

List compiled by Professor David Pellow, September 26, 2005

Toxic Inequalities in Louisiana

There is a great need to understand the link between social inequality (particularly race, ethnicity, class, and native nation) and toxic pollution in Louisiana. The field of environmental justice studies has established that these two variables are often linked in what is called environmental inequality and environmental racism. That is, communities that are predominantly populated by people of color, low income and working class persons, immigrants, and indigenous groups are more likely than others to live in close proximity to pollution generating facilities (heavy industry, landfills, waste incinerators, etc.). Scholars have documented this relationship in Louisiana as well, since the state has 1) a long history of racial and class inequalities via slavery and Jim Crow, immigration, and a significant Native American presence; and 2) a high density of petrochemical industrial facilities and other toxic release inventory sites [TRI] that produce enormous volumes of pollution (for example, see Barbara Allen. 2003. *Uneasy Alchemy: Citizens and Experts in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor Disputes*. MIT Press; Steve Lerner. 2005. *Diamond: A Struggle for Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*. MIT Press; Timmons Roberts and Melissa Toffolon-Weiss. 2000. *Chronicles from the Environmental Justice Front Line*. Cambridge University Press). We would like one or more students to conduct research on the historical and contemporary environmental justice terrain of the state, and link that to both the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the more general question of natural and un-natural disaster preparedness. There is a large literature in the sociology of disasters, which might also come in handy (see Dennis Mileti. *Disasters by Design*).

Inequitable Taxation and Native American Nations in San Diego Region

SBRP Tribal Partner Mike Connolly Miskwish (Councilmember, Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians) is looking for undergraduates who are interested in researching the extent to which Native nations in the County generate tax revenue (primarily sales tax) that the County receives but never returns to the tribes. In California, Native nations receive 0% of the sales tax, which is interesting considering Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's declaration that gaming tribes "need to pay their fair share" back to the state. What about what the state owes them? This is of particular importance from a research perspective since tribes in Nevada and New Mexico do receive a portion of such taxes (around 25% and 40%, respectively). What is the reasoning behind this policy? Is it related to the fact that, by comparison to New Mexico and Nevada, California's Native American population is much smaller and exercises less political influence over the legislature? Or is this policy in fact, reasonable, just, and equitable? If Native tribes do generate taxes that are used by City and County governments to fund environmental protection projects (among other things), could some of that revenue be returned to the tribes to be used for their own such projects? Mr. Connolly has informed us that he has documents and reports (most available via the Internet) that students could use to research this issue.

Historical and Contemporary Environmental Practices of the Campo Band of Kumeyaay

We are looking for students interested in conducting archival and oral historical research on the Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians in East San Diego County. This is a community with a rich history of resistance and independence from the Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. colonial powers since their first encounter with Europeans in 1769. Despite land grabs, treaty violations and deceitful practices (by the California legislature in particular), and a host of environmental threats, the Campo have survived. Students are needed to perform archival research on the Campo and oral history interviews with Campo tribal members that would examine traditional land use, cultural and environmental practices relating to natural resource management and ecological preservation. There is a growing literature on Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) systems among indigenous peoples and this project would allow researchers to develop a more complete and in-depth map of such a system among the Campo. More fully documented TEK systems allow tribes to amplify their voices in policy making around development projects that might impact the integrity of tribal lands, for example.

Traditional Environmental Knowledge among the Coahuilla Nation

We are seeking students who are interested in conducting an oral history project that would document Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) among members of the Coahuilla nation in Southern California. The major outcome of this project would be to complement Western scientific approaches to environmental problems with TEK for the purpose of setting up and strengthening the Coahuilla nation's Tribal Environmental Protection Agency. The purpose of documenting TEK is not to challenge Western scientific knowledge paradigms (although this certainly might be one outcome), but rather to find the points of integration and complementarity between the two epistemologies (ways of knowing). Tribes have a real need for negotiating the line between Western science and traditional practices because both are helpful for analyzing environmental problems and developing solutions, but also because both represent political, cultural, and economic realities that tribes cannot afford to ignore.

See the following URL for a number of sources concerning traditional practices among the Coahuilla people (particular ethno-botany):

<http://www.americanindian.ucr.edu/references/bibliographies/cahuilla.html>

Environmental Threats to the Campo Band's Land

We are seeking students interested in conducting research that would examine a range of environmental threats to the lands of the Campo Band of the Kumeyaay Indians. In recent years, Campo leaders have made it know that they are facing problems such as illegal dumping of methamphetamine laboratory wastes, illegal solid waste dumping (also known as fly dumping), hazardous waste run off from transportation systems, and other impacts from development projects. While many of San Diego County's Native lands have historically been considered rural, increasingly the distance between San Diego's urban/suburban and rural communities has decreased significantly as sprawl and commercial development push further into formerly rural areas. Using government documents, spatial, historical, and other forms of data, students can document visually and textually the growing threats to Campo land and offer prescriptions for addressing these problems. Laguna Resources, Inc. and the Kumeyaay/Diegueno Unity Organization are two groups that have asked for assistance from researchers to examine these concerns.

Environmental Challenges to San Diego's Tribal Communities

Students interested in a broader, County-wide approach to environmental concerns facing San Diego native communities might consider gathering data on environmental threats to any number of tribes in the region. This might include an examination of various development projects, illegal dumping practices, and the location of toxic facilities such as superfund sites and landfills, etc. and their spatial correlation with Native lands. One related concern is the impact of habitat conservation plans on tribal communities. While many ecologists in San Diego County hold these plans up as models of species protection and preservation, some tribal leaders report that the plans often have a negative impact on their own ability to engage in economic and infrastructural development projects to meet the needs of their members. Furthermore, as non-tribal development continues to expand throughout the county (i.e., sprawl), developers often view the protection of Native lands as potential "mitigation projects" whereby they can claim they are preserving green space and critical habitats in order to balance out the effect of the damage caused by the development projects. This creates intense pressures on tribal leaders who may need the land for their own purposes. To what extent is this happening with any regularity and what can be done to meet the needs of conservationists, tribal communities, and (perhaps) developers? To what extent are San Diego's tribal communities confronting environmental inequalities?