



METROPOLITAN URBAN INDIAN DIRECTORS GROUP

Page | 1

February 22nd, 2023

Metro Urban Indian Directors (MUID) Position Statement on the City of Minneapolis Hiawatha Expansion Project at the Roof Depot Site:

This letter has been written on behalf of the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group (MUID) – a collaborative of over twenty-five American Indian organizations operating within the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota (*please see the attached organizational listing*). The purpose of this communication is to express that the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group (MUID) collectively oppose the Hiawatha Expansion Project proposal by the City of Minneapolis.

The membership of MUID believes that there are a better community-led, green initiatives to be pursued that will better mitigate the negative social determinants of health caused by environmental racism. Additionally, MUID supports the non-violent direct action led by our community members to fight the environmental and racial injustices currently being imposed upon the American Indian community and the Phillips neighborhood. Our membership believes that such community-led civic actions are directly protected by the United States Constitution Bill of Rights regarding the right to peaceful assembly and the right for citizens to petition their government.

Further, MUID formally denounces the militaristic actions taken by the Minneapolis Police Department on the evening of February 21st, 2023, to dismantle a peaceful and ceremonial occupation on the Roof Depot site.

American Indian people in the Phillips Neighborhood suffer from the poorest health outcomes and highest rate of health disparities in the state of Minnesota. Environmental racism is any

policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages individuals, groups or communities based on race, while localizing such harmful policies directly into the geographic spaces where they and their families reside. It is a well-documented fact that communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by polluting industries and lax regulation of these industries, and the city of Minneapolis and the actions the Minneapolis government throughout the years has reinforced this fact.

Environmental Justice is supported by decent paying and secure jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making; and finally, personal empowerment. A community of Environmental Justice is one in which both cultural and biological diversity are respected, and where there is equal access to institutions and ample resources to grow and prosper. All of the above play a direct role in determining social indicators of health and wellness for the urban American Indian community in the Phillips neighborhood. One of our own nonprofit social impact organizations has been impacted by the arsenic mitigation during the re-building of MIGIZI.

A Green Zone is a geographically based policy initiative aimed at improving health and supporting economic development using environmentally conscious efforts in communities that face the cumulative effects of environmental pollution, as well as social, political and economic vulnerability. The City of Minneapolis' website defines the Roof Depot as a "South Side Green Zone." It defines "a green zone is a group of neighborhoods with 1) High levels of environmental pollution and 2) Racial, political, and economic marginalization" and goes on to state that the City of Minneapolis has been ... "working with residents in these neighborhoods to achieve environmental justice by 1) Addressing environmental issues and 2) Energizing the economy". <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/health/sustainability-homes-environment/sustainability/green-zones/>

In the spirit of healing from historical environmental racism and looking to a future of environmental justice, MUID stands in solidarity with our community by espousing the following values by which our membership holds dear:

- We affirm the sacredness of our Earth Mother and the interdependence of all creation, and the inherent right to be free from ecological destruction.

- We demand that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- We mandate the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
- We affirm the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of American Indian people.
- We demand the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
- We affirm the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment.
- We consider governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
- We recognize the special legal and natural relationship of American Indian people to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
- We affirm the need for urban policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

It is the desire of MUID for the City of Minneapolis to realign their activities to meet these stated values shared by MUID and our community in the hopes of arriving at a co-created solution to these issues that benefit all of our citizens.

Pidamaya yedo/Pilamayaye/Miigwech/Wibthaha/Pinigigi/Thank you,

SIGNED BY THE FULL MUID MEMBERSHIP

Listing of Voting Member Organizations within the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group:

1. Ain Dah Yung Center
2. All Nations Indian Church
3. American Indian Community and Development Corporation
4. American Indian Family Center
5. American Indian OIC
6. Bois Forte Urban Office
7. The Circle Newspaper
8. Division of Indian Work
9. Fond Du Lac Urban Office
10. Indian Health Board
11. Indigenous Peoples Task Force
12. Little Earth of United Tribes
13. MIGIZI Communications
14. Mille Lacs Band Urban Office
15. Minneapolis American Indian Center
16. Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
17. Mni Sota Fund
18. Native American Community Clinic
19. Native American Community Development Institute
20. Nawayee Center School
21. New Native Theatre
22. Red Lake Twin Cities Embassy
23. Upper Midwest American Indian Center
24. Wakan Tipi Center
25. White Earth Nation Urban Office

Listing of Ex-Officio Member Organizations within the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group:

1. City of Minneapolis – American Indian Community Specialist