

Women's Congress for Future Generations Moving Forward – 2015 & 2016

Our successes at the first two Women's Congresses represent the beginning chapter of a long-term campaign to articulate, disseminate, and uphold the rights of future generations, in collaboration with a broadening network of community organizations.

In 2015-2016, we will move several strategic pieces forward:

The Companion for Political Change. The Women's Congress Companion for Political Change is a comprehensive "kitchen table study guide" intended to support community members' political engagement as guardians for future generations. It encourages citizens to collectively move from grief or numbness over the destruction of the Earth, into the moral authority to act on behalf of the Earth and future generations. Readers learn how to give or withdraw their consent to an activity, how to identify common cause with their neighbors, and how to determine effective points of intervention for political engagement. The Companion examines current approaches to environmental policy-making, and an alternative policymaking approach known as fore-caring, the practice of caring for future generations by making sound policy decisions.

Some Legal Principles for Mining, Fracking, and Pipelines: Defending Our Communities and Future Generations. We have entered the Age of Extreme Energy. Every region is facing threats. New destructive techniques for mining, drilling, and transporting fossil fuels are swarming across the land like locusts. The reason legal principles are important is that governments make decisions within a legal frame, and the current legal framework does not account for all of the facts. The old legal principles that permitted exploitation of land and people have failed us, failed to protect the necessities for life — air, water, land, water, plants, animals, and public health. To protect our communities and the natural world, we can establish new legal principles.

The Science & Environmental Health Network and the Women's Congress for Future Generations offer a set of legal principles to serve as one basis for organizing. The intent of these principles is to provide common talking points, a common legal agenda, and an entry point for organizing.

Build a Midwestern Movement. The Upper Midwest is a territory fraught with mining, pipeline, and other industrial projects, where communities are often organizing in isolation from one another. We will build on the momentum of the November 2014 Congress in Minneapolis, by empowering citizens to employ innovative legal principles to uphold the rights of future generations and to protect the waters. We will convene a Midwestern Advisory Group, a coordinating body that will collectively determine how to leverage the energy generated at the 2014 Congress, to move our shared environmental goals forward. We will invite representatives from leading regional organizations to join us.

In fall of 2015, the Women's Congress and SEHN will host a pilot gathering of 100+ activists in Minneapolis to bring to life the key legal principles and organizing tools outlined in the *Companion*. The meeting will aim to deepen connection among citizen activists in the Upper Midwest, in order to mobilize more effective, coordinated action to protect the waters of our region. We'll tailor the workshop to the needs of activists fighting pipelines and mining in Minnesota, training these citizens to understand and collectively leverage the holistic legal frameworks identified in the *Companion*, as a tractable foundation for their work.

Women's Court for Future Generations. Based on the successful implementation of our First and Second Women's Congresses for Future Generations, we are exploring the possibility of convening a Women's Court for Future Generations. At the Court, women will apply new forms of law -- holistic, poetic, and deeply rooted in wisdom traditions -- to redress the harms against future generations wrought by environmental harms. We will devise and articulate remedies for these harms. And we will explore strategies for grassroots, community-driven actions to implement the Court's decisions.

