

In the Moon of Black Cherries Indigenous Nations Gather to Defend Bear Butte

by Debra White Plume, writing from the banks of Wounded Knee Creek

Many Nations of Indigenous Peoples, ngo's (nongovernmental organizations), and government representatives gathered at the sacred mountain Bear Butte. Traditional Healers, Tiospaye Headmen, Matriarchs, Traditional Societies, and community leaders camped together to have good talks, debates, and form agreements on how indigenous peoples can work together to strengthen the pockets of resistance across Turtle Island. All are working to stop the desecration of sacred lands and sacred places. While we camped at Bear Butte for those 42 days, we saw a rainbow surround the Sacred Mountain.

At the Summit of Indigenous Nations August 1-4, respected elder and leader Carrie Dan of the Western Shoshone Defense Project encouraged everyone to take a strong heart and keep working to protect sacred land, "We have to learn to use new words to educate the world about how indigenous peoples view our land-all land is sacred, but we have these special places that are tied to our identity". She spoke of how the Western world has a difficult time comprehending how native peoples have a relationship with sacred places, such as



Bear Butte. An elder from Canada, Wolverine, addressed the people to remember that the fight is not over, as long as there is one sacred place still threatened, we must all come to the aid of our allies to protect these places and the ceremonies conducted there. Wolverine's history of struggle includes an attack on his Sun Dance ceremony by the civil authorities in British Columbia in the mid-1990's, who laid land mines on the road to his Sun Dance, exploding the vehicles driven by people traveling to the ceremony.

An action item for consideration by the full Summit was the Papal Bull of May 3, 4, 1493 Inter Cetera. The papal bull has been the basis for the extinguishment of aboriginal land title and the subjugation of indigenous peoples of North and South America. The implementation of the papal bull evolved in the United States through the Supreme Court decision of Johnson v. M'Intosh [1823] which established the precedent for the denial of aboriginal title to American Indian lands in the United States. Delegations of indigenous nations and ngo's, by consensus, adopted a resolution condemning the historical use of the doctrine of discovery as an instrument of genocide. Tupac Enrique Acosta, coordinator of the Tonatierra ngo based in Phoenix, AZ stated that this effort at Bear Butte continues the indigenous battle to halt genocide of indigenous peoples and seizures of their homelands in the Americas. "It has been resolved by 23 Nations and NGO's and 100 individual signatories that the 'Doctrine of Discovery' is a legal and political fiction in violation of the rights of indigenous peoples and intellectual act of oppression which continues to serve to suppress and repress the indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere," said Tupac Enrique.

Santiago Delacruz, vice president of CONAIE (Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador/Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador). CONAIE is a formation of 28 indigenous nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador said "We have come from the southern part of this continent Abya Yala which we share with you all as indigenous nations of this hemisphere on a mission to strengthen and re-establish our ancestral ties as a continental confederation of nations and pueblos". Delacruz offered support for rescinding the papal bulls and support from the south for the protection of Bear Butte. "It is with great concern that we have

come to be informed of the threatened desecration of the Sacred Mato Paha, also known as Bear Butte, where we now gathered in summit as indigenous nations. "This sacred area must not be allowed to be destroyed or desecrated by the proposed construction projects of 'biker bars' and the like," Delacruz said.

Chief Oliver Red Cloud of the Black Hills Sioux Nation Treaty Council said the Catholic church has continuously made money for the Red Cloud Indian School at Pine Ridge and has not helped the communities that are most in need for daily survival, not to mention the long term reservation needs to help address the causes of poverty.



Nongovernmental organizations presented the work they are doing at the frontline on the grassroots level. Rosalie Little Thunder, President of the South Dakota Peace and Justice organization encouraged all the delegates to continue in their struggle, that ancient ways of life will continue as we protect our sacred places.

Kent Lebsock and Chris Soverow from the American Indian Law Alliance presented, with Debra White Plume from Bring Back the Way, research data on the Cameco, Inc. uranium mine operating an Insitu Leach Mine through the company Crow Butte Resources, located near Crawford, Nebraska. "This uranium mine has had a leak which lasted from several months to two years, leaking radioactive contamination into the air, water, and land" said Severow to the stunned audience. "This mine is located on 1868 and 1851 Ft. Laramie Treaty territory, this mine uses up to 5,000 gallons of water each minute," said White Plume. "Our Oglala Sioux Tribe must take the lead in fighting this mine, and lead the "Great Sioux Nation" in this fight. This contaminated land is just a few miles from where Crazy Horse was killed. This has to be a national issue as well."

Young adults all the way from Canada down to Arizona participated in the Summit of Nations, giving speeches about sacred site protection work they are involved in which includes fighting the Sun Peaks Ski Resort, to the Snow Bowl Resort, to the bars and concert amphitheaters near Bear Butte, and the "Divine Strike" proposed 700-ton bomb the US plans to detonate on Shoshone Nation's Ruby Valley Treaty land. The common linkage to these developments all revolve around business owners not only making money, but increasing profits that are already in the millions per annum range.

The final day of the Summit the delegations marched on Sturgis and had a rally downtown in order to educate the bikers about the Bear Butte desecration issue. "Don't Ride Highway 79" and "Bear Butte is Sacred Land" were the major messages of the protest.

The Summit of Indigenous Nations delegations will take home to their communities the collective action taken at the Summit for increased public awareness, and more discussion at the grassroots level. The Summit will reconvene in the summer of 2007 for the delegations to gather again, the 2006 Summit served as a starting point for collective action and the making of allies.

We honored Carrie Dan and Wolverine as elders who have committed their entire lives and who also have risked their freedom and lives to protect their ancestral land and ways of life. Both are tireless in their commitment and are a great encouragement to everyone who is in this for the long haul. We say wopila to them. (Part II next week).

FOR MORE INFO ON BEAR BUTTE GO TO www.bringbacktheway.com