

solidarity with Indigenous activism



Inter Pares is located on the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Omàmiwinini. Our community is spread across the Indigenous lands currently known as Canada. As part of our commitment to decolonization, we build relationships with Indigenous-led movements and foster connections between Indigenous communities in Canada and internationally. In this *Bulletin*, learn how Indigenous people in Canada are resisting mineral extraction, bringing long shut-out voices to policy conversations and defining their own food systems.



"We've been shut out for so long from these conversations. Just being in the room and being Indigenous is a huge thing," says Celeste Smith of her time at COP27.

Photo credit: Grassroots International

Countering corporate control at COP27 climate negotiations

Celeste Smith wears many hats.

She runs a small seed company. She is starting a teaching farm where Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQI+ people can (re)learn ancestral agricultural methods lost to colonization. She is chair of Peel Food Action Council and gives workshops at universities. She is constantly on the go. ►

“We were trying to counter the corporate presence at COP and big agriculture destroying [the environment] – and then saying that they can provide the solution.”

Celeste Smith



◀ Celeste is also chair of the International Program Committee of the National Farmers Union (NFU), a role that took her to Egypt in November 2022 for the United Nations climate change conference commonly called COP27.

“Me, I’m Indigenous, so I show up in these spaces where I’m not supposed to be. I have to,” says Celeste, who is Oneida. Policy discussions – from municipal to

international – do not have a long history of allowing Indigenous voices at the table, she points out.

“We’ve been shut out for so long from these conversations. Just being in the room and being Indigenous is a huge thing.”

Through the NFU, an Inter Pares counterpart, we supported Celeste’s travel to COP27. There, she joined an international delegation from La Via

Campesina, a global movement of more than 200 million peasants and small-scale farmers, as their North American representative. Together, these farmers from 11 countries advocated for climate solutions rooted in justice, food sovereignty and agroecology – agriculture that works with nature to produce food in Earth-friendly ways. They were also vocal opponents of corporate-backed climate “solutions” like geoengineering and carbon markets.

“We were trying to counter the corporate presence at COP and big agriculture destroying [the environment] – and then saying that they can provide the solution.”



Inter Pares supported Celeste’s (far left) travel to COP27 to advocate for climate solutions rooted in justice, food sovereignty and agroecology.

Photo credit: Madeleine Race/Friends of the Earth International



When a bottle of Nestle water was plunked down in front of her at a COP27 event, Celeste took a moment to call it out.


“This is greenwashing,” she said. While the

company provided water at the global climate conference, it extracted 3.6 million litres of water a day out of Celeste’s own community, Six Nations in Ontario – even as much of the community did not (and still doesn’t) have access to clean drinking water.

Ultimately, for Celeste, COP27 was about solidarity.

“Some people thought that COP was a waste of time ... because big corporations dominate the space. I kept saying ‘there is a reason I am here,’” she says. “I believe that everything is about relationship building.”

As an organization that is all about building relationships of solidarity, we’re proud to support Celeste’s international policy work. Plus, organizations like Inter Pares have an important role to play in economic reconciliation, Celeste says.

“Thoughts and feelings only go so far. Unfortunately, it takes money to do the work that we’re doing. Economic reconciliation is backing up those feelings.” 

Sowing food sovereignty, cultivating relationships


The relationship between Inter Pares and the National Farmers Union goes back four decades.

Like counterparts we support in India and West Africa, the NFU works toward food sovereignty – the right to healthy, culturally appropriate and sustainably produced food. Food sovereignty means more than ensuring everyone has enough food to survive. It means the people eating and growing that food have the right to choose how it gets to their plates.

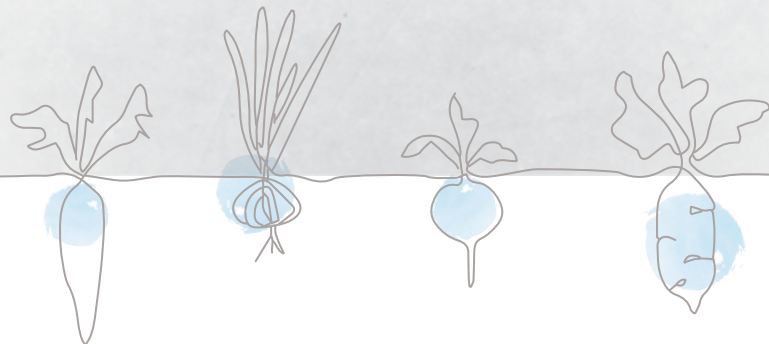
By supporting the NFU’s International Program Committee (IPC), Inter Pares helps farmers in Canada push for better climate

policy, support migrant farm workers and build relationships between settler farmers and Indigenous communities.

In 2022, IPC members worked with the Relational Accountability for Indigenous Rematriation Collective to host a meeting with settlers, Indigenous people, landowners and land-seeking people who want to work together toward land sharing and decolonization.

We’re honoured to support the IPC as it continues to facilitate knowledge sharing among Indigenous and non-Indigenous farmers to deepen relationships and make the NFU a welcoming space for Indigenous people. 

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Resisting lithium mining in Quebec

Below the surface of the unceded territory of the Anicinape Aki, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue in western Quebec, a rare resource has caught the eye of Sayona Mining: lithium.

The company plans to extract lithium at three sites in the region. One, the Tamsin Lithium Project, is on the unceded territory of Long Point First Nation (LPFN). In 2018, Sayona Mining acquired a claim to these lands, and dozens of others, through provincial mining laws. The laws did not require the company to gain the consent of the First Nation, or even to consult them.

When they learned about Sayona's claim to their land, LPFN sounded the alarm: mine operations and runoff would irreparably harm Lake Simard, vital for their community. A mine would put their traditional practices—hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering—at grave risk.

LPFN mobilized together with other environmental and civil society groups, including Inter Pares counterpart MiningWatch Canada. With MiningWatch support, they drew attention to the risk the mines pose to



Lake Simard, on Long Point First Nation land, is vital for the community. Mine operations and runoff would cause irreparable harm.

their lands and way of life. Then MiningWatch and the groups discovered Sayona Mining had misled the public and the government about the intended scale of another of its mining sites—the Authier Lithium project—to avoid a full environmental impact assessment. Concerned by this evasion, LPFN and allies have called on Quebec's government to conduct a full environmental review of all three projects.

While they wait for a response from the province, Long Point First Nation, with MiningWatch support, is seeking to conduct their own environmental assessment review on the Tansim project.

“The findings of our own assessment must be critical in deciding whether or not to

allow the project to proceed,” says Steeve Mathias, former Chief of the Long Point First Nation's Council.

According to MiningWatch, mining companies in Quebec have claimed an area the size of Cuba. And while Quebec has 11 First Nations, none of the province's environmental laws require consultation or engagement with them.

Long Point First Nation's struggle is shared by Indigenous peoples across Canada. As a co-founder and active member of MiningWatch, Inter Pares is in solidarity with Indigenous-led struggles to assert their right to steward their lands for themselves, their communities, and for future generations. 

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With the support of thousands of Canadians, Inter Pares works in Canada and around the world with social change organizations who share the analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by inequalities within and among nations, and who are working to promote peace, and social and economic justice in their communities and societies.

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