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Native American Forum on nuclear issues welcome and agenda overview

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Good Morning. It is my privilege to welcome you to the Native American Forum on Nuclear Issues. I want to acknowledge you, the participants of the forum, for giving us your valuable time today and tomorrow. Because we are here today, I can declare this event a successful interdisciplinary collaboration.

Prayer

I ask you now to give more of yourself if you can. We need you to use your best reasoning and planning. We need your best thoughts and ideas to help us find the alternatives, options and leverage to appropriately address the nuclear threats and hazards we experience as Native American peoples.

There are three important aspects of this event worth noting. First, this event is truly a grassroots event initiated and organized by Margene Bullcreek and myself on behalf of the Native Community Action Council with very little funding. Two additional important aspects of this event are manifest by it taking place at UNLV. First, it is interdisciplinary with participation from the Department of Environmental Studies, the Department of History, the Department of Sociology, the UNLV Law School and the UNLV libraries. It is also collaboration between tribal stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and the university departments mentioned. By each of the individuals and entities participating here today I can confidently declare the Native American Forum on Nuclear Issues as success.

Our agenda is arranged to allow each presenter to not run over another presenter's time. So please keep to the twenty minute presentation with two to three questions after the presentation. We have very good participants in the audience representing various views on nuclear issues. Please take the time to meet and have discussions with as many individuals as you are able. We have regular breaks and lunch served today at the UNLV Dining

Commons nearby. Tomorrow we will also have lunch provided and end early so you can meet with other participants before leaving town.

Statements

IF ANY

Announcements

LVIC is having a soccer camp Saturday at the UNLV soccer fields.

Forthcoming U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Workshop For Affected Tribal Government and Affected, Units of Local Government on "The NRC's Licensing Process: Judging the Safety on a Proposed Repository at Yucca Mountain: Update 2008 April 17, 2008, 8:30am - 5:00pm, NRC Las Vegas Hearing Facility on Pepper Lane in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Poo-Ha-Bah Healing Center in Tecopa is having ceremonies and sweats April 18, 2008 Contace Lexi (530) 277-0260

Priscilla R. Sanderson, Ph.D will give a lecture entitled: "Colorectal Cancer and Navajos: Recent Data on Knowledge, Attitudes and Behavior" [Friday, April 18, 2008](#), at the Nevada Cancer Institute - Flagship Auditorium Las Vegas, NV

The UNLV Libraries Nevada Test Site Oral History Project is hosting a reception April 27, 2008 at the Tam Alumni Center at UNLV See Mary Palevsky.

SPECIAL BONNIE RAITT BENEFIT TICKETS May 23rd, 2008 Silver Legacy Casino, Reno, NV Contact John Hadder at (775) 284 1989

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

I have been involved in nuclear issues since I was 18 when I realized my people suffer the adverse health impacts known to be plausible from exposure to radiation in fallout from nuclear weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site. My community is downwind and, so too, is every living thing on the planet I have since learned. I am sure if you talk to the Native Americans here today you will hear stories of cancer and other adverse health impacts. I think most of us have stories. I have my own. I am sure we all have similar stories. When asked why I do this work I explain that I was lucky enough to be born healthy and have dedicated my life to defending my land and people from nuclear threats and hazards. It is not an easy course to take. When asked how I am able to accomplish so much with so little, “it is because I hold nothing back. Nothing is more important than my land and my people. We must address the past before we can move on. The past informs the present so we can make wise decisions about the future. My people have nothing to lose. Poor people are more easily controlled.

I just want to take a few minutes to cover the Western Shoshone case from this perspective. The Western Shoshone people have been in an ongoing war dispute with the US since the signing of the peace treaty at Ruby Valley. When the treaty was signed America was weak and engaged in a civil war. No one knew what the outcome would be. The US had to make agreements that could clearly demonstrate its legitimacy and credibility among nations as allies to guarantee payment with gold for armaments to fight the war it was then engaged. The US agreed to pay the Western Shoshone Nation \$5k per year for twenty years. The Western Shoshone Nation possessed the interests that the US sought to acquire through those payments. After the war the US did not fulfill the payment schedule. By not fulfilling its obligation the US has abandoned its rights sought in the treaty as would any other

party to a contract who does not make their payments. The US cannot demonstrate any lawful ownership documentation to Western Shoshone treaty lands. We will hear more of the ownership question and its relationship to the siting of Yucca Mountain later.

Since 1971 Carrie Dann has been defending herself from claims of the US Bureau of Land Management that she is trespassing on Western Shoshone peace treaty lands. The US Bureau of Land Management blames the Carrie Dann for overgrazing of horses and cattle. Carrie's son Mark has severe mental and physical difficulties I believe are the result of radiation exposure Carrie Dann received. I believe that the radiation from the weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site have exposed vast regions of the Great Basin destroying the indigenous plants and creating vulnerabilities in the land that allow noxious and invasive plant species to take hold unchallenged. While there are surely legitimate overgrazing issues the United States Bureau of Land Management engages in an aggressive strategy calculated to bring about conditions of economic hardship and emotional stress upon the Western Shoshone people peacefully engaging in their treaty defined rights as "hunters and herdsman". Former Western Shoshone National Council Chief Raymond Yowell, like Carrie Dann, has had his cattle herd confiscated...his life long work stolen. Now the United States Bureau of Land Management has sent a delinquent grazing fee bill for grazing the cattle they confiscated to the United States Treasury and are taking his Social Security retirement to pay the delinquent grazing fees. So, though overgrazing may be the issue for the United States Bureau of Land Management I believe the poor quality of the range goes back to nuclear weapons testing. Further, impacts may affect wildlife and domestic animals and ultimately the people that live as hunters and herdsman...Native Americans. We will hear more about the Native American lifestyle differences and unique exposure pathways.

Environmental justice has become an increasingly important policy requirement in federal programs. Environmental justice should not only be a process of identifying potential threats, hazards and adverse impacts but, also fair distribution of benefits. What has happened has been the unfair manipulation of tribal communities against each other by researchers seeking to achieve research goals while successfully fulfilling contracts of federal agencies thereby securing future contracts and their careers. As you will hear today, there are plenty of adverse impacts, hazards and threats that we as Native Americans experience. However, very few, if any, benefits.

We do not have the resources or opportunities to educate ourselves, study the potential nuclear threats and hazards or adequately defend ourselves against the US government. We are doing the best we can. We need your help.

The issue nuclear waste storage will be discussed thoroughly today and tomorrow. I will just say that the US does not own Yucca Mountain. For the US to claim ownership of Western Shoshone treaty lands is a fraud and a violation of the peace treaty between our peoples. There are larger foreign policy issues at stake. America's moral ascendancy is declining fast.

I have one final thought for your consideration as a theme to carry through the event. I was comforted by individuals who spoke of Native Americans being left out from the beginning on nuclear issues. In my opinion, being left out of nuclear development activities of the US government has serious impacts to Native American communities. It is an issue of negligence, and an act of abuse. Intent to violate and abuse Native American people is manifest in neglect. Ghandi said that, "poverty is the greatest violence." I believe that negligence is of the same character..."a soft abuse that festers like cancer causing great pain and suffering." As Native Americans we are obligated to take responsibility for the protection of our communities especially our

future generations. We act in our own interest to transform ourselves from victims to competent advocates in defense of our land and people. I find comfort in not being left out. I appreciate being acknowledged and not having to fight for that acknowledgement. I thank you for your understanding you're your commitment in joining us here today to addressing the serious threats, hazards and potential impacts associated with nuclear development in the Great Basin from a Native American perspective.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge Peter Ford who is not here but, has been instrumental in coordinating the work of the Native Community Action Council and has been involved with the Western Shoshone since the 1980's.

I also want to acknowledge Candace Ross who has provided me with the nudges to get this event going and resources to share information and materials with you.

Also, I must acknowledge Dottie Shank-Barnett from the UNLV Environmental Studies Department for organizing the university portion of this event and similarly prodding me to get it together.

And finally I want to thank the presenters for sharing the most important things you possess...your knowledge and time.

Now we will get right into the presentations with Margene Bullcreek, President of the Native Community Action Council from the Skull Valley Goshute Tribe site of the proposed Private Fuel Storage for high level nuclear waste.