

An Urgent Way Forward, A Summit on Intersectional Environmentalism



An Urgent Way Forward, A summit on Intersectional Environmentalism, an Arizona Green New Deal Summit was held on Saturday August 21st at Heritage Square Park in Phoenix AZ.

An Urgent Way Forward: A Summit on Intersectional Environmentalism is bringing Arizonans, organizations and community leaders together to discuss climate action, racial and environmental injustices by amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Together, we must move beyond a singular position, or

singular approach, to one that is intersectional, and one that is transformational. The fuel that ignites societal transformation is the collaboration of people, among and across diverse groups. An Urgent Way Forward is not a finite event, it's a call to action. Join the movement. Justice For The People. Justice For The Planet.

Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr. was a featured speaker along with Martin Quezada, AZ

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State Senator, Carlos Garcia, Phoenix Vice Mayor, Regina Romero, Tucson Mayor, Yassamin Ansari, Phoenix City Council, Diego Rodriguez, AZ State Representative, and Pita Juarez, League of Conservation Voters. Isela Banc was the summit moderator.

The topic focused on Water issues in Arizona and its impact on low income/minority families and the disabled. State Senator Carlos Garcia spoke of how environmental issues intersection with health care, education, criminal justice, by looking at his congressional district. He stated that what makes it to number one concern is to keep light on for the family. The people are not concerned whether the city is rezoning, trees are begin removed from neighborhoods, or that the state legislature is voting to slow down the implementation of solar energy. Environmental, issues and water control issues end up affecting them by decisions being made without their input.

Water issues discussed included asthma, school attendance, access to health care, communities of color are who suffers the most. Discussion also included living during COVID, air is dirty, lack of accessibility to testing, and vaccinations. Our kids are the ones that are getting sick, rising temperatures, all affected but are created all by design, systemic and systematic. We need to change those systems.

Moderator introduced Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr., our Indigenous brother, it's an honor to have you with us, can you please educate us, what have we gotten wrong?

Nosie introduced himself, stating that is our ancestral home land, that he is Chiricahua and an enrolled member of San Carlos Apache Tribe. Wendsler began, "please don't get offended, we say we are the last coil on the tail of the rattlesnake, we have seen all the things that have happened before us. How can you hate me for defending our lands, how can you hate me for telling you

that this capitalist world, you are and is bringing all these issues that we are talking about today. I try to remind people that what happened on the other side of the world. It's not that we hated the people who came here, it's not the people, it's the fact what they brought and what they changed."

"I tell people when I travel this country that I thought reservations were bad, but I find that cities and towns are bad, they are like reservations themselves (people kept within boundaries). I tell white people that there is a big difference between you and I. There is no difference on the human side of us, but the difference is: I feel that chain, leading me back, but for you, you are accustomed to that, what we are trying to do is to help you see the chains that you live with and these boundaries and that's capitalism, like it or not, that's what it has done to all of us. As human beings, we need to understand that there are always times that we need to change or amend things because it doesn't fit anymore. Well, Mother Earth has suffered enough and we have to go into adjusting and changing things, we got to make that decision for our children, not for us, because we have lived our lives already. It's our children, the ones that we are not going to see, they are the ones that are going to suffer.

"So, getting to the discussion on the water, let me take you to a different perspective and that perspective is that there are federal laws and there are state laws, but when the federal laws, when the US Congress exempts these corporations from all environmental laws what does that mean? That means they have a free highway to do everything and anything they want. And for the State, you have them going back and negotiating with corporations with federal leaders, and there are hidden pressures that are put to our leaders and it caused them to not make the right decision for our people and so this is what is happening today, Our leaders need to hear our voices, from all different angles and that

they need to apply the moral decision, the ethical decision, so a better tomorrow can really transpire for what we are all fighting for, because that is where we are today, now that's what we have in common and we should all fight together, regardless of what our differences are."

"It is water, without water, we have nothing else, any of our problems don't matter if we don't consolidate about the livelihood about tomorrow. So getting to Oak Flats, what I'm defending right now, is that there is deep water that is going to be contaminated and that is going to be pulled and that's why we have no support in the State of Arizona because we have people that have already negotiated to get this deepwater that goes from Phoenix to Tucson. On top of that, you have Governor Ducey with federal government leaders working together to put the tailings between Globe and Winkelman, that is on partial federal land and state land. When it breaks, it will go through the Gila River and come right here to south mountain, on the other side. Then on top of that, they are working on deals where the slurry is going to go, and it's going to go behind south mountain. This is what I am saying, it's important that we have this kind of dialog and discussion because it brings forward what our leaders are doing behind closed doors. What we all have to remember is when a corporation is exempt from all federal laws, they are not mandated and they go at will with whatever that want to do. When I go to DC to discuss these issues, they tell me, "well, you got to go to Rio Tinto, go to England and Australia, and yet and what we find out is that when political leaders get donations and running for office, that's a really big black eye because they are not going to move for the people. For all the years I have run across that, I have been really upset because I look at the city of Phoenix, Tucson, I hear leaders I would stand behind but as one lady told me when we elect our people and they get

into that main office, they are good people, but something happens to them. Being a political leader and also former chairman for my tribe, I seen when John McCain, we started to fight him on this issue on Arizona water, he pulled the AIDS funding for Indian Country from our tribe and threatened the rest of the tribes to suppress everyone, so we do all we can to supplement those programs."

"One of the things this state has is the Native American Community as Allies! Believe me, my discussion like this, is totally different when I am among our people, because it is about survival. It's about maintaining who we are, it's about moral things."

Panelists asked Dr. Nosie for his perspective of the changes in the State of Arizona:

Nosie explained his view, "The rims of the mountains used to hold water till early May, there was snow on the rim. Now you don't see them anymore, you used to have streams that ran and you don't see them anymore. and the earth is cracking, looking like a dry river bed, it is happening. We have trees that are falling, by themselves, the old oak trees, hundreds of years old, falling. We are sitting there saying this ugliness that they talked about that occurs with mining is now here, so when we talk about deep water and aquifers being depleting, and most of all we see the change in animals, they are limited now. Being native, we are accustomed to our medicine plants and that even too is now hard to find. What we said is that the one thing is that there is always a male and female and these places that are being destroyed right now are the female mountains. The female mountains hold the capacity for life to be born and live and die there of old age and now they are being ruined. This is going to be a contaminated south of Arizona and when I go to Montana, they are already talking about how they can suppress people from south moving to the north. They are even talking about if indigenous people

would be upset about running water pipelines, not oil but water, to Arizona to keep people back. These are the discussions that are going on behind closed doors and being a political leader, I was fortunate to hear our US congressional leaders say, "we understand, but that's not how its going to be, without the environment there is not life."

"One example is my granddaughter told my mother, "look grandma, look at how pretty the sunset is (facing toward phoenix) it's just really orange and red. My mom turned to her, my granddaughter and said, hey, that's pollution, that isn't supposed to be

in the air."

"I don't think a lot of people remember the 1960s' and how these towns were really polluted in the air. When the environmental laws came into play, it saved a lot. But now that congressional people are diluting those laws and not enhancing those laws, it's going to get worst this time because everyone is going after as much as they can get and as quick as they can. I have to stay with the fact that if we don't do anything to help our political leaders, then their struggle is against corporations who have money and who will suppress their voice. So, it's important that we all need to get involved!