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The Indigenous Teen Who Confronted Trudeau About Unsafe Water Took On the UN

Autumn Peltier is 15, Indigenous, and fighting for everyone around the world to have clean drinking water.

by Rebecca Nagle
Oct 1 2019, 2:26pm

Indigenous peoples and people of color are disproportionately affected by our global climate crisis. But in the mainstream green movement and in the media, they are often forgotten or excluded. This is Tipping Point, a new VICE series that covers environmental justice stories about and, where possible, written by people in the communities

experiencing the stark reality of our changing planet.

“We can’t eat money and we can’t drink oil,” Autumn Peltier told world leaders at the United Nations on Saturday during a weeklong global summit on climate change. “One day I will be an ancestor and I want my descendants to know that I used my voice so that they could have a future.”

Peltier is a 15 year old citizen of Wiikwemkoong First Nation. As the Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation, she represents more than 40 First Nations in Ontario, many of whom, lack clean drinking water. In Peltier’s speech to the U.N., she urged world leaders to use their power to ensure people around the world have access to safe drinking water. “Water is a basic human right,” she said.

Though the spotlight on youth activists focused on climate change may be most bright on Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg—who made international headlines for chastising world leaders for not doing more to prevent climate change—she is, of course, far from alone. The environmentalist movement sprung up in western countries in the 1970s, but Indigenous people have always seen their role as protecting the earth. While Peltier is young among global climate activists, in many ways she was born into this role. Peltier lives on unceded Wiikwemkoong territory on Manitoulin Island, the largest freshwater island in the world. Nestled within Lake Huron on Canada's southern border, she is quite literally surrounded by water. As an Anishinaabe woman, she learned about her responsibility to protect the water from a young age. "We're automatically given roles and responsibilities to protect the water and to protect the land being born Anishinaabe, being born a First Nations person," Peltier said. Peltier has been speaking up about the environment since she was in elementary school.

When Peltier was 8 years-old, she and her family traveled north to the Serpent River First Nation reserve for a water ceremony. While in the washroom, Peltier saw posters with a warning she had never read before. "All over the walls it said 'boil water advisory.' Don't drink or touch the water," Peltier told Vice.

Peltier asked her mother what the signs meant and learned that many First Nations communities in Canada didn't have safe drinking water. Today 56 First Nation communities are still under boil advisory, some for more than 20 years. Canada's Liberal Party has pledged to provide clean water to everyone by 2021, but after several false starts and passed deadlines many residents remain wary according to local press.

In Neskantaga First Nation, residents have lived without clean drinking water for 25 years. After suffering Canada's longest boil advisory, last month the situation got even worse. Pumps in the remote community's water plant broke leaving many houses without running water at all. Families had to evacuate.

"No community should be on a boil water advisory," Peltier told Vice. "Or experience not being able to drink from your own tap. Children shouldn't have to grow up not knowing what it's like to drink from your faucet, or shower, or wash your hands. "Canada is not a Third World country but some of our First Nations are living in Third World conditions."

Learning about the water crisis facing Indigenous communities in Ontario launched Peltier into action. At the age of eight she started speaking out about the importance of water on her reserve. Last year, she addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In April, at the age of 14, she became the Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation. In her role, she visits different reserves, meets with leaders of the Anishinabek Nation, and speaks internationally about Indigenous and water rights. Last month, she was nominated—for a third time—for the International Children's Peace Prize.

In April, Peltier inherited her role from her great aunt, Josephine Henrietta Mandamin, an internationally recognized water rights and Indigenous activist who passed away in February. After founding Mother Earth Water Walkers, she walked the entire shoreline of the Great Lakes. In total, she walked over 15,000 miles to advocate for water.

From her great aunt Josephine and other family members, Peltier says she learned the cultural importance of water. "When you ask the question about why is water so sacred, it's not just

because we need it and nothing can survive without water,” Peltier told the U.N. “For years and years, our ancestors have passed on traditional oral knowledge that our water is alive and our water has a spirit.”

Peltier first caught media attention when she confronted Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2016. At the winter meeting of the Assembly of First Nations, Peltier was invited to give the Prime Minister a gift. Instead she gave him a message. “I am very unhappy with the choices you’ve made.” she told him publicly.

By phone, Peltier explained she was frustrated with Trudeau’s failure to provide clean water to First Nation communities and his decision to greenlight controversial pipeline projects. Trudeau responded by promising to do better. “As a youth I’m going to hold him accountable,” Peltier told Vice. “Because he made a promise.”

As the globe faces a growing climate crisis, Indigenous people—and their rights—play a vital role in preventing ecological destruction and climate catastrophe. Indigenous people inhabit 25 percent of the earth’s surface, but protect more than 80 percent of the earth’s biodiversity. According to the Center for International Forestry Research, traditional landholders, including Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, manage 40 percent of all ecologically intact land on the planet, including 22 percent of the world’s carbon-sinking tropical forests. The U.N.’s top climate change body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), says without rights for Indigenous people, climate change will certainly get worse. But in too many conversations about climate change, tribes like Peltier’s aren’t at the table.

Native American and First Nation activists have long gone to the U.N. to demand Indigenous rights where the U.S. and Canada have fallen short. In 2007, the United Nations passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). The sweeping decree "emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions." Addressing everything from land rights to cultural appropriation, the declaration explicitly stated world leaders should work with indigenous communities on global challenges like climate change. Of all the U.N. member states, only four countries voted against the declaration including the United States and Canada.

While the declaration was historic, it didn’t come with teeth; none of its platforms are enforceable under international law. Indigenous leaders have criticized UNDRIP for being mostly symbolic. While the U.N. has a strong rhetorical stance on indigenous rights, without enforcement, Indigenous rights continue to suffer worldwide. As does the planet. On Sunday Peltier was traveling back to Manitoulin Island from New York City after addressing the United Nations. Even though she had spoken in front of the U.N. before, this year felt different. “You could tell they were paying closer attention,” she told me. In addition to the U.N. General Assembly, the entire globe is paying more attention. More than six million people have joined climate protest in the past two weeks in over 100 countries and on all seven continents.

Peltier has been doing this work for years, but the past two weeks brought a surge of attention. She went from having 5,000 Instagram followers to over 88,000 in less than a week. While a surge in international interest is “exciting and overwhelming” the Anishinaabe water protector knows there is still a lot of work to do.

“There are a lot of youth that are standing up and it’s because we’re really seeing the effects of climate change,” she told me. “A lot of us youth are scared. We are wondering do we even have a future to look forward to.”

Have a story for Tipping Point? Email TippingPoint@vice.com grist.org



[After 525 years, it’s time to actually listen to Native Americans](#)

By [Bill McKibben](#) on Aug 22, 2016 (*Well now it is three years later.....*)

The Standing Rock Sioux are fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline — one...

[Over 700 Arrested During Extinction Rebellion Climate Actions](#)

AMY GOODMAN AND JUAN GONZÁLEZ, DEMOCRACY NOW!

More than 700 people have been arrested in civil disobedience actions as the group Extinction Rebellion kicked off two weeks of protests in 60 cities worldwide, demanding urgent government action on the climate crisis. Extinction Rebellion co-founder Gail Bradbrook discusses the significance of the coordinated global protests.

[Watch the Video and Read the Transcript →](#)

Ecuador: Indigenous People Lament Killing of Leader in Quito's Protests

(<http://lists.readersuppo.rtednews.org/ga/click/2-543400-5-750004626-750009184-750037256-335b79252a-71f4aa5121>) [teleSUR](#)

Excerpt: "The body of indigenous leader Inocencio Tucumbi who was killed during demonstrations against government austerity measures, was carried through the streets of Quito, Ecuador on Thursday to a cultural center where indigenous groups amassed for a ceremony to honor the victim."



[N8v Beauties](#) celebrated Columbus Day by taking this guy's seat even though he said he was here already.

Indigenous Peoples Day began in 1989 in South Dakota. (30 years....do the math)

Shakopee Sioux announce \$5 million campaign to boost Indian education in Minnesota schools

It will fund classroom resources, training. <http://strib.mn/3263jKY>

Our See Her Excel scholarship reflects GA's commitment to championing gender diversity and inclusion at all levels, and elevating women — like you — in STEM fields so they can thrive in the world's fastest growing industries.

- You're 18 or older.
- You self-identify as a woman, transgender person, genderqueer, or non-binary person.
- Your current income is less than \$40,000 USD (£28,000 GBP, \$40,000 AUD, \$40,000 SGD, or \$40,000 CAD) per year.
- You've been admitted to one of the following full-time courses: Software Engineering Immersive, Software Engineering Immersive Remote, or Data Science Immersive.

To be eligible to receive \$1,500 USD (£1,500 GBP, \$1,500 AUD, \$1,500 SGD, or \$1,500 CAD) toward your tuition, you must meet the following criteria:*

Get \$1,500 Off Tuition

* McKinsey & Company, [Closing the tech gender gap through philanthropy and corporate social responsibility](#). Our

partner HP is providing See Her Excel recipients an exclusive coupon on the Zbook x2.

Visit [HP's website](#) for more details.



It's not too late! The Garden for Wildlife Photo Contest

[https://us.e-activist.com/ea-action/enclick?ea.url.id=310806&clid=10033&ea.campaigner.email=TswN3C8QoVhDpKcz3j6qw0aF%2BegVuZ9O&ea.campaigner.id=Z8ybT1QvN0%2BZkArzVWMSmA=&ea_broadcast_target_id=0] has been extended to October 18th. Show us your favorite photos of birds, butterflies, bees and other backyard wildlife to win a grand prize of \$1000.

The entry fee supports the wildlife conservation work of the National Wildlife Federation. We can't wait to see your photos!

Submit your photo today!

<https://www.powwows.com/50-native-american-baby-names-and-their-meaning/>

Coming to PBS, America's home for documentaries, *Independent Lens* brings a new group of powerful, award-winning films that will thrust you into the heart of conversations across America's neighborhoods, from Boise to the Bronx, from Alaska to Long Island to North Carolina. [Check local listings.](#)

[*Conscience Point*](#) (Mon. 11/18): A Native American activist fights to protect her tribe from the onslaughts of development in the Hamptons, where a famous golf course was built over her ancestor's burial ground.



[*Attla*](#) (Mon. 12/16) tells the gripping but little-known story of legendary Alaska Native dogsled champion, George Attla.

[More award-winning films](#)

[coming to *Independent Lens* will be announced soon](#), but here's a teaser of two:



[*Always in Season*](#), a harrowing look at the history of lynching and the 2014 case of Lennon Lacy, a North Carolina teen who died under unexplained circumstances; and [*Bedlam*](#), a psychiatrist's shocking chronicle of what it means to be mentally ill in the U.S. today, interwoven with the story of how the system tragically failed his own sister.

A copy of an Aug. 19th letter from Michael Cullen, political director at the Julian Castro campaign, in which he thanked Laura Leigh for her input for that campaign's PAW ([Protecting Animals and Wildlife](#)) Plan. He cites this from the section on horses:

Protect horses by instituting a permanent ban on horse slaughter for human consumption, ban race-day doping of horses, and strengthen penalties and protections against horse soring. I respect the cultural importance of wild horses and support shifting Bureau of Land Management resources toward range management. This would include science-based data collection and the use of temporary fertility measures to manage the wild horse and burro population.

This letter reflects the respect Laura Leigh has earned at the highest level of public lands policy development. Concern for the welfare of wild horses and burros has certainly struck a chord with Nevada Democrats since the days of Wild Horse Annie. It's an issue that all campaigns would do well to address.

The following was copied from Wild Horse Education's brochure...

The sound of thundering hooves and the sight of windswept manes, wild horses can stir the American soul. This symbol of freedom and icon of our western heritage is in danger. The land they stand on sits in peril, and a push has begun to resume slaughtering them.

Wild horses exist in an ever-shrinking landscape that is being exploited by profit-driven interests. All of our western landscape is open to mining, and two-thirds of our public land is open to domestic livestock operators, but only 12% of BLM land can be legally occupied by wild horses. On the fraction of public land they occupy, they are only allowed 16% of the grazing. Habitat is threatened by road construction for mines. Much of our western ranges, 80%, are in a backlog of health assessments. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report in 2016 noting that trespass livestock, many of which are not supposed to be on the range, is widespread and under-reported.

Blaming wild horses for degradation of the land is irresponsible. Killing them to keep exploiting the land is simply not acceptable.

Wild Horses once roamed our western landscape in large numbers. They were hunted down through a practice called "[mustanging](#)," made famous by the 1961 film "The Misfits."

Pushed to the brink of disappearing from the landscape, slaughtered for chicken feed, fertilizer and dog food, in 1971 Congress passed the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act to protect and preserve this heritage animal as "the living symbol of the pioneer spirit of the West."

Wild Horse Education makes Nevada its home base because Nevada has more wild horses than all other states combined. In Nevada, more than 80% of the land is public. This is truly ground zero in the fight to save our wild horses and the land they stand upon.

WildhorseEducation.org

"An educated advocacy is needed more than ever."

Mailing address:

Wild Horse Education, 216 Lemmon Dr., Suite 316, Reno, NV 89506

<https://wildhorseeducation.org/>

The [BLM website](#) has detailed info on all 177 of its herd management areas across the west. It says: "Each HMA is unique in its terrain features, local climate and natural resources, just as each herd is unique in its history, genetic heritage, coloring and size distribution."

The following 84 HMA's are spread across the entire map of the Silver State. The ones with embedded links are on the FY 2020 roundup list.

Amargosa Valley/Antelope/Antelope Valley Ash Meadows/Augusta Mountains/Bald Mountain/Black Rock Range East/Black Rock Range West/Blue Wing Mountains/[Buffalo Hills HMA](#)/Bullfrog/Calico Mountains/Callaghan/Clan Alpine/[Desatoya HMA](#)/Diamond/Diamond Hills North/Diamond Hills South/Dogskin Mountains/Eagle/El Dorado Mountains/Fish Creek/Fish Lake Valley/Flanigan/Fort Sage/Fox-Lake/Range/Garfield Flat/Gold Butte/Gold Mountain/Goldfield/Goshute/Granite Peak/Granite Range/Hickison Summit Burro Range/Horse Mountain/Hot Creek/Jackson Mountains/Johnnie/Kamma Mountains/Lahontan/Lava Beds /Little Fish Lake /Little Humboldt/Little Owyhee/Marietta Wild Burro Range/Maverick-Medicine/McGee Mountain/Montezuma Peak/Montgomery Pass/Muddy Mountains/Nevada Wild Horse Range/New Pass-Ravenswood/North Monitor/North Stillwater/Owyhee/Palmetto/Pancake/PaymasterPaymaser/Pilot Mountain/Pine Nut Mountains/Red Rock/[Reveille](#)/Roberts Mountain/Rock Creek/Rocky Hills/Sand Springs West/Saulsbury/[Seaman/White River](#)/Seven Mile/Seven Troughs/Shawave Mountains/Silver King/Silver Peak/Snowstorm Mountains/South Shoshone/South Stillwater/Spruce-Pequop/Stone Cabin/Stonewall/Tobin Range/Triple B/Warm Springs Canyon/Wassuk/Wheeler Pass/Whistler Mountain HMA

Needless to say, Laura is extremely busy monitoring roundups across these widely scattered horse management areas, but she has agreed to take time out of her hectic schedule to educate us on this critical area of public policy. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the west's foremost authority on wild horses. It's a complex topic, and no one is better qualified to bring these numerous issues into sharper focus than Laura Leigh.

Incidentally, Jeri Davis' piece in this week's Reno News & Review spells out the reasons why wild horse advocates are not thrilled with the BLM's "[The Path Forward](#)" management plan for wild horses and burros. [Worth a read.](#)

Calendar

October 19 Nevada Field Day - features hands-on activities and information focusing on the latest advancements in agriculture, horticulture, nutrition, natural resources and the environment<https://www.unr.edu/nevada-today/news/2019/nevada-field-day?>

[utm_source=newsletter101019&utm_medium=email&utm_content=fieldday&utm_campaign=NevadaWeekly](https://www.tribalepa.com/?utm_source=newsletter101019&utm_medium=email&utm_content=fieldday&utm_campaign=NevadaWeekly)

October 21-24, 2019 **Tribal / EPA Region 9 Conference**
Harrah's Ak-Chin Maricopa, AZ <https://www.tribalepa.com/>

National Archives Releases Digital Preservation Framework for Public Comment

The National Archives and Records Administration is seeking public comment and discussion on our digital preservation framework, which consists of our approach to determining risks faced by electronic files, and our plans for preserving different types of file formats. The public is encouraged to join the discussion, September 16 through November 1, 2019, on [GitHub](#).

Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero explained the importance of this new digital vision: “We’re in the process of shifting the entire government off of paper and to all electronic record-keeping, and we play a major role in helping the agencies get to that point,” Ferriero said. “Our new strategic plan is the roadmap. By putting records management and digital preservation at the forefront of our priorities, we will help drive greater efficiency and effectiveness while making the Federal government more responsive to the American people.”

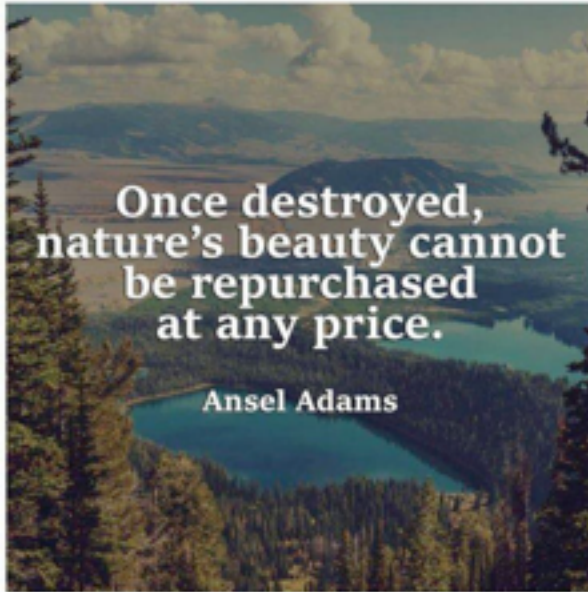
This is evidenced by the June 2019 direction ([M-19-21, Transition to Electronic Records](#)) to Federal agencies to transition business processes and record keeping to a fully electronic environment and to end the National Archives’ acceptance of paper records by December 31, 2022.

The National Archives’ digital preservation subject matter experts, led by Director of Digital Preservation Leslie Johnston, have been hard at work to prepare the National Archives for this change. They have formalized a set of documents that describe how we identify risks to digital files and prioritize them for action, and created specific plans for the preservation of these many file formats.

“The National Archives has been adding electronic records to the holdings since 1970, so managing and preserving these files is not something new. Digital Preservation is the process applied to the ‘born-digital’ electronic record files and digitized physical records that we have in our holdings, where we identify file formats, assess risk, and take actions to ensure that the content of the records continue to be available for researchers into the future,” Johnston said.

As we continue to lead the government’s efforts for fully electronic recordkeeping, we are engaging other Federal agencies, the private sector, and stakeholders and subject matter experts to establish best practices in our archival and preservation efforts. We are also ensuring that our process for identifying and mitigating risk in the electronic records that we preserve and make accessible is as transparent as possible. We are posting these documents because we want to share what we are doing, and because we need your help.

The documents are available at: <https://github.com/usnationalarchives/digital-preservation>
Please use the Issues feature to leave comments or questions, or to start a discussion. The matrix and plans will be open for comment until November 1, 2019. After that time, National



Archives staff will take all the feedback and update the matrix and plans, incorporating the comments. Then final versions will be publicly released, and updated on an ongoing basis in response to changing risks and new technologies and formats.

Survey on Participatory Archiving Process Requested

University Archives & Special Collections (UASC) in the Joseph P. Healey Library at the University of Massachusetts Boston recently launched a [two-year project, "Destination Preservation,"](#) funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to build an accessible, adaptable, and engaging "roadmap" to guide libraries of all kinds and sizes through the participatory archiving process.

In order to create the best roadmap possible, we need your help!

We are seeking input from staff and volunteers representing a wide range of institutions committed to documenting shared cultural heritage, including libraries, archives, historical societies, museums, and cultural centers. We would be grateful if you would please [complete our survey here](#) to share your experiences and perspectives with us.

The survey is between 31 and 75 questions, and we estimate it will take about 35 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

Please complete the entire survey before closing your browser. While you can use the arrows in the bottom right corner to go back and change previous answers in the survey, you will not be able to exit and return to saved answers.

As a thank you for those who complete the survey, we will be raffling off the chance to win one of three \$100 Amazon gift cards.

The results of this survey will inform the development of a suite of resources empowering libraries to plan participatory archiving programs with the communities they serve, preserve the resulting digital collections, and make those collections accessible to the public. You can learn more about the project and survey [here](#).

Thank you for taking the time to help us by taking our survey! Please share the survey with your networks and any relevant stakeholders you think would benefit from the roadmap.

We're excited to share what we learn from you all and look forward to creating a roadmap that incorporates your wisdom!

If you have questions about the survey, would like to participate in material reviews, or would like to receive a copy of the final survey results, please contact the Community Archiving Grant Project Manager, Sarah Collins, at Sarah.Collins@umb.edu.

Call for Proposals for New Archival Futures Series

Archival Futures is a new series, published jointly by SAA and the American Library Association, that critically engages issues related to archives as—and for—the public good. This series combines provocative discussion with practical insight, examining professional values and current innovations in archival and library practice. Have an idea for a book? We are seeking proposals for volumes of 20,000 to 50,000 words, that demonstrate innovative thinking, cut across cultural and professional boundaries, and stimulate discussion about archives as institutions and sustaining forces in modern society. Contact series editors [Bethany Anderson](#) and [Amy Cooper Cary](#) with questions or [submit a proposal](#).

Other News

Call for Course Hosts

Bring SAA Education courses to your institution! Hosts benefit from timely and convenient education as well as discounted courses. [Learn more about hosting](#) and fill out the [Call for Course Hosts](#) to be in touch with Education staff.

Urge Your Representative to Join the Congressional History Caucus

What actions can we take to support federal funding of the humanities, even as we keep an eye on Congress's appropriations discussions? As we fight to ensure that drastic cuts don't become law, our most important assets are our allies in Congress. That's why this is the perfect time to make a push for the Congressional History Caucus! The History Caucus is the brainchild of the National Coalition for History (NCH), of which SAA is a policy board member. It provides a forum for members of Congress to share their interest in history and to promote awareness of the subject on Capitol Hill. Find resources for contacting your representatives.

PS

This Monday, Oct. 14, the last course will come first. National Dessert Day offers perfect excuse to indulge in the sweet treat of your choice.