



# Resist.

#IndigenousRising

The Newsletter  
Spring 2016  
Volume 25 #1

# “The People” United Can Stop ExxonMobil

*Resist speaks with Julian Matthews of Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment*

**By: Julian Matthews and Saif Rahman**

*Editor’s Note: Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment is a new Resist grantee that is bravely standing up to one of the largest and most powerful corporations in the world. Once we heard how they were physically putting a stop to ExxonMobil “mega-load” trucks that were driving through their community, we knew we had to share this story with Newsletter readers. These trucks were destined for Alberta, Canada and carry massive equipment to extract oil from tar sands (virtually the dirtiest type of energy extraction there is).*

*As they state, “Nimiipuu is the English translation for ‘the people’ which is one amongst many names the Nez Perce call ourselves. And protecting the environment of our traditional lands was the common commitment that brought us together.” Here we interview Julian Matthews from Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment on how they came together to take on one of the most destructive forces in the world.*

**Saif Rahman:** Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment’s story is so inspiring. Could you describe the beginnings for

our readers?

**Julian Matthews:** Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment formed about three years ago. It was the offspring of a group that we had attempted to start around ten years ago called the 1855 Coalition, which was based on the 1855 Treaty of the Nez Perces. I had been working with the Friends of the Clearwater (FOC), an environmental group in Moscow, Idaho. The FOC worked on issues that included our Treaty of 1855 and they always were good allies on protecting the interests in the wilderness and roadless areas that also fall within our Treaty area. This is where many of our traditional hunting, fishing, and gatherings takes place. It is very pristine and holds much of our history of our people.

When the “megaloads” first came to the Port of Lewiston in 2010, I began looking into where these megaloads were going. The first load went through on Highway 12. They had been talking about using the Highway as a commercial road to transport equipment. During this time I was trying to get tribal members involved and interested in stopping these loads.

**SR:** Tell us a little about tar sands and what happened next.

**JM:** They use an ungodly amount of water in these evaporators and the water is being depleted near the First Nations villages and affecting them with arsenic, cadmium, and other chemicals used in the process. I made a resolution to our tribal general council to stop these and they approved it, but our Nez Perce Tribal council wouldn’t do anything tangible. I also had met activist Heather Milton and she and a couple of Fort Mac tribal members came and we met at the casino to dis-

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Photo: Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment

# “Frontlines of Crises, Forefront of Change”

*Indigenous Communities across the United States are leading the climate justice movement*

By Resist Staff

If you were one of the 300,000 people that marched through the streets of New York City in September of 2014 at the People’s Climate March (or if you read Resist’s 2014 Annual Report Edition of the *Newsletter* in which the march graced the cover), you were probably moved by the lead banner that read, “Frontlines of the Crises, Forefront of Change.” The people holding this banner (as well as leading this movement) were all from communities that are enduring the most disastrous effects of climate change.

One of the principles we hold dear here at Resist is that social movements are most powerful when those who are most impacted by the systems we aim to change are the ones leading them. And when those communities speak and take action, others should listen and be in solidarity.

Indigenous communities across the globe are bearing the brunt of our immoral economic system which is destroying our land, water, and air. Moreover, those who contributed the least to the emissions of carbon around the world are the ones being impacted the most by climate change. Those

who rely on and respect Mother Earth are the communities that are quite literally on the frontlines of this crises. Melting glaciers, prolonged droughts, rising tides, and destructive storms won’t stop this movement and neither will the powerful industries we are up against.

One of Resist’s earliest grants was to the American Indian Movement (AIM). At the time, they were fighting for sovereignty, rights, and justice for Indigenous peoples. Five decades later, the struggle has not only continued, but expanded.

But there is hope. That is why this *Newsletter* is dedicated to those indigenous communities that have been resisting for centuries and continuously organize and take action in the most beautiful and brave ways possible.

In the words of Leonard Peltier, “We need to do more than just what is right. We need to join together and right what is wrong.”

To joining together and righting wrongs,  
Resist Staff

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cuss what we could do and what they were doing up there. Two were in the Sierra Club Canada. During this time it was very frustrating trying to get more tribal members involved and we held meetings at the tribe and did get some support but nothing very substantial.

On August 6, 2013 the “megaloads” were parked at the Port of Lewiston and I was driving by the casino and remembered that they were set to leave that night to head upriver. I felt bad about them just going by and heading up there with seemingly no one doing anything about it. So I drove out to the Port to check them out and to see what they were doing and trying to figure out what to do.

I headed back to the casino and then saw a bunch of people there parked and milling around, including Tribal members. I asked someone what was going on and they said, “the Chair was having a press conference about this

and how they weren’t going to let them do it.” I was surprised as I hadn’t heard any of this and I work at the tribe. So I hung around and some tribal members and the council were setting up these blockades on the highway so I thought this was cool they are going to stop them. Then a number of tribal members and folks from the area went onto the highway so I was pretty happy about this. There was a drum and singers and so we waited there. At about 11:00 pm, the megaload trucks, with 30 state and county police cars, came ambling up the highway right before the casino and the Nez Perce Reservation boundary.

It was pretty wild when this big thing came up to us with all these lights and cops surrounding it back, front, and the sides. As it came up everyone was yelling, singing, and dancing and the trucks stopped about 100 feet in front of us. This was a trip seeing this and also not knowing what was to happen next.

The tribal council and many other tribal members were arrested and taken to Nez Perce county. We stayed

there on the highway and then they told the Non-Indians if they didn’t leave they would be arrested. That night they only made it about four miles down the highway and were parked in the middle of the highway waiting. The next night I was waiting and talking to a tribal member about gathering down at the Ant and Yellowjacket tribal site. We drove down and I thought no one was going to show up and we would get arrested if there were only a couple of us.

We waited there and then all these people began showing up. We all got on the road and waited for them to start moving. It was a narrow roadway they had to go through so it seemed we would have a better way to stop them. We stood on the road and they began moving and cops starting telling us to get off the road. A number of tribal members were arrested that night also and when they began moving we kept on trying to stop them but they made it past us that night. They subsequently made it

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# Activists Call for Inclusion of Rights of Indigenous Peoples in UN Climate Agreement

By *Desiree Kane*

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Indigenous leaders, activists, and their allies gathered along the banks of Bassin de la Villette, Paris's largest man-made lake, as 25 Indigenous activists from North and South America formed a canoe flotilla on the lake. Renowned Indigenous North American climate activists from the Ponca Nation in Oklahoma to the Tla'Amin First Nation from British Columbia to Lummi Nation youth from Washington State, among others, participated in the event.

The purpose of the flotilla was to call upon the world's governments to include the rights of Indigenous people in the text of the UN climate summit's international deal and to highlight the relationship between people and water. The inclusion of the rights of Indigenous peoples in the legally binding portion of the agreement is a contentious issue at the climate talks. Several countries — including the United States, Norway, and Australia — have worked to eliminate Indigenous rights from the binding parts of the agreement, and include them only in the “aspirational” preamble.

“It's key that we are here as Indigenous peoples because we are the frontline communities,” said Dallas Goldtooth of Indigenous Rising, which works to defend Indigenous rights. “Our communities are the first ones to feel the affects of climate change.”

Speaking at the event, he continued, “Our communities are impacted and our traditional ways of life are at risk of being destroyed and even up until yesterday, governments of the world refused to let the rights of Indigenous peoples to be put into the Paris agreement. That is not acceptable, the rights of Indigenous peoples must be respected and acknowledged in a legally binding text of the Paris agreement. That is non-negotiable.”

The activists presented three documents to reinforce and articulate their demands, including the Indigenous

Women of the America — Defenders of Mother Earth Treaty, which elaborates the stresses being placed on Mother Earth, calls for support for the rights of Indigenous peoples, and demands protection of nature. The treaty was signed and ratified by Indigenous women leaders from North and South America in a sacred ceremony along the same banks of the Bassin de la Villette.

Ena Santi from the Kichwa community of Sarayaku in Ecuador, Sarayaku council member in charge of women's issues, addressed attendees at the event, saying, “This morning together with other Indigenous women we signed a treaty. My village has been fighting very hard for a very long time. We want to live a healthy life in the rainforest and our struggle is a hard struggle. The Earth is getting warmer and we can't go on like this. We have to fight this together as women — the whole world, we have to fight this together. This is why we have signed the treaty.”

She continued, “We want our children to have a good life. Not just Indigenous children, all children. We have the strength of mountains and we are the descendants of the jaguar. We will fight this until the end for our children.”

A Declaration to Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground was also presented at the event, calling on world leaders to stop extraction of coal, oil, and gas. In an effort led by Indigenous peoples, the document has been signed by over 150 organizations, including 350.org and Amazon Watch.

Faith Gemmill of the Gwich'in & Pit River/Wintu Nations in Alaska, executive director of the nonprofit Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Land, emphasized the impact of drilling activities on her home: “Alaska is ground zero of climate change. [It] directly affects and undermines our livelihood.

The ground we walk on is literally melting beneath us. Whole communities are under threat of being climate refugees as they are being forced to

relocate. The fossil fuel companies see climate change as an opportunity. As the ice melts into the ocean, they salivate to drill offshore.” She added that, following a successful campaign to stop Shell from drilling in the Arctic, Alaskan politicians had called for additional drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, “the sacred place where life begins.”

A third document was also presented at the demonstration: The Kawsak Sacha or the “Living Forest” proposal on how we can live together with the natural world, created by the Kichwa Indigenous people of Sarayaku, Ecuador. The proposal, which is based on the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon rainforest, aims to create a new legal category of protected areas for Kawsak Sacha, which would be “free of oil, mineral, and lumber extraction” and would preserve the territory of Indigenous peoples.

The presentation of these three documents emphasized the need to embrace and implement the collective knowledge of Indigenous peoples as perhaps the only way to stop catastrophic climate change.

“Indigenous peoples live with this wisdom, live in harmony with living beings. We are here to protect the lagoons, the water, the trees and the mountains. We are the balance. We live the balance. Only if our proposal is heeded will be able to ensure the future,” said Felix Santi, president of the Kichwa community of Sarayaku in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

“We declare that Indigenous people's territories are a vital and crucial place for the future of the planet and our territories are our sacred heritage,” he added. “There should be no more oil and gas, no more mining, no more logging in our lands and territories.”

Gemmell, echoed this sentiment, and believes that the destruction of humanity will begin if fossil fuel companies

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to Orofino, Idaho and then to Kooskia and then on up to Missoula. During this time Idaho Rivers United had filed a lawsuit under the Scenic Rivers Act and sued the US Dept of Transportation and after much wrangling with the Forest Service the judge said the Forest Service had the authority to stop these megaloads. The Nez Perce Tribe also joined in this and now it is in “mitigation” for the last year. They have stopped since then and tried alternate routes but haven’t had much success.

**SR:** That is quite the story. So much gratitude and love. What were the next steps to continuing this fight and expanding?

**JM:** About January of 2014 I received a call from Heather Milton in Fort Mac and she said a group called Seventh Generation fund was trying to get tribal groups to provide funds for this type of activity and she thought of

me and our efforts down here. I called up Tia Peters, executive director of the 7th Generation fund and she said if we applied we could get some funding. We used Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) as our fiscal sponsor and then in April of 2015 we incorporated and now were a Tribal run 501C3 non profit and have applied for and received additional funding. In 2014 and 2015 we had tribal environmental summits on the reservation and meetings with other tribal members on local reservations trying to assist them with their environmental issues. We have a good tribal network and have participated in actions and activism with non-Indian groups also.

**SR:** What is ahead for you?

**JM:** Our future is to mainly get tribal members involved and educated, especially youth. We will continue to expand our efforts and to network with other tribes. We have a good tribal member board with an elder and work with the Circle of Elders of our tribe and the Senior Citizens Advisory Board so

have good support and cultural advice from these two groups.

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*Julian Matthews is a board member of Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment and has been actively involved in environmental issues for the last 20 years, primarily in response to threats made on or near the Treaty of 1855 and usual and accustomed areas. Saif Rahman is the director of communications at Resist and the editor of the Newsletter.*

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continue to get access to sacred places. “We are calling for a full phase out of fossil fuels. No more business as usual, we don’t have the luxury of time.”

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*Desiree Kane is a Miwok woman, multimedia journalist, and a live-media event producer. Learn more about her work at [desireekane.com](http://desireekane.com) This article originally ran in Earth Island Journal.*

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Photo: Desiree Kane

Indigenous activists gathered along the banks of the Bassin de la Villette to call for inclusion of Indigenous rights in the binding portion of the Paris climate agreement.

# Demands for COP21

*These were the Talking Points for Indigenous Environmental Network and other Indigenous delegations participating in Paris, France at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference*

## **Establish mandatory—not voluntary—emissions cuts at the source.**

In order to keep the average global temperature from rising further, we must significantly decrease greenhouse gas emissions at their source.

The United Nations must establish a mandatory, legally-binding agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions at the source. This is called a supply-side approach to dealing with climate change. Corporations and nation-states must be held accountable to their contributions to climate change.

## **Leave Fossil Fuels In The Ground.**

We call for a moratorium on any new fossil fuel development.

Give Mother Earth a rest by making binding commitments to leave more than 80% of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground and the ocean floor. Stop the escalation and expansion of fossil-fuel development, i.e. oil, uranium tar sands, fracking, shale oil and shale gas, offshore drilling, coal, power plants, and transportation systems – pipelines, trains, tankers, etc.

## **No False Solutions – Just Transition.**

Calling global attention to the false solutions being negotiated within the UN climate negotiations, COP21. These false solutions privatize Father Sky and Mother Earth and continue the colonization of Indigenous peoples, land, water, and resources.

These false solutions are market-based mechanisms, such as: Carbon markets, carbon trading and carbon offsets (such as REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation).

These false solutions are: natural gas, fracking, and nuclear.

We reject these false solutions and unite for a Just Transition away from the extractive economy of fossil fuels and other dirty and dangerous industries, towards new community-rooted economic models for clean energy and healthy communities that work for people and the planet.

## **Inclusion of the the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Recognition of the Rights of Mother Earth**

The United Nations agreement to address climate change must include the recognition of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous people are on the frontlines of extractive development and climate change.

As nations and communities that feel the effects of climate change first and most direct, Indigenous Peoples must be informed and consulted on any proposed mechanisms to respond. Rights as Indigenous Peoples must be recognized in the treaty agreement text.



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Your contribution to Resist supports hundreds of activist groups resisting, organizing, and building a better world. We will never have the money that those in power have, but Resist believes in a simple equation: a little bit of support plus grassroots creativity and passion can equal radical social change.

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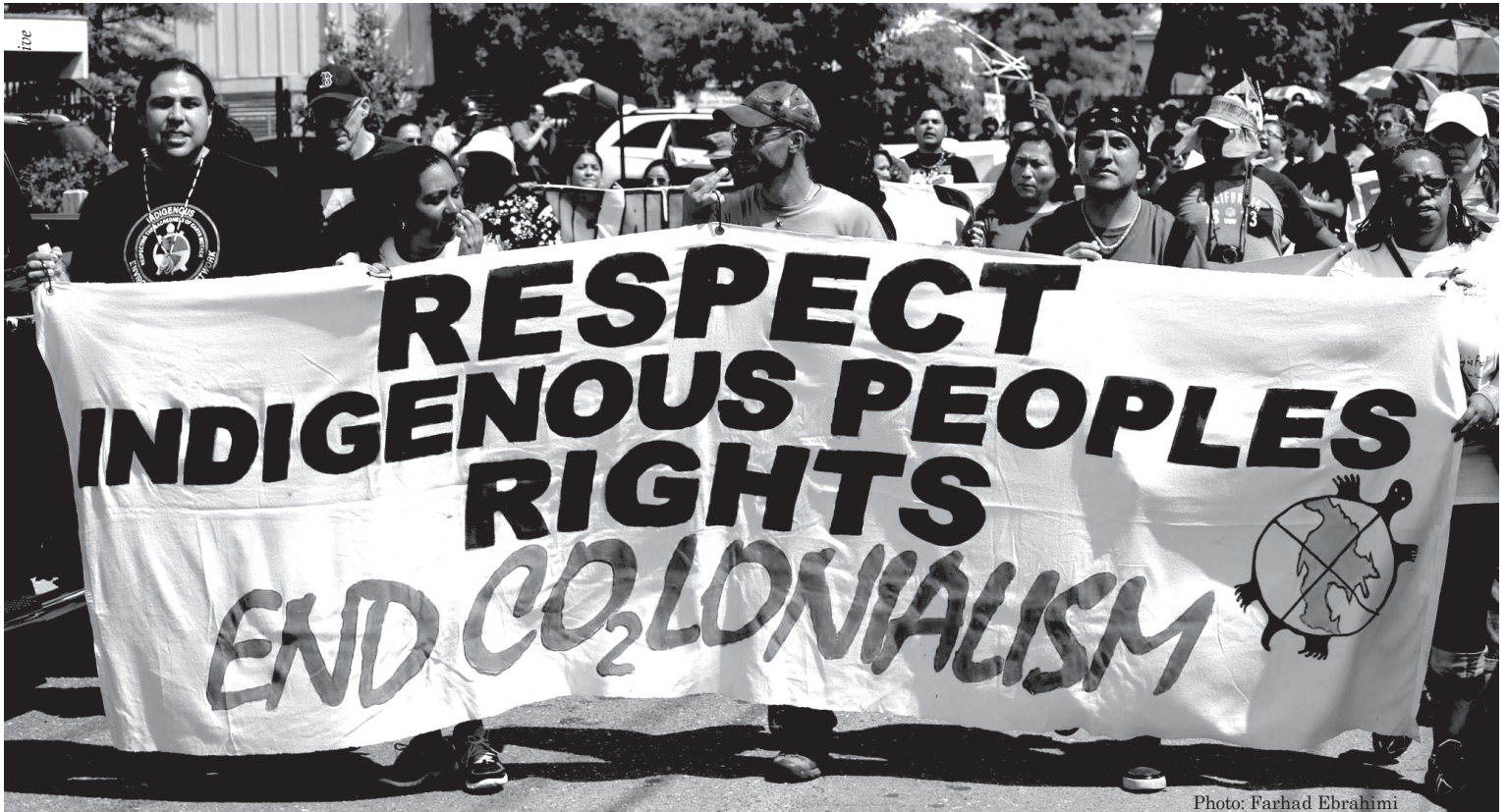
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