Dear Friends,

Reflecting on this past year, what comes to mind is the growing commitment and involvement of the many indigenous leaders and communities we’ve worked with, learned from, and will be able to continue to help thanks to your generous support. Without your contributions, Tribal Link could not have accomplished all that we did in 2019.

Our flagship program, Project Access, is Tribal Link’s most powerful tool in capacity building for indigenous peoples’ work. We are committed to work with alumni of the program, supporting their participation in international meetings and conferences where decisions are being made that affect their rights, cultures, and livelihoods. The participants all express a deep and active commitment to the Earth and feel empowered to be even more vigilant about defending their territories, water, knowledge and cultures.

Tribal Link has intensified its focus on the Amazon region as the Bolsonaro Administration’s aggressive denial of indigenous land rights has tragically and predictably accelerated forest fire devastation throughout the region. We held a special event, concurrent with UN Climate Week, called “North and South: Two Indigenous Leaders on Nature, Forest, and Climate,” featuring our long-time partners, Chiefs Tashka Yawanawa of the Yawanawa people and Sachem Hawk Storm of the Schaghticoke First Nations.

The first participants in our East African Young Women’s Leadership Initiative are now completing their education. We congratulate Joy Kakenya and Sabina Sankoi on their recent graduations, and we look forward to staying in touch with them as they begin to step into exciting leadership roles in their communities.

With your generous support Tribal Link will continue to accomplish meaningful change in the lives of indigenous peoples worldwide.

To donate, please visit triballink.org/take-action/

Best Wishes,

Pamela Kraft
Executive Director
Indigenous Tech Workshop at Microsoft


Digital Custodians is a partnership between Indigital, Microsoft, and Shared Path. The program aims to enable Indigenous Communities to develop cutting edge digital skills and develop opportunities to maintain culture and participate in the digital economy.

Chief Tashka Yawanawa of Brazil; Sachem Hawk Storm of the Schaghticoke First Nations; and Pamela Kraft Executive Director of the Tribal Link Foundation at the Global Climate Strike rally and march in New York City on September 20, 2019. Chief Tashka and Sachem Hawk Storm are both alumni of Tribal Link Foundation’s Project Access Global Capacity Building Training Workshop for Indigenous Peoples. Later in the day, they were both featured speakers at the rally, which drew over 250,000 at the Global Climate March in NY and over 4 million participants worldwide.

“North & South” at Nature’s Climate Hub

Chiefs Tashka Yawanawa of the Yawanawa people of Brazil’s Amazon Rainforest and Sachem Hawk Storm of Schaghticoke First Nations of the Northeastern U.S., shared their perspectives on protecting their respective lands and forests. The discussion was moderated by Michael Ventura, CEO of Sub Rosa and author of “Applied Empathy.”

Chiefs Yawanawa and Hawk Storm described their deep reverence for the Earth, and the importance of stories and culture in perpetuating these beliefs for future generations. They also announced a partnership between their two peoples to unite their causes going forward. A talkback segment engaged and encouraged audience members to share why they were at the event, why they care about forests, and how they feel about the indigenous perspectives shared. Click here* for full video coverage of the session.

* https://vimeo.com/365024844/665585960
The 15th annual session of PROJECT ACCESS facilitated the participation of 21 indigenous peoples’ representatives from 13 countries within a 3-day intensive training workshop, as well as during the 18th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). The UNPFII was held in New York from 22 April to 3 May 2019 providing a platform for Indigenous Peoples to raise the visibility of challenges faced by their communities; lobby their proposed solutions to representatives of governments and others; outreach to relevant UN Agencies for support; and work through special events to raise further awareness about their cultures.

To ensure more effective participation at the 2019 session of the UNPFII, Tribal Link organized the training program for delegates preceding the Forum session held at UN Headquarters. The program also included an evaluation session with participants. Due to the generosity of our funders, critical financial assistance was provided to facilitate delegate trainee participation. Additionally, selected trainees received personalized support and mentoring from the program coordinator, the instructors, and Tribal Link Staff. Four Project Access alumni returned as mentors for the new participants, further enhancing participants’ experiences. Tribal Link also facilitated opportunities to engage with several UN agencies, departments, and programs.

Project Access 2019: Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Knowledge

The 2019 Session of Project Access dedicated a portion of its training agenda to discussion of the concept of traditional knowledge (TK) as it was a main theme of the 2019 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, mentioned in the Paris Climate Agreement, an ongoing discussion at WIPO, and it was important to reaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following is a comment on Traditional Knowledge from 2019 Project Access Trainee Sara Yawanawa:

“Traditional Knowledge is our culture, traditions, way of life, and our language, which we need to recuperate, because we’re losing it. TK is the most sacred thing of all; it’s our identity.”

Project Access Participant Comments:

• Karissa John, Mohawk, Six Nations (Canada): “I couldn’t even imagine going to the UN before, but through networking, when I was walking around the UN, it was so comforting and helpful to see any of the PA trainees. It helped me to feel I belong. In a practical way, I have already used what I have learned here. My water project is producing a resource guide for indigenous ‘communities’ – I taught them to use ‘peoples’ and they changed it immediately.”

• Jupta Lilian Itowaki (Wayana, Suriname): “In my language we have a saying, ipongmanae it is a loose translation of saying you have done good to me. It is more powerful than saying thank you for you have been good to me. I have learned a lot. I met wonderful people. ...we are fun but we are also serious and support each other.”

• Eriverto da Silva Vargas (Marubo, Brazil): “I was here last year – I was going to come early this year, but I was asked to help with a Brazilian mobilization, had to organize logistics for 5,000 people, so I couldn’t come early. I am the result of Project Access. Because of everything I learned last year, I knew how the system works, felt very comfortable. This is thanks to Tribal Link.”

• Emily Rosa Lerosion (Samburu, Kenya): “…in my advocacy work, I work with women and girls for them to be able to have a voice in the community. Sometimes, it calls for me to have a meeting with the women and the girls in a male-dominated society. I feel I will now be able to address issues in a more powerful way and a systematic way in accordance to how we were taught here at the Project Access training.”
Alumni Corner

Project Access mentor Carson Kiburo chairs a side event at the Permanent Forum, highlighting the launch of a book that he helped produce titled “Global Indigenous Youth: Through Their Eyes.” Fellow PA mentor Victor Lopez-Carmen was an editor of the book.

East African Young Women’s Leadership Initiative

We’re pleased to announce that Joy Kakenya Barta successfully graduated on August 9th from Mt. Kenya University with a degree in Public Relations and a major in Journalism. Joy’s family and friends attended, as well as our colleague John Parsitau, the coordinator of the program in Kenya. Sabina Sankoi graduated on November 29 with a bachelor’s degree in Gender and Development Studies at Egerton University. Both Joy and Sabina have dedicated a lot of time and hard work in their studies, and we are proud to see them complete their degrees. They hope to become mentors and role models to other girls. We supported them through both high school and university education, and we hope to do the same for others who follow in their footsteps.

East African Young Women’s Leadership Initiative’s focus has been to build the leadership capacity of young Maasai girls from Kenya and Tanzania. The Kenyan chapter drew girls from Kajiado and Narok counties. These girls are frequently referred to as the ‘Elites’ at their villages, as they now offer leadership and guidance to the rest of the girls due to their educational achievements. Traditional leadership and peace building mechanisms are integrated into the life cycle of the Maasai community and have always been under the guidance of the men, but these girls are determined to bring much desired change and add the voices of women.

“Global Indigenous Youth: Through Their Eyes,” a book collaboration between the UN Global Indigenous Youth Caucus and Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights and co-sponsored by Tribal Link Foundation, was published in April by the Institute.

Here is a press release and link to the book:

Fourteen Indigenous youth authors, two from each UN Indigenous region, contributed writing about the human rights challenges Indigenous youth face, what it is like to be an Indigenous youth today compared to generations past, the role of Indigenous youth in traditional knowledge preservation and transmission, and how Indigenous youth imagine a future of well-being and dignity for their communities.

TRIBAL LINK FOUNDATION  Pamela Kraft, Executive Director  ■ 37 Vestry Street, NY, NY 10013  ■ 917-439-6443  ■ pkraft@triballink.org  ■ www.triballink.org  ■ Tribal Link Foundation, a 501(c)(3), is a non-governmental organization with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in association with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI).

Tribal Link’s mission is to support the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples worldwide by building their capacity to protect their ways of life and preserve their sacred lands and knowledge for the betterment of humanity.