

Coalition Calls for Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Transition to Clean Energy

Launches Resource Hub of Indigenous-led Solutions

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, August 4, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On August 9, 2022, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous leaders will launch a new site – www.sirgecoalition.org – as part of the official public announcement of a new coalition to Secure Indigenous People's Rights in a Green Economy (SIRGE Coalition).

The minerals necessary for renewable energy minerals, such as nickel, lithium, cobalt, and copper are critical to the development of a green, low-carbon economy. As demand for these transition minerals is skyrocketing, increased mining threatens Indigenous rights and territories where there is not a comprehensive assessment of risks and harms to Indigenous Peoples, and complete participation of Indigenous Peoples who are impacted.

In order to solve the growing climate emergency, a true [Just Transition](#) to a low carbon economy requires governments and companies involved in the new green economy to observe and implement the rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

Cultural Survival, First Peoples Worldwide, Batani Foundation, Earthworks, and the Society for

Cultural Survival



Indigenous communities are raising awareness about how the proposed lithium mine at Peehee Mu'huh (Thacker Pass), NV, will impact their ancestral burial grounds, water resources, and wildlife. Photo by Chanda Callao/ @Peopleofredmountain

Threatened Peoples have launched the SIRGE Coalition as a platform to champion a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy. SIRGE Coalition is calling upon government, corporate, and financial decision-makers to avoid the mistakes and harms of past resource development by protecting the rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples around the globe, many of whom live on lands rich in transition minerals.

A few of many examples of Indigenous Peoples currently experiencing harms and threats from unconsented development of transition minerals include:

- [Peehee Mu'huh](#), or Thacker Pass, sits at the southern edge of the McDermitt Caldera in Humboldt County, Nevada. Lithium Americas is attempting to develop a lithium mine on these lands, which are sacred to Shoshone and Paiute Peoples.
- In Guatemala, members of the Indigenous Q'eqchi' community peacefully blockaded the Fenix Nickel Mine to protest the lack of consultations and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for the mine, which has polluted their traditional fishing grounds in Lake Izabal.
- In Russia, Indigenous communities on the Taimyr Peninsula suffered food insecurity after a fuel spill in 2020 from a subsidiary of Nornickel – a mining firm that supplies some 20 percent of the world's Class I nickel needed for electric vehicle batteries – polluted local waterways. Despite pressure from companies in the supply chain, Nornickel has failed to respond to requests from Indigenous communities for adequate compensation and restoration of the fragile Arctic environment.

Indigenous territories contain significant concentrations of untapped heavy metal reserves around the world. In the United States, a [study by MSCI](#) estimated that 97 percent of nickel, 89 percent of copper, 79 percent of lithium, and 68 percent of cobalt reserves and resources are located within 35 miles of Native American reservations. A 2020 study found that mining potentially influences 50 million square kilometers of Earth's land surface, with 8 percent coinciding with Protected Areas, 7 percent with Key Biodiversity Areas, and 16 percent with Remaining Wilderness.

About the SIRGE Coalition

The SIRGE Coalition's primary goal is to elevate Indigenous leadership through the creation of a broad coalition and the promotion of constructive dialogue. In accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the coalition will uphold all rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories, and especially their rights to determine their own priorities as to their lands, territories, and resources. Indigenous leadership is essential as Indigenous Peoples conserve about 80 percent of the planet's remaining biodiversity.

The SIRGE Coalition is staffed by an Executive Committee made up of representatives from each

organization and is governed by an Indigenous Steering Committee made up of two representatives of Indigenous Peoples from each of the seven socio-cultural regions across the globe along with a global chairperson and the chairperson of the Executive Committee, chosen from Indigenous members.

SIRGE Coalition is calling for full implementation of the UNDRIP, including the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, in all endeavors related to the extraction, mining, production, consumption, sale and recycling of transition and rare earth minerals around the world.

For more information, see www.sirgecoalition.org (Launching on August 9).

Quotes from Coalition Members:

"Cultural Survival is honored to be part of the SIRGE Coalition. We must center Indigenous Peoples' and human rights as well as true, regenerative practices as we transition to the new green economy. Healthy and sustainable economies should mirror healthy ecological systems. Healthy ecosystems are interconnected and resilient to change; they are interdependent and regenerate each other, rather than depleting and weakening the system.

Indigenous Peoples have sustained diverse and complex societies with circular economies over millennia without defaulting to the sort of replacement extractivism that some of today's renewable energy options entail. A meaningful, intentional, and truly Just Transition will require a set of solutions including improving existing standards, reforming old mining laws, mandating circular economy practices, setting standards and meeting targets for minerals' reuse and recycling, reducing demand and accepting de-growth as a concept and a pathway, and most importantly, centering human rights and the right to the Free, Prior and Informed Consent in all decision-making." – Galina Angarova (Buryat), Cultural Survival Executive Director

"The green economy is what the world, countries, and societies are striving for right now. But we must already understand today that if we do not create the human rights prerequisites and conditions for the green economy, it can become a tragedy for Indigenous Peoples on whose lands the natural resources will be extracted. The creation of the SIRGE Coalition is an important step toward a more just and fair world. I am confident that we will not be alone, and that with our support, the green economy will be truly sustainable and just." – Pavel Sulyandziga (Udege), Batani Foundation, President

"Partnership with Indigenous Peoples is integral to climate-resilient development. We must ensure that the harms to communities and environments driven by the fossil fuel economy are not replicated in the critical mineral development necessary to transition to low-carbon, clean energy projects. The SIRGE Coalition provides pathways to concrete action necessary to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights and reduce material loss for companies in the rising demand for renewable energy resources.

To witness the SIRGE Coalition activate so comprehensively is to witness the strength and vitality

of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous solutions. It is an honor to serve alongside and to help grow this coalition of such immense expertise." – Kate R. Finn (Osage), Executive Director, First Peoples Worldwide

"The SIRGE Coalition is a powerful Indigenous-led alliance there to ensure that the mistakes of the fossil fuel industry are not repeated in the transition to a Green Economy." – Tabea Willi, Campaign Manager for the Arctic campaign at the Society for Threatened Peoples, Switzerland.

About Cultural Survival

Cultural Survival (CS) is an Indigenous-led NGO and U.S. registered non-profit that advocates for Indigenous Peoples' rights and supports Indigenous communities' self-determination, cultures, and political resilience, since 1972. For close to 50 years, Cultural Survival has partnered with Indigenous communities to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights and cultures worldwide. CS envisions a future that respects and honors Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights and dynamic cultures, deeply and richly interwoven in lands, languages, spiritual traditions, and artistic expression, rooted in self-determination and self-governance. The core of Cultural Survival's efforts rests on the principles of supporting, amplifying efforts, and raising awareness of self-determination for Indigenous communities. To learn more, visit www.cs.org

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