

George Poitras, Former Chief of the Mikisew Cree First Nation at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, who has just returned from a KAIROS solidarity mission to Ecuador, wrote a letter to President Obama on August 29, 2011 about the Keystone XL pipeline. Excerpts of that letter follow:

Mr. President Obama:

I live in the tar sands. I, and generations before me, have seen the devastation of our lands, water, air, animals, fish, and more recently our people's health, in worse cases the loss of young lives to rare and aggressive cancers.

We live in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, one of the largest freshwaters deltas in the world.

We know now through the science of Dr. David Schindler that this is ALL at risk because of the tar sands production in the past 40 years. A testament that both the Albertan and Canadian governments have virtually done nothing to protect our waters, land, air, its citizens, etc. The fact that this means our environment and peoples health is so negatively impacted in 40 years of only 3% of the total deposit being mined, is scary to say the least. What is even more sad, President Obama, is the fact that my generation which is your generation, will not be able to hand down to our children and children's children, and future generations, what our ancestors were able to hand down to us.

Your approval, President Obama, of the Keystone XL Pipeline, will only compound an already dismal situation for our people who have the most at stake from this out-of-control development. Your approval will mean with CERTAINTY that we will continue to see our waters poisoned, our lands contaminated, our skies polluted, our fish deformed, and our people die unnecessarily. Your approval will guarantee the continued daily repeated infringements on our Constitutionally protected Treaty Rights to hunt, fish, and trap. Or, President Obama, your non-approval will mean a chance for my people to survive but more important a non-approval will mean that perhaps the governments of Alberta and Canada and the oil companies will take notice.

On behalf of my community of Fort Chipewyan, of the Cree, Dene, and Metis, we appeal to you. It's a sad day that we who live in the tar sands have little to no weight on these decisions, that you yield more weight than I do on a decision that will have impacts on my people and our lands for generations to come.

We appeal to you for the right decision!

Thank you.

George Poitras,
Former Chief, Mikisew Cree First Nation
Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, Canada

Nobel laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Rigoberta Menchu and the Dalai Lama wrote the following appeal to President Obama not to approve the Keystone Pipeline in a September 7, 2011 letter signed by 5 other recipients of the Nobel Peace prize:

Dear President Obama,

We --a group of Nobel Peace Laureates-- are writing today to ask you to do the right thing for our environment and reject the proposal to build the Keystone XL pipeline.

The night you were nominated for president, you told the world that under your leadership--and working together--the rise of the oceans will begin to slow and the planet will begin to heal. You spoke of creating a clean energy economy. This is a critical moment to make good on that pledge, and make a lasting contribution to the health and well being of everyone of this planet.

All along its prospective route, the pipeline endangers farms, wildlife and precious water aquifers--including the Ogallala Aquifer, the US' main source of freshwater for America's heartland. ... We know that another pipeline that covers some of the same route as the proposed pipeline, and built by the same company proposing to build Keystone XL, already leaked 14 times over its first year of operation.

Like you, we understand that strip-mining and drilling tar sands from under Alberta's Boreal forests and then transporting thousands of barrels of oil a day from Canada through to Texas will not only hurt people in the US--but will also endanger the entire planet.

Your rejection of the pipeline provides a tremendous opportunity to begin transition away from our dependence on oil, coal and gas and instead increase investments in renewable energies and energy efficiency.

We urge you to say 'no' to the plan proposed by the Canadian-based company TransCanada to build the Keystone XL, and to turn your attention back to supporting renewable sources of energy and clean transportation solutions. This will be your legacy to Americans and the global community: energy that sustains the lives and livelihoods of future generations.

Sincerely,

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate (1976) - Ireland
Betty Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate (1976) - Ireland
Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Laureate (1980) - Argentina
Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate (1984) - South Africa
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Laureate (1989) - Tibet
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Laureate (1992) - Guatemala

José Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Laureate (1996) - East Timor
Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate (1997) - USA
Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Laureate (2003) - Iran