

Roundtable

Living with radioactive contamination: A discussion between generations

Date: May 17-19, 2006

Location: Kyiv, Ukraine

In April 2006 the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe will be commemorated by a number of international events. Most significantly, in Kyiv on the 24-26th of April 2006, there will be an International Forum “Twenty years after Chernobyl: Look to the future,” organized by Ukrainian, Russian and Byelorussian Governments. This forum will pose questions about the state of the Chernobyl station and shelter, technical aspects of radiation, proper management of nuclear wastes, and the human health impacts of the catastrophe.

We intend to hold a roundtable “Living with radioactive contamination: A discussion between generations” as a registered side-event of the International Forum. This roundtable is being organized jointly by the Sustainable Development and Ecological Education Center (SDEEC: Ukraine) in cooperation with faculty from several American universities (Applied Indigenous Studies, Northern Arizona University; American Indian Education Program, University of New Mexico; Hazardous Substance Research Center, Kansas State University; Center for Indigenous Nations Studies, University of Kansas; and the Haskell Indian Nations University Ecology Club). The goal of the roundtable is to create an international dialog between generations to promote an understanding of the impact of multigenerational trauma on societies caused by catastrophes, particularly those involving radioactive contamination.

This event will bring together faculty and students from Ukrainian and American universities, experts on radioactive issues, Ukrainian alumni of American Educational programs, U.S. and Ukrainian governmental officials and members of non-governmental organizations. Participants will discuss the environmental situation caused by radioactive contamination after Chernobyl as well as uranium contamination on American Indian lands. Special emphasis will be given to the impact of radiation on human health, including mental health. Questions about the necessity of proper access to information about the state of the environment and human health will be discussed with emphasis on the role and impact of the UN Convention “About Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters” with regards to further development of democracy in Ukraine.

Selected questions for discussion at the roundtable include:

- Challenges faced by past and present Chernobyl victims; including public health issues, social issues such as migration away from the area due to economic reasons, and current and future environmental issues;
- Impact of multigenerational trauma on societies;
- Connections between the environmental movement and democracy-building in Ukraine;

- Environmental security aspects of Chernobyl, examining possible tensions and conflicts within and between states;
- Programs and services provided for radioactive and hazardous waste management;
- Strengthening leadership and responsibility as core issues for democracy-building.

The roundtable will be concluded by a two-hour session that creates an international bridge between U.S. and Ukrainian campuses and American Indian Tribal leaders using distance-learning facilities in both countries.

Outcomes:

- Participation by U.S. and Ukrainian faculty and students in an event included in the 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl Catastrophe;
- Strengthening awareness about the negative effects of radioactive contamination in the younger generation;
- Creating a bridge between generations and nations in understanding the impacts of human activities on the environment;
- Exchange of knowledge and ideas about the connection between radioactive contamination and human health;
- Awareness raising about the importance of free access to information, especially in an emergency situation;
- Development of an exchange network between Ukrainian and American faculty and students ;
- Recommendation of activities that the roundtable participants recommend for addressing Chernobyl's ongoing challenges and the problems created by radioactive contamination on American Indian Tribal lands.