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# LUKANKA

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Lukanka is a Miskito word for “thoughts”

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Editor in Chief

Curating a journal of global Indigenous voices is a journey filled with surprises and unexpected gifts from unseen places. The contributions for the 2025 Winter Issue form a cohesive journal issue, weaving together common themes of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and activist scholars participating in and reflecting on efforts to maintain sovereignty over land and natural resources.

In this issue, contributors responded to our general call for papers, exploring topics within the broader field of Indigenous human ecology. These topics include access to natural resources, international legal mechanisms, the connection to land, and the roles of resilience, activism, and the arts in preserving Indigenous territories and sustaining traditional ways of life.

The first paper is a seminal chapter by **Rudolph Rýser, PhD**, which lays the groundwork for understanding the dynamic relationships between nations and states in the context of Indigenous environmental rights and practical considerations. Rýser emphasizes the critical need for Indigenous peoples to maintain control over their lands, which harbor the world’s last remaining natural resources. These resources are essential for Indigenous communities’ survival and global ecological balance.

The chapter explores the role of negotiations and strategies to prevent further invasions and resource extraction, framing these actions as vital to preserving Indigenous sovereignty and environmental sustainability. Rýser’s thesis calls for a profound reimagining of the relationships between state actors and Indigenous nations. It urges Indigenous leaders to assert their rights and sovereignty in the international arena. He envisions a future where collaboration replaces exploitation and the rights of Indigenous nations are fully recognized and respected in global governance frameworks.

**Mohammed Enaikele, Ph.D., and Suleiman Momoh** explore a fundamental Indigenous value: naming peoples and places is integral to preserving identity. In their paper, they investigate the influence of Islam on Indigenous naming practices among the Etsako people in present-day Nigeria, examining how these changes have been reshaping Indigenous identity across generations. This raises essential perspectives on how religions, often used as tools of colonization, influence Indigenous peoples.

Longtime *Fourth World Journal* contributor and Soviet Union scholar **Joseph Fallon, MIA**, delves into the Soviet Union’s systematic efforts, beginning with the Bolsheviks, to

homogenize and erase Indigenous peoples and their identities. Fallon's analysis reinforces the enduring resilience of Indigenous peoples, who, as Dr. Rudolph Ryser often asserted, form the bedrock of humanity. Despite the actions of state systems and ideological frameworks, Indigenous identities, though submerged under political rule, endure and persist, deeply rooted in cultural memory and tradition.

Land and its resources are at the heart of the struggle for Indigenous rights. Without land, Indigenous peoples lose their homes, their rights, and their access to vital resources. Yet it is this very land that state governments and corporations covet. **Mrinal Debnath, Ph.D.**, provides a deeply human perspective on the destabilizing effects of land grabbing on the people of Palashpur, a remote village in Bangladesh. This story is just one of thousands of similar struggles unfolding worldwide. Debnath takes us through the historical collusion of colonizing forces that have set the stage for the current crisis in the region, highlighting the failure of existing laws to protect communities and prevent further exploitation.

Debnath eloquently describes land grabbing as a fundamental disruption of the "rhythm of life," a balance of body, mind, and spirit essential for well-being. When this rhythm is broken, it leads to profound trauma—both personal and communal. Through his analysis, Debnath illuminates the critical link between land, identity, and resilience, urging readers to confront the global implications of these ongoing violations.

With a shared history of British colonial rule, like the people of Palashpur in Bangladesh, **Zafar Khan, Ph.D.**, examines the story of the Pashtun people in northern Pakistan and their resilience in employing cultural practices to combat the effects of climate change. The history of colonial exploitation is the legacy of foreign domination, and distrust of external systems continues to shape their responses to modern challenges. The Pashtun are asserting their traditional knowledge to address environmental changes, drawing strength from their cultural heritage. The author briefly touches on the critically important issue of women's marginalized role in Pashtun society. This raises the need for a critical analysis of Indigenous values and practices that contribute to women's oppression, highlighting the tension between cultural preservation and gender equity. Addressing these dynamics is essential for prioritizing women's sovereignty and cultural sovereignty, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable path forward for Pashtun society.

If the themes of this journal issue have thus far underscored the pervasive disregard for institutional governance and legal frameworks, **Marine Gauthier, Ph.D.**, brings back our focus to Africa. In this context, even well-intentioned efforts like the REDD+ initiative (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), which aims to combat climate change, fail to consider the needs of Indigenous peoples adequately. What might seem like a noble effort at climate healing often overlooks the voices and priorities of those most closely connected to the land.

Gauthier argues that Indigenous decision-making must precede any initiative involving their lands and practices. She emphasizes that women's contributions, far from being relegated to the margins as "women's issues," are central to addressing the community's needs. True sustainability, she asserts, cannot be achieved without integrating the perspectives and leadership of Indigenous women into the broader framework of environmental and social solutions.

Moving west, **Laura Corradi, MA**, reflects on her involvement in the Siekopai Nation's landmark victory over their territories in the Ecuadorian Amazon region. This article is presented in English, Spanish, and Corradi's native Italian, emphasizing the global relevance of this achievement. Corradi situates this intergovernmental agreement within the broader context of international resolutions and agreements, highlighting its significance as a potential model for negotiated relationships between Indigenous peoples' rights, land stewardship, and state governments. While the victory marks a critical step forward, it raises questions about how these legal agreements will manifest in practice, warranting close monitoring to ensure they result in meaningful outcomes for the Siekopai Nation and their land.

CWIS intern **Robert Hansell** undertook a literature review complemented by selected case studies, a glossary, and web resources as part of his graduate studies. *Fourth World Journal* is proud to present this student research as part of our commitment to mentoring rising activist scholars.

This comprehensive review notes the essential inclusion of gender in knowledge production related to Indigenous food sovereignty. Hansell highlights the vital role that traditional food systems play in maintaining cultural coherence and serving as a defense against what I previously referred to in my FWJ article, "Burying the Umbilicus" (Summer 2014), as *nutrition trauma*. This term describes the disruption of access to endemic, natural food resources caused by external forces, leading to the introduction of foreign foods that are often ill-suited to the local population's biochemistry. Such disruptions can result in chronic illnesses previously rare or unknown, underscoring the critical importance of preserving Indigenous food systems in the face of ecological and cultural challenges.

In the final paper of this *Fourth World Journal* issue, **Peter Petkovsek, MFA**, explores the expression of Mapuche cosmovision and (new) animism through stage performance. The work tells a powerful story of resilience and environmental significance, using diverse arts and cross-cultural collaboration to bring the narrative to life.

Petkovsek shares the story of the performance, the creative process, and the artful outcomes, all grounded in the values of respect and reciprocity with nature, highlighting the enduring relevance of ancient traditional stories. These narratives serve as a persistent cultural stream that nourishes the community's vision and reinforces its connection to heritage and the environment. The paper also exemplifies the fruitful outcomes of communication and collaboration across

cultures, illustrating how shared creative efforts can transcend boundaries and inspire meaningful connections.

**Martha Schmidt, MA**, a human rights attorney and CWIS board member, confronts the complexities of international law, which is frequently crafted without the input of Indigenous peoples. Even when such laws are developed with Indigenous peoples' contributions, they often remain constrained by structural frameworks that marginalize Indigenous communities. In her book review, Schmidt examines Shea Elizabeth Esterling's recent book, *Indigenous Cultural Property and International Law: Restitution,*

*Rights and Wrongs*, a significant addition to the literature.

Schmidt asks critical questions such as how international law serves—or fails to serve—Indigenous peoples. Through this lens, she explores the challenges and shortcomings of current legal frameworks while highlighting the need for more inclusive and equitable approaches to Indigenous cultural property and rights.



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