

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

History of our Indigenous Lands Campaigns

Protecting Indigenous People, Cultural Landscapes, Sacred Sites, Health, Environment, Air, Land, and Water

(December 2025)

In late 1997, Indigenous people helped co-found Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice as a grassroots multiracial, community-led organization led by and working with frontline urban, rural, and indigenous communities and Native Nations on environmental health and justice issues. We have a long, proud, and successful history working with Native Nations and grassroots indigenous people to protect health, environment, sacred sites and cultural landscapes from pollution and desecration. Indigenous grassroots people continue to play a leading role on Greenaction's Board of Directors.

Ward Valley, California: Our first major campaign and action in early 1998 was joining the Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Quechan, Cocopah, and Colorado River Indian Tribes in occupying Ward Valley in the Mojave Desert to stop plans to build a nuclear waste dump on sacred land near the Colorado River. The Mohave Elders of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, a Mojave leader from the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, and a Chemehuevi/Yaqui/Chicano Elder all were founding members of Greenaction .



The Ward Valley occupation, ceremony, and standoff against federal police lasted 113 days, ending in victory when the White House dropped plans for the dump. Greenaction played a lead role along with the five Native Nations in a large and broad coalition in winning this epic, historic victory. We worked with tribal government leaders, Elders, Spiritual Leaders, and other tribal members in planning and carrying out many successful actions including the historic occupation. We participated in the government permit processes, helped unite the broad environmental coalition with the tribal coalition, the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance. We also joined CRNNA tribal leaders in building a major alliance with Indigenous groups in Mexico, including the Tarahumara, and organized events on both sides of the border. The Ward Valley victory is celebrated each year in February, organized by the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Greenaction and other partners.



Gila River Indian Community, Arizona: In 2000, we began working with tribal leaders, Elders, and the tribal member organization Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment (GRACE) to educate tribal members and organize to shut down Romic's toxic waste facility and Stericycle's medical waste incinerator which were illegally operating on and polluting tribal lands. In 2002, after protests led by GRACE, Gila River Environmental Youth, and Greenaction, Stericycle closed their incinerator. In 2007, another important tribal member and Greenaction victory was won when USEPA denied Romic's permit.

Greenaction continues working closely with Gila River tribal members, led by Lori Riddle who is a leader on Greenaction's Board of Directors.



Quitovac, Sonora, Mexico: In 2006 when traditional O’odham leaders asked us to help stop plans for a toxic waste landfill near their community and sacred site in Quitovac, Mexico, Greenaction immediately joined tribal members and helped defeat the toxic waste company’s plans. The fight was led by O’odham Voice Against the Wall and the O’odham Rights Cultural and Environmental Justice Coalition, and we were honored to be their main advisor and ally. We worked with the O’odham traditional leaders to organize and hold a binational organizing and strategy conference in Quitovac, and organized protests at the Mexican consulates in Arizona and San Francisco. O’odham grassroots leader Ophelia Rivas is a Greenaction Board of Director.



White Mesa Ute Community/Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Utah: We have worked closely with the White Mesa Ute Community and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe for about twenty years in an intense campaign against Energy Fuels’ uranium mill. Located next to the White Mesa Community and near Bears Ears National Monument, the mill was built on top of sacred and culturally significant sites. The mill is becoming an international radioactive dump, as the US government promotes more uranium mining. We are a key advisor for the White Mesa Concerned Community (WMCC) grassroots group, and we helped build a large diverse coalition to support the Ute people. We are a lead organizer along with WMCC of the annual Spiritual Walk and Protest against the uranium mill, and of a regional strategy and networking conference at White Mesa that is held the day before the annual walk and protest.

Greenaction and the White Mesa Concerned Community also conduct an annual White Mesa Ute Youth and Adult Environmental Justice Leadership Academy to empower tribal members with knowledge and skills to be effective activists and leaders. We also support Navajo/Dine people and the Havasupai Tribe in demanding a cleanup of uranium contamination on their land without dumping it at the uranium mill next to White Mesa. Together we all oppose the new uranium mines that are opening up.



Quechan Indian Tribe: Greenaction is honored to have worked with the Quechan Tribe, Elders and Spiritual Leaders since our first campaign in late 1997/1998 that defeated a nuclear waste dump proposed to be built at Ward Valley in the Mojave Desert, on sacred land near the Colorado River. In 2022, we responded to the request for assistance from Quechan Elder Preston Arrow-weed and his grassroots group Ah Mut Pipa Foundation and helped defeat plans for a cyanide leach gold mine proposed at sacred Indian Pass. In 2023, we worked with tribal members and the Quechan Tribe to defeat the proposed Oro Cruz gold mine, also planned on sacred and traditional Quechan land.

Today we continue work with the Quechan people, including supporting their concerns about large scale lithium mining in the nearby Salton Sea, an area with sacred and cultural significance to many Indigenous people of the region. We are starting a new project to collaborate with the Tribe's Environmental Department and tribal members on a Community Air Monitoring and air quality education program that will measure particulate matter from diesel truck emissions and agricultural operations and educate tribal members about pollution and air quality issues. We have also alerted the Quechan about the danger posed by hazardous waste from California being dumped at the nearby Yuma Regional Solid Waste Landfill.



Cahto Tribe, Laytonville Rancheria, California: We continue working with the Cahto Tribe and other Native and non-Native area residents demanding health care and relocation away from the old, leaking, toxic Mendocino County landfills that have caused many deaths and serious illnesses.

Navajo Nation: Greenaction's relationship and support for Dine/Navajo people's efforts to protect their health, environment, and sacred areas dates back to 1989 (8 years prior to Greenaction's formation) when Bradley Angel assisted the people of Dilkon, Arizona/Navajo Nation and their organization Citizens Against Ruining our Environment in their campaign that defeated Waste Tech's plan to build a hazardous waste incinerator. This victory, and collaboration, led to the formation of the Indigenous Environmental Network.

Currently, we work to support the Dine people as they campaign to have the widespread uranium contamination on their lands properly cleaned up. We work with Dine CARE, Bidii Roots, and Red Water Pond Road Community – three important grassroots groups on the Navajo Nation. We help unite indigenous groups from tribes in the southwest who are impacted by old and current uranium mining and uranium mill problems.

In 2006, at the request of Dine CARE, Greenaction provided a non-violent direct-action training to Elders involved in the fight against existing and proposed coal-fired power plants on and near the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. Greenaction shared examples of successful Indigenous-led direct actions including Ward Valley as well as the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla's blockades of illegal sewage sludge dumping on their reservation. Here is a photo from the Dine CARE/Greenaction direct action training for Elders.



Supporting Indigenous National Monument Efforts to Protect Sacred & Cultural Landscapes and Wilderness: Greenaction supports the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Zuni Tribe, and Uintah & Ouray Ute Tribe to protect the Bears Ears National Monument in southern Utah from harm and attempts by the State of Utah and Trump Administration to drastically reduce its size.

We support the Quechan Tribe's campaign for the creation of the Kw'tsán National Monument, a proposed 390,000-acre area in the Sonoran Desert of California, in order to protect Quechan homelands, cultural objects, and sacred places.

Support for the Indigenous Environmental Network: Greenaction is a longtime supporter and ally of the Indigenous Environmental Network. Our Executive Director Bradley Angel and Board member Teri Johnson have been involved with IEN since its inception. Following the victory won by the Citizens Against Ruining our Environment group in Dilkon, Navajo Nation against a proposed toxic waste incinerator, CARE and Bradley decided to organize the first Protecting Mother Earth – Toxic Threat to Indian Lands Conference that was held in Dilkon in June 1990. The Indigenous participants at this historic conference decided to form a network the following year at Bear Butte in South Dakota (land of the Lakota and Dakota people) and IEN was born.

People of Red Mountain, Fort McDermitt Paiute & Shoshone Reservation, Nevada: We support the People of Red Mountain, a grassroots committee of Paiute and Shoshone people opposing the destructive lithium mining taking place at Thacker Pass, an area with profound sacred significance to the Indigenous people of the area. We donated a stationary air monitor to detect particulate matter (PM) pollution from the industrial activity.

Oneida Nation, Wisconsin: At the request of Oneida activist/IEN leader Chas Wheelock and Tom Goldtooth of IEN, Greenaction provided educational and technical information including producing a report documenting pollution concerns with a plasma arc incinerator facility being proposed on the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin reservation. We educated tribal members, tribal leaders, and the surrounding community about the pollution threat posed by a pyrolysis incineration plant proposed on the Oneida reservation. The project was not built.

Mauna Kea, Hawaii: In 2019 Greenaction Indigenous leaders from our staff and Board of Directors joined Native Hawaiians in the occupation of Mauna Kea to stop a project that would desecrate this sacred mountain. We also helped organize and support solidarity protests in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Gwich'in Nation, Alaska: Greenaction continues our support of the Gwich'in in their long battle to protect their aboriginal traditional lands and the Caribou from government and industry attempts to drill for oil and gas in the pristine and sacred Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.



Upstream Downstream Alliance, Arizona, California & Utah: Greenaction united Indigenous People from Native Nations in Utah and Arizona in a multi-state alliance with environmental groups to help defeat a nuclear power plant proposed in Green River, Utah along the Green River which feeds into the Colorado River. We

informed the tribes along the lower Colorado River of this radioactive threat, and we brought together the Mohave Elders of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe members, and Chemehuevi who then traveled to southern Utah, where they met and united with White Mesa Ute Community members and grassroots leaders from Skull Valley Goshute, the Uintah and Ouray Ute people, and Hopi.

Ahmah Mutsun Tribal Band, California: Greenaction supports the Amah Mutsun in fighting plans for a gravel and sand mining operation on traditional sacred land.

Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, California: We support the struggle to protect sacred cultural resources and protect the redwood forest that Pomo people have called home since time immemorial. We also helped in the campaign against air pollution from a wood pellet plant located next to the intertribal health center.

Medicine Lake/Pit River Indian Tribe, California: In 2007 Greenaction supported the campaign led by the Pit River Indian Tribe to defeat a hydroelectric plant proposed next to sacred Medicine Lake. We joined protests and helped mobilize support from the environmental justice movement in California.



For more information, please contact Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

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