



Office of Sustainability

Exploring Climate & Environmental Justice at MIT

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ICEO + MITOS



Purpose

- Feel comfortable and equipped to begin having conversations about climate + enviro justice at MIT, in the lab, office, classroom, community.
- Be able to answer: What role does my office play? What role do I play?

What justice, equity, and climate change issues are you most interested in learning more about?

Type your answer into the chat



Agenda

- 1** Welcome
- 2** Environmental Justice with Patricia Saulis
- 3** An overview of Climate & Environmental Justice with MITOS
- 4** Breakout Session
- 5** Debrief & Closing

Environmental Justice with Patricia Saulis



ckuwaponok

MLK VISITING
SCHOLAR
PRESENTATION by

PATRICIA SAULIS,
WOLASTOQEQY

for

Exploring Climate &
Environmental Justice
at MIT

March 4, 2021

Photo: Rick Barber



MIT Land Acknowledgement

MIT acknowledges Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories.

The Land on which we sit is the traditional unceded territory of the Wampanoag Nation. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of their territory and we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous Peoples connected to this land on which we gather from time immemorial.

Personal Acknowledgement

Woliwon to the generations who prayed for this day and this opportunity to create a better future

Woliwon to Dr. MLK Jr. for his tireless work, passion and commitment for a promised day of deliverance from injustice

“Make a career of humanity, commit yourself to the noble struggle of equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Note on Protocol

Many Indigenous Nations follow many levels of Protocol such as ceremonial protocol, spiritual protocol, language protocol, cultural protocol, community protocol, inter-nation protocol, interpersonal protocol.

Acknowledging protocol, knowing protocol and honoring protocol is an essential element to establishing respectful relationships.

Relationship building on protocol is the culturally sensitive and appropriate way of demonstrating care and concern for well-being. It is based on the understanding that how something is done is as important as what is being done.



How the 2 Eyed Seeing Approach can be used to Redress systemic discrimination and racism and Address Environmental Justice

Acknowledgement that there is a combined vision necessary to understand the plight of life today; some Wolustogey/Maliseet Elders have noted that what happens to our relatives, the 4 legged, swimmers, flyers, crawlers and those seen and unseen will happen to us as well. This we have seen and continue to see.

Acknowledgement that the cumulative impact of what humans are doing to their surroundings is having a devastating and lasting impact to life.

Acknowledgement that climate change does exist and that it is man-made.

Acknowledgement that it is going to take a reconnecting of vision between competing world views to fully understand where we are at and what needs to change; take the best of both.

Acknowledgement that climate change is not only about impacts to human life but to all life, and that this is a story about life and death and there is great grief, sorrow and anger in the telling of this story

Further, that we understand that humans are but only one species of 8.7 million



How the 2 Eyed Seeing Approach can be used to Redress systemic discrimination and racism and Address Environmental Justice - continued

The 2 Eyed Seeing Approach enables us to combine Indigenous and Western Knowledge systems and to take the best of both. It provides the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of understandings and to co-develop a fulsome, enhanced understanding of the world, thereby creating effective and emerging approaches for solutions to climate and environmental crisis.

Indigenous Peoples, Tribal and First Nation communities have been learning from the environment for millennia. This knowledge, teachings and understandings is embedded in our Indigenous languages. Our Indigenous languages carry the key to our culture and to making the world a better place. UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which is a specialized agency of the United Nations aimed at promoting world peace and security, has studied the link between Indigenous conservation that includes the use of Indigenous languages, and found that Indigenous conservation provides the most effective protection of bio-diversity. This is not an accident. Indigenous Peoples continue to have a sophisticated way of living with the environment which can help the rest of humanity survive.



How the 2 Eyed Seeing Approach can be used to Redress systemic discrimination and racism and Address Environmental Justice – continued

Environmental Justice may not always have encompassed Indigenous issues however that is changing. Indigenous Peoples are the land, the waters, the air, the fire, the rocks, the animals, the fishes, the crawlers and the winged ones. We do not see ourselves as disconnected but as inter-connected. We carry the same spirit set forth from the universe. Our languages reflect this kinship and keep us bound, responsible and held to roles as caretakers and speakers for those that cannot speak in our circles.

Many of our Nations have clan systems and many may have matrilineal lineage which keeps families and extended families close to our mothers, aunties, grandmothers. We have seen in the pursuit of social justice that environmental justice has become understood as inter-connected and it is time for Indigenous justice to be understood as the link to addressing systemic discrimination and racism and addressing climate justice and environmental justice. This is not for others in other countries, or for only those “in power”. We the People are the ones to make this change and we need to make change happen today.



How the 2 Eyed Seeing Approach can be used to Redress systemic discrimination and racism and Address Environmental Justice – continued

The most major important factor in finding the path to environmental justice is you. It is what you do, how you do it and who you do it with. You are like that pebble thrust into the pond and your presence in that water is causing waves outwards. You can decide when you will become a part of that wave.

Indigenous People have retained their interest in keeping the environment healthy for future generations. Contrary to popular belief, there is no part of the land or water that is not included within one of our traditional territories. We fully lived across our lands and we knew the rivers as routes for our travel. We didn't pollute. We didn't contaminate. We didn't take more than what was needed. We kept balance and we taught that to our children. Some may think that we don't care, don't have means or don't understand. All of which is untrue. We care so much still that some of us are putting our lives at risk and some of us have been killed for defending our territories. We definitely have an interest in environmental justice, we are the environment.



How the 2 Eyed Seeing Approach can be used to Redress systemic discrimination and racism and Address Environmental Justice – continued

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples across the globe.

Articles 24 to 29 focus on the rights of Indigenous Peoples have in relation to their lands, territories and the environment. I would suggest that you become familiar with those Articles and the document. It contains a particular element known as Free, Prior and Informed consent which is important to Indigenous Nations.

For example, Article 28 states:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when that is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.

UNDRIP sets the bar for respect of Indigenous rights which includes pursuit of environmental justice. These are inter-connected and must be addressed as such, just as we are inter-connected.



“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Woliwon!

You can reach me at:

ckuwapon@mit.edu



Q&A

Type questions into chat or use the 'raise hand' feature on Zoom

An Overview of Climate & Environmental Justice

MITOS



WE ACT for Environmental Justice

“ to build healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low income residents participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices”



Indigenous Environmental Network

“building the capacity of Indigenous communities and tribal governments to develop mechanisms to protect our sacred sites, land, water, air, natural resources, health of both our people and all living things, and to build economically sustainable communities”

Making the Connection between Climate Change and Human Lives

Death and chronic illness due to exposure to toxins from coal fired power plants and other toxic facilities

Increase in the severity of storms which devastate communities

Breathing toxic ash from blasting for mountain top removal

Easier access to a bag of Cheetos than a carton of strawberries

Compounding Threats of Environmental Injustice and COVID-19

Healthcare goes beyond doctors and medicine to include access to healthy homes and communities

Lack of access to adequate healthcare and facilities in Navajo Nation

Concerns about tourism rush in Blackfeet Nation, thus infringement upon sovereignty

Climate Justice in Boston

“Class and race have always played a key role in defining the development of Boston’s infrastructure. As a city with millions of dollars currently invested in new real estate, it’s crucial to look at ways in which these projects are being carried out, which communities they’re displacing, and how the resources used will have an immediate impact on our climate and our health”

- Northeastern Environmental Justice Research Coalition

MISSION STATEMENT:

MIT Office of Sustainability

We aim to transform MIT into a powerful model that generates new and proven ways of responding to the unprecedented challenges of a changing planet via operational excellence, education, research and innovation on our campus.

Areas of Impact

LOW-CARBON
CAMPUS

Climate
Buildings
Energy
Mobility

RESILIENT
ECOSYSTEM

Water
Landscape
Air Quality

MATERIAL
LIFECYCLES

Procurement
Waste

THRIVING
NETWORKS

Campus
City
Globe

HEALTHY
PEOPLE

Food

Scales of Impact





Think about *your* sphere of influence

Take a moment to reflect on what areas of campus you can reach

Breakout Session



Discussion questions

Individual

In what ways can individuals take action on climate & environmental justice today?

Campus

What could the integration of environmental and climate justice into emerging campus policies and plans look like?

Community

Who are the enviro justice related partners we should engage with, learn from, and work with?

A google doc like this

Individual Actions	Campus Actions	Community Network
<p>Question:</p> <p>In what ways can individuals take action on climate & environmental justice today?</p>	<p>Question:</p> <p>What could the integration of environmental and climate justice into emerging campus policies & plans look like?</p>	<p>Question:</p> <p>Who are the enviro justice related partners we should engage with, learn from, and work with?</p>
<p>Starter idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about the ways that racial equity, social justice, and sustainability intersect with the food system.• Add more below!	<p>Starter idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select caterers through a justice lens for large events• Add more below!	<p>Starter idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage local food partners (less waste, small farms, healthy food), like the Daily Table and New Entry Sustainable Farming Project• Add more below!

Instructions & reminders

- Groups of 4 people - self-moderate, share the space
- Each breakout room will have access to its own worksheet via Google Docs
 - Find your breakout room number at the top of the window
- Introduce yourself: Name, affiliation, department
- Take a moment to think about what your “spheres of influence” are, too. Feel free to share
- Read through the 3 questions and discuss with your group
- Designate a notetaker (or two!), and fill out worksheet as you go
- Remember to share the space
- 15-20 minutes in groups and we’ll return to report out

Debrief & Closing



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- 1. What is something you heard that really inspired you?**
 - 2. What is one thing you are willing to do in the next month to advance climate justice?**

Type your answer into the chat or raise your hand

Our work this semester

- We hope to advance climate and environmental justice in our campus sustainability work and learn more about what the campus community cares about.
- Keep a lookout for our follow up Resource Guide & future engagements



Stay in touch

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twitter.com/SustainableMIT



MIT Office of Sustainability

For upcoming Community Dialogues & more, visit the ICEO at <https://diversity.mit.edu/>