



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Witness Biographies

The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas

Panel I



Leila Salazar-López is the Executive Director of Amazon Watch, leading the organization since 2015 in its work to protect and defend the bio-cultural and climate integrity of the Amazon rainforest by advancing Indigenous peoples' rights, territories, and solutions. For 20+ years, Ms. Salazar-López has worked to defend the world's rainforests, human rights, and climate through grassroots organizing and international advocacy campaigns at Amazon Watch, Rainforest Action Network and Global Exchange. She serves on the Governing Council of the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative and the Amazon Emergency Fund, and is also a Greenpeace Voting Member and a Global Fund for Women Advisor for Latin America.



Keith Slack is the Director of Strategy and Campaigns at EarthRights International. Prior to joining EarthRights, Mr. Slack spent nearly two decades building and directing Oxfam America's Extractive Industries Global Program. In that role, he led campaigns and advocacy to promote greater transparency and respect for the human rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities. Mr. Slack worked previously for the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights and in the human rights program of Catholic Relief Services' Peru office.



Melania Canales Poma is a leader of the Quechua people of the Ayacucho region of Peru and is currently the president of the National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru (ONAMIAP). She is also the southern region coordinator for the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA SUR); and member of the ECMIA board. Ms. Canales has held several leadership positions in the campesino community of Lucanas in Ayacucho, including multiple positions with the Federation of Lucana Women, later serving as the president of the Regional Federation of

Ayacucho Indigenous Women (FEREMIA). She was also elected mayor of the Lucanas district from 2011-2014. Her organizational and political trajectory has been based on the revindication of her identity, defined by the struggle for autonomy and for women and indigenous communities to exercise their basic rights. She has represented indigenous women in different spaces of dialogue with the state, civil society, and other stakeholders.



Leonardo A. Crippa is a descendant of the Kolla people located in the Northwest of Argentina and a Senior Attorney at the Indian Law Resource Center. For almost 20 years, he has practiced law in the field of human rights and advocated for the enhancement of multilateral development banks' policies and procedures, especially those aiming at safeguarding indigenous peoples from environmental and social harm due to bank-funded projects. He was engaged in the development of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States in 2016. Mr. Crippa has also represented several indigenous communities in cases before both the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights based in Washington, D.C. and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights based in San Jose, Costa Rica.



Jolie Schwarz is the Policy Director for the Bank Information Center. She joined the Bank Information Center in 2012 to support BIC's advocacy efforts around U.S. government oversight and accountability at the World Bank. As a human rights lawyer, she is committed to promoting policy reform by international financial institutions to protect human and environmental rights and enhance transparency and accountability. Ms. Schwarz supported BIC's successful campaign to include social protections in the updated World Bank safeguards and continues to coordinate BIC's efforts to strengthen social and environmental protections at the World Bank. Ms. Schwarz facilitates the monthly Tuesday Group meeting, co-chaired by BIC and USAID, that provides a regular platform for civil society to raise concerns about multilateral development bank policies and programs directly with the U.S. government.



Brian Keane has been working with indigenous communities for over thirty years. He is the founder and Board Chair of Land is Life, an international coalition of indigenous peoples. He served as Rapporteur for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2017-2019), and; was appointed, under the Obama Administration, as the first Advisor for Indigenous Peoples' Issues for United States Foreign Assistance.