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Youth, indigenous Canadian activists protest at climate talks

Sharon Abercrombie | Dec. 9, 2011 Eco Catholic

A group of youth and indigenous activists from Canada presented delegates attending the U.N. climate talks in Durbin, South Africa, with souvenir gift bags containing samples of fake tar sand, reports Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! [1]

Kandi Mossett, native energy and climate campaign organizer for the Indigenous Environmental Network told Democracy Now! on Dec. 6 that the tar sands extraction process is energy and water intensive and destroys the landscape. The production site is the size of Florida.

"It is the largest catastrophic project that I am aware of on earth right because of the amount of emissions that it kicks up into the atmosphere," Mossett said.

"To even get to the tar sands, they have to remove boreal forest, old growth forest. And they call it overburden. They just scrape it off and get rid of that, and then they dig down and move so many tons of earth," Mossett said. "They squeeze out the last little 10 percent of oil that's actually in the sand. And then they have to use chemicals to make it liquid enough to be able to put it through the pipes. It's much more toxic than any other kind of, sweet crude oil."

A few days earlier, reports Beth Buczynski of Care2 website [2], First Nations indigenous people in British Columbia publicly united to oppose the transport of tar sands crude oil through their land. More than 60 nations signed the Save the Fraser Declaration, which bans pipelines throughout the Fraser River watershed, an area that was never ceded to the Canadian government and therefore not legally under the government's control.

"North or south, it makes no difference. First Nations from every corner of BC are saying absolutely no tar sands pipelines or tankers in our territories," said Chief Jackie Thomas of Saik'uz First Nation, a member of the Yinka Dene Alliance. "We have banned oil pipelines and tankers using our laws, and we will defend our decision using all the means at our disposal."

Their decision means that the Canadian government cannot move forward with many of its major oil production projects. First Nations made its announcement Dec. 5 in response to recent calls from the Harper government and oil executives to push through pipeline and tanker projects against the wishes of British Columbians and First Nations, said the Care2 report.

The Save the Fraser Declaration prohibits tar sands crude oil tankers in the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon and bans crude oil exports along the whole BC coast, including the south.

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Links:
[1] http://www.democracynow.org/2011/12/6/indigenous_activists_from_canada_protest_tar

[2] http://www.care2.com/causes/bc-first-nations-unite-to-ban-export-of-tar-sands-oil.html