NGO Committee on Rights of Indigenous Peoples

December 16, 2021 1pm-3pm

[Indigenous.committee@gmail.com](mailto:Indigenous.committee@gmail.com)

**Facebook: ngo committee on the rights of indigenous peoples**

**Participants**

1. Daniel Leblanc
2. Elaine Congress
3. Cici Ogden
4. Joy Garland
5. LaVonne Peck
6. Victoria Edmonds
7. Sandra Sheridan
8. Henry Proclade
9. Ellen Ferranti
10. Myra Coffino
11. R. Mukaro Borrero
12. Joseph Wronka
13. Mary Ann Cassidy
14. Cynthia Chan
15. Judy Alves
16. Nikki Vandenburgh
17. Annemarie O’Connor
18. Mathew Giblin
19. Sharon Joslyn
20. Grandfather Dan Hawk
21. Rashmi Jaipal
22. Mare Louchart

**1. Moment of Silence in Honor of the Land we are on and the Native Peoples of this land.**

**2. Welcome and Introductions**

**3. Review of Agenda**

**4. Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2021** - Approved. Noted that the minutes will be posted on the committee’s website once it’s up and running.

**5. Executive Committee Report** - there was a brief review of the role of the executive committee. They met on December 6th to prepare the minutes and the agenda for this meeting. They wrote a thank you letter to Regina Whiteskunk, who took the time to speak at our last meeting and began to plan our parallel event for the CSW conference in March, which will be on the theme of climate change. They submitted an application for an event “Indigenous Women - Wise Protectors of Mother Earth Leading Climate Action”. On November 18, Roberto spoke at SUNY Syracuse, and on November 20 Joseph gave the keynote at a Children’s Day event in Massachusetts.

**6. Announcement - Secretariat Update** - the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be held from April 25 - May 6, 2022. The format for the event has not yet been announced, it will likely be online but could be in person. We are trying to get a member of the Secretariat to speak at our January or February meeting. The website of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues says that it will be held at the UN headquarters in New York, but the Secretariat is not sure if that means it will be in person. The UN has slowly been opening for NGO’s, but they require proof of vaccination and may now require three shots to be considered vaccinated. To attend the forum you need to create an online profile, but you do not have to have ECOSOC status.

**7. Speakers - LaVonne Peck and Nikki Vandenburgh from Native Network Consulting**

***LaVonne Peck*** – of La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians lives on a reservation in San Diego. San Diego County has the most tribes of any county in the United States. Native Network Consulting was founded four years ago and works in hemp and cannabis spaces. The Farm Act of 2018 made hemp legal nationally. Hemp farming allows indigenous communities the ability to diversify their economies and introduces new opportunities. In order to grow hemp you have to have a hemp plan, which comes from the Department of Agriculture. Their company helps indigenous farmers apply for these plans. Native land is expansive, so new agricultural opportunities are especially exciting, and after Covid they had a lot of tribes reaching out for their help. In order to grow hemp legally it must contain less than 0.083% THC, and they focus mainly on the industrial uses of hemp. It has many uses and provides tribes with once in a lifetime economic opportunities.

***Nikki Vandenburgh*** - she has worked with tribal governments for over twenty years, and saw the need for large scale production because they have millions of acres to grow on. There wasn’t the necessary infrastructure to farm hemp on a large scale, so they started a new company and are working with an existing company from Europe. Some of the uses for industrial hemp are in making building materials, fabrics, and automotive parts. None of these are new uses for hemp, but the United States in new to the hemp industry. The 2018 Farm Act treats sovereign nations and states the same way, in terms of securing USDA hemp plans. Hemp is exciting to grow, it’s a restorative crop, and it can feed, shelter, and produce medicine.

***Roberto*** - How large of a land investment do communities have to make?

***Nikki*** - For large scale at least 20,000 acres, but it can vary. Industries want to work with large scale producers.

***LaVonne*** - No one in the US is producing at that scale.

***Dan*** - The Space-X rocket requires a tremendous amount of methane, se we’d need a huge scale or production to use the hemp for rocket fuel

***Daniel*** - What is the economic feasibility for tribes?

***LaVonne*** - High, especially with partnerships between nations/communities. There are opportunities for huge revenue.

***Sandra*** - Thank you to the speakers, and to Myrna for introducing. How can we keep in touch?

***LaVonne*** - email. Please reach out with anything

***Nikki*** - We are starting to move on a global level, we are working with some groups from Africa.

***Sharon*** - Once it gets off the ground, once the large scale acreage is working, would smaller farms be able to link in?

***Nikki*** - Yes, and we work with local farmers in addition to tribes.

**8. Film and Discussion - Dawnland** - The film is available on PBS. It discusses the removal of indigenous children from their families through the boarding school system in Maine, USA. It focuses on the first US government endorsed day of Truth and Reconciliation.

**9. Speaker - Theresa Darder**

Theresa is a member of the Pointe au Chien tribe in costal Louisiana. She lives on tribal lands with her husband, grew up there, and has seen the impacts of climate change on their lands first hand. She has been fighting for restoration, as the current levy system does not protect their mounds or cemeteries. She participates in the Oyster Shells Project, which is working to create a living coastline using oyster shells to reinforce the coastline. In the area she lives it is mostly populated by natives, and only 18 of their 80 homes remain after Hurricane Ida. They have received a small amount of money from FEMA, but it has been insufficient. It will be a long road and a struggle, but the tribe is dedicated to rebuild their homes and restore their land. They are currently seeking funds to backfill canals that were left behind by oil companies. They want the government to help restore the islands, but so far they haven’t stepped in. The Pointe au Chien are a state recognized tribe, but are not recognized federally as a sovereign nation. In their neighboring community, which is outside of the levy system, only one home remains. They were given a grant by FEMA, but the state took it over and they are letting them wash away. Their community is mostly made up of elders, because they don’t have enough land for everyone and the younger generations have moved away.

***Cynthia*** - When the BP oil spill happened, you were here to speak at the UN, what would that have been about?

***Theresa*** - The levy system, which needed to be built so they could pump water out, and rebuilding the islands.

***Cynthia*** - Why didn’t oil companies backfill the canals?

***Theresa*** - Because it’s not enforced. The BP oil spill also caused the loss of more land.

***Cynthia*** - Could they go back and enforce it?

***Theresa*** - They could, but the government is in the pocket of big oil companies and they will not.

***Joy*** - Theresa has spoken at the UN, speaks for her people, and will not stop. She has so much to teach. We don’t know where the tribe would be without Theresa.

***Judy*** - How does not being federally recognized impact the tribe?

***Theresa*** - It means that we can’t deal directly with the federal government. We had to get a lawyer after BP because we can’t work directly with FEMA. If we were federally recognized, the government would likely help us preserve out cultural sites.

***Daniel*** - gave a reminder that everyone is always welcome, and ends the meeting.