



*mother earth*

a native perspective

*manna-hata*

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'Decolonizing Environmentalism' have been updated.

# **“A Basic Call to Consciousness, the Hau de no sau nee [Iroquois] Address to the Western World”**

## **1977, United Nations Conference on Indigenous People**

“In the beginning, we were told that the human beings who walk about the Earth have been provided with all the things necessary for life. We were instructed to carry a love for one another, and to show a great respect for all the beings of this Earth. We are shown that our life exists with the tree life, that our well-being depends on the well-being of the Vegetable Life, that we are close relatives of the four-legged beings. In our ways, spiritual consciousness is the highest form of politics. . . .

“The original instructions direct that we who walk about on the Earth are to express a great respect, an affection, and a gratitude toward all the spirits which create and support Life. We give a greeting and thanksgiving to the many supporters of our own lives -- the corn, beans, squash, the winds, the sun. When people cease to respect and express gratitude for these many things, then all life will be destroyed, and human life on this planet will come to an end.

“To this day, the territories we still hold are filled with trees, animals, and the other gifts of the Creation. In these places we still receive our nourishment from our Mother Earth. . . .

“The Indo-European people who have colonized our lands have shown very little respect for the things that create and support Life. We believe that these people ceased their respect for the world a long time ago. Many thousands of years ago, all the people of the world believed in the same Way of Life, that of harmony with the universe. All lived according to the Natural Ways.

“Today the species of Man is facing a question of the very survival of the species. The way of life known as Western Civilization is on a death path on which their own culture has no viable answers. When faced with the reality of their own destructiveness, they can only go forward into areas of more efficient destruction. The appearance of Plutonium on this planet is the clearest of signals that our species is in trouble. It is a signal which most Westerners have chosen to ignore.

“The air is foul, the waters poisoned, the trees dying, the animals are disappearing. We think even the systems of weather are changing. Our ancient teaching warned us that if Man interfered with the Natural Laws, these things would come to be. When the last of the Natural Way of Life is gone, all hope for human survival will be gone with it.

And our Way of Life is fast disappearing, a victim of the destructive processes.

"The technologies and social systems which have destroyed the animal and plant life are also destroying the Native people. And that process is Western Civilization.

"We know that there are many people in the world who can quickly grasp the intent of our message. But experience has taught us that there are few who are willing to seek out a method for moving toward any real change. But, if there is to be a future for all beings on this planet, we must begin to seek the avenues of change.

"The majority of the world does not find its roots in Western culture or traditions. The majority of the world finds its roots in the Natural World, and it is the Natural World, and the traditions of the Natural World, which must prevail if we are to develop truly free and egalitarian societies. "

We must all consciously and continuously challenge every model, every program, and every process that the West tries to force upon us. . . .

"The people who are living on this planet need to break with the narrow concept of human liberation, and begin to see liberation as something which needs to be extended to the whole of the Natural World. What is needed is the liberation of all the things that support Life -- the air, the waters, the trees -- all the things which support the sacred web of Life.

"We feel that the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere can continue to contribute to the survival potential of the human species. The majority of our peoples still live in accordance with the traditions which find their roots in the Mother Earth. But the Native peoples have need of a forum in which our voice can be heard. And we need alliances with the other peoples of the world to assist in our struggle to regain and maintain our ancestral lands and to protect the Way of Life we follow. . . .

"The traditional Native peoples hold the key to the reversal of the processes in Western Civilization which hold the promise of unimaginable future suffering and destruction. Spiritualism is the highest form of political consciousness. And we, the native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, are among the world's surviving proprietors of that kind of consciousness. We are here to impart that message."

Published in *Akwesasne Notes*, Rooseveltown, NY: Mohawk Nation, 1978. Excerpt published by Jerry Mander, *In Absence of the Sacred*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991, pp. 191-193

## Thoughts on the Occupations

Tiokasin Ghosthorse  
Oyate Tokaheya Wicakiye

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift" ~ Albert Einstein

I'm thinking about the "Occupy whatever" situation and the rationalities being used on either side of the same coin to keep the attention on the very same privilege being lost. Or is it being lost? The obvious and mundane society which uses a "language of lacking" since 1492 in the western hemisphere is looking for a way out of the buried box. It's either now or never "occupy" people! The con game to fascism is allowing you to protest to create world fascism. You can be stronger by making Mother Earth a priority on all your "what to do lists." Come on . . . use your intuition, it will tell you something else.

### *Mitakuye Oyasin*

There are those who will hang on to the same system they benefit from and defend it at all costs. It's called the American dream. There are those who are miffed about the system and diss it as not theirs and say things like "another world is possible" and languish in their hope and salvation-point mentality. Then there are those of us who know the "other" world is already here. It has always been here. It has always been a reality to us. It is called Turtle Island.

America continues to break the heart of Mother Earth, as doubt and denial walk hand in hand down the road of tragedy. The real war is against Mother Earth. If, however, "occupiers" put Mother Earth first, instead of the wealth and privilege that derives from her, then the usage of colonial language becomes coherent, then consilient to the unavoidable change needed for a movement based in living reality, rather than using reality to explain a pro tem articulation of economics, race and class struggle.

For more, see video talk: "Unsettling Occupation"  
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<http://alturl.com/y3ug7>

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# From Resources To Relations

Demelza

We, as indigenous people and indigenous allies, believe that the current way of life and belief system is not sustainable. Specifically we are talking about capitalism and colonialism. Colonialism is defined ideologically, and we include everyone in this definition: we have all been colonized through our schools, through our government, through our media. Indigenous people have dealt with, and continue to deal with an exceedingly violent colonization enacted through genocide, rape, and abuse. We recognize other groups around the world, and on Turtle Island, have also experienced, and continue to experience, the violent consequences of colonialism and capitalism. Colonization tells us what's right, it tells us what to think, it tells us not to unify and fight together. Colonialism tells us that our ancestors were wrong (or crazy), that our ways of life are wrong. Capitalism works together with colonialism - colonialism might work to tell us we aren't "white" or upper-class enough without the correct soap, eye color, or hair type. Capitalism attempts to get us to buy products that "fix us" so we can fit in. Colonialism tells you what to consume, and capitalism tells you to consume more.

Capitalism is also contingent on the idea of continual growth and continual spending. Capitalism is a windigo. Anishinaabe stories warn us about a terrible cannibal monster who cannot stop eating and assimilating everything around him. Capitalism is a windigo - it cannot stop consuming. This constant hunger and consumption is not sustainable.

Indigenous ideas about the environment have been consumed and appropriated by this colonial and capitalist windigo. The real message the indigenous people have told about Mother Earth has been heard incorrectly. Corporations want you to think that purchasing ecologically sound products will help you save the world. This isn't correct. It is more sustaining to turn to your own communities and learn how soap was/is made, how plants were/are cared for, how people were/are healed. Share this knowledge with others! Aid in the creation of life sustaining communities!

Indigenous knowledge tells us that everything is alive and everything is connected. Nature cannot and should not be controlled or manipulated. Rather, everything non-human must be respected - animals, plants, fish, the ocean. These things are our ancestors and our family. We are integrally connected to them, we are them as they are us. We are a part of nature, in no way separate from it. What we do to harm the environment, harms us and will harm future generations.

Colonialism has historically been propagated by the capitalist search for resource extraction. But fish friends, and tree friends, and mineral friends should not be viewed as resources from which one can gain profit. Rather they should be viewed as those we have a family relationship with. We need to move away from the idea of resources and towards the idea of relationships and responsibility.

This is what decolonization looks like and, if we are to survive, *we need it now.*

# Decolonizing Environmentalism

Karen Shapiro

We cannot solve our problems by using the same mind that created them.

Enormous cities full of high-rise buildings are not sustainable. Mother Earth cannot give up enough food and water or sources of electricity to meet the demands of the populations crowded into cities, so these resources have to come from someone else's land.

Those of us in the cities rarely, if ever, see the price paid by those people and the Earth for the privilege we take for granted. We see the excitement of Tucson or Phoenix, but never the devastation done to Diné ancestral lands, their water, their people, their animals, and their way of life. We never see the people displaced from their land to accommodate corporate farms, or the local farmers driven out of business.

Our demand for resources is so far out of control that as we deplete them, we continually turn to measures that are even more devastating to the earth. Today we're faced with fracking and GMOs. But these practices are part of the logical progression of the mind that says it's entitled to take what it wants, regardless of who or what is harmed.

So I don't understand why some environmentalists approach our problems by attempting to work within existing infrastructures.

We are told that renewable energy sources like solar and wind will solve all of our problems. But enormous solar projects are already devastating the Mojave Desert, wreaking havoc with sites that the Native people hold sacred, heating up the desert floor and harming reptile life. Investors are buying up the desert and plan to level it to accommodate solar panels, regardless of how this will affect the desert ecosystems. Do we really believe that we can throw the systems of the desert out of whack, and not eventually wind up with yet another huge scale catastrophe on our hands, just so that we can pursue a fantasy of having unlimited access to "clean" power sources? The desert, its hills, the reptiles, the sacred sites and the Native peoples are all our relatives and it's our responsibility to protect and defend them against this devastation.

"Yes, it is good to make use of the sun but not when it comes to disturbing sacred sites, pristine desert, the turtles or the horny toad. We were placed here to be guardians of harmonious equilibrium and we have a mission to ensure the sites are preserved for future generations. We cannot allow them to destroy us." ~ Alfredo Figueroa (Chemehuevi)

Recently I received an e-mail warning me about genetically engineered salmon. These salmon have had their DNA spliced and they grow to

maturity at twice the normal rate. The FDA is about to approve these salmon for sale at the market, but they won't be labeled as being GMO. The group who sent the warning urged me to take action by signing a petition to demand labeling. That was the beginning and the end of the action. It centered around how humans shopping in markets would be affected by genetically engineered salmon.

But what about the rights of the normal salmon to have their habitats and populations restored? What about the rights of the waters that have sustained them for ages? What about the organisms on which the salmon feed, and the whales and other predators who eat the salmon? What about the Native cultures for whom salmon is at the heart? What about the rights of the salmon not to be violated on such a brutal level? What about our responsibility to the water, to the life it sustains, and to the salmon?

Recently, President Obama released the "National Bioeconomy Blueprint," which would basically privatize all of the natural world. We'll extract biomass from forests and farmlands to produce energy and materials at a scale comparable to our current fossil fuel extraction, and we will only drive the ecosystems of Mother Earth into deeper crisis.

None of these "solutions" do anything to address the root of the problem, which is America's refusal to examine its arrogance, its attitude of privilege and its addiction to "more." We must take a cold hard look at our commitment to our current practices and ask ourselves if they are in any way sustainable. The lion's share of them violate everything that our Indigenous brothers and sisters struggled to teach us. It was all perfectly illustrated 400 years ago when the Dutch arrived and began to colonize Manna-hata. We began with beautiful sustainable ways of life, and then we "improved" upon them. Now we are faced with a host of crises brought on by centuries of "improvement."

Feeding our habits with a new drug will not stem the tide of disaster. Learning to live in a radically relational way with the land just might.

# **Beneath My Feet: The Story of a Hill and a Pond**

Alexandra (Sasha) Raskin

Living in New York City, I sometimes wonder if there's soil beneath my feet. I wonder, in this sea of cement, how far down you have to go before hitting soil that runs clear down to the core, to the center - earth that is filled with dirt, rocks, and underground streams, tiny creatures eating one another in the damp darkness. Earth that makes buildings sag and sink. Somewhere below Manhattan there is living soil, but it is far below, and its movements have been muted. This is the story of a one such endeavour to silence in the earth - the story of a hill and a pond.

Today they lie buried together beneath the streets and buildings at the intersection of Chinatown, Little Italy, and Civic Center. But they were not always buried and they are still far from silenced.



From the highest hill in lower Manahatta, a person could see bears, wolves, and deer in the forests below and whales in the waters surrounding the island. There was a lake just south west of the hill bustling with gasping fish and abundant freshwater. A stream from the pond led to the Shatemuc (Hudson) River and around them both, this hill and this pond, was the largest Lenape village on the island.

The Dutch named the village Werpoes. But by the time they arrived to "buy" the island, the population of Manahatta had been decimated by disease. Years of genocide and war lay ahead. Naming and renaming ensued - Kalck Hock, Picinic Hill, Bayard Mount - as if it would render the history that the hill and the pond bore witness to benign, the death and devastation less soul-splitting. Eventually they would be known as Bunker Hill and Collect Pond - the center of a shifting neighborhood that would see a familiar New York history of eviction, gentrification, urban blight, overcrowding, and "urban renewal."

The pond grew and shrank with the seasons, lapping at its banks, going still, freezing and melting and flowing. It was the main source of freshwater, a place for people to gather, eat the shellfish it offered, wash clothes, swim, and ice skate. After the Lenape were forced out of much of lower Manahatta, the area was settled by free Blacks who were used by the Dutch and later the British as a buffer to keep Native people away from white settlements. As New York grew, the free black neighborhoods were gentrified out and replaced by increasingly wealthier white settlers.

What abundant wildlife had lived in the pond was disappearing. Deer, bears, and wolves no longer ran and ate and rested in the shade of the

hill which trembled and stood sentinel over the changing landscape. Cottages became taverns, shops, wealthy residences, row houses. Butchers, breweries, tanneries, and gunpowder factories dumped ofal, chemicals, and sewage into the pond. The people blamed the pond for the spread of disease, the stench, and the woes of the rich white residents. It was a problem that needed to be solved.

As the plan for the city grid was being conceived, it was decided that the fate of the hill and the pond would match that of much of Manahatta. It was to be leveled, dried, and filled to create a grid beneath which the earth would prostrate itself. The pond was dredged and the hill used as landfill for the pond it had stood guard over. They lay together and were covered over by roads and townhouses in a neighborhood renamed "Paradise Square."

But the earth would not be silenced and as the wealthy landowners moved in, they found the houses were being reclaimed by the ground. The neighborhood over the pond and the hill began to sink back into the earth. The wealthy inhabitants were quickly replaced by people who could not afford to live anywhere else, transforming the area into an immigrant slum known as Five Points. A giant foundation of hemlock logs was sunk deep into the middle of the pond and hill beneath the streets and a prison built on top of it. The Tombs, as it was known, would sink and stink and be condemned before the end of the 19th century, only to be rebuilt.

To silence the earth and rebuild the prison, the city sunk cement 140 feet beneath the streets, deep beneath the bottom of the pond, in an attempt to force the land to accept the buildings on top of it. To this day, one of those building is a jail - the Manhattan Detention Complex, and near it, Central Booking. The Detention Complex has been rebuilt every forty years as the earth rejects it and tries to throw it off. The land there is still sinking. The hill and the pond, lying beneath the streets refuse to be silenced. Natives and Black people are over represented in the swathes of people who pass through Central Booking and the jail today. They were also the first and second communities to live with the pond and the hill before the land and water was poisoned, before both were destroyed in an attempt to make the Earth bend to human will, before Manahatta became Manhattan.

Listen to Mother Earth - Decolonize.

# **Manna-hata**

GP with addendum by Fanshen

If you've spent any time walking around Manhattan, you've probably noticed that the island can be remarkably hilly. This rolling terrain didn't go unnoticed by the island's pre-colonial inhabitants, the Lenni Lenape, who called the land—as translated in 1609 by an officer on Henry Hudson's ship, the "Half Moon"—"Manna-hata": the "Island of Many Hills."

## **Who Are the Lenape?**

Archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest known Lenape ("The People") inhabited the land surrounding the Hudson and Delaware rivers (present-day New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, northeastern Delaware and southeastern New York State, including New York City) roughly 10,000 years ago, near the end of the last glacial period. The Lenape referred to their territory by several names, including "Scheyischbi" ("place bordering the ocean") and, according to later sources, "Lenapehoking" ("in the land of the Lenape").

At the time of the first contact between the Lenape and white Europeans (possibly around the time of Verrazano's voyage into New York Harbor in 1524), most Lenape spoke two related dialects of the Eastern Algonquin language group: Munsee in the northern sections of Lenape territory, and Unami in the south. The Lenape practiced large-scale agriculture, cultivating fields of vegetation through slashing and burning, which extended the productive life of planted fields (and, ironically, made Lenape territory easier to farm for European settlers). Lenape women also cultivated many varieties of the "Three Sisters" vegetables: corn, beans and squash. The addition of huge quantities of fish and shellfish pulled from coastal bays throughout Scheyischbi allowed the Lenape to support a relatively large population, and scholars have estimated that in the New York City area alone, some 15,000 Lenape were scattered across roughly 80 settlements.

## **The Lenape in Manhattan**

In the 16th century, three Lenape groups inhabited present-day Lower Manhattan: the Canarsie, the Sappohannikan, and the Manahatin. Spread out in five villages (Sapohannikan, Werpoes, Kapsee, Rechtanck and Shempoes) along the Hudson and East rivers, the groups congregated for political, social and cultural purposes at Kintecoying ("Crossroads of Three Nations"), located at the present site of Astor Place.

According to Evan Pritchard, author of *Native New Yorkers*, the Lenape group closest to Kintecoying were the Renneiu-speaking Canarsies, who predominantly settled on the east side of the Bowery in two



villages: Shempoes, located between present-day 10th and 14th Streets along Second Avenue; and Rechtanck, on the water near what are now Clinton and Montgomery streets.

To the west of the Bowery were the Unami-speaking Sapohannikans. Their territory occupied the land between today's W. 14th Street and Canal streets, while their village, Sapohannikan, sat along the Hudson River near the juncture of Horatio and Greenwich streets. Other Munsee speakers, meanwhile, lived north of present-day Union Square.

The trail from Shempoes Village started near St. Marks Church (Second Ave. and 9th St.) and cut straight through 9th and St. Marks Place and then west into Astor Place.

The Sapohannikan trail started around Horatio Street, turned north to 13th Street, followed Greenwich Avenue all the way through Washington Square Park and then continued east to Astor Place. The three villages near the tip of Manhattan were connected to Kintecoying by a trail running up modern-day Broadway.

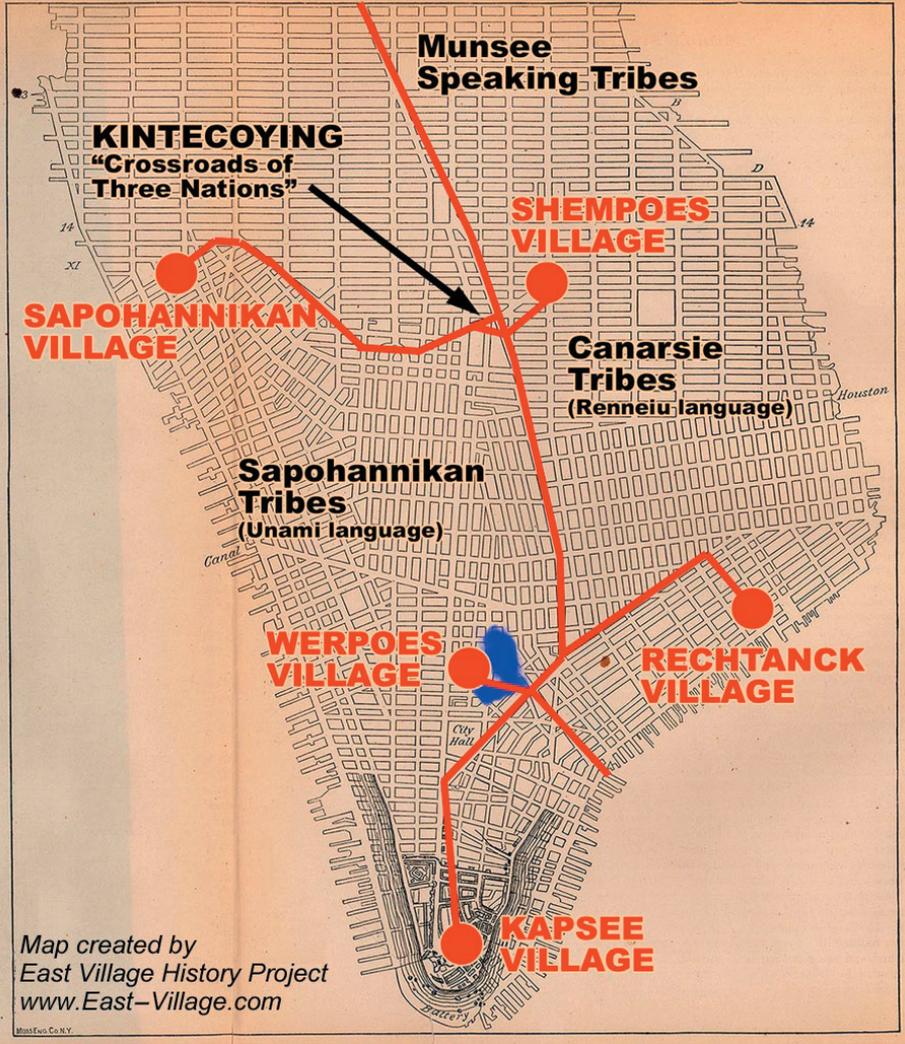
### **European Occupation and the Lenape Diaspora**

The first Dutch colonists began to move from Governor's Island ("Noten Eylant") into lower Manhattan (near the present-day site of the U.S. Custom House, south of Bowling Green) in 1625, and within several years to Pavonia, now the site of Jersey City, New Jersey.

Early interactions between the Dutch and Lenape were difficult; the language barrier, along with social, familial and cultural structures (and, not least, the concept of land "ownership") that both sides struggled and often failed to grasp led to misunderstandings, tension and, at times, bloodshed. The legendary "sale" of Manna-hata by the Lenape to Peter Minuit, the Dutch West India Company's director of New Netherland (along with a similar transaction in Pavonia, possibly involving the same Lenape), almost certainly meant completely different things to each party; for the Lenape, air, land and water were not commodities that could be traded or sold, and the 60 guilders (or \$24) that they received—so often cited as the "sale price"—along with the trinkets and other goods that they presented to the Dutch, were likely viewed by the Lenape as goodwill gifts.

By the middle of the century, the Lenape around New Amsterdam and north into the Hudson Valley had entered heavily into the beaver fur trade with the Dutch. Within decades, however, heavy Dutch demand for the furs resulted in massive over-harvesting of the region's beaver population, and the fur trade around the present-day New York metro area collapsed as the Dutch moved their operations farther north. This economic decline, combined with exposure to previously unknown diseases such as measles and smallpox,

# Lenape Tribes of Lower Manhattan



decimated the Lenape population in the area; by 1700, no more than a few hundred Lenape remained in increasingly Europeanized Manna-hata.

Lenape influence on the eastern seaboard continued to wane as European settlers poured into the colonies of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and in 1758, during the French and Indian War, the Treaty of Easton essentially forced indigenous peoples in the area—including the Delaware, Lenape, Iroquois and Shawnee—west into the Ohio Valley. This westward expulsion of many former eastern tribes continued into the early 20th century, and today, most descendants of the colonial-era East Coast Lenape can be found among the Delaware Nation and the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community in Wisconsin. In the New York area, two recognized tribes—Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey and the Ramapough Lenape Nation—remain. Several Lenape organizations in Colorado, Idaho and Kansas continue to petition the U.S. government for recognition, and many individual descendants of the Lenape diaspora are spread throughout the urban Northeast and many other regions of the country.



By 1640, there were only a few hundred Lenape in New York City, by the Revolutionary War (1775 - 1783) many were so poor they were dying from malnutrition. The population had been decimated from over 200 years of wars, disease, slavery and ultimately driven out by poverty and starvation. Many left but not all immediately went west; they went east into Long Island, as far north as Massachusetts or south to places like New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Still others went “underground” intermarrying speaking in “code” so as not to be discovered

Despite their historical role in founding New York, the Munsee have never been given a reservation, and never federally recognized except where they mixed with other Native peoples. Since Native peoples could not own land until 1924 (only if they were US citizens), they were faced with two choices: starve or pretend to be white and marry into white families.

According to the 2000 census there are more than 41,000 Native Americans in New York City, more than there were in the 16th century. The original people here are now mainly located in Stockbridge, Wisconsin, Munsey, Ontario, near Thamesville, Ontario, with a small number on the Six Nations Reserve on Grand River in Ontario.

## **Native Resistance Network**

is a direct action organization of Indigenous individuals and Non-Indigenous allies dedicated to informing and educating the public, and supporting and empowering Native peoples throughout the Western Hemisphere and around the world.



**N R N**

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