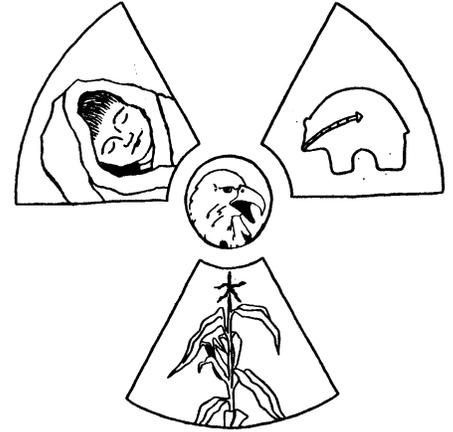




North American Water office

CHILD HEALTH



The Great Law of Peace

One thousand years ago the Bringer of Dreams gave the Great Law of Peace to Deganawida of the Iroquois. The Law directs whoever lives on Earth to do so in a manner that will protect seven generations. Failure to follow the Great Law it is said will bring about the destruction of life giving nourishment and lead to the end of human existence. 1

We as a human society have gone against the forces of nature. We have created poisons that we have no place to hide. We cannot burn them. We cannot bury them. Plutonium, other nuclear fission wastes, dioxin, Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), mercury and other heavy metals, pesticides, and many more toxic substances are the tools of slow motion genocide. We have endangered the health of our children into geological time with these man-made poisons.

We
must act
in order
to protect
the next
seven generations.

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Pathways into the body

Toxic substances are being manufactured daily. We breathe them in the air, drink them in the water, and eat them in the foods we consume.

Nuclear wastes from power plants and the weapons of war are dangerous and must be isolated from all biological life forms.

A legacy of the 1954 “Bravo Test” [nuclear bomb] in the Marshall Islands, is what the Native women call “jellyfish babies”. These children die soon after birth because of dreadful deformities that are associated with the radioactive poisoning.²

A 1994 US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Report calculates that an infant breast fed for one year will receive between 4 and 12% of the lifetime dose of dioxin in that one year. ³ Dioxin is a known carcinogen.

In addition to dioxin mother’s milk has more DDT and other pesticides than is considered acceptable by the World Health Organization.⁴

Children are at greater risk for exposure to and harm from environmental hazards than adults because they are biologically more sensitive. As children grow and develop, their cells are changing rapidly, making them more vulnerable. They are at greatest risk in their mothers’ wombs.

Children have increased absorption rates and decreased elimination rates, making it more likely that radioactivity and organic chemicals such as lead and mercury accumulate in the body. Detoxifying enzymes are also less developed in infants and children. This increases the retention times of toxic chemicals in their bodies. Target organs where chemicals are deposited are less developed, and therefore may be more susceptible. ⁵

FACTS:

- Birth defects and developmental delays are increasing. Research has shown a link between birth defects and fetal exposures to pesticides, organic solvents, heavy metals and ionizing radiation. An estimated 5 to 10% of children in America suffer from hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities. ⁶
- Cancer incidence among all children increased 19% between 1973 and 1990. Cancer incidence among African-American children increased 23.9%, compared with 9.1% among white children,⁷ which may be related to poverty among people of color and the increased risk of toxic exposures among the poor.
- Asthma and other respiratory diseases in children have increased dramatically during the past 20 years. Deaths from asthma have increased more than 30%. ⁸
- Infants and children breathe more rapidly than adults, making them more vulnerable to air pollution such as tobacco smoke. More than 60% of pre-adolescent Latino children live in counties failing to meet one or more U.S. EPA air quality standards.⁹
- Children consume more fruits, vegetables, and water per pound of body weight than adults, this increases their exposure to pesticide residue on foods.¹⁰ As infants and young children explore the world around them, they are exposed to accumulated household chemicals, pesticides, and other toxins.
- Poor children suffer more frequent and more direct exposures to environmental hazards. They also are exposed to many more of the toxic chemicals shown to be hazardous to

human health. The risk is highest among children of color.

- One study showed that while 36% of poor white children suffered from lead poisoning, the incidence rose to 68% among African-American children.¹¹ Another study says 88% of all children in the US have more than 10 micrograms of lead/per deciliter of blood, a level which causes subtle brain damage.¹² Yet another study of Mexican-American children indicated that too much lead hinders growth, 0.4" on the average, but in some children as much as a full inch, "a really significant growth reduction".¹³
- Indigenous Peoples, Asians, the poor and others who rely on a fish diet are at risk from methyl-mercury contaminated fish from affected water bodies across the country.
- fetuses and infants are the most susceptible. Methyl-mercury interferes with the development of the brain and nervous system, lowering intelligence, impairing hearing, peripheral vision, speech, and

coordination. Methyl-mercury can be transported to fetuses in their mother's blood and to infants from their mother's breast milk. At high levels mercury contamination can cause mental and physical retardation and even death.¹⁴

- PCB's have contaminated and damaged human populations of all kinds, including the Inuit people in the Arctic and other native groups who eat fish and fish-eating mammals like seals.¹⁵ PCB contamination causes brain damage. The damage includes lower intelligence, poor reading comprehension, difficulty paying attention, and memory problems.¹⁶ PCB contamination has been found in Inuit mother's milk on Broughton Island (northern Quebec) to have five times the level of PCB's as women in southern Quebec.¹⁷

It is our responsibility to the children of the world to safe guard them against toxic pollution and the corporations that profit from the generation of these wastes. We must take action.





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