

For Immediate Release

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Ho-Chunk Nation Gives Rights to Nature

Ho-Chunk Nation adds “Rights of Nature” to their constitution

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Over nineteen hundred Ho-Chunk tribal members gathered on a balmy early afternoon at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin on September 19th, for the annual General Council. Major tribal issues are taken up and voted on by a quorum of the Ho-Chunk population.

The Ho-Chunk tribe has been severely affected by the unregulated effects of frac sand mining, Bakken oil transport, high capacity wells and industrial agriculture to name a few. Near Tomah, sacred ceremony grounds are now surrounded by four frac sand mines which interrupts ancient cultural practices with blowing silica dust, twenty four hour light pollution and truck traffic essentially turning the area into an industrial zone. Historically, the Ho-Chunk people respect the natural world and believe that when nature is viewed as only property it no longer has rights or value.

Tribal member William Greendeer introduced a resolution to amend the Ho-Chunk constitution that would give rights to nature. It passed by a majority. “This is so exciting” says Greendeer, “now maybe we can finally keep our water, air and environment healthy by having a larger say in what activities happen in our communities.”

Juliee de la Terre, adjunct professor at Viterbo University has been working with William for quite a while on this issue. “The Rights of Nature” is more than an legal instrument it is an international movement meant to acknowledge that all natural systems need to be preserved in order for our planet to remain habitable.”

“The Ho-Chunk Nation has always respected the earth, says William, but we were made to adopt a constitution based on roman law that makes humans more important than everything else by passing this resolution we are acknowledging how important nature is. We are just one part of Mother Earth, not the center of it.”

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