



L to R, from Storforsen, Karen Kuhnert (KAIIROS Indigenous Rights Circle), ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson, Katarina Kuhnert (McGill Environment student sponsored by Eastern Synod YAYA) call to #MakeltOperative now.

R. International Chief Littlechild Call to #MakeltOperative now



**COP21 CALL FOR BRAVE ACTION AND BOLD DECISIONS FOR THE WHOLE OF NATURE GOD SO LOVED**

Just before Canadian Thanksgiving this year, forty people from the global North gathered above the Arctic Circle in Storforsen, Sami Territory, Sweden, to raise-up stories of how climate change is currently impacting lives of people in the Arctic. Why? Because it is understood that climate change evidence from the Arctic reveals what is to come for the rest of the planet, and that the experiences of the people of the North will become experiences common to all people if climate change is not checked. The hope is that the stories of lived impacts of climate change *today* would move to action the 40,000 participants expected at the upcoming world conference called COP21 in Paris.

What is COP21? Most adults have heard of the Kyoto Protocol (2005) and the Copenhagen Agreement (2009). These are outcome documents from meetings of the 196 International State governments and other parties working together on sustainability for the world. The “Paris2015” meeting is the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21).

The Parties have recognized how far reaching the implications of this particular November-December Convention might be and have been mobilizing “business leaders and investors” to draft a succinct outcome document (a protocol or agreement) that aligns with their interests. Yet these industrialized-nation COP21 representatives are disproportionately urban delegates living daily with mere ripples of climate change. Alternately the Indigenous Peoples who live closer to the land and are already experiencing waves of climate change are under-represented at COP21.

The Arctic delegates told important stories in Storforsen that few COP21 attendees have access to. They described food-chain insecurity all across the Arctic: fish flesh turning from healthy pink to a sickly yellow, caribou and mammals changing migration routes due to rising air and water temperatures and shifting ice conditions, herds of reindeer starving in the pasture due to vegetation changes, deformed berries shriveling before ripening. And it’s not just that food is harder to find, but it is also more dangerous to seek out food as travelling on the land, water and ice has become dangerously unpredictable. Increasingly people are eating overly expensive, salty, pre-packaged foods that deplete physical, mental, cultural and spiritual vitality. Both traditional knowledge keepers and scientists have described the devastating changes that are occurring.

We saw the connection between the suffering of the land and its effects on traditional livelihoods, the mental health, identity and well-being of all who live there. We were moved by the concerns youth have for their future and their cultural way of life. We heard of the ongoing dispossession of the peoples of the land from the land and acknowledged the responsibility to include peoples of the land in decision-making that affects the future of all.

There was a request to ask faith communities and people everywhere to rededicate themselves to stand in solidarity and support the peoples in the North, who are now already survivors and leaders in responding to climate change. There was a call to take brave action and make bold decisions on promoting climate justice.

At Storforsen we Christians were reminded that John 3:16 reads in the Greek *that God so loved the cosmos, the whole of nature, that God sent his only beloved Son...* We believe the spiritual roots of climate change point to a need for conversion, to repent from individual and collective patterns of consumption that put the creation and life at risk. This aligns strongly with testimonials from coast to coast in Canada throughout the 2015 Church Leaders Justice Tour, that climate change, Indigenous rights and poverty are inseparably intertwined and of concern to the Church today.

Climate Justice for the Arctic is a spiritual issue. We heard that all the land, all the cosmos is sacred, a sacrament, infused with meaning. Each being has a purpose. The purpose of each human being then is to be a responsible caretaker. All human beings are called to this priestly vocation.

The COP21 outcome document is already in pre-negotiation and will lead to international laws and policies that will affect us all. International Chief Wilton Littlechild pointed out in Storforsen that protections for the inclusion of the voices of women, intergenerational equity (youth and elders) and indigenous peoples may get dropped from the Paris outcome document in the effort to be succinct.

As such, Chief Littlechild, a TRC Commissioner, and member of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with colleagues in the Arctic Caucus, the Pacific Caucus, and the Women's Caucus, want the following paragraph made operative in the Paris COP21 outcome document:

**All Parties shall, in all climate change related actions, respect, protect, and fulfil human rights for all, including the rights of indigenous peoples, gender equality and the full and equal participation of women, food security and intergenerational equity as well as a just transition of the work force that creates decent work and quality jobs and upholds the integrity and resilience of natural ecosystems**

We are being asked to take action now with them to stand up for the voices of women, youth, seniors and Indigenous Peoples and realign COP21 for the sake of justice.

Readers are asked to please go to your email and send #MakeltOperative to [MakeltOperative@aol.com](mailto:MakeltOperative@aol.com). Or tweet, post, send out #MakeltOperative through your Twitter, Facebook or Instagram along with Chief Littlechild, Bishop Susan, Karen and Kata. Readers are encouraged to ask their contacts to take the action as well.

The intergenerational Future of Life in the Arctic Conference was sponsored by the Church of Sweden in partnership with the Canadian Council of Churches. See more at the #ArcticFuture Facebook page.



Youth Delegates: L to R Maria-Teresia Nutti (Sami) Katarina Kuhnert (Lutheran)