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Item 6

Standard-setting activities, including a review of Indigenous peoples' relationship with the natural resource, energy and mining companies.

Delivered by Wizipan Garriott  
On behalf of the American Indian Law Alliance

Madam Chairperson,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you and other members of this distinguished group.

We appreciate this gathering with Indigenous Peoples to deliberate upon our right to a review of development, including Indigenous peoples relationship with land and natural resources. However, we experience much oppression and exploitation from aggressive, profit-driven corporations that irreparably harm Grandmother Earth. We will share with you one clear example of the violations of our rights to follow natural and customary law.

We are experiencing an immediate and pressing social and economic disaster, in the unethical activities of a U.S. corporation, Bell Farms, a supplier for the larger Hormel Corporation. They are constructing the world's third largest hog farm on our homelands. Using the weaknesses in the federally imposed governing body of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Bell Farms manipulated a questionable lease of tribal lands. They made a token gesture to meet the federal mandates of the National Environmental Policy Act by holding one clandestine hearing in a remote community. The Bureau of Indian Affairs found the lease to be invalid. As opposition by tribal members increased, Bell Farms used its corporate influence to gain the U.S District Court's favor to restrain opposition from interfering with its construction and operation. Although Mr. William Bell claimed to be providing much-needed employment, in the same breath, he threatened to sue one of the poorest communities in the country for one hundred million dollars if he could not continue to build a serious environmental threat on our tribal lands.

To date, the first of thirteen proposed sites is operational. Several problems have already emerged, which will be grossly multiplied with continued expansion. The profits may be great, but in the vague provisions of the land lease, the tribe's share is very minimal. The corporate farm utilizes automated systems and barely employs 15 tribal members. The working conditions are inhumane and health hazards abound.

In the early 1900's, the Spanish flu pandemic killed millions worldwide. Again, in the early 1980's, the Hong Kong flu was responsible for thousands of human deaths. Both human health disasters originated from hog farms. With the intense concentration of

large numbers of living beings, antibiotics are administered but flu viruses mutate quickly. Only recently, after a year of operation at Site #1, Bell Farms has reluctantly admitted that its waste management system is not functional. With half of the adult Lakota population stricken with diabetes and decreased immunities, the hog farm and its filled ponds of undigested waste is a serious threat to the health of the Sicangu Indigenous population.

When the Rosebud Sioux Tribe attempted to hold the corporation responsible to its promises of cooperation in the lease agreement, the corporation disregarded the jurisdiction of the tribal court and fled to U.S. District Court again for protection. U.S. Courts are very seldom fair and just to Indigenous peoples in their rulings.

This hog farm is not owned, controlled or welcomed by the Sicangu Lakota. This type of corporate development is against the grain of our culture. The Lakota, like many Indigenous cultures of North America, believe that in making decisions, one must consider the impact upon seven generations. The facility existing on our lands is shameful and the degradation of health, water, air, and land should not be tolerated for the sake of our children and their children. We want our children to experience life in humane and healthy conditions and to have safe drinking water, clean air and uncontaminated earth.

Indigenous Peoples have a relationship with the rest of creation which is fundamentally different from the colonial and corporate powers that control the resources of this world. The Sicangu Lakota take this relationship as not just a mere obligation but as a sacred right and duty. The most important aspect of being a Lakota is to live in good relationship with one's relatives. Bell Farms does not interact with creation in a loving or respectful manner.

Because of our firm beliefs and the health threats to our people resulting from corporate farming, Madame Chairperson, we humbly recommend a study of the health effects of corporate farming in Indigenous communities and further recommend that clear and definite health standards be set when corporate farms are built on Indigenous lands.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson

Wanmankaskan Oyasin.