

Post Conference Report

ACES 2016 Town Hall

December 7, 2016

Title: How Climate Change is Impacting Native American Sacred Sites and Cultural Practices

As former Secretary Ken Salazar stated in his Secretarial Order 3289, Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America's Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources, "[c]limate change may disproportionately affect tribes and their lands because they are heavily dependent on their natural resources for economic and cultural identity." As these severe climate events occur with greater force and frequency, Native American Nations are facing unprecedented challenges to their sacred sites and cultural practices that have sustained them for millennia. This Town Hall will provide case studies and the tribal perspective on the effect these impacts are having on tribal cultural survival in the 21st century. This Town Hall will provide a forum to discuss these challenges.

Panelists: Originally, three panelists were scheduled, but one was unable to attend due to huge snowfalls in the Great Plains. These remaining two speakers presented.

Mike Durglo. Mr. Durglo is a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). He received his BS in Environmental Science from Salish Kootenai College in 2002. He is currently the Environmental Protection Division Manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and is the Climate Change Planning Coordinator. He has worked for the Tribes for over 30 years in different capacities including Wildlife Conservation Officer, Tribal Councilman, Wetland Conservation Coordinator, and Regulatory Specialist. He currently serves as the Chairman on the EPA Region 8 Tribal Operations Committee and is the EPA Region 8 representative on the National Tribal Science Council. In July of 2016 Mr. Durglo received the "Whitehouse Champion for Change in Climate Equity" award. He also serves on the Climate and Traditional Knowledge's Workgroup (CTKW) that was formed from the Department of Interior's Advisory Committee on Climate Change and Natural Resource Science.

The CSKT developed their Climate Change Strategic Plan in 2013. In the process of developing the plan numerous tribal elders were interviewed. These tribal elders identified concerns about the impacts of climate change on traditional foods and also shifting animal populations on and around the reservation. Elder observations indicate that the climate has noticeably changed within their lifetime and that the knowledge they gained from parents, grandparents, and great grandparents goes back multiple generations. These first-hand accounts of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) on the impacts of climate change further demonstrate its effect on tribal cultural practices.

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Elizabeth James-Perry. Elizabeth James-Perry of Dartmouth, Massachusetts is an enrolled member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe on the island of *Noepe* (Martha's Vineyard). She earned a degree in Marine Science from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth in 2001 with coursework at Cornell's satellite campus: Shoals Marine Lab. She has in-shore and off-shore commercial fisheries research experience, and has published Native research and scientific illustrations; recounting some of her Wampanoag families' whaling history in Nancy Shoemaker's *Living with Whales*. She was recently honored to be a 38th Voyager onboard the historic *Charles W. Morgan* refurbished whaling vessel, as a descendant of the Gay Head crewmembers.

Elizabeth's artwork grows out of Northeastern Woodlands Algonquian artistic expressions. To support her natural weaving and dyes, she wild harvests common plants and barks, while growing some plants that have now become rare in Massachusetts woods. In 2014 Elizabeth had the honor of receiving a Traditional Arts Fellowship from Massachusetts Cultural Council. As a member of a Nation that has long lived on and harvested the sea, Elizabeth's is a perspective that combines art, an appreciation for Native storytelling and traditional environmental knowledge in her ways of relating to coastal North Atlantic life. Elizabeth James-Perry works as a Cultural Resource Monitor for the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribal Historic preservation Office, and is a member of the Culture and Heritage committee at the United and Southeastern Tribal Conference.

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Town Hall key points:

The panelists provided examples of how climate change was affecting their communities, touching upon phenology, acidification and water temperature and sea level rise, disrupted weather patterns and extreme storm events, and the fact that Tribes cannot abandon their reservations for other lands, and thus are faced with adaptation challenges. They explained that often they have to spend a great deal of time conveying the importance of traditional cultural practices to non-Natives who may or may not grasp the centrality of these practices to tribal identity. This presents increased challenges in addition to the actual effects of climate change on natural and cultural resources needed for continued traditional practices. Both panelists stressed the need to pass on traditions to the next generations, and how climate change was straining to varying degrees the ability to do so. Their hope was to increase understanding in the scientific non-Native community by presentation such as this one.

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