

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Response to Senator Murkowski's Actions and Comments in Senate Meeting on KXL Bill

January 9, 2015 - The Indigenous Environmental Network is dismayed by the actions and comments made yesterday by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), in her first day as the new chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources' Committee. The Senator spoke about her usage of a Tsimshian "gavel" at the conclusion of the meeting and after adjournment was overheard on the live stream stating, "It's kind of evil looking, isn't it?", referring to the gavel. Although we cannot assume the full history and connection the Senator has with the cultural item, her remarks were inappropriate and disrespectful nonetheless.

In the context of this meeting and the Senate discussions on the Keystone XL pipeline, we are curious why the only indigenous representation seen so far is a gavel used by Senator Murkowski. Given that the proposed Keystone XL route passes through Oceti Sakowin -- Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Sioux - territory in the Great Plains, and given that Senator Murkowski has been a longtime member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, we wonder why Native voices have not been included in these US Congressional discussions on the issue. These nations have not been properly consulted on the construction of this pipeline, as is required by US Federal Law, and South Dakota state law.

We implore the United States Congress to recognize the treaty, water and land rights of Native peoples across North America. We challenge Senator Murkowski to hear what tribal nations have to say on the matter of this "transboundary" issue. And we ask the Senator to consult with Tsimshian people before she makes any more remarks on the "evilness" of Tsimshian art.

We support the requests of First Nations Cree and Dene people of northern Alberta who vehemently demand to shut down the tar sands oil development. We support a just transition towards a greener, more sustainable economy in order to avoid future climate meltdowns. And we ask Senator Murkowski, and other US Congressional members, to join us in this movement and say no to the Keystone XL pipeline.

Alaska-based REDOIL Statement

The following is a statement given by one of our network organizations in Alaska, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), an Alaskan Native grassroots network:

"Senator Murkowski blatantly ignores the concerns of thousands of Indigenous peoples threatened by the passage of the pipeline as she promotes Senate approval for the project. Senator Murkowski claims to have great respect for Indigenous peoples but her actions continually support development projects and legislation that threaten tribal sovereignty and food security of Indigenous communities whether it is by pushing Keystone XL legislation or seeking development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and offshore oil development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.

Sen Murkowski promotes Indigenous homelands and marine ecosystems being plundered for the profits of big oil while our subsistence livelihoods would be destroyed as a sacrifice for short term economic gain with long term devastating consequences to the survival of our future generations." - **Faith Gemmill, Executive Director Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL)**

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