris-based Collective for the Defence of Malagasy Lands ("Collectif pour la défense des terres malgaches" or TANY) asked the international community to urge the heads of Sherritt International Inc. to address the human and environmental impacts of the Ambatovy nickel and cobalt mine in Madagascar. The construction phase of the project alone led to at least four sulphur dioxide spills, leading to the deaths of two adults and two infants.

A peaceful demonstration against human rights violations in West Papua was subverted by members of Indonesia's Police and military forces. The peaceful action had been organized by the transitional government declared by the newly-established Federated Republic of West Papua (FRWP). The police forces set up blockades to prevent the demonstration from going



ahead, arrested several individuals, confiscated banners and attacked at least one village. Following the demonstration, the governor of Saireri under FRWP was charged with treason.

Photo Credit Martin Pelcher

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni Peoples (MOSOP) issued an alert that the Ogoni would disengage its relationship with Nigeria in the event of another civil war targeting the natural wealth, especially crude oil and natural gas deposits in Ogoniland. It would, instead, embark on a journey to regain its sovereign independence violated by the British Empire in 1901.

Wolf Lake and Eagle Village First Nation raised concerns about a proposed rare earth open pit mine on their traditional lands in Western Quebec. In a joint



statement, the Two Algonquin Nations pointed to the sizable controversy surrounding rare earth mining and processing, which tends to have severe environmental impacts. Rare earths, used in everything from mobile phones to Tomahawk Cruise Missiles are quite harmless by themselves; however, they are often accompanied by radioactive substances like thorium and uranium.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) built two high-tech greenhouses and a field experiment station to cultivate plants native to the area around Hanford in Washington State, where you can find the most contaminated land in North America. The project enabled the CTUIR to begin the long process of revegetating formerly contaminated areas, like the Hanford Site (home to two-thirds of America's high-level radioactive waste) and the Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon.

There was a horrifying surge of violence against indigenous people in Bangladesh, including the rapes and murders of several young girls, a grenade attack against Jumma students attending a peaceful public meeting, the murder of 4 indigenous labourers and the gang rape of an indigenous woman by a group of Bengali settlers. Human rights group urged the government to intervene by ensuring the security of the Jumma and other marginalised communities and to pursue legal against the perpetrators; the government did nothing.

The Tahltan Nation of northwest B.C. said they will fight the construction of the Red Chris gold-copper mine unless the risk of water pollution is minimized on their traditional lands. The controversial project would transform part of Klappan Valley into a vast tailings pond near the Sacred headwaters of the Stikine, the Nass and the Skeena rivers.

The Embera-Chami Peoples made it known that their ancestral territory in Colombia should no longer be referred to by its colonial name, "Christendom". Rather, the Embera-Chami said, it should be known as "Karmata Rua" which means "Land of Pringamoza" (Pringamoza is a type of Shrub; its leaves are often applied to tumors).

The Botswana government sent a contingent of Army, Police, and Department of Wildlife and National Parks officers to a camp at Metsiyanong in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve - in order to discourage a nearby

Kilauea, which is considered a living deity by Kanaka Maoli (native Hawaiians).

The Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization voiced concerns about the Kiggavik Uranium project's potential effects on Caribou. The proposed uranium mine and on-site milling operation would be located about 80 km west of Baker Lake, Nunavut. The company behind the mine, France-based Areva, has consistently dismissed all concerns about the project, going so far as to say, in November 2011, that "Uranium mines are safer than being in your own home."

Members of Six Nations called on supporters to join them in an effort to block a multi-billion dollar renewable energy windmill project planned by Samsung. Green or no green, the multi-national corporation failed to gain permission from the traditional Haudenosaunee government in Six Nations to proceed with the project.

A meeting of representatives from across the Australia gathered to confirm their intent to form a National Unity Government of First Peoples in Australia. A spokesperson for the Sovereign Union said, "The delegates acknowledged that having now stepped up to the plate of taking on this enormous task of nation building, not just at the national level, but at our local and regional levels as well. The most pleasing aspects of this movement is that nation building has now become organic within our communities throughout Australia. The grassroots people are using their own personal resources to bring their people together to rebuild their own nations and governance."

Penan communities from Upper Baram, Sarawak (Malaysia), proposed the "Penan Peace Park" as a model project that would integrate forest protection and socio-economic development. The project was considered groundbreaking by Penan people, who for the first time in their history decided to collectively model a development plan for their own future, in sharp contrast to the Sarawak government's model to exploit the land every way possible and leave the Penan with nothing.



IN BRIEF

# JUNE 2012

## INTRODUCTION

CHINA ANNOUNCES PLAN TO ELIMINATE NOMADIC WAY OF LIFE;  
CREE NATION OF MISTISSINI REITERATES POSITION ON URANIUM  
MINING;

**T**o the shock and dismay of Indigenous Peoples across Australia, the Australian Senate rushed through a law meant to extend the despicable Northern Territory “intervention” (Northern Territory Emergency Response, NTER) for another ten years. The race-based legislation, introduced in 2007, replaced the land rights of more than 70 Indigenous communities with 5-year leases, banned “unsupervised” community meetings, and gave the military the right to maintain a permanent presence in the effected

communities.

The Xavante territory of Marãiwatsede in western Brazil was occupied by a group of armed ranchers. The invaders were said to have dug trenches in a local highway and burnt bridges to prevent access to nearby towns. The action was allegedly aimed at preventing the Xavante from gaining legal recognition of their territory. A month earlier, the Regional branch of Brazil's Federal court recognized the Xavante's demands for the removal of any illegal invaders of their territory.



Meeting between Xikrin Kayapo leaders and Norte Energia  
Photo Credit: International Rivers

The risk of violence was considered to be extremely high.

A US-based human rights group condemned the Chinese government's plan to extinguish the nomadic way of life in Occupied Tibet, Inner Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The so-called "Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Project on Resettling Nomadic People within China" would send more than a million people to permanent settlements over the next 3 years.

A group of Tla'amin (Sliammon) First Nation citizens stopped a controversial treaty vote from taking place in southwestern British Columbia. The peaceful protest ignited a fairly heated debate across Canada concerning the BC Treaty process. First Nations in British Columbia are forced to participate in the treaty process, by the Canadian government. The treaties are often aimed at extinguishing sovereignty in exchange for a few pleasant-sounding promises and short term kickbacks.

Hundreds of Indigenous Peoples from the Xingu River Basin occupied the Belo Monte Dam construction site on Pimental Island in Pará, Brazil. Initially the protest was led by a group of about 150 Xikrin Peoples; but after successfully managing to paralyze work at the construction site, the group was joined by representatives from the Juruna, Araweté, Assurini and Parakanã. Representatives from all 34 villages in the middle of Xingu River basin were expected to join the protest.

A consortium of indigenous and non-governmental organizations sounded the alarm over a disturbing new eco-tourism scheme by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (MPFD). The MPFD, a government agency responsible for managing all forest areas in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, said it wanted to lease out 50 to 150 sq km bricks of land to interested tourism companies. Those companies would then be free to change the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples to something more 'compatible' with conservation.

After waiting for decades in despair, the Barabaig Peoples in Tanzania's Mbulu district finally secured a Certificate of Customary Rights of Occupancy (CCRO) to safeguard their threatened grazing land. The CCRO, will protect nearly 38, 358 hectares of land from being encroached upon by competing land users.

Yolanda "Yoli" Oquely Veliz, a human rights and environmental activist in Guatemala, was shot three times as she left a resistance blockade near the entrance to the Radius Gold-owned El Tambor gold mine in San José del Golfo, Guatemala. She was reported to be in stable but serious condition.

In Oaxaca, Mexico, another two activists were shot as they casually stood with friends in front of city hall in the town of San José del Progreso. Bertín Vásquez Ruiz was shot in the abdomen and Guadalupe Vásquez Ruis took bullets in his leg and hand. Both are members of the Coalition of United Peoples of the Ocotlán Valley (CPUVO), which has been actively protesting Fortuna Silver Inc.'s Trinidad/Cuzcatlán mine. They, too, were reported to be in stable condition.

The international spokesperson of the KNPB, the National Committee of West Papua, announced that all members of the KNPB will surrender en masse to the police in Papua. The unprecedented action is in response to a series of violent acts that have occurred in Jayapura. The spokesperson insists the KNPB are not responsible for the acts, but are rather the work of 'mysterious' or unknown people who are now being referred to across Papua by the acronym "OTK": Orang Terlatih Khusus or Specially Trained People.

At least eight police officers and nine peasant farmers were killed in armed clashes during a land eviction in Paraguay, marking one of the worst such incidents in the country in two decades. The eviction was requested by a local businessman who complained that a group of about 100 families had invaded his property. Peasant rights groups, however, say the prime farmland was taken during the 35-year dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. Paraguay's President promised "sweeping agrarian reform" during his election, but far that promise has not been fulfilled.

A US federal court rejected the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's attempt to store spent nuclear fuel at the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant for another sixty years. The Prairie Island Indian Community later called on the US government to fulfill its promise and legal obligation to remove the nuclear waste from the reservation.

Barriere Lake spokesperson Norman Matchewan was acquitted of all charges stemming from a 2009 blockade that was set up to defend the Algonquin First Nation's territory from illegal logging. A man working for AbitibiBowater, the logging company, was kind enough to help the courts arrive at its decision, albeit reluctantly: he was caught lying on the sand, twice.

Three environmental groups filed a lawsuit to stop a controversial forest-to-vineyard conversion project in northwest Sonoma County, California, USA. The proposed land conversion--which is funded by one of the world's largest corporate wineries, Codorníu S.A.--would devastate the local forest ecosystem, reduce local water quality and threaten the endangered coho salmon. It would also obliterate archeological sites and diminish the history, identity and cultural practices of the Kashia Pomo.

The Awajun and Wampis commemorated the third of the Bagua massacre, one of the most widely-publicized military assaults against Indigenous Peoples in a decade. Peruvian police opened fire on a group of Awajun and Wampis protesters near the town of Bagua, who were trying to stop newly introduced laws that would open their lands to industry. The violence left 34 dead and over 200 injured.

The controversial Praver plan was passed into law, allowing the government of Israel to begin the full-scale theft of Bedouin lands and the destruction of their Traditional way of life in the Negev desert. Israel intends to forcibly relocate upwards of 40,000 Bedouin to various designer settlements. The international community continued to ignore the imminent crisis.

The Cree Nation of Mistissini reiterated its position on uranium development at public hearing organized by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). The CNSC insisted that a proposed uranium exploitation project in Eeyou Istchee (Cree for “The People’s Land”) is low risk. However, as far as the Cree Nation was concerned, any risk is too much risk. Chief Richard Shecapio, speaking on behalf of his community, explained that his Council would do “whatever it takes” to implement a moratorium on uranium development in the region.

Hundreds of Kumyks continued to hold out a peaceful protest camp in the volatile Russian republic of Dagestan, which was close to civil war. The Kumyk set up the protest camp in April, to demonstrate their concerns of being neglected, discriminated against and driven from their territory. The camp demanded more autonomy in order to preserve their language and culture.

After a 30-year struggle, two indigenous Wounaan communities in the eastern Panamanian province of Darién finally received land titles from the government to their traditional lands. Thousands of other Wounaan and Emberá are awaiting their own titles in another 39 communities.

The Northern Land Council, which represents native title claimants in the Arnhem Land region of Australia’s Northern Territory, decided to extend the boundaries of the world-heritage-listed Kakadu National Park to include a 1200-hectare uranium deposit. The decision brought the Koongarra uranium deposit one step closer to being permanently safeguarded from the French uranium mining giant AREVA.

Members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) found two grotesquely deformed, lesion-covered Fish in Lake Athabasca near the community of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. The Suckerfish and Jackfish were found on the same day, at two separate locations in Lake Athabasca. They were later sent to the CCWHC lab in Calgary for analysis.

The US Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.) carried out a massacre deep inside the Miskitu coast of Honduras, killing two pregnant women, a child and a young father. DEA officials initially denied that they opened fire--on foreign soil--but later claim that they did open fire, only, in self-defense. A U.S. Embassy spokesman referred to the “raid” as a “great example of positive U.S.-Honduran cooperation.” The families of the victims, who were from the remote indigenous community of Ahuas, called out in vain for justice.

Australia’s Attorney General refused to investigate the 10-year extension plan for the NT intervention, infuriating



ating Greens and indigenous groups across the country. A statement from the Attorney General explained that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs personally provided the chair of the human rights parliamentary committee with “further information” on how the federal government gave “consideration to human rights in relation to the preparation of the bills.”

Photo Credit: Rollback the Intervention

A Tibetan nomad set himself on fire as he stood in front of a police station in Chentsa (Jianzha) county in the Huangnan (Malho) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Tamdin Thar gave his life to protest Chinese rule and to demand the return of Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. On site Chinese security forces quickly doused the flames and took him away. On learning of his death, hundreds of Tibetans in the area thronged the Chentsa county center and the police station to demand his body. As the crowd swelled, the authorities complied. Tamdin Thar was the 39th Tibetan to self-immolate since February 2009.



First Nations accused the Harper government of putting the interest of oil companies ahead of Indigenous rights by passing Bill C-38, an Omnibus Bill that repealed some 70 federal laws. Among the more disturbing changes, the government 'streamlined' the environmental review process to pave the way for rapid approval of industrial mega-projects like the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline and oil extraction projects in the Alberta tar sands.

The Awa Peoples, called "Earth's most threatened tribe" by Survival International, made a desperate appeal for the Brazilian government to evict illegal loggers from their territory before they destroy what little land the Awa have left. Thousands of illegal loggers were believed to be operating in the area. A message campaign by Survival International generated over 27,000 messages to Brazil's Justice Minister, calling for him to remove the invaders.

After more than a week of peaceful protests, Quechua residents of the Pastaza River basin successfully pushed the Peruvian government to launch a high-level investigation into foreign oil companies operating in Peru's northern Amazon region of Loreto. Prior to the protests, Quechua leaders spent months requesting talks and demanding government compliance with a year-old deal that was supposed to bring improvements in health, education and an oil cleanup.

The Indonesian Military launched a ferocious wave of attacks against Papuan civilians in the highland town of Wamena. An initial report found eight people dead and 17 injured. Hundreds of people fled the town to seek refuge in the forest. Prior to the military offensive, two soldiers on motorcycles ran over and injured a 3 year-old Papuan child that was playing by the side of the road in the village of Honelama, Wamena. Villagers who witnessed the incident chased the soldiers down, stabbed one to death and injured the other.

The Anishinabek Nation proclaimed the Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin, the Anishinabek Nation constitution, setting a solid foundation for governance and the exercise of inherent rights bestowed by the Creator. The Anishinabek Nation constitution was the result of more than 14 years of development and consultation among Anishinabek citizens. Founded and guided by Ngo Dwe Waangizid Anishinaabe (One Anishinaabe Family), the Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin marked a return to Anishinaabe identity and traditional governance. A group of Indigenous Elders in the province of Ka-

linga, Philippines, raised questions about the possible environmental impacts of a proposed geothermal plant. More than anything, the Elders wanted to know what the company behind the proposed plan--Chevron--would do if the geothermal drilling operations triggered a volcanic eruption. Another geothermal drilling operation triggered such an eruption in the late 1980s at Mt Pinatubo.

The U.S. Forest Service announced that it would allow Denison Mines Corp. to begin excavating the Canyon uranium mine without first updating the 26-year-old environmental impact statement for the mine, located south of Grand Canyon National Park on the Kaibab National Forest. The Service claimed that no new public review or analysis is needed because there was no new information or circumstances relevant to its original analysis.

Indigenous Peoples successfully delivered the Kari-Oca 2 Declaration for the protection of Mother Earth to leaders at Rio+20, the UN Conference on Sustainability, after the military halted hundreds of Indigenous Peoples from entering the area. The Declaration was a reaffirmation of the commitment to nature signed by Indigenous leaders at Kari-Oca 1, the historic 1992 meeting that also gave us the Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter. Kari-Oca 2 was also scathing indictment of "green colonialism", the worldwide effort to commodify nature under the auspices of protecting it.



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IN BRIEF

# JULY 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL VOTES DOWN CONTROVERSIAL AGREEMENT; MONGOL HERDERS PROTEST CHINA'S RESETTLEMENT PLAN; NASA PEOPLES ATTEMPT TO DEMILITARIZE ANCESTRAL LANDS

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Members of the Innu First Nation and the Nulhegan Abenaki were denied access to the 36th Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers. While the governors and premiers were discussing access to renewable energy, representatives of both Indigenous Nations entered the Hilton Hotel and asked to have a seat at the table. The delegation traveled to the conference because of Plan Nord and a Hydro-Quebec development project on the La Romaine River. Despite being stakeholders in these projects, the delegation was denied entry to the conference.

Representatives of the Taos Land Trust officially returned the Ponce de León Hot Springs to the Taos Pueblo Tribe. The sacred site has been used by Taos Pueblo for ceremonial activities since time immemorial. For more than a century, however, the 44-acre area had been in the hands of private landowners. According to a press release, the trust, a local land conservation organization, received funding in 1997 to acquire the property from private landowners, to protect it from commercial development. After a 15-year search for the best entity to preserve the land and its natural and cultural resources, the organization returned the site to its original indigenous owners.

Hundreds of Nagri villagers attempted to regain their agriculture lands from the State of India. Vast portions of the usurped lands were handed over to the Birsa Agriculture University, a Law University and two separate Indian Institutes. The irony of the theft, of course, was that the government could have used uncultivable land that no one would have contested; but

it chose to take the Nagri's land, which they depend on for culture and subsistence. After taking matters into their own hands, the unarmed Nagri villagers (mostly women) were assaulted and charged with various crimes, including attempted murder.

The Sarayaku people welcomed with open arms a decision by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights which declared that Ecuador is responsible under international law for the violation of Sarayaku's rights to prior consultation, communal property, life, judicial protection, and other important rights. The Sarayaku said they would now closely monitor Ecuador's compliance with the sentence and ensure that indigenous peoples' territories are respected in the face of damaging extractive industries such as oil drilling.

The Penan people in Sarawak issued a statement against the activities of the Malaysian-based multinational logging and timber products company Ta Ann. According to a statement, Ta Ann leased their lands for logging without prior consent or knowledge by the indigenous Sarawakians. The Huon Valley Environment Centre also released a letter, fingerprinted by Penan people, formally requesting Ta Ann's removal from their land. It was an unprecedented show of opposition to the company.

The Navajo Nation Council unexpectedly voted down the controversial Navajo-Hopi Little Colorado River Settlement Agreement. Navajos opposed to the settlement continuously warned that it was a scheme devised by Arizona senators, corrupt politicians and non-Indian attorneys to steal Navajo water rights for the Navajo Generating Station--one of the dirtiest coal-

fired power plants in the US--and for non-Indians in Arizona to continue their lavish lifestyles.

Mapuche leaders warned of the presence of paramilitary groups in the Chilean Araucania region, acting surreptitiously to blame the Mapuche for violent acts. A Spokesperson for the autonomous Temucucui community of Ercilla town stated that "the paramilitaries are the children of farmers and retired police officers that are frightening us and generating this type of situations in order to accuse the Mapuche communities." Local analysts issued similar warnings that private business people and big landowners were moving to declare a siege on the Araucania in order to advance their own interests.

China's "resettlement" plans sparked protests in Inner Mongolia, with traditional Mongol herders accusing authorities of the illegal expropriation of grazing lands for development projects. At least four protests by Mongol herders were reported.

The much-anticipated Peoples' International Health Tribunal was held in Guatemala, exposing the harmful impacts of Goldcorp mining operations in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala. After listening to hours of testimony from affected community members about the negative social, physical, psychological and environmental impacts of the company's mines, a distinguished panel of judges found Goldcorp guilty in all three countries.

The Algonquins of Barriere Lake won a significant victory in their long-time struggle to secure their land rights and protect the environment. Following protests --and a solid letter writing campaign aimed at Resolute Forest Products--the Quebec government and the forestry company agreed to respect a key aspect of the 1991 Trilateral agreement by harmonizing logging with Barriere Lake's land use practices. Some Algonquins, however, rejected the deal and demanded a full moratorium on logging.

The regional government of the Altai Republic reviewed and passed a new decree to protect sacred sites from being wrongfully damaged or destroyed. Essentially, through the decree, the governor of the Altai Republic instructed local authorities to make laws to protect any sacred sites that are threatened by the construction of a new gas pipeline. The pipeline across the Ukok Plateau was described as a 'moral violence against the people' by Urmat Knyazev, a deputy in the Altai republic's legislative assembly."

About 60 Munduruku indigenous people burned

down a police station in the Brazilian state of Para in response to the government's decision to release two suspects in the murder of a fellow Munduruku citizen who was killed in an armed robbery in June.

India's Supreme Court banned all commercial and tourism activity near the Jarawa's ancestral territory in the remote Andaman and Nicobar islands. The order barred hotels and resorts from operating within a 5km buffer zone around the Jarawa reserve. It was more that appropriate given the shocking video that was release to the public in which tourists were viewing and treating Jarawa women and children like trained zoo animals.

The Nasa Peoples carried out a daring effort to demilitarize their traditional lands in Cacia, Colombia. In one confrontation, the Nasa removed police trenches from an urban center and disassembled homemade FARC missiles found on their lands. In another, they removed Colombian troops from a mountaintop base. The Nasa were responding to a week of intense battles between



Colombia's armed forces and the FARC in a war that has stricken the Nasa to constant anguish, exploitation and abuse.

Member of the Indigenous Guard, Photo Credit: David Schwarz / ES

The M'Chigeeng First Nation turned on the switch to its 4MW Mother Earth Renewable Energy (MERE) wind project, one of 16 new renewable energy projects being constructed by Ontario First Nations. Close to 500 people attended the opening of the wind farm which overlooks West Bay on Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron.

Indonesian Police in West Papua refused to let an inter-faith prayer take place in the city of Jayapura, in response to the security situation in Papua during the months of May and June. The goal of the joint prayer meeting was to promote brotherhood between the Papuan people of all religions, for democracy and to avoid horizontal conflicts.



Tibet activists and supporters joined 400,000 people in the streets of Hong Kong in a protest rally against Hu Jintao, who was visiting the business hub to commemorate the 15th anniversary of its handover to China. “Chinese President Hu has tried – and failed – to convince the world that China is more open and democratic and that Tibetans are somehow prospering under Chinese rule,” said Dorothy Hui, one of the organizers in Hong Kong. “His brutal and violent occupation of Tibet, and abuses committed against his own people, clearly show the truth that China remains an unchanged, repressive and authoritarian state.”

Indigenous communities from the Xingu Basin in Brazil, carried out a 21-day protest against the Belo Monte dam’s main cofferdam, halting all work at site. The action brought a notable level of new national and international visibility to the concerns over the project’s impacts on health, livelihoods and the environment. Another protest was carried out against the dam just a couple weeks later, when three engineers employed by Norte Energia, S.A. (NESA), the company behind Belo Monte, were detained by Juruna and Arara authorities over the company’s unilateral approach in negotiations.

The international community condemned the cold blooded murder of 20 innocent tribal peoples in Chhattisgarh by the Indian State. The Chhattisgarh police and the Central Reserve Police Force claimed to have killed 20 guerillas of the Communist Party of India (Maoist). According to the villagers, however, the security forces opened fire at a peaceful gathering they had organized to discuss their seed festival which is held every year before sowing begins. Among those dead were five youths aged 12-15. The villagers also said that four teenaged girls were sexually assaulted during the encounter.

The Australian Federal Government recklessly approved the controversial “Stronger Futures” legislation, with the support of some Opposition MPs, extending the Northern Territory intervention for another decade. According to the Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA), it was passed following an 11th hour addition to the parliamentary agenda in a deliberate bid to impede the democratic process. An ALA spokesperson said it “represented a dark day in Australian politics for Indigenous human rights,” adding, “but the fight is not over.”

Indigenous Peoples in south-east Peru demanded the expulsion of a Father Miguel Piovesan, an Italian priest

who they accused of “racism and aggression” for his role in promoting the construction of a road that would cut through three protected areas meant to safeguard Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation (so-called “uncontacted tribes”). FECONAPU, a local Indigenous organization, pointed out that he was using his magazine and radio broadcasts to label Indigenous Peoples as “pigs and worms, who don’t know how to think”.

Human rights organizations fiercely criticized a decision by the World Bank to fund power lines in Ethiopia linked to the Gibe III dam. The newly-approved project would help transport power generated by the notorious dam in southern Ethiopia, to Kenya’s power grid. More than 200,000 indigenous people in the Lower Omo Valley—including the Bodi, Mursi and Kwegu Peoples—would lose their livelihoods and food security through dam flooding.

Brazilian authorities arrested 18 people in connection with the high profile killing of an indigenous leader by masked gunmen. Religious leader Nísio Gomes was murdered in front of his Guarani community in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul last November. His body was never found. The list of suspects included the owner of a notorious security firm which hires out gunmen to patrol areas of land occupied by ranchers.

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (commonly called Quakers) formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery at its annual Summer Session in New York. The Quaker organization chose to act after two years of deliberation under the leadership of its Indian Affairs Committee, first formed in the late 1700s. The Friends denounced the Doctrine of Discovery and called upon the United States Senate to “enact the legislation that will make UNDRIP the law of the land in the United States of America.”

After 2 months of public pressure, the US Forest Service agreed to close off the McCloud River for the Winnemem Wintu Coming of Age ceremony. But then, instead of actually protecting the Winnemem from harassment, the Forest Service became the biggest harassers, interrupting the ceremony every day. At the end of the four-day Ceremony, they slapped Chief Sisk with citations for federal crimes, with penalties totaling \$10,000 or 1 year in jail.





Photo Credit Keith Bacongco



IN BRIEF

# AUGUST 2012

## INTRODUCTION

TAHLTAN SET UP ROADBLOCK AGAINST RED CHRIS MINE; BANGLADESH SUPPRESSES INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY CELEBRATIONS; DON-GRIA KONDH RENEW OPPOSITION TO UK MINING COMPANY

**T**here was grave concern surrounding the safety of Garifunas who were taking part in a land recuperation project in the region of Vallecito, Honduras. The Garifunas possessed title to the land in question, however, many outside interests wanted the land for themselves, including agri-business oligarchs like Miguel Facusse (the largest landholder in Honduras). Paramilitaries mobilized on motorcycles and 4 x 4 vehicles, apparently ready for a Garifuna massacre.

The fight for the rights of the indigenous San people in Namibia received a major boost with the formation of the San Support Organisations' Association of Namibia (SSOAN). SSOAN brought together international, national and community-based NGOs, multilateral and bilateral donors, and research and training institutions to promote the rights of the San in Namibia, improve coordination of the various San support initiatives and harmonize approaches to San development.

A group of Tahltan Nation citizens set up a blockade to oppose the Red Chris Mine, a project that would devastate lands inhabited by many species of animals including Stone Sheep, Mountain Goat, Moose and Caribou. The Tahltans explained that depend upon these animals for subsistence and believe that the mine would destroy the animal's habitat and calving grounds which are considered sacred.

An entire Yanomami community was believed to have been wiped out by illegal gold miners (garimpeiros) in southern Venezuela near the border with Brazil. An initial investigation led by local Yanomami reportedly uncovered the remains of several charred bodies, prompting the government to carry out its own official investigation. That investigation came to a close after two days. The investigators, unable to find any kind of evidence, abandoned their search.

The Chinese government announced that it would launch a USD \$4.7 billion theme park project in Tibet to attract tourists. The Tibetan Theme Park - located on the outskirts of the city of Lhasa - would occupy some 800 hectares of land. Tibetans described the project as the "Disneyfication of Tibet" rather than a genuine sharing and preservation of Tibetan culture.

The Dongria Kondh, who've all but faded away from the international community's gaze, renewed their opposition to Vedanta Resources' plan to mine a sacred mountain for bauxite. Ahead of Vedanta's AGM in London, the Dongria Kondh sent a strong message to the company's chairman Anil Agarwal, "Even if Anil Agarwal himself comes here, we won't leave our land. We will use all our strength to make them leave this place. Let us live our lives in peace".

The Lower Elwa Klallam, a federally recognized Indigenous Nation located on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, gained much to celebrate in a very short time: there was the discovery of a 'Legendary' sacred site, the uncovering of archaeological evidence for ancient inhabitation of the Elwha river area, and the return of the salmon run to the Elwha's middle range. All of this was able to take place because--and only because--of the removal of an almost-century old dam.

The Aché community of Kue Tuvy reported that peasant groups were attempting to seize portions of their ancestral lands in northeastern Paraguay. According to the community, the peasant groups were also engaging in illegal logging activities and threatening to kill any Aché who tried to stop it. Journalists who attempted to cover the story on the ground were also threatened.

A Barabaig community in Tanzania teamed up with the Indigenous Knowledge Project (IKP) to develop a sustainable economy that works. The initiative is

a rarity, founded on the ideals of sharing, autonomy, participation and sustainability. In the words of IKP co-founder Heather Cruise, it is "heart-to-heart, grass roots, participatory."

The Guarani community of Arroio Korá was attacked by a group of gunmen in southwestern Brazil. According to reports, the gunmen terrorized the community for several hours, shooting guns, shouting threats and burning crops in an attempt to expel the community from their ancestral lands. One community member was dragged away during the attack

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) accepted the Nigerian government's Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Programme (HYPREP) for the clean-up and restoration of areas devastated by severe oil pollution in the Niger Delta. A major question remained however, among the Ogoni Peoples and all international observers: would the government actually carry out the programme?

The Ktunaxa Nation challenged the British Columbia government's approval of a controversial year-round ski resort in Qat'muk (GOT-MOOK), a profoundly sacred area to the Ktunaxa Peoples. As an initial action, the Ktunaxa applied for Judicial Review of the approval.

An International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) confirmed that the Philippines-based A. Brown Company, Inc. never had the right to open an oil palm plantation in Opol, Misamis Oriental in Southern Philippines, where it displaced hundreds of Higaonon families. The IFFM called on the company to immediately pull-out of Opol and respect the farmers' and indigenous peoples' right to their lands.

The Canadian government began to introduce legislation that would allow individuals to own private property on reserves, effectively abrogating collective ownership of reserve land for any First Nations that adopts the law. The government claimed that the new law would encourage economic development; but the reality is far less economical. As Pam Palmater observed, the law would open the floodgates for the gradual takeover of indigenous lands by non-First Nations peoples, including land-holding companies, banks, corporations; heck, even bored Canadians looking for an "adventure!"

The EZLN sent out an international call for solidarity with San Marcos Avilés, a small indigenous Tzeltal-speaking community located in the highland region of the state of Chiapas, in southeastern Mexico. The EZLN explained that the community was fighting to live according to their own indigenous culture and struggling for freedom, justice, democracy and a dignified life for all. For that reason, they were being faced



with threats, kidnappings and displacement by armed men--members of the political parties PRI, PRD, and PAN. The community started coming under attack in 2010, when they constructed a small wooden building to house an autonomous school, named 'Emiliano Zapata'.

The Bangladesh government placed an official embargo on the celebrations of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Despite the imposed restriction, however, Indigenous Peoples throughout the country attempted to celebrate the event. At least one clash followed in Joypurhat district, with police carrying out baton charges peaceful protesters. Elsewhere, police set up blockades to prevent people from reaching celebrations.

Indonesia similarly refused to let Papuans take part in celebrations; and when Papuan leaders in Serui proceeded to move forward with their plans anyways, they too were confronted. The combined forces of Brimob (Police Mobile Brigade), Densus 88 and TNI blocked access to Mantembu District and destroyed several houses. At least eleven people were arrested, including a pregnant woman. Elsewhere, peaceful demonstrators were terrorized by the police, forcing many to seek refuge in the jungle.

Following the Nigerian government's promise of a clean-up, a faction of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by Dr. Goodluck Diigbo declared self-government for the people of Ogoni. The declaration, meant to enforce the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was realized through a series of community elections that were set up by 272 village councils and the assignment of representatives for 33 district councils to serve as custodians of customs and traditions, otherwise called lawmakers. Diigbo emphasized the need for all Ogoni to act nonviolently, saying "we are acting with legitimacy to reclaim all of our rights, without exception, and for the sake of peace and security; let no one test the collective will of the Ogoni people, because we will not surrender our indigenous rights anymore."

Three Mapuche women and other members of the Mapuche Territorial Alliance occupied the headquarters of UNICEF in Santiago, Chile, to urge the organization to pressure the Ministry of Interior to withdraw police forces from Mapuche communities. The Mapuche Territorial Alliance explained in a public statement that Mapuche children were being victimized--even

shot--by the police forces. UNICEF responded to the request by saying that 'cannot' accede to the request. Tom Olsen, an agency representative, stated his personal opposition to the occupation and warned that UNICEF would forcefully remove the Mapuche from their offices.

The Lakota Nation began to struggle against the clock to save Pe' Sla, a sacred area in the Black Hills considered to be the heart of everything. The privately-owned land was to be auctioned off to the highest bidder, after which it would likely be opened up for development, with the State of South Dakota building a road directly through it. To prevent the desecration, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe began working alongside LastReallIndians.com to purchase Pe' Sla. In a relatively short amount of time, they managed to raise an impressive \$1.4 million.

The James Bay Cree Nation declared a permanent moratorium on uranium exploration, mining and waste emplacement in Eeyou Istchee, the traditional territory of the James Bay Cree. The moratorium was enacted unanimously by the Annual Cree Nation General Assembly in Waskaganish. "Uranium moratoriums have been enacted by the governments of British Columbia and Nova Scotia, as well as other foreign jurisdictions, without affecting other mining and resource development activities," Grand Chief Coon Come told the Assembly. "We anticipate that all Québécoises and Québécois, once they know the facts, will join us in this minimal stand of prudent stewardship."

Paraguayan authorities issued a ruling against Carlos Casado SA, a ranching company owned by one of Spain's richest men. The company illegally bulldozed forest inhabited by Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation. The company categorically denied carrying out any unauthorized deforestation in Paraguay; However, Paraguay's Environment Ministry found that company carried out reservoir construction and road-building without official permission.

Altai Republic authorities passed a decree that all but reversed the government's widely-supported move to protect the Ukok plateau. The new decree gave the Russian as giant Gazprom permission to begin construction of the Altai pipeline, which would cut directly through the region, which is a profoundly important cultural zone for the Altai, Shor and Telengit Peoples.



IN BRIEF

# SEPTEMBER 2012

## INTRODUCTION

SHIPIBO VILLAGERS TAKE CONTROL OF OIL WELLS ON THEIR TERRITORY; SIXTEEN INDIGENOUS NATIONS JOIN FORCES TO OPPOSE BRAZIL'S MOVES; THE YORUBA BEGIN PUSH FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY



After standing strong for more than 140 days, the Musqueam People celebrated a decision by the B.C. Government to cancel the controversial 5-story condominium project at cusnaum in the heart of Musqueam's

Traditional, unceded Territory. The developers behind the project, were not impressed. They were expected to challenge the basic-indigenous-rights decision.

The Yanomami organization, HORONAMI, issued its final public statement on the matter of illegal Brazilian miners in the Upper Ocamo region of Venezuela. HORONAMI was relieved to learn that no massacre had taken place, however, it rejected claims that 'all is well' in the region. The 16-point statement also rejected attempts to internally divide the organization, to link it to opposition actors and to exploit the previous allegations of a massacre.

Five Mapuche activists entered their fifth week of an "open-ended" hunger strike at Angol Detention Center in Chile's Araucanía region. One Mapuche, Daniel Levinao Montoya called the hunger strike after he and Paulino Levipan Coyán were convicted by a military court in mid-August. The men were protesting the militarization of their land in Chile's south and calling for the release of all Mapuche political prisoners.

The Chumash Nation raised concerns over the proposed Diablo Canyon Seismic project off the Central Coast of California. Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) intended to carpet bomb approx. 580 square nautical miles of sea floor with powerful Air Cannons that would blast every 10 to 20 seconds for 42 days straight. The 260db sonic blasts would devastate the

local marine ecosystem and possibly destroy fragile and sensitive Sacred Chumash Cultural Sites.

The government of Indonesia responded to the UN's recommendations to recognize the rights of its indigenous peoples by asserting, once again, that no indigenous peoples live in the country. The government recognizes exactly 365 distinct ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, however, it explicitly defines them as "komunitas adat terpencil" (geographically-isolated customary law communities). The concept of Indigenous Peoples, according to Indonesia, cannot apply to any of these communities, whether it's the Manggarai, Leragere, Kedang or the Peoples of occupied West Papua.

About 200 people from around Nova Scotia gathered to protest the imminent threat of fracking on the shores of Lake Ainslie. The action included a partial blockade led by Mi'kmaq from Cape Breton and the Nova Scotia mainland.

A group of Naso protestors blocked access to the Bonyic Hydroelectric project in Bocas del Toro province, western Panama. The protestors, who issued an urgent plea for international solidarity, warned that a new road would cut through an ancient archaeological site that was already damaged by bulldozers. They said the site is extensive and that they have collected a variety of ceramic shards, implements, huacas (pre-Colombian ornaments) and a piece of human bone from the area, indicating it was once a burial ground.

Herakles Farms, a subsidiary of the New York-based investment firm Herakles Capital, withdrew its application to join the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

(RSPO) after a coalition of environmental and human rights organizations called attention to the reality of its proposed 73,000-hectare palm oil plantation in Cameroon. They exposed the project for what is: bad for the environment and bad for the people.

Protesters continued to challenge China's 12th Five Year Plan, which, as of January 2011, had already forcibly moved 1.43 million nomads into urban environments. By 2017, the state would settle another 1.5 million nomadic pastoralists in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

The Kuki National Assembly formally requested the cancellation of a proposed Tiger Reserve on the Kuki's territory in Assam, India. The proposed sanctuary would be placed in an area that the Kuki use for their traditional method of allied farming, which they depend on for survival. The National Assembly stated that--while Tiger's need to be protected--it is "cruel, inhuman and agonizing" to do so at the expense of the Kuki.

Several Indigenous Nations along the North and Central Coast of British Columbia, Canada, declared a ban or trophy bear hunting in their traditional territories. Because the Province was negligent in their responsibility to monitor the trophy hunt, the Coastal First Nations assumed responsibility for bear management on the Coast and enforcement of a closure of the senseless trophy hunt.

Over 400 Shipibo villagers in the Ucayali region of Peru took control of nine oil wells, belonging to a company that has exploited Shipibo lands with impunity for the past 37 years. The action sent a clear warning to all foreign and domestic oil companies now invading indigenous homelands throughout the Peruvian Amazon: enough is enough!!

Elsewhere in Peru, the Achuar Peoples won a major victory in their own struggle against another oil company. In a move that caught everyone off guard, the Canadian company Talisman Energy announced that it would be withdrawing from the Achuar's territory, just as soon as it finished ongoing commercial transactions. Essentially, the company got sick of not making any money off the Achuar's homeland. The company tried and failed for eight years.

The Amoonguna people in Australia's Northern Territory issued a statement requesting the removal of all government workers from their community by the end of September or face charges of trespass. The Amoonguna also refused to sign a second five-year

lease after being forced to accept the first one in 2007 as a part of the government's draconian 'intervention' programme.

Several Yoruba organizations started to push for regional autonomy in the south-western area of Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba people. As observed by Aderemi Suleiman Ajala, an expert on Yoruba nationalism, the Yoruba ruled several powerful kingdoms prior to European colonization; but now that power base is all but gone.

Leaders of the Lummi Nation announced their opposition to the Gateway Pacific Terminal project, a coal and cargo shipping terminal that would destroy the natural and cultural heritage at Cherry Point. After conducting ceremonies at a public gathering located on the beach



near the site of the proposed project, the Lummi burned a giant mock check to make a statement that no amount of money could buy their support for a project that would destroy their village and burial sites.

Video Still from "Lummi Nation determined to protect Cherry Point" by NWIFC

For the first time in several hundred years, non-Indigenous peoples were invited to participate in the week-long Wabanaki Confederacy Gathering. Speaking about the invite, Harry LaPorte, grand chief of the Maliseet First Nation, stated, "We're going to rebuild the Wabanaki Confederacy... We also invited some non-Natives...to come and be with us and to help us build an alliance, so that when we...come into conflict with the government and some of their decisions and policies...to have them stand beside us and to let their government know that it's not only Native people who are worried about the water, the land, the air. But it's also people from their nation that are concerned."

Sixteen different indigenous Nations in Brazil came together to show their outrage against the government's controversial Decree 303 and what they are calling the



“scrapping” of the FUNAI, Brazil’s Bureau of Indian Affairs. As part of the protest, the indigenous peoples blocked access to two major interstate highways, BR-174 and BR-364 - stepping on the economic nerve of the state of Mato Grosso. Sadly, there was almost no English media coverage of the protest.

The Gadigal Peoples in Australia started issuing passports to recent immigrants to their territory as well as asylum seekers. Among those to receive passports are WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and Mamdouh Habib, an Australian citizen detained in Guantanamo Bay.

Documents released by Australia’s Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) revealed that Fortescue Metals Group (FMG) completely destroyed two Yindjibarndi sacred sites and under-reported the actual number of heritage sites on Yindjibarndi lands by about 30%. The information vindicated the the Yindjibarndi People who accused FMG of damaging their sites in November 2011. The company responded to the accusations with absolute denial, stating, FMG “categorically rejects offensive claims that it is operating unlawfully regarding Aboriginal heritage sites at its Solomon Hub project.”

The “relevance” of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was called into question after a number of key changes were made to the organizational draft of the high-level plenary meeting. Among the more disturbing changes, the approval of the outcome document of the Conference was placed solely in the hands of UN Member States along with the ability to determine who would participate in the Conference, which was called on by the United Nations General Assembly, for Indigenous Peoples, in 2010. The North American Delegation of the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group (tasked with coordinating Indigenous participation at the WCIP) warned that the changes severely undermined the best possible outcomes of the conference. The draft was ultimately approved, without revision.

A group of unknown assailants attempted to take the life of renowned BriBri leader, Sergio Rojas, President of the Association for the Development of the Indigenous Territory of Salitre and a Coordinator at the National Front of Indigenous Peoples, FRENAPI. Prior to the Monday shooting, Sergio was already under fire as the subject of a massive defamation campaign led by the National Commission for Indigenous Affairs

(CONAI), the Buenos Aires Municipal Council (local government), the State government, the tv station “TV Nativa” and a local radio station. Why all the fuss? Sergio helped in the recovery of BriBri lands that were illegally occupied by non-indigenous outsiders.

Hundreds of Penans staged a blockade against the Murum hydroelectric (HEP) dam project calling on the government to listen to their plights regarding to the dam’s construction. The Penan explained that they were protesting against the government’s failure to consult them on all aspects concerning the project. Completion of the dam would flood a significant position of the Penan’s ancestral lands.

Members of the Mapuche Land Alliance ended their 39-day occupation of UNICEF offices in Santiago after reaching an agreement with the organization. UNICEF later said in a statement that it “praises the agreement that has been reached through dialogue between the two parties, and has been able to put an end to the hunger strike and occupation.”

A tribal community that was displaced by the Narmada dam project in Madhya Pradesh, India, reaped the first harvest of their resistance. In late 2011, the community forcefully seized 100 acres of government land after they were displaced from their traditional lands nearly a decade ago. They called the action a ‘satyagraha’, a peaceful struggle for rights, recognition and land. After successfully entering the land, the community then re-established a village and began cultivating crops. Despite frequent government threats to remove the ‘encroachers’, the community is now enjoying the fruits of their labours.

# OCTOBER 2012

## INTRODUCTION

ELDERS WALK OUT OF HEALING CIRCLE AFTER NUCLEAR WASTE  
PITCHED AS SOLUTION TO YOUTH SUICIDE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE; ANU-  
AK IMPLICATE WORLD BANK IN GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

**B**razil's federal court reversed a decision to evict a Guarani-Kaiowá community that was attempting to reclaim ancestral lands. The threat of an eviction received major news coverage around the globe after the Guarani community threatened to resist to the death any attempt to remove them. Unfortunately, many reporters misinterpreted the Guarani's words, believing that they were going to commit mass suicide rather than leave their land again.

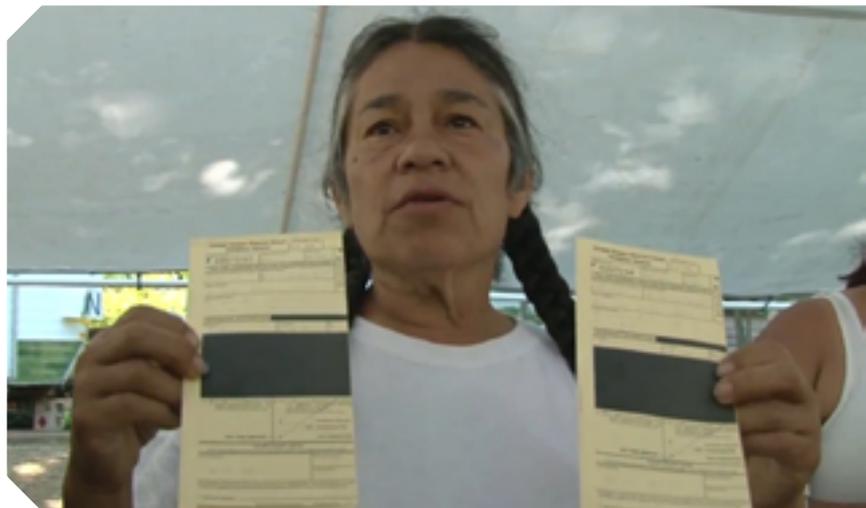
Innu protesters set up two consecutive blockades on the main supply road to a major northern Quebec Hydro dam project. The Protesters said they were systematically excluded from talks related to Quebec's Northern Plan to develop natural resources. Some protesters also accused the Uashat-Malotenam band council of corruption because it was reaching deals with the government without the peoples' consent.

A group of O'odham youth raised their voices against Pangea Development and the Pecos Landowners Association (PLA), without saying a single word. The youths attended a Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) Tribal Council session wearing breathing masks and "No Build 202" shirts to speak out against the proposed Loop 202 freeway and the negative impacts it would bring.

In a stunning development, villagers in Kurukshetra,

India, forced the Haryana Agriculture University authorities to fulfill their promise to completely destroy field trials of Monsanto's GM corn. The welcomed display came only after Monsanto officials--with the support of University staff--tried to sneak out the GM corn. Alert villagers stopped them in their tracks.

The federal attorney in Sacramento dismissed a set of citations that were issued against Winnemem Chief Caleen Sisk last July, with no further explanation. At the time the citations were issued, Chief Sisk was



charged with violating the very river closure the Winnemem had requested to defend the sanctity of their coming-of-age ceremony. The Winnemem requested a formal apology from the US Forest Service for their actions.

Video still from  
"Ceremony is not a Crime"



The UK government dismayed and disappointed indigenous peoples as well as activists around the world by refusing to ratify ILO Convention 169, the only enforceable international law that protects basic indigenous rights. Prime Minister David Cameron defended his position by saying that ILO 169 cannot be implemented 'as the UK has no indigenous people to whom the Convention can apply'.

A fleet of boats piloted by Native and non-Native fishers gathered off Xwe'chi'eXen (Cherry Point, Wash.) to stand with the Lummi Nation in opposition to the proposed Gateway Pacific coal terminal at Xwe'chi'eXen. If completed, the terminal would significantly degrade an already fragile and vulnerable crab, herring and salmon fishery, dealing a devastating blow to the economy of the fisher community.

The Batwa Peoples of southwest Uganda, after being evicted from their traditional territory in 1991, finally started returning to their homeland; however, as tour guides. The Batwa started taking tourists on \$80 treks deep into Mgahinga to encounter first hand "the lost world of the Batwa". Not all Batwa were displaced from their lands. Over all, there are 500,000 Batwa--offensively known as "pygmies"-- who remain in their ancestral lands which stretch from Cameroon to Uganda.

The Penan blockade that went up in September was dismantled after the government agreed to seriously look into the Penan's requests. The agreement, however, was announced several days after government officials claimed that the blockade was over--a bit of misinformation that was heavily criticized by observing NGOs. Prior to the agreement, a 'secret' plan to resettle the Penan also surfaced, revealing to the world the government's strategy of using the negative effects of rampant logging on Penan lands to justify the tribe's resettlement.

The Anuak, Indigenous Peoples in Southwest Ethiopia, implicated the World Bank in grave human rights abuses that were being carried out as part of a supposedly voluntary resettlement programme headed by the Ethiopian Government. The Anuak explained that they were being dispossessed of their fertile, ancestral lands, and forced into new villages where there is little access to food or arable land. They also reported a daunting list of abuses including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture in military custody, rape and extrajudicial killing--all of which was made possible through

grants and loans that the World Bank gave to the government.

A group of ten Elders walked out of a healing circle in northern Saskatchewan, Canada, after Nuclear waste storage was pitched as a solution to youth suicide and substance abuse. Some inquiries after the perverse proposal revealed that the healing circle was organized by employees of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), a federal agency responsible for "long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel".

Indigenous Peoples throughout Brazil mobilized to repeal a dangerous new law that would open the doors to a full-scale military invasion of Indigenous lands, prohibit the distribution of news lands, restrict autonomy, and permit the construction of various industrial projects (like the Belo Monte Dam) without consultation.

At least 7 Maya were killed and up to 32 were injured when combined armed forces violently removed demonstrators from a well-known intersection in Totonicapán, Guatemala. Demonstrators had blocked the road to protest the rising price of electricity in the area. They also demanded a dialogue with the government to discuss their objections to various reforms proposed by President Otto Pérez Molina. The Guatemalan foreign minister later said that the murders were no big deal.

An international protest in support of the Jumma Peoples was carried out in Bangladesh, South Korea, USA and Australia. The protest, which took place over the course of 13 days, condemned a communal attack on the Jumma by Bengali settlers with the support of the Bangladesh government. The attack left more than 100 Jumma and 9 Bengalis wounded.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) confronted Shell's proposed expansion of the Jackpine Mine with a constitutional challenge that cited, "lack of adequate or meaningful consultation" and that the application would have an adverse impact on their treaty rights. The action was carried out just days after Canada's Conservative government tabled Bill C-45, a 443-page bill that would erode Treaty rights in Canada and remove vital protections meant for culturally significant and vital waterways across the country.

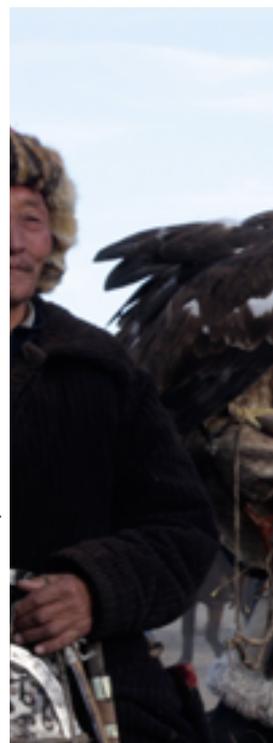




Photo Credit  
Dionysius

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IN BRIEF

# NOVEMBER 2012

## INTRODUCTION

HIMBA AND ZEMBA PEOPLES MARCH AGAINST NAMIBIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS; ALBERTA COURT DISMISSES ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN FIRST NATION'S APPEAL TO BE CONSULTED

**S**hell Security Forces reportedly opened fire on a protesting Ogoni community in the Rivers State of Southern Nigeria. The community had gathered to oppose the presence of Shell officials at the Ebuju Oilfield when a clash broke out with security forces. Following the attack, eye witnesses say that Nigerian military arrived to take control of the area. It was not known how many were captured as a result of the military invasion.

Activists from across Canada and the world stepped forward in solidarity with the Unis'tot'en, who grabbed national headlines after evicting shale gas pipeline surveyors from their territories in the interior of BC. The Unis'tot'en made it abundantly clear that no proposed pipelines would proceed in Unis'tot'en territories and that corporations, investors, and governments have no jurisdiction to approve development on their lands.

California's coastal regulators rejected Pacific Gas

and Electric's plan to map earthquake faults by using powerful air cannons along the sea floor, off the Central Coast of California. The regulators said the impact to sensitive marine mammals along the coast would be too great, and they felt the company did not make the case that such testing was necessary. The Chumash warned that the sonic blasts would devastate the local marine ecosystem and possibly destroy fragile and sensitive Chumash cultural sites.

Hundreds of Himba And Zemba Peoples went on the march to protest against Namibia's human rights violations, including the advancement of mining and hydro developments at the expense of their lands and livelihoods. On top of raising their concerns, the Himba And Zemba demanded the right to choose their own representatives and leaders, and to be allowed to administer their internal affairs, including their territory, according to their own customary laws and traditional courts.

The US Forest Service officially dusted off a twenty-six-year-old Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the "Canyon" uranium mine, one of several operable uranium mines inside the "protected" million-acre Grand Canyon watershed. The Havasupai Tribe has been strongly opposed to the Canadian-owned mine since it was first proposed, because it could contaminate their sole source of water and desecrate Red Butte, one of the most sacred areas within their homeland.

Alberta's Court of appeal dismissed Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's plea for a review concerning the Crown's failure to consult before approving Shell's Jackpine Mine expansion project. The First Nation stated its extreme disappointment, stating that it would review their options to address the lack of consultation.

The Peoples Permanent Tribunal (PPT) convened in Mexico to review the case of Mega Dams and Forced Evictions. After hearing several days of testimony from effected communities, the PPT, an ethical opinion tribunal founded in 1979, criticized the Mexican government's long-term failure to observe international human rights law and its own constitution. It also called for the authorities to cease the construction of five dams. Further, it accused the National Water Commission and other authorities of corruption after they vetted dam construction despite the range of concerns. The PPT will reside in Mexico until 2014 to hear the claims of Mexican civil society.

More than eighty Lumad leaders from around Mindanao issued a joint declaration reasserting their rights

and urging all other stakeholders in Mindanao's peace processes to let the Lumad Peoples live in peace. The Midsayap Declaration followed a four-day consultation that brought the Indigenous leaders together with the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to discuss the newly signed Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro (FAB). The agreement signalled the beginning of "enduring peace" in Mindanao, where a war for independence raged on for more than thirty years, taking up to 150,000 lives in the process. The Lumad were caught in the middle of the decades-long conflict.

Wixarika leaders welcomed a new government proposal to declare a Biosphere Reserve in Wirikuta. However, they warned of inconsistencies and dangerous propaganda that was being instigated by First



Majestic Silver, the Canadian mining company that wants to gut the sacred territory. They also demanded, once again, to be included in the decision-making process as the government prepares to issue a final decree.

Photo Credit  
marmarou

An indigenous community in the Brazilian Amazon cancelled a controversial deal that would have allowed an Irish company to sell carbon credits on their land. The Munduruku tribe had sealed an agreement with Celestial Green Ventures earlier this year, guaranteeing \$4 mln per year over 30 years. The deal was being promoted by REDD-enthusiasts as an example of how Indigenous Peoples can benefit from REDD.

Activists from around Brazil mobilized for a full two weeks to demonstrate in defense of the Guarani-Kaiowá--against their expulsion by the government. The unprecedented act of solidarity involved more than 50 events across Brazil, with other actions in Portugal, Germany and elsewhere.

After a group of four women started organizing in central Canada, a controversial plan headed by the Harper government was revealed once and for all:



Canada was going to attempt to radically alter First Nations lives without their consent. At the center of the plan was eight Bills and Acts that would, among other things, replace collective land rights with individual property rights, allow indigenous lands to be purchased by Canadian citizens, and undermine the ability of First Nations youth to learn their customs and languages.

Fourteen Yupiit fishermen, who were arrested in June for allegedly violating an Alaska state- and federal government-imposed fishing ban, struggled to defend their inherent hunting and fishing rights---rights that were “extinguished” in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

Russia’s Ministry of Justice ordered the closure of RAIPON, Russia’s biggest indigenous peoples organization. Russian officials claimed that the closure was the result of unresolved conflicts between RAIPON’s charter/operations and federal law. However, many suspected that Russia just wanted to get the NGO out of the way.

Indigenous Mongolian herders, who had been evicted from their land to make way for a Rio Tinto gold and copper mine, lodged a complaint with the World Bank for providing US\$900 million of financial backing for the project. The herders had not been adequately compensated for their eviction and loss of herd since the project began/ Furthermore, their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) was not obtained in the process of undertaking the project.

Several opposition groups called for civil disobedience against Chile’s newly-proposed fishing law which would leave small-scale fishermen and indigenous communities without quotas, while gifting fishing quotas to several industrial businesses. The opposition group consisted of the National Council for the Defense of Artisanal Fishing (Condepp) representing 50,000 fishermen throughout the country, Group for the Collective Rights for the Mapuche Community (GTDC), and Centro Ecocéanos, a civil and environmental awareness group.

Githabul Elders warned that one of their sacred sites would be destroyed to make way for a new basalt quarry at Cedar Point in New South Wales, Australia. Githabul Elder Rob Williams said the site is meant for ceremony, the initiation of boys and the continued well-being of men. Men’s health,the Elder continued,

is directly linked to its preservation.

In Mexico, the general assembly of the Zoque municipality of Santa María Chimalapa declared itself an autonomous municipality until the three branches of the Oaxaca government ratify the dismissal of the mayor and the cancellation of his powers in the municipality. In a public communique, the assembly denounced the behavior of the mayor, who has not “honestly and responsibly carried out his charges as assigned to him by the People.”

The Government of Manipur threatened to forcefully evict and relocate the villagers of Chadong and Lamrai Khullen, in the Ukhru District of Manipur, Northeast India, to make way for the Mapithel Dam. In response to the threat, the Mapithel Dam Affected Villagers Organization and the Committee on the Protection of Natural Resources in Manipur called for urgent action from partners and allies around the world.

Indigenous leaders from Mexico, Brazil and Ecuador traveled to Sacramento, California to urge officials not to include an international REDD project in its Global Warming Solutions Act. The visitors to Sacramento told lawmakers that they were suffering harassment, intimidation and vandalism of their homes and offices for rejecting REDD-type projects.

Anishinaabe activists and environmentalists in Minnesota welcomed a state court of appeals decision that ruled against a lawsuit filed by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber appeal focused on diminishing the current Wild Rice/Sulfate Water Quality Standard established in 1974 to protect wild rice. Robert DesJarlait, spokesperson for Protect Our Maanoomin, commented: “The decision is a victory for us in that it maintains a law intended to protect wild rice, a sacred food for Anishinaabe people. Sulfide mining companies like PolyMet will have to establish quality water treatment facilities to meet the letter of the law which, in the current situation, they are not able to do.”



IN BRIEF

# DECEMBER 2012

## INTRODUCTION

TAINO PEOPLES ADOPT HISTORIC DECLARATION OF UNITY; MASVINGO CHIEFS PUNISHED BY COURT FOR TAKING TOO LONG TO PROTECT BURIAL SITE; ZAPATISTA ANNOUNCE NEW ERA OF STRUGGLE

**I**n a suite of staggering revelations, Bruce Woodley, Chairman of the Wirilu-Murra Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (WMYAC) confirmed earlier statements that the WMYAC was formed to help Fortescue Metals Group (FMG) circumvent the Yindjibarndi's representative body, the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC). FMG, a mining company that's exploiting Yindjibarndi lands, has consistently denied then allegation.

The Yaqui in Sonora, Mexico said they will defend their rights to the Rio Yaqui, against the theft of water by the government of Mexico for the Independence Aqueduct, the largest engineering project in the state's history. Yaqui representatives said that their People have first rights to the water from the Yaqui River, and that 98% of the population was not willing to accept the current project, which would take 634 gallons per second.

A group of Indigenous Peoples led by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) burnt copies of the Nepal's 2011 National Census report expressing their dissatisfaction over it. NEFIN leaders demanded a recount and full transparency concerning the number of ethnic people and those speaking their mother languages. The existing statistics, NEFIN said, lessen the population and completely reject the existence of more than 10 distinct Peoples.

In Malaysia, two Kenyah longhouses erected a blockade against an oil palm company that encroached on their land in 1998, and never left. Since the company's arrival, the two communities have incurred damages

to their crops and properties without permission or compensation.

Nearly 70 indigenous leaders from Mato Grosso do Sul and various other regions of Brazil delivered the names of more than twenty thousand people to Brazilian authorities, who endorsed the petition "I support the Indigenous". The unprecedented solidarity petition--which arrived in the midst of increasing violations of indigenous rights in Brazil--demonstrated a welcomed shift in attitude towards Indigenous Peoples by urban populations in Brazil and by the International community.

News that Pinehouse was set to sign a "collaboration agreement" with uranium giants Cameco and Areva sparked outrage in the northern Saskatchewan community. Some of the terms in agreement amounted to nothing less than a gag order that would protect the mining companies. As outrage grew and grew, Cameco and Areva announced that the final agreement would not include the controversial terms.

Mexican authorities banned Maya spiritual leaders from performing ceremonies at their ancestral temples to mark the widely-misunderstood end of the Maya long-count calendar. The government's excuse for the ban was that the Maya intended to bring braziers and burn incense which "simply isn't allowed". Despite the prohibition, the Maya still carried out their ceremonies, which included prayers for renewal and an end to war, hunger and conflict.

Tibetans in Canada spoke out against the Canadian government's controversial decision to sell the Canadi-

an oil giant Nexen to a Chinese state-owned company that's complicit in human rights abuses in Tibet. For three months, Tibetans and their Canadian supporters petitioned Ottawa and held weekly rallies against the possible sale of Nexen, which currently operates in the Tar Sands near Fort McMurray, Alberta.

The US departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy and Interior signed a memorandum of understanding to start protecting sacred sites. The agreement came just a couple weeks after thieves made off with rock carvings from a sacred Paiute site in California's Sierra Nevada. There was some question, however, concerning the seriousness of the inter-department pledge, given that more than three dozen sacred sites are currently threatened across the US.

More than 600 people from the district of Cañaris, province of Ferreñafe, Peru, blocked a highway and detained three geological engineers employed by the Canadian mining company, Candente Copper. The protest was undertaken in response to the Peruvian government's failure to recognize a community vote in which 95% of participants rejected the company's presence.

Masvingo Chiefs in Zimbabwe lost a court effort that sought to stop Econet Wireless from completing a new base station on the Sviba Hills in the Bikita of Zimbabwe. According to the Chiefs, Econet Wireless, a company headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, defiled a traditional shrine by exhuming human remains and destroying relics. The presiding judge dismissed the case because, apparently, the Chiefs took too long to act. Adding injury to insult, the judge also ordered the Chiefs to pay for Econet's legal expenses.

Paramilitary police in Botswana severely beat two San ("Bushmen") men, burying one in a shallow grave, after accusing them of hunting without permits in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The two men were both successful applicants in a landmark court case six years ago that recognized the Bushmen's right to live, and hunt, on their ancestral land. After winning that case, the government made the tribe's life impossible, by unlawfully refusing to issue a single hunting permit.

The Yukpa shed light on their own struggle to reclaim ancestral lands in Venezuela, pointing out that President Hugo Chavez wasn't to blame. As one Yukpa activist pointed out, "It's the ministers." The revelation offered a much needed counterpoint to continued unfounded claims that Chavez is working against

Indigenous Peoples.

The United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) and the Opia Taino of St. Thomas adopted a Declaration of Unity. The historic Taino treaty marked "a significant moment in our collective history" stated Roberto Mukaro Borrero, a UCTP representative. "We are affirming and honoring our ancestral connections across the region in an effort to promote our ancient Indigenous heritage to our present and future generations."

A new nationwide movement was founded in response to Canada's renewed efforts to radically alter inherent and treaty rights and further entrench the Indigenous population into Canada's economy. The grassroots



movement, known as #idlenomore, led over 100 different actions, from public meetings to protests, blockades, hunger strikes, and 'flash mobs' in popular market centers.

An Embera Chami community returned home to western Colombia despite major security problems on their lands, including uncleared land mines and ongoing military operations. As part of the Colombia government's program to restore land to people displaced by armed conflict, the community recently received titles to lands they were driven from ten years ago. Since then, the community had been living as refugees in Bogota.

The Brazil government's deadline passed for the removal of the remaining non-indigenous population in the Xavante Indigenous territory of Maráiwatsede. Rather than evading the lawful eviction, however, the government was said to be "doubling security" to remove the remaining invaders who refused to leave voluntarily.



Reporters Without Borders (RWB) condemned Guatemala's newly-adopted General Telecommunications Law (LGT), calling it "unjust and discriminatory" for "upholding a grave imbalance in the allocation of frequencies." The new law, RWB said, "will leave the small radio stations created by indigenous (Maya and Xinka) communities, by Garifuna communities (those of African origin) and by mixed-race communities in permanent fear of forced closure and confiscation of their equipment."

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) finally took action against First Resources Ltd., a Singapore-based company that's spent more than 12 months clearing the ancestral lands and abusing the human rights of the Dayak Benuaq community of Muara Tae in Indonesia. The RSPO, a market-led non-profit, ordered the company to cease all developments on Muara Tae land, until such time that the conflict is resolved.

A controversial consultation process came to a close in Bolivia with communities in TIPNIS, the Isiboro-Sé-secure Indigenous Territory and National Park. According to official data, of the 69 communities included in the consulta, 55 agreed to support a proposed highway and all but one rejected the park's "intangible" status (which prohibits community development activities and megaprojects like the highway). However, Fernando Vargas, who leads one of three indigenous governing authorities TIPNIS, insisted that the official data is inaccurate, stating that, in many cases, community residents took part in the consulta without sanction from indigenous authorities who rejected (and did not take part in) the government process.

Bedouin citizens of the state of Israel started campaigning for democracy just as campaign posters popped up ahead of the country's upcoming elections. Since 2009, they have been legally denied the right to elect their own representatives.

Despite the strong presence of Idle No More in Canada, which finally managed to breach a media black out and catch the international community's attention, Canada's Senate Passed Bill C-45. In response to the betrayal, which was unconstitutional, a number of Chiefs in Canada stated that they would not recognize the Bill or any other illegal laws or enactments. Idlenomore, meanwhile, started to grow into something

much deeper than a protest movement like Occupy or the Arab Spring.

Despite the strong presence of Idle No More in Canada, the Senate went ahead and passed the first of eight controversial bills (Bill C-45) without even so much as blinking. In response to the betrayal, a number of Chiefs in Canada stated that they would not recognize the Bill or any other illegal laws or enactments. Idlenomore, meanwhile, started to grow into something much deeper than a protest movement like Occupy and the Arab Spring.

Thousands of Zapatista started marching in silence, entering at least five cities in Mexico to announce a new cycle of struggle. The peaceful mobilization began as the eclectic bunch of dooms-dayers, conspiracy theorists and hopeful dreamers (who thought aliens were going to save them) gathered at old Maya temples to mark the end of Baktun 13, the current phase in their long-count calendar. The Zapatista--which is, at its heart, a movement of Maya traditionalists--then left the cities as they entered, in silence. Following the actions, the Zapatista released a formal statement outlining their next steps.



