

Hoodwinked Attends the 18th Protecting Mother Earth Gathering

In early August, members of Hoodwinked Collaborative had the pleasure of joining Indigenous Environmental Network, Eastern Cherokee Organization and over 1400 participants from all walks of life for four days on the land of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians for the 18th Protecting Mother Earth Gathering. A beautiful and powerful gathering, spiritually and in its vision of a more just future and in connection to the land we were on. PME was filled with dedicated organizers, land defenders, Indigenous youth, knowledge keepers, a big volunteer kitchen crew that kept us well fed, and a unifying dedication to resistance against false solutions, a dedication to protecting Indigenous health and communities, and protecting and caring for our home, Mother Earth, leaving her healthy for future generations.

Listen to the Opening Plenary [here](#).



The Hoodwinked crew at our panel on False Climate Solutions at PME

At Hoodwinked's False Climate Solutions workshop, we covered an array of false solutions including [carbon markets and offsets](#), [geoengineering](#), [hydrogen](#), [nuclear](#), [genetically engineered trees](#), [biomass](#), and more.

We learned from Anne Petermann about [woody biomass](#) and how it's being pushed as a "sustainable" alternative to fossil fuels. In reality, **industrial tree plantations cut the amount of carbon that the land can store, absorbing less carbon than the native forests.** When woody biomass is burned for energy, it actually emits more pollution than coal facilities and no less CO2 than burning coal. Industrial tree plantations, such as eucalyptus plantations are also used as [carbon credits](#) or [forest carbon offsets](#) which allow polluters to continue polluting while branding themselves as green, net-zero, or zero-emissions. [Learn more about why biomass](#) is a false solution, [forest protection](#), and the threat of [GE Trees](#) from Global Justice Ecology Project.

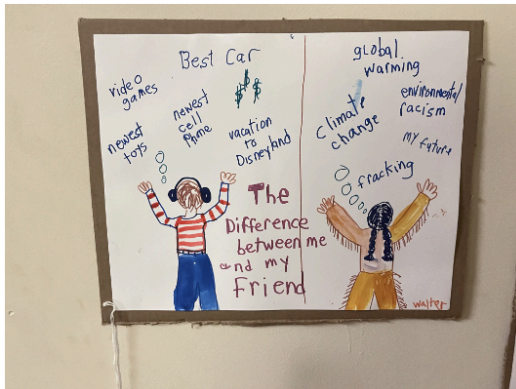


Tamra Gilbertson of Indigenous Environmental Network and Hoodwinked Collaborative leading a breakout group on the false solutions: carbon markets and carbon pricing.

We then covered the false solution of geoengineering, which hinges on manipulation of Earth's systems (the sun, the seas, the forests, the land) in a false bid to roll back climate change. Groups fighting geoengineering under the banner of Hands Off Mother Earth (HOME) have managed to blow the whistle on several projects, including one most recently on San Francisco Bay. Learn about geoengineering at [Geoengineering Monitor](#) and check out the [Geoengineering Map](#), an [international map of current and proposed projects](#).



In the second half of the workshop, we broke out into smaller focused groups to learn from one another. We had great conversations in our breakout groups and some exciting ideas for next steps emerged... stay tuned. If you're feeling bogged down by all the false solutions out there, do not fret. You can learn more about [Real Solutions for Climate Justice here](#).



Since the first Protecting Mother Earth gathering in 1990, Teri Johnson, a founding member of PME has been offering free childcare to PME attendees. This year, almost 50 children took part along with the help of Kori, Teri's daughter, parents, and volunteers. The children held an art show where they showcased their powerful climate justice artwork. The kids know what's up!



Chief Ninewa from the Brazilian Amazon speaks about the threats facing Indigenous Peoples in the region

***Excerpt of Reflections on the 18th Protecting Mother Earth Conference
by Indigenous Environmental Network***

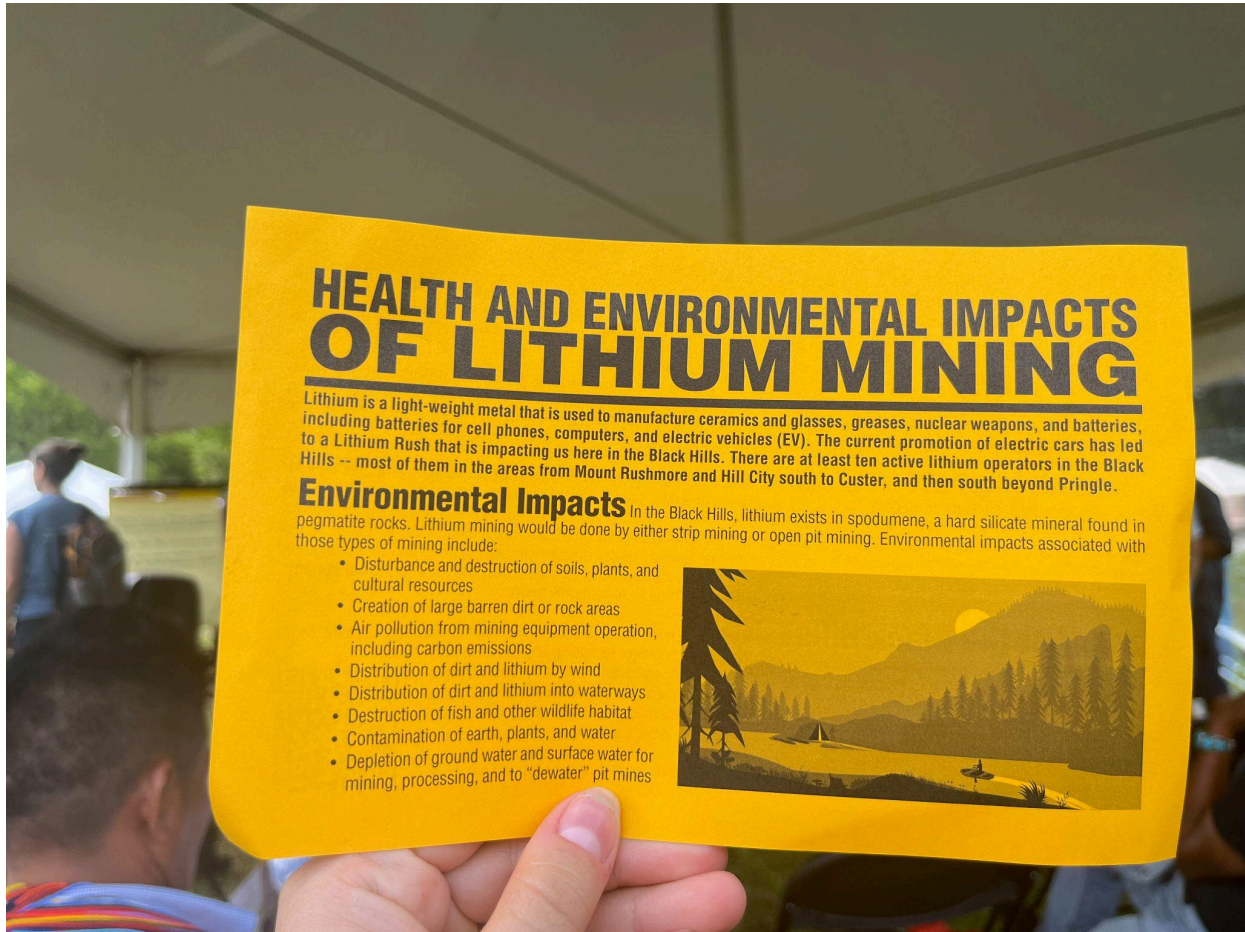
As August's days come to an end, in the northern regions of Turtle Island, children are returning to school, and dusk coming earlier each day signals the end of summer, and fall is just a few weeks away. For IEN staff and board, the first four days of August took us to the ancestral homelands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) for the 18th Protecting Mother Earth gathering. Hundreds of domestic and international supporters, allies, and frontline communities joined us from far and wide.

The four-day gathering began in the predawn twilight, August 1, 2024, as parents with sleepy-eyed toddlers, elders, and youth from all walks of life formed a circle in an open meadow along the Oconaluftee River on the edge of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian reservation. We were all there to witness the traditional lighting of a sacred fire. The passing of the sacred fire from community to community to connect each of the previous PME's was continued at the sunrise ceremony that kicked off this PME. IEN Executive Director, Tom Goldtooth, and EBCI, IEN staff member, and founder of the local host organization Eastern Cherokee Organization (ECO) Mary Crowe, spoke about the history of the site and the purpose of the gathering. As the speakers talked, two large elk descended from the nearby mountainside, stood for several minutes, and quietly observed the ceremony.

At the edge of the open meadow were tents, and pavilions, and where services were set up for the four days of workshops, plenaries, entertainment, and dining, 100 or more camps were set up for hundreds of feet along the river and under the shade of a variety of trees that make up the temperate rainforest canopy surrounding Qualla Boundary. Dotted in among the rainbow of modern-day camping tents and several tipis were peaceful spaces where all aspects of wellness and healing - Body, Mind, and Spirit - were the priority. Near the edge of the river, constructed by local Eastern Band men, sat an "osi" or "asi" in the language of the EBCI, commonly known as a sweat lodge. Prayers and purification were offered each evening. Chosen Firekeepers lit, nurtured, and maintained a sacred fire throughout the gathering for this lodge.

Five hundred yards to the west, perched atop a slight outcropping above the rambling river, rested a screen-walled cabana, open between sunrise and sundown for appointed sessions of therapeutic massage and other holistic wellness practices were offered to the gathering's more than 1,400 registered participants.

To read the rest visit [PME 2024: Indigenous Environmental Network](#).



The push for renewables is causing rapid land speculation and extraction on Indigenous land

In a workshop led by IEN's Keep it In the Ground Mining Organizer, Talia Boyd, we learned about critical minerals and materials for energy, also known as "the electric eighteen." The next day, we heard from folks across all ends of the [nuclear fuel chain](#), and the toxic devastation it causes along the way.

We heard from Indigenous representatives from [Alaskan Community Action on Toxics](#), the [Black Hills Clean Water Alliance](#) in South Dakota, [Citizen's Resistance](#) in Detroit and the [West Valley Nuclear Waste Site](#) in New York, amongst others. With the push to go green and go electric combined with geopolitics (the war in Ukraine and the rush to get ahead on renewables), the Biden administration has pulled away from international critical minerals and therefore, billions are funding the rapid rush to mine these critical minerals here in the U.S., disproportionately on Indigenous lands.

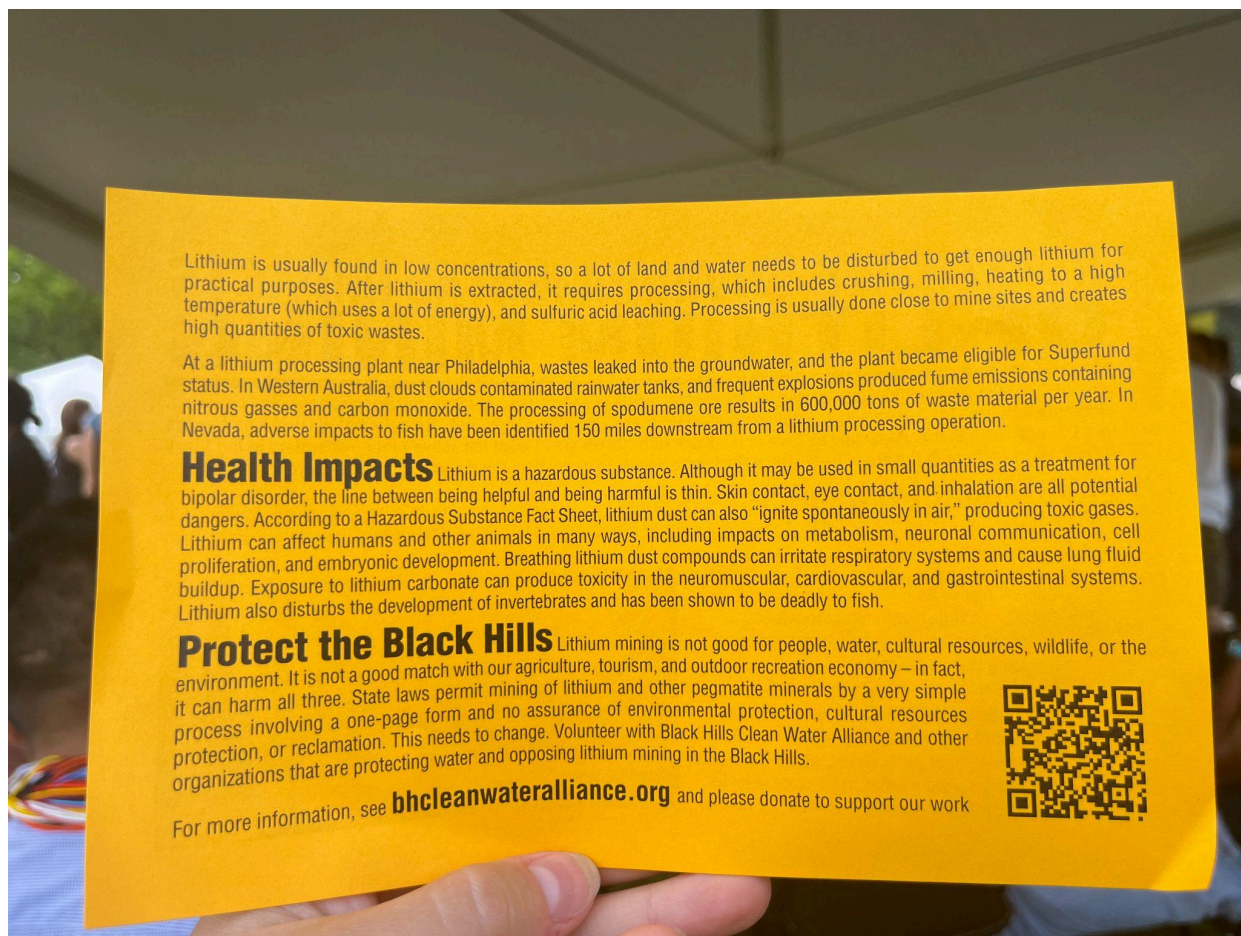
With the need for batteries for EV (electric vehicles), there is a [massive lithium rush](#) along with other minerals such as cobalt, uranium, graphite & more. “After lithium is extracted, it requires processing, which includes crushing, milling, heating to a high temperature (which uses a lot of energy), and sulfuric acid leaching. Processing is usually done close to mine sites and creates high quantities of toxic wastes.” This doesn’t just affect the land the mine is on. “In Nevada, adverse impacts to fish have been identified 150 miles downstream from a lithium processing operation.” Who is sacrificed in this process?



The Black Hills are the treaty homelands of the Lakota people. An organizer from the Black Hills region shared with us what her community is up against. In the Black Hills region, the total acreage of [active mining claims](#) is around 261,411 acres due to the [lithium rush](#) in the Black Hills. Companies come in and drill holes 700 feet deep into the Earth as they “explore.” Indigenous communities on this land are still dealing with the generational trauma of settler colonialism and the genocide of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. Communities are trying to heal yet neo-colonialism rears its ugly head and is relentless. A wholesale change to EV could potentially reduce emissions in urban areas, yet it will cause further extreme pollution of land and water in rural and Indigenous communities. Climate justice does not mean continuing business as usual but go electric. Climate justice must center degrowth.

In Alaska, students in the early 2000s successfully organized and pushed out a mining company. While there is only currently one other mine in Alaska, there are lots of mining proposals incoming from Canadian companies who want to drill holes on wetlands as well as a proposed [huge road, 221 miles](#) to "facilitate mine development" and transport minerals. This proposed road will destroy and disrupt the local caribou which will affect not only the local ecosystem but the diet, health, and culture of local indigenous communities.

We learned about [lithium mining](#) in Northern Nevada, on land that is home to many different tribes. Thacker Pass has the largest known lithium deposit in the United States. Most mines take 3-5 years to permit, but the [Thacker Pass Lithium Mine](#) in Nevada only took a year. It is built on land that is sacred to 22 different tribes as well as over a massacre site. This was not included in the EIS, Environmental Impact Statement. "Consultation" regarding the building of this mine was a letter sent in the height of Covid-19. Due to an 1872 mining law that states mining is the best use of public land, a judge acknowledged the incorrect EIS but encouraged them to keep building anyway. This mine got a \$2 billion loan from the government. There are five other multinational corporations currently laying claim to the land in that region. The speaker ended by stating that Indigenous peoples are looking out for the next seven generations, not just for the economic gain of this generation. She emphasized that we need a complete transformation, not just a transition and lastly stated, "*You cannot mine your way out of the climate crisis.*"



Lithium is usually found in low concentrations, so a lot of land and water needs to be disturbed to get enough lithium for practical purposes. After lithium is extracted, it requires processing, which includes crushing, milling, heating to a high temperature (which uses a lot of energy), and sulfuric acid leaching. Processing is usually done close to mine sites and creates high quantities of toxic wastes.

At a lithium processing plant near Philadelphia, wastes leaked into the groundwater, and the plant became eligible for Superfund status. In Western Australia, dust clouds contaminated rainwater tanks, and frequent explosions produced fume emissions containing nitrous gasses and carbon monoxide. The processing of spodumene ore results in 600,000 tons of waste material per year. In Nevada, adverse impacts to fish have been identified 150 miles downstream from a lithium processing operation.

Health Impacts Lithium is a hazardous substance. Although it may be used in small quantities as a treatment for bipolar disorder, the line between being helpful and being harmful is thin. Skin contact, eye contact, and inhalation are all potential dangers. According to a Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet, lithium dust can also "ignite spontaneously in air," producing toxic gases. Lithium can affect humans and other animals in many ways, including impacts on metabolism, neuronal communication, cell proliferation, and embryonic development. Breathing lithium dust compounds can irritate respiratory systems and cause lung fluid buildup. Exposure to lithium carbonate can produce toxicity in the neuromuscular, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal systems. Lithium also disturbs the development of invertebrates and has been shown to be deadly to fish.

Protect the Black Hills Lithium mining is not good for people, water, cultural resources, wildlife, or the environment. It is not a good match with our agriculture, tourism, and outdoor recreation economy – in fact, it can harm all three. State laws permit mining of lithium and other pegmatite minerals by a very simple process involving a one-page form and no assurance of environmental protection, cultural resources protection, or reclamation. This needs to change. Volunteer with Black Hills Clean Water Alliance and other organizations that are protecting water and opposing lithium mining in the Black Hills.

For more information, see bhcleanwateralliance.org and please donate to support our work



One speaker stayed in our minds long after the workshop, a young 4th generation activist whose family lives near a uranium mill. Their water comes out of the tap cloudy, yellow, and smells like rotten eggs. His community runs off of well water and the mill has poisoned that water. He used to be able to forage for plants, but there are no plants left and no animals come around anymore. Only about 300 people remain in their community and he fears their cultural heritage is almost coming to an end with only 10 elders left. When we hear about techno-fixes, nuclear, electric, uranium, and they're sold to us as answers to the climate crisis, the effects on frontline communities and the land are left out of the conversation.


Hoodwinked will be sharing further resources on how to get involved, resist these projects, and educate others about the effects of mining for "the electric eighteen" and the nuclear fuel chain. Stay tuned.

In the meantime, checkout these organizations and resources.

- [Black Hills Clean Water Alliance](#)
- [Citizens Resistance at Fermi Two](#)
- [People of Red Mountain - Life Over Lithium](#)

- [Stop Pinyon Plain Mine: Protect and Defend Mother Earth Against Uranium Mining, Milling, and Transportation](#)
- [153 Groups and Onondaga Nation Allies Tell Gov. Hochul: No Nuclear, Follow NY Climate Law](#)
- [Oglala Sioux Tribe Wins Legal Case Sending Powertech Dewey-Burdock Uranium Mine Permits Back to EPA's Region 8 for Further Review](#)



 Join the **White Mesa Ute Community** for a Spiritual Walk and Protest against radioactive uranium mill - Saturday October 12th, 2024 11 AM MDT | Visit protectwhitemesa.org to learn more

White Mesa Ute Community Spiritual Walk & Protest

Protecting Our Communities,
Health, Environment & Indigenous
Sacred Landscapes



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday October 12, 2024 • 11am MDT



At the White Mesa Community Center

Rally starts at 11AM MDT, followed by the spiritual and protest walk to the White Mesa uranium mill.



Directions

- The White Mesa Community Center is between Bluff and Blanding, Utah.
- The community center is located slightly off Highway 191, on the west side of the road, behind the gas station.
- Look for a large building with "White Mesa Community Center" written on the side.



We live down the road from this mill. When it's running, we smell it from our houses. They're bringing radioactive wastes from all over the world to this mill. We want this to stop. We want the mill to close and clean up its mess.

– Yolanda Badba

White Mesa Concerned Commu

Sponsored By

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and White
Mesa Concerned Community

For more information

Call White Mesa Concerned Commu
(435) 459-2461 protectwhitemesa.org