



Contact Kasey Kinsella

Cell 617-306-6190

Email kasey@7directionsofservice.com

Website www.7directionsofservice.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Carteret County, NC – On Sunday July 23, 2024, American Indian women, children and elders faced intimidation and hate-induced brutalization during an unarmed, peaceful prayer to honor exposed and desecrated American Indian burial grounds at the Bridgeview housing development in Cedar Point, North Carolina. The group gathered for prayer observing agreed-upon traditional protocols, which forbid weapons or any man-made protections to be carried during prayer.

[Click to view 6/26 press conference](#)

***Please note:** 2 videos of the violence will be shared with the press as soon as possible, and the next press conference will be announced as soon as more information can be made public.

Dr. Crystal Cavalier-Keck of 7 Directions of Service statement regarding violence at American Indian burial grounds threatened by housing developers and HB385:

“Mecoureme:chen kihoe. Nahap̄ ipi:se! Mima Crystal. Mima yesaꞑ. Mima Occaneechi Saponi. Mima Mebane wati:wa.

Meku, I am Dr. Crystal Cavalier Keck, a citizen of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation and co-founder of 7 Directions of Service. First and foremost, our Civil rights have been violated as American Indians.

On June 10th, 2024, the 17 Rivers North Carolina Chapter of The American Indian Movement, in solidarity with 7 Directions of Service, an Indigenous environmental and justice advocacy organization, first learned of House Bill 385.

Two days later, my Husband and other members spoke in further solidarity with the Poor Peoples Campaign & Repairers of the Breach at Witness Wednesday in the North Carolina General Assembly legislative building in Raleigh. They were there to call the continued genocide and basic human rights violations that House Bill 385 contained, as well as several other bills that aim to underfund children's public and pre-education in the State, as well as weaken long-fought freedoms to assemble peacefully.

A constitutional right that was only accessible to the marginalized by the middle of the last century. At that event, a teacher spoke of bringing her students previously to the House to educate them on the process of governance. She left having to explain why elected officials were so heartlessly minimizing the reverence and spiritual importance of desecrated Indigenous human body parts as if our people's sacred resting places still don't meet federal standards of human equality, even now in today's 21st century so-called civil society.

With that knowledge, we were called into immediate responsibility by the unconquerable spirit of our ancestral duties and legacy. A peaceful prayer gathering was called forth as a spiritual expression of our eternal lifeways.

Yesterday, an updated version of HB385 was voted through during the Senate judiciary committee hearing. Thanks to our Indigenous community members Speaking out and overwhelming public outcry over the desecration of sacred sites and burial grounds, we have avoided the worst of those developer back door financed provisions.

While not going far enough to improve regulatory processes and prioritize protecting cultural resources, the new language and proposed amendments encourage developers to do their due diligence to avoid worst-case scenarios like what we have seen at Bridgeview/Cedar Point, L.L.C.

If only our elected officials would prioritize and legislate protections for our State Recognized Indigenous Nations, providing at least the dignity of Federal recognition. Then we would not be subject to having to witness the exposed bones and artifacts of our ancestors being used as a place for the residents of Bridgeview to allow their animals to defecate, even to the point of grave robbing, holding our relatives in basement boxes refusing to acknowledge our ancestral connections.

All of these blatant continued oppressions and exploitations combined, we believe, have caused the societal and social climate for the ethnic intimidation and hate-induced brutalization that women, children, and elders experienced during an unarmed, peaceful prayer on Sunday, June 23rd.

A violation of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act and a global Indigenous violation of our very scientifically proven HUMAN rights. On Sunday, June 23rd, 2024, Relatives of Haudenosaunee, Siouan, Algonquin, Muskogean, and others organized in peaceful prayer and honoring of our Ancestors.

The spiritual protocol was agreed upon to honor some of our elders' traditions that no weapons or man-made protections would be carried on our persons as we prayed. That day, after the majority of male passengered vehicles were allowed exit access to leave the exposed and desecrated burial site, a few of our mothers with children of at least four and elders of at least two were lingering slower to get to their vehicles.

Direct details are documented, video recorded, and injuries confirmed, but they are all under current protection by legal representation for our victims. What we are allowed to disclose for clarity is these families witnessed and experienced violence against women and a minor.

One of the families involved is the sister, and one minor is the daughter of a Missing Murdered Indigenous Woman who was murdered in Robeson County. The impacts of that alone, compounded with a man with a gun and an off-duty police officer, and the social hostility today we experience from police make it even worse.

Even those without injuries now have post-traumatic stress that will now be connected with their experience of prayer and cultural practice since experiencing this event Sunday.

I am personally traumatized as one of the participants who escaped and naively waited for the others only to be told by legal, political, and spiritual leaders I trust that I could not rely on law enforcement protection in that county and to get my victims to safety.

Because we were afraid for our lives, we drove 3 hours until we arrived safely at a place we trusted and a physician could see and address their physical damages.

All of this trauma compacted on top of the generational trauma that descendants of historical holocaust survivors are raised with—the improper reporting without proper investigation.

The drawing up of charges is based upon hearsay accounts of intoxicated, armed assailants. And the dismissal of direct witness accounts because they were culturally kin to the abused parties.

All of this travesty and tragedy brought to the modern day, alluding to the reality that the genocide never indeed ended. We will protect these Indigenous Rights. We will defend these human rights. And we will send a voice to the highest authority in the land and sky that we, as peaceful, self-determined people, Shall overcome these injustices.

That is all we have to say at this time. Pilahuk, Nyawe, Yakoki ishto, always

We have two videos of the event; one has been released, and the other will be released to the public after the investigation. I will warn you that the violence in the video is traumatic.

Thank you for your ears to listen and for your hearts to hear.”

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About 7 Directions of Service:

7 Directions of Service (7DS) is an Indigenous-led environmental justice and community organizing collective based on Occaneechi-Saponi homelands in rural North Carolina dedicated to canceling the Mountain Valley Pipeline and MVP Southgate Extension, advocating for legal Rights of Nature and developing a land, language and cultural center based on traditional teachings. Learn more at 7directionsofservice.com