Report on the Third Inter-Tribal Gathering on the Colorado Plateau
November 17-19, 2010
Moenkopi, Arizona

Third Gathering events actually kicked off on the evening of Tuesday, Nov. 16 with a presentation at Northern Arizona University by representatives from the Coastal First Nations Turning Point Initiatives out of Canada (http://coastalfirstnations.ca/). Proceedings of the talk were recorded both then and during the second (identical) presentation offered to Gathering participants in Moenkopi, and will follow.

The formal Gathering began at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 17 at the Moenkopi Legacy Inn with presentations from the sections of the Grand Canyon Trust report "Tribal Conservation Programs on the Colorado Plateau." Anne Minard reviewed the section on water, Deon Ben presented health, Paulita Kewanwytewa covered language and culture, and Gabe Yaiva went over sacred sites. Please see the report contents for details of the presentations themselves. Details on the discussion following each presentation appear below.

Water: Participants felt strongly that large-scale changes need to be emphasized on water issues, especially actions wherein tribes can assert control over their own water quality standards (like the Ute Mountain Ute tribe has), or initiate overhauls of legal frameworks like the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) to allow for adequate consideration of cultural values alongside the conventional, scientific approaches. Some participants favored the idea of introducing a "Cultural Impact Statement" process to accompany Environmental Impact Statements for proposed projects that will affect their lands and waters. Short of that, some representatives stressed the need for tribes to seek involvement during the initial scoping stages of Environmental Impact Statements, so that their voices are most likely to be heard. Participants noted that some existing water conservation programs were left out of the report, most significantly those involving springs and watershed restoration. The Zuni and White Mountain Apache tribes have been especially active in this area. This is also an area where participants from several tribes, including Hopi and White Mountain Apache, requested volunteer assistance in the future.

Health: Participants agreed on the need to document traditional ways of planting and farming, and pass those on to the youth. Approaches differ, however, with some traditionalists advocating a return to discipline, ceremony and other historic values for the youth, and others leaning toward reaching the youth where they are today – by creating videos and other digital presentations that chronicle the old ways.

Some participants expressed concern that traditional crop varieties are threatened by genetically modified seeds, and pointed out the need for education so that people save and safeguard traditional varieties, some of which have been adapting to the places where they're grown for thousands of years.

Ethnobotany – the cultivation and study of traditional, culturally important edible and medicinal plants – is an important effort for many Colorado Plateau tribes, and several participants expressed a desire to collaborate on ways to keep native plants alive and

relevant, especially with the youth. The term ethnobotany was problematic for at least one participant, Jim Enote of Zuni, who sees it as a Western term subjugating indigenous knowledge. Finally, ample discussion and enthusiasm centered on Bucky Preston's annual Paatuwaqatsi (Water is Life) run at Hopi, approaching its 8th year. The run promotes the spiritual, cultural and biological importance of water. As one Gathering participant noted, springs are shrines, passageways to the spirit world.

Based on the success of the Hopi run, other tribes are thinking about starting races of their own that would showcase environmental causes and promote health, or even collaborating to establish multi-tribal events, perhaps as a way to keep historic trade routes in use.

Sacred Sites: Discussion after this presentation focused on the decision each tribe must face about whether or not to list sacred sites in the National Register of Historic Places, with the Hualapai and Zuni tribes having been active participants in this process, and other tribes (e.g., Hopi and Havasupai) opposed for two main reasons: 1. Such listing requires erecting boundaries, physical or figurative, around places tribes consider to be inseparable in a spiritual sense from the surrounding landscape and 2. Listing may expose sacred places to unwanted visitation and desecration. Octavius Seowtewa described a positive experience with listing Zuni Salt Lake, which is now protected by both the federal government and the state of New Mexico so that tribal permission is required for entry. This protected status is worthwhile for keeping out people using GPS systems for scavenger hunts, which is an emerging threat to tribal sacred places.

Glenmore Begaye, a Navajo representative, questioned why states are involved in matters of sacred sites: shouldn't we be engaging the federal government on a nation-to-nation basis, and does state involvement diminish tribal sovereignty? Overall, Gathering participants made clear that it's not a Native way to divide land into pieces; it is the whole land that is sacred. Participants called for a new paradigm about sacred sites that isn't within existing, ill-fitting laws; sacred sites aren't real estate.

One Gathering participant, Theresa Pasqual of the Acoma Pueblo Tribe, cautioned others to take care in introducing religion to matters of protecting sacred sites. "We can't put one religion above the other because this is America and it is all about equality," she said. "For example, when we argue the case of the San Francisco Peaks we don't say things like, 'you wouldn't put reclaimed/recycled/re-potable water on your church'."

Language & Culture: *As people discussed the loss of language, the steady cawing of a raven could be heard between people's words. Then the raven appeared at the high window of the conference center. As the conversation drifted around the room, raven stayed at his perch, his beak mouthing some unknown language.*

Representatives from several tribes noted that the report overlooks a major effort to preserve language: dictionaries. The following tribes have written dictionaries, which are in various stages of completion and/or use: Havasupai, Hopi, Zuni, Hualapai, White Mountain Apache and Southern Ute. Zuni representatives added that they preserve their language by using it in everyday life and ceremony. The Zuni must know their language and be able to speak, sing and pray in it in order to be involved in ceremonies, where

the English language is forbidden. Elders from the Hopi and Havasupai tribes have been recording songs for their youth, with Havasupai elder Rex Tilousi taking the extra step of recording a DVD that will hopefully "get into their iPods." Some participants expressed concern about widely available language programs like Rosetta Stone. While some Navajo tribal members believe the availability of a Rosetta Stone Navajo language program aids in the preservation of the tongue, members from other tribes – including Zuni – resist publicizing their language outside the tribe for fear outsiders may try to perform Zuni ceremonies.

Representatives also noted various social programs that have helped to promote tribal culture, including Bingo, tribal news (TV and radio), and cultural nights.

Sacred Sites tour

The second day of the Gathering, Thursday, Nov. 18, began with a half-day tour of Hopi sacred sites by Micah Loma'omvaya, a Hopi anthropologist, archeologist and professional tour guide. Gathering participants were able to experience sacred springs and traditional farmlands. They also learned about Pasture Canyon, an undeveloped riparian area between Highway 160 and the Pasture Canyon Dam. Though impacted by trash, wildcat roads, invasive plants and overgrazing, the area has drawn attention from both the Hopi tribe and the EPA for rehabilitation projects, and may someday be transformed into a treasured natural area and park. More attention and probably some volunteer support will be needed to carry this worthwhile project to fruition.

Coastal First Nations – Laying a Road Map for Success in Indian Country

Coastal First Nations is an alliance of First Nations on British Columbia's North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Coastal First Nations includes the Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Kitasoo/Xaixais First Nation, Nuxalk Nation, Gitga'at First Nation, Haisla, Metlakatla First Nation, Old Massett Village Council, Skidegate Band Council, and Council of the Haida Nation. Lax Kw'alaams is an associate member.

Over the past five years, Coastal First Nations has played a leadership role in bringing together a range of interests on the coast to address the unsustainable policies and practices that have damaged the environment and devastated coastal economies and communities. New partnerships have been developed with environmental groups, the federal and provincial governments, industry and other interests to begin the move to a conservation-based economy with increased First Nations involvement through strong leadership and vision.

Board of Directors members Marylin Slett, chief council member of the Heiltsuk Nation and Gerald Amos, council member of the Haisla Nation, were joined by Art Sterritt, Coastal First Nations executive director. They showed slides of incredible coastal lands, including forests, islands, inlets, coastal cliffs and beaches. Amos noted they live in part of largest remaining intact rainforest on the planet, with "trees as high as skyscrapers." Salmon is a key part of the diet, and they share the land with grizzlies, black bears, six million migratory birds, spirit bears and seals.

As recently as the 1980s, the local economy was based entirely on extraction – including logging camps, fish canneries and mines – and the tribal landowners got precious few benefits. Then, the economy began to falter. "Our people have been the first to feel the depletion of the resource and the loss of jobs," Amos said, noting tribes suffered high unemployment and low graduation rates alongside a demoralizing loss of rights and societal attacks on their cultural identity as Indian people. The entire region crashed from a peak of affluence 40 years ago to next to nothing by 10 years ago. "There were no fishing boats in most communities," Sterritt said.

A rumble of protest in the Native communities led to several victories in the Supreme Court of Canada. First, the court acknowledged in *Calder v. British Columbia* (1973) that aboriginal title to the tribal lands existed prior to colonization. In 1997, the court found in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* that aboriginal title is a right to the land itself, not just a right to hunt, fish and gather. Victories snowballed. "We have been challenging the courts in Canada for over 40 years, and we have won every case," Sterritt said.

Still, the Coastal First Nations weren't able to capitalize on their legal rights because they didn't yet have the support of people actually on the lands, including the extractive industries that were ruining them. They decided to come together, to "breathe life into our rights for ourselves. Nobody else was going to do it for us," Amos said.

The process started in 1985, but progress was slow at first.

"We did this in isolation. We steadfastly refused to work together," recalled Marilyn Slett. "We have a history with our neighbors. That was probably part of it, but we all do. But things weren't working. Very little was happening in our communities. As a result of our collective frustration, it was time for our communities to come together."

From that point forward, things started happening. The collaborative group outlined goals for a conservation-based economy, including land and marine use planning, decision making powers, traditional and non-traditional economic opportunities, and capacity building – including training, institutions and the human resources to push their plans forward. They reached out first to the environmental community and then industry, experiencing something bordering on shock to find that those groups were willing allies. So empowered, the tribes went on to enlist the support of labor unions, municipalities and non-native communities. When they finally entered the federal political arena on a government-to-government basis, they did so with the support of everyone in their territories. They determined that they needed $120 million to kickstart their efforts, which – to their initial surprise -- they managed to collect with the support of environmental groups and the private philanthropic community, including the Ford, Rockefeller and Packard foundations. Now, they run a self-sustaining economic engine that pours funding back into their communities. The Coastal First Nations maintain more than 45 million agreements causing more than $300 million to flow into their communities. Seventy percent of their land is directly under their power.

Within the next 10 years, the Coastal First Nations expect to own all of the forest licenses in their traditional communities. They're employing ecosystem-based

management to guarantee the health of their lands and forests for future generations. Nearly two million hectares of land are out of bounds for resource extraction. The communities all have land use plans, approved and agreed to by the environmental community, industry, tribal communities, and ratified by governments of Canada and British Columbia. And in a more recent effort, the Nations have initiated marine use planning to address the depletion of traditional fish stocks, as well efforts to introduce a green economy and take advantage of carbon capture credits as part of an economically viable answer to climate change.

The Coastal First Nations panel emphasized several take-home messages for the Gathering participants: Be bold; create a uniquely compelling vision; pursue multi-stakeholder, public support; use diversity; embrace the strange bedfellows approach; and employ persistent optimism.

Gathering participants warmly received the messages from Coastal First Nations presentation, with Navajo Nation representative Cora Max suggesting a cultural exchange program in the near future. Several participants asked about the group's financial structure; Amos said they formed an organization called Great Bear Initiative Society, registered with British Columbia, which allows them to enter into legal contracts. The board is looking into becoming a nonprofit entity. He stressed the importance of independence from government funding and even, eventually, from nonprofit groups that helped them get started, "even though they've been good partners."

Vernon Masayesva expressed interest in the Coastal First Nations' carbon credits marketing, and asked if such a program would have legs here. Sterritt mentioned a coupe of possible sources for such credits: farmers may be eligible to get credit for crops they're already growing, for example.

Sterritt's final point was that the success of Coastal First Nations relies on a number-one rule: "we don't do anything that will hurt one of our communities. One does salmon farming, so we don't fight it."

Sacred Sites Workshop

On the final day of the Gathering, Friday, Nov. 19, Gabe Yaiva led a workshop on Sacred Sites. Loretta Jackson-Kelly of the Hualapai Nation gave an update on sacred sites and what's been done to protect them at Hualapai. Cora Max, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley's lead person assigned to gain intertribal support to stop use of water for snow at Arizona Snowbowl, discussed ways tribes can come together to protect culturally significant landscapes. Following lunch and a performance by a local, traditional dance group, representatives from the conservation group Round River Conservation Studies spoke on the topic of "Sacred Sites as threads in the Blanket of the Sacred Landscape." Mark Maryboy, former Navajo Nation council delegate and Dennis Sizemore, Round River's executive director, discussed methods of weaving ecological with traditional knowledge to preserve the many ways which Native lands contribute to Native culture.