

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Coming from the Mountains and going to the Sea: “A Meeting of Sacred Waters”
A Global Virtual Gathering Discussing a More Sustainable Future for Our Rivers

TUCSON, AZ – **Red Star International, Inc.** (Red Star) is partnering with the **Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.** (ITCA) and the **Te Pou Tupua of the Whanganui River** in New Zealand to host *A Meeting of Sacred Waters*, a global gathering that brings together Indigenous leaders to highlight the interconnectedness between our health and the health of the world’s rivers. This one-day event happens virtually on Thursday, November 18 (US), 2021 and welcomes all those who envision a sustainable future.

“Water is the force that sustains us and it has a sacred value. We should treat it as such in our decision-making, when developing policies and creating laws. We need to look to our values, our culture and our ways of life as we have for millennia to find our way forward in our work to sustain our rivers,” said ITCA President Bernadine Burnette.

Through the experiences of Indigenous peoples of the Whanganui and Colorado Rivers, this global exchange explores and honors the Indigenous knowledge vital to healing our ancestral waters.

The Māori peoples of the Whanganui River achieved national recognition of the river as an indivisible, living entity, inspiring Red Star to undertake an exchange. In 2017, the New Zealand parliament passed unprecedented legislation recognizing legal ‘personhood’ of the Whanganui River: **Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017**. *“For us legal personhood was just a mechanism of the British common law that suited our agenda [to] highlight an Indigenous philosophy and values that have permeated this ancestral river since time beginning,”* said Turama Hawira, Te Pou Tupua – tribally designated face and voice of the river.

Attendees will enjoy a full viewing of ***From the Mountains to the Sea***, an American Indian Film Festival 2021 Selection. This short documentary highlights a meeting of Indigenous leaders from opposite sides of the world as they travel down the rapids of the sacred Whanganui River. Together, they witness its towering canyons of dense green forest and experience first-hand the innate relationship of the River to the People and the People to the River.

The gathering features a panel of esteemed Indigenous Leaders and keynote speakers, including **José Francisco Calí Tzay**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mr. Calí Tzay is Maya Kaqchikel from Guatemala, with experience in promoting the implementation of international standards concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples. Red Star also invites Indigenous nations, organizations and communities to participate by sharing their experiences, skills and knowledge with other thought-leaders from across the globe. It is now accepting session proposals for 60-minute concurrent sessions held between 4:25 to 5:25pm (MST). **Proposals are due by 5:00pm (MST) on October 8, 2021.**

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With support from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, *A Meeting of Sacred Waters* explores Indigenous pathways to heal our rivers through sustainable, systemic change. “*Colonial mindsets continue to be centered on resource-taking. Outside the U.S., Indigenous peoples have acted to mitigate and restore ecosystem balance through the institutionalization of Indigenous approaches. We need to do the same here at home,*” said Aleena Kawe (Hiaki), Red Star CEO and project lead.

Red Star is excited to host this worldwide event and further its mission to advance Indigenous self-determination for the health of humanity and the environment.

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