

INDIGENOUS STATEMENT TO THE U.N. NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

“For more than seven decades, nuclear weapons have posed an intolerable, ever-present danger to all peoples and the planet as a whole. Because we abhor these instruments of terror and mass destruction, we warmly welcome the United Nations negotiations for a treaty to ban them.

We write to remind those drafting this important new treaty about the ongoing harm caused by the use of nuclear weapons, and by more than two thousand nuclear test explosions around the globe. Indigenous communities have borne the brunt of these deadly experiments. Our land, our sea, our communities, and our physical bodies carry this legacy with us now, and for unknown generations to come.

Governments and colonial forces exploded nuclear bombs on our sacred lands – upon which we depend for our lives and livelihoods, and which contain places of critical cultural and spiritual significance – believing they were worthless. They saw us as expendable, offering little or no protection against the harmful effects of radioactive contamination.

We were told that the explosions would benefit humankind, that they would make the world safer. But we learnt that was not true. We learnt that these bombs could only ever be a source of death, misery and destruction.

We were never asked for, and we never gave, permission to poison our soil, food, rivers and oceans. We continue to resist inhumane acts of radioactive racism.

The nuclear tests permanently dislocated us from our homes and disconnected us from our traditional way of life. Future generations will never be able to enjoy and live off the land and the ocean in the way that our ancestors had done for thousands of years before the mushroom clouds descended.

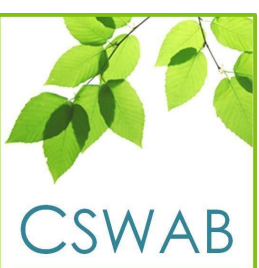
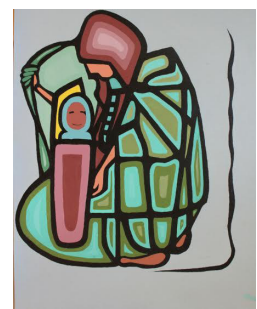
In pursuit of ever-deadlier weapons of mass destruction, the authorities have subjected our peoples to epidemics of cancers, chronic diseases and congenital abnormalities. They have treated us as “guinea pigs”, in some cases denying us access to adequate medical care and even our own medical records.

The mining of uranium – the essential first step in the production of every nuclear bomb – has also taken a terrible toll on Indigenous communities in many parts of the world. Tailings and other nuclear wastes that remain toxic into eternity have been dumped on our lands and in the ocean against our will. In some countries, our Traditional lands are under ongoing pressure to be the solution to the world’s nuclear waste problem.

As a result, we have experienced immeasurable pain and heartache. We have lost many loved ones. We have lived with the anguish of not knowing what impact the unleashed radiation might one day have on our children and grandchildren.

Our suffering cannot be undone. Our lands can never be fully restored. Some of our customs will never be revived and will forever remain disrupted. But we hope that, in this new treaty to ban nuclear weapons, governments will at last acknowledge and make reparations for the harm inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, communities, lands and sea.

We hope, too, that governments of the day will recognise that Indigenous peoples’ rights matter, as do the rights of all victims of nuclear bombs everywhere. In solidarity with the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we insist that you do everything in your power to ensure that no one else ever suffers as we have.”



Endorsed by:

Australian Nuclear Free Alliance
Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger
Coalition Québec Meilleure Mine
Collaborative Visions
Committee for Future Generations
Documentation and Information Network for Indigenous Peoples' Sustainability
Elimoñdik
Environmental Protection Association of the Upper Laurentians
FemLINK Pacific
Forward Together/ Strong Families New Mexico
Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation
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Indigenous Environmental Network
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Inter-Church Uranium Committee Educational Coop
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Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment
Native Organizers Alliance
Observatoire du Nucléaire
Pacific Network on Globalisation
Peace Movement Aotearoa
Red Water Pond Road Community Association
Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Centre
Sept Iles sans Uranium
Southeast Indigenous Peoples' Center
Southwest Indigenous Uranium Forum
Te Runanga O Te Whanau (Te Whanau a Apanui)
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Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance

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