



# ATOMIC GENOCIDE

An act of atomic genocide was how activists from indigenous communities described uranium mining around the world during three days of events organized by Beyond Nuclear in Washington, DC in late February.

Activists representing Native American, Australian Aboriginal and Touareg (Niger) communities were joined by prominent actor, James Cromwell, French nuclear engineer, Bruno Chareyron and Natalie Wasley of Australia's Beyond Nuclear Initiative in condemning the deliberate targeting of

indigenous peoples with uranium mines.

The mining of uranium, necessary to fuel nuclear reactors—and also to manufacture nuclear weapons—causes widespread and long-lasting contamination of the water, air and land.

In the U.S., the majority of the uranium mining workforce has been Native American, resulting in high levels of cancers and pulmonary diseases in these communities. The Navajo Nation, Hualapi Nation and Havasupai have banned uranium mining on their lands but continue to struggle for adequate cleanup, compensation,

and health care. (See RECA story page 3).

In Australia, Aboriginal peoples have been stripped of their rights to make way for new uranium mines as interna-



Mitch, Eastern Arernte and Luritja Aboriginal tribes.

tional corporations race to capitalize on global interest in building new nuclear reactors.

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# AREVA'S ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM



Photo: CRIIRAD

Pictured left is the house of a uranium miner employed by Areva in Arlit, Niger. It is made of compressed metal drums left over from mining

activities. Radioactive scrap metals from the mine are sold in local markets. This discovery was one of many made by an independent French scientific research team (CRIIRAD) that visited Niger in 2003.

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### Special points of interest:

- Sahara could be littered with uranium mines
- Caribou herd faces extinction due to expanded uranium extraction
- Compensation must be expanded to all uranium mineworkers
- Indigenous peoples across the world the traditional target of atomic racism

## Atomic Genocide

*Continued from front page*

The activists came together in Washington to inform legislators, students, the public and the press about the unfair targeting of indigenous peoples around the world with uranium mines and the dire health consequences of such environmental racism.

The group spoke at a press conference at the National Press Club; met with the staffs of legislators on Capitol Hill and addressed a lunchtime Hill briefing; held a public event and screening of *Poison Wind* by filmmaker Jenny Pond, that tells the stories of sickened Native American uranium mine and mill workers; (two short pieces from Al Jazeera English on the threat to nomadic Touareg from uranium mines in Niger



*James Cromwell (right) in Washington, DC*

were also shown); and addressed a standing-room-only crowd of 500+ at the PowerShift 2009 youth conference on climate change. Beyond Nuclear staff members were also featured on two

additional nuclear power panels at PowerShift and conducted a workshop—all of which were filled to capacity.

The indigenous activist speakers who participated in the Beyond Nuclear-sponsored tour included: Manuel Pino of the Acoma Pueblo; Mitch, an Aboriginal from Australia; and Sidi-Amar Taoua, a Touareg from Niger. Each of them described the deprivation of sovereign rights; the contamination and depletion of essential resources including safe, clean drinking water; the often deadly health consequences of uranium mining; and the lack of cleanup at abandoned mine sites.

The speakers called for an end to uranium mining and the nuclear programs it feeds and that cleanup be conducted at disused mine and mill sites around the globe.

## Areva's environmental racism

*Continued from front page*

Although their equipment was confiscated at the airport upon arrival, the CRIIRAD scientists used pocket-sized Geiger counters to take readings around the mining community. They measured local water supplies which were found to be radiologically contaminated at 10 times the World Health Organization's level for safe drinking water. Subsequent

findings also uncovered rocks outside the Areva-owned hospital were 100 times more radioactive than normal background levels.

Despite this, Areva states in its own press materials that there is "no contamination" of local drinking water. Hospital doctors, paid by Areva,

also insist that no one has ever died of a uranium mining-related illness.

But privately one doctor admitted they

never diagnosed leukemia and pulmonary diseases that could be linked to uranium mining because that could reflect badly on the mining company.

***Rocks found outside the hospital were 100 times more radioactive than background levels***

## Caribou calving grounds targeted for uranium mines

Nunavut caribou herds are under threat. Far beneath the Arctic tundra of their precious grazing and calving grounds lie enormous deposits of uranium. The Inuit voted in 1990 to ban uranium mining. But that ban could soon be reversed—pressured by the Canadian minerals company, Uravan, eager to open up the vast deposits at Garry Lake. Such a decision could threaten

the Beverly caribou herd, the Inuit and the precious ecosystem on which they depend as toxic radionuclides would contaminate the caribou that graze and drink in the area. The Inuit still rely on caribou as an essential food source. The Caribou herd is already in decline and, say Inuit opponents of the mine, further mineral exploitation could sound the final death knell for the herd.



## This is what “clean”, “green” nuclear energy looks like



Photo: Areva

Piles of uranium ore (*left*) sit in the open air outside a uranium mill in Niger, Africa. Meanwhile, the mining process itself is powered by a coal plant which deposits soot on the desert sands (*below*). The carbon footprint of the entire nuclear fuel chain is omitted from the nuclear power industry’s “clean air” propaganda.



Photo: CRIIRAD

## Post-'71 uranium mine workers struggle for compensation

People that worked in U.S. uranium mines before 1971 qualify for federal aid under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). However, people that worked in uranium mines after 1971 do not qualify for this aid under RECA even though they are just as sick as pre-'71 workers. In addition, the compensation process is deliberately exclusionary to Native

American workers and has convoluted requirements for record-keeping that do not take into account Native lifestyles, resources and practices. Efforts are underway to pressure Congress to amend the RECA law and include all mine workers, millers and

*Uranium mine workers employed after 1971 are not entitled to compensation even though they are as sick as pre-'71 workers*

transporters who worked until 1990. Workers must prove that they were employed in the mines and are suffering from one of the diseases listed under RECA. For more information, please visit the Post-'71 Committee Web site at:<http://www.post71exposure.org/index.html>

## Cree Nation files suit to block tar sands exploitation. Nuclear reactors also proposed to power tar sands extraction

The Beaver Lake Cree Nation is mounting a legal challenge to stop further exploitation of the huge Canadian tar sands that have destroyed hunting and fishing lands and contaminated water supplies. The tar sands constitute the largest fossil fuel project in the world.

Aboriginal populations are experiencing rare cancers suspected to be caused

by toxic substances that have leached downstream. The Cree have also observed that caribou, elk, moose, deer and other animals are vanishing or are ravaged by disease. Pollution is damaging fish stocks and poisoning plants used in traditional medicines.

Now, to add to the risks, Alberta’s provincial government is attempting to rubber stamp the construction of

nuclear reactors to power the extraction of oil from the tar sands. This exposes the nuclear industry’s pretense that it is concerned with climate change as nothing more than a profit-motivated publicity stunt.

In Saskatchewan, new reactors are also targeted at Cree lands while the province remains the world’s largest exporter of uranium.

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***Working for a world beyond nuclear  
power and nuclear weapons***



## About Beyond Nuclear

Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic.

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The Thunderbird, in Lakota tradition, is the Guardian of the Truth.

## France—a Radioactive Mess: The Hidden Story

There are 210 abandoned uranium mines in France—a little-known fact even to the French themselves. The French nuclear industry is notoriously secret and has been anxious to keep hidden the widespread radioactive contamination caused by its now shuttered uranium mining program.

But despite attempts by the largely government-owned French nuclear company, Areva, to block the program from the airwaves, an investigative documentary was shown in February 2009 on the France 3 television network that revealed the true extent of the radioactive mess left behind by French uranium mining operations.

Relying on the solid scientific data of the investigative French laboratory—CRIIRAD (*Commission for Independent Research and Information on Radioactivity*) whose director, Bruno Chareyron, joined the Beyond Nuclear tour of experts in Washington, DC later

that month (*see page 1*)—the show exposed some frightening realities. Tailings (radioactive mud), and/or radioactive rocks, left behind from the uranium mines, had been used in school playgrounds and public parking lots.

Communities around the disused mines, which were often unmarked with no warning signs, were receiving even higher exposures to radiation than those living near nuclear reactors.

Although Areva, under pressure, had agreed to decontaminate a few sites, the company refused to address the wider cleanup problem.

CRIIRAD also tested the water around the huge Tricastin nuclear facility in

Provence which suffered a spate of four accidents in two months beginning with a major uranium spill in July that contaminated two rivers. Communities were left in the dark for 14 hours after the



July 7 spill first occurred and continued to drink and bathe in the water until a ban was imposed. Wine-growers in the area have since had to change their labels while homeowners have watched the value of their properties plummet. Meanwhile, government authorities and Areva declared the accidents of low importance. However,

both the French Safety Commission and CRIIRAD found evidence of earlier leaks hitherto undetected that contained isotopes from the nuclear weapons plant