



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2013 and with the Department of Public Information since 2006.

News from the UN - # 101

RSHM at the UN

April/May 2019

Mother Earth Day

On April 22nd, the United Nations celebrated **Mother Earth Day** with a full programme of events dedicated to the protection of our planet. **María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the UN General Assembly** spoke passionately about the danger of climate change, calling it an “*existential threat of our time*.” She called for solidarity, collective action, and urgent responses to foster harmony among mankind and with nature. Youth climate activists around the world have been speaking out, demanding the right to a healthy environment. Her words echoed the words of the young leaders, saying “*Let us take our relationship with mother Earth as cultural inheritance. The true generosity to the future is given in the present.*”



➔ [Watch a short video](#)

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The 18th **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)** was hosted at the UN from April 22nd, to May 3rd. The theme for the 2019 UNPFII was “*Traditional knowledge: generation, transmission, protection.*” It brought together representatives of thousands of indigenous communities from across the world to speak about the importance of protecting their land, language, and culture and the danger of its loss. Indigenous populations are highly impacted by poverty, given that they are only 6% of the global population, but 15% of the world’s poor. Their territories and livelihood are often threatened by the expansion of mega projects which promise financial gain to Governments but fail to respect their communal ownership rights.



Representatives of our **RSHM NGO** attended many events throughout the forum, ranging from the protection of indigenous knowledge to the use of caribou as a traditional food source. Just a few glimpses:

The delegation from the Amazon

During the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, our NGO Mining Working Group supported the delegation from **REPAM**– the coordinating network under the Latin American Conference of Bishops in the 9 countries of the Amazon – and **CIMI (the Indigenists Missionary Council of Brazil)**. Four representatives of indigenous peoples from the Amazon shared their experience, giving moving testimonies in various sessions. **Veronica RSHM**



served as Portuguese / English translator for 3 of these. It was a privileged time of hearing the ‘*cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*’ as they shared about the violation of their human rights and the impact of this on the Amazon area – the “*lungs of the earth*”.

The urgency of demarcating the traditional forest areas which they steward and on which they depend for their livelihoods was highlighted by the 3 indigenous representatives from Brazil, as well as by **Archbishop Roque Paloschi**, the president of CIMI who also highlighted the important opportunity provided by the forthcoming Synod on the Amazon convoked by Pope Francis for October 2019. ➔ [Read more](#)

The impact of dams on indigenous territory

The impact of hydropower on indigenous lands in central Canada was discussed at another session. Several speakers gave emotional testimonies about the flooding caused by dam installation, saying that the land will never be returned to its natural state. With regard to the technicalities of hydropower in Canada, one speaker noted that the dams in their territory have not generated any profits for the state, and likely never

Did you know that:

- **Indigenous people** created and speak the majority of the world’s 7.000 languages.
- Research shows that where indigenous groups have control of the land, forests and biodiversity flourishes.
- Nearly 70 million indigenous women and men depend on forests for their livelihoods. Their forestlands store 4 times the total global Carbon emissions in 2014
- **The Amazon River Basin**, which represents 7% of the world’s surface, is home to more than **400 Indigenous groups** and harbors more than **50 % of the Earth’s biodiversity**.
- **The life expectancy** of indigenous people is as much as **20 years lower** than that of their non-indigenous counterparts
- **Indigenous women** have higher rates of **maternal mortality, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases** than non-indigenous women.

will. This event highlighted the paradox between the need to generate renewable energy, and the negative impact of hydropower on environments and communities.

➔ [Watch the short video...](#)



Tracking Climate Change (contributed by Patricia Cole)

During PFII I attended an introduction to a groundbreaking and collaborative climate change research program - **Tracking Change**. It was developed over the last four years to document and mobilize community-university research activities in the Mackenzie River basins Canada and with emerging projects in the lower Mekong River Basin (Vietnam), and in the lower Amazon Basin (Brazil). Elders and chiefs of First Nations, Métis and Inuvialuit as well as academics and scientists gathered to discuss and share their own experiences regarding the drastic climate developments they are experiencing in their respective communities and lands. The speakers covered the trends and patterns that are increasingly worrisome. Not only are the waters warming but changing seasonal patterns affect the social habits and quality of community life and livelihoods. Generations of local and



traditional knowledge regarding their care for Mother Earth are also being constantly challenged.

It was very clear that the scientists and academics rightfully honor the important intuitive and spiritual

knowledge of the communities. The communities are frequently interviewed and then only do the scientists look to establish methodologies and analyses that can help remedy the change. The teams are also working collaboratively with corporate and government development and preservation interests. They are supportive as long as all take a sustainable and balanced approach to change. Treaty Rights should always be honored. As the Elders put it, *“It is not a climate problem but a human problem”*

 [Read more....](#)

Human Trafficking : The Grandmothers’ Bundle

A group of indigenous grandmothers from North America hosted a powerful event centered around high rates of human trafficking in their indigenous communities. Traffickers often target indigenous women and girls by detaching them from their cultural heritage and destroying their family ties. The strengthening of indigenous identities and spiritual belonging has been used as a mechanism to lower rates of human trafficking in indigenous communities. The preservation of indigenous language and land is imperative to the preservation of these identities, as well as the safety of their women and girls.

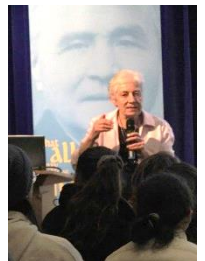
 [Read more....](#)  Watch [the short video](#)

Global Network of RSHM Schools - RSHM Heritage Week



RSHM Heritage Week was celebrated from **April 1 – 5** in the **EAP Schools** of the **Global Network** with a week long series of workshops and events for Middle School students held in **London (Model UN Conference)**, **Paris (RSHM Maker Faire)** and **Rome (Performing Arts and Sports Festivals)**. Different teams from each of the 4 schools, accompanied by some of their teachers, participated in the 4 different programmes that ran simultaneously. **Veronica**

RSHM spent two days in the RSHM Maker Faire in Neuilly, where she was the opening speaker and resource person and two in Marymount Kingston for the Model UN Conference where she shared about the RSHM NGO and served as closing speaker.



The **RSHM Maker Faire**, at **Marymount Paris**, chose the theme **“Hope for the Future”**, highlighting

three of the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. With the technology and resources available to them in the **FabLab**, students designed prototype solutions to global problems related to **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** **SDG 7 (Renewable Energy)** and **SDG 9 (Innovation and Infrastructure)**. The inter-disciplinary approach adopted in preparation for this enabled them to better understand complex global issues addressed by our RSHM NGO and faced by people around the world. The Maker Faire give the Middle School participants the chance to develop their creativity, and critical thinking and apply their learning in designing and building practical solutions.

 [Read more....](#)



The **Middle School Model UN (MUN) Conference** in **Marymount London** highlighted the importance of becoming global citizens by addressing the theme: **“Shaping Global Interactions in the 21st Century”**. Issues were debated and discussed in five Model UN Committees. Issues debated included the situations of Yemen and Syria (**Security Council**), Plastic litter and the transition to sustainable production and consumption (**Environment Committee**) The Protection of our Global Climate the Convention on biological diversity (ECOFIN), racism in sport and the role of women in Peace and security operations as well as the regulation of Artificial Intelligence. The richness of this week highlights concrete ways in which our RSHM educational ministry can prepare students to practice tolerance, to live together in peace with one another, use their creativity to expand their global consciousness and apply their classroom learnings to current global problems.



Distribution:

General Council Team; Provincials/ Regionals, JPIC Animators;
Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group
Portuguese translation by Maria Luisa Pinho, RSCM.

Prepared by
Veronica Brand RSHM & Madison Weisend