



Presentation by: Tai Pelli - International Indian Treaty Council & United Confederation of Taino People

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*“An Indigenous Reality and Perspective on Data Sovereignty & Governance and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”*

Taigüei, ituno kena itiaono, D'iri ka Tai Pelli kena Daka Boriken Taino. Good day sisters and brothers. My name is Tai Pelli and I am a Borikén Taíno, which you may recognize as Puerto Rico. I am currently residing in the United States.

This past April, I attended the 2nd Indigenous Peoples Data Sovereignty and Governance Summit which was hosted by the University of Arizona. While in the essence of time, I cannot be inclusive on all the issues that we, as Indigenous Peoples are encountering when it comes to Data Sovereignty and Governance, I would like to highlight areas that are of extreme and urgent importance. I will also share with you, areas for possible solutions as Indigenous Peoples, and about actions that can assist us in ensuring that our rights are protected, including the empowerment and education of our own Indigenous Peoples. We must protect and understand the ramifications of Artificial Intelligence; data extraction; digitalization; the impact to our water resources and other natural resources, including our Indigenous lands and territories. We must be proactive in preparation for the tsunami -(I am an islander)- that all of these can have for us, if we do not take measures of prevention.

Although I have been doing International Indigenous Human Rights Advocacy for a couple of decades and have been a socio-cultural advocate from a very early age, when I started hearing about Indigenous Data a few years ago, I assumed it to be just statistical numbers. When I finally learned about all the areas that this term encompasses, I became extremely worried. Most of our Peoples have little to no idea as to how intricate this subject is and how behind we are in ensuring the Protection of our Data.

For many decades, Indigenous Peoples have been the subject of studies with no shared benefits nor reported results back to the Peoples. If anything, they were subjects of continued studies of the studies, all without the Free Prior and Informed Consent of the Peoples involved.

While broadly or even publicly undermining the value of Indigenous knowledge, sciences and technologies, we see over and over how this same information is extracted from our Peoples and then marketed without any form of reciprocity. Our traditional medicines; our farming systems - including growing healthy crops without the use of pesticides for example, or our irrigation technologies; our spiritual practices; beadworks and other Indigenous Art forms; our ceremonies; our midwifery practices; our songs...are just a handful of examples of areas that have been targeted for Data extraction.

Currently, in the United States, we are reading about the number of non-Indigenous communities that are establishing local policy to ensure that no data centers are established in their communities. Interestingly, what we are not reading about are the many Indigenous communities that are already facing the impacts of Data Centers in or near their ancestral lands and territories, and how many are already experiencing water shortages. This is not just happening in the United States, but in other countries in Latin America as well as in other parts of the world.

Ni toh kakuhu! Water is Life! Indigenous Peoples are already enduring the impacts of Environmental Violence and Environmental Racism as it is, and diverting the limited water resources to these Data Centers is not only detrimental to human life, but to our flora, fauna, our agriculture, and has a tremendous unfathomable impact on the economic, social and cultural aspects for Indigenous Peoples. It is a menace to our ways of life, sustainability and cultural preservation.

During the Summit, we identified the need for:

Education - utilizing layman terms so that youth and elders understand the meaning of Data Sovereignty and Governance, what it entails and how to establish protocols, specific to the Indigenous Peoples. Community Capacity Building and Train the Trainer sessions on targets, data collection methods, measure techniques and indicators. Integrate intersectionality - education - economics - research.

Fostering intergenerational dialogue - Elders have the gift of knowing our ways, our Youth is more comfortable in using modern technology. The elders have the stories and the knowledge and the youth and young adults possess the know-how's, are computer savvy and can be creative with data technology.

Fostering partnerships, including those with other Indigenous Peoples who have established protocols for their Data Sovereignty and can bring insight based on their experiences.

Indigenous Peoples and Communities creating their own small Data Centers and iClouds.

And because time is running out, I will stress on the most important one, in my opinion: creating protocols and frameworks utilizing a rights-based approach as the foundation. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, represents the minimum standards. We shall not accept anything that goes below those minimum standards. We need to encourage and foster Free, Prior and Informed Consent Protocols based on the decisions made by the Indigenous Peoples themselves. Whether it is Artificial Intelligence, Data Extraction, digitalization, and/or anything that affects Indigenous Peoples must be done with the Consent of the particular Indigenous Peoples. I remind all of you that Consultation is the means to obtain Consent. A Consultation process without the exercise of Free Prior and informed Consent is a violation of our Rights. Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance can only be achieved by

the full respect and application of our Rights. However, and as I always stress, "If we don't understand what our rights are, there's no way we can defend them."

Hahom. Thank you.