



# International Indian Treaty Council

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **44<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY INTERNATIONAL TREATY CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE AT MATO PAHA (BEAR BUTTE) SACRED SITE IN SOUTH DAKOTA, JUNE 21-24, 2018**

**Oceti Sakowin Treaty Territory, June 4, 2018:** From June 21-24, 2018, the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and the Sicangu Treaty Council/Rosebud Sioux Tribe will co-host the 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Treaty Council at Rosebud Bear Butte Lodge, Lakota Nation Treaty Territory (South Dakota USA). The Conference theme is *“Treaty Right to Food, Treaty Right to Water, “Hecel Mitakuye Oyasin Wiconipi Ktelo: So that all my Relatives will live”*. Presenters and participants will include Indigenous leaders, human rights activists, traditional knowledge holders and IITC affiliates from North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Pacific and Arctic.

Bill Means, Oglala Lakota, IITC co-founder and current Board member expressed his views about why this conference is so important: “Treaty rights are human rights and ‘the supreme law of the land’. Today in Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Treaty territories, we are struggling against extractive industries that want to mine more gold in the Black Hills, build pipelines that will contaminate our water and traditional food sources, and drill 5000 new oil wells in Converse County Wyoming just west of the Black Hills, to name just a few examples. Our Treaty Right to Consent continues to be violated by corporations and the US government. 2018 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty that the IITC first took to the United Nations in 1977. So this is a very significant time for us to come together to discuss what we have accomplished so far, and what still we need to do to defend the rights our ancestors fought to protect”.

Phil Two Eagle, Executive Director of Sicangu Treaty Council, shared the importance of the Conference location and the reason the dates were chosen: “Mato Paha known as Bear Butte is very important to the Lakota Nation. It is one of our important sacred places where our People have always gone to hanblecheya, to pray and seek visions. The first day of the Conference, the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, is one of the most significant days in our Lakota Star knowledge. It is the longest day of the year when the sun reaches its highest power. This will bring many blessings and good outcomes for this gathering. We welcome all Treaty Nations and Peoples to our territory at this sacred time and place”.

“The Conference theme *“Treaty Right to Food, Treaty Right to Water”* is of vital importance to Indigenous Peoples as we face imposed development, environmental contamination and the effects of climate change in our homelands” said IITC Executive Director Andrea Carmen, Yaqui Nation. “We look forward to coming together to talk about these threats and how we can support each other. We also want to discuss solutions to take back to our communities and to the national and international levels so that our rights will be respected and our ways of life can continue”.



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Topics for presentations, roundtables and commissions (breakout sessions) will include Treaty rights, defending cultural practices and sacred places, repatriation, food sovereignty, environmental health, Indigenous women's and children's rights, human rights defenders, youth organizing and updates on international work. Cultural presentations, ceremonies, songs and stories will be an important part the Conference. On the last day, resolutions will be adopted by consensus to guide the work of IITC in the coming years.

The participation of Indigenous students and youth is key. It will add energy and inspiration to the Treaty Conference. Sinte Gleska University student Latoya Crazybull, Kul Wicasa Oyate (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) will moderate the youth panel at the Conference. She emphasized the importance of youth participation: "I think that youth should be a part of this Conference because it will give them a sense of identity as to who we are as Native Peoples and where we come from". Daniel Grassrope, also Kul Wicasa Oyate of the Oceti Sakowin, will be a presenter and youth organizer. He stressed the significance of this opportunity to learn about the Treaties from those that went before: "It is important for us to reteach what we have learned to the next generations".

The IITC is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Arctic, Caribbean and Pacific working for the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of Indigenous rights, Treaties, traditional cultures and sacred lands. IITC was founded on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota in June 1974. In 1977, the IITC became the first Indigenous Peoples' organization to be recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In 2011, IITC was the first to be upgraded to General Consultation Status in recognition of its active participation in a wide range of international bodies and processes in order to advance, defend and recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

*For more information about IITC's 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Treaty Conference including the agenda, information for participants and driving instructions, please visit [www.treatycouncil.org](http://www.treatycouncil.org).*

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*The International Indian Treaty Council wishes to express our solidarity with our brothers and sisters affiliated with IITC, and to all of the people from Guatemala, due to the eruption and aftermath, including loss of life, by Volcán de Fuego. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.*