

# Transition Minerals, Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Green Economy

Indigenous Peoples are holding companies accountable to human rights commitments in renewable energy supply chains and transition mineral resource development, and raising awareness about impacts on Indigenous communities. The **Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Green Economy (SIRGE) Coalition** offers the following talking points for Indigenous leaders, frontline advocates, and allies in efforts to safeguard Indigenous Peoples' rights in the emerging green economy.

- Many renewable energy technologies require minerals such as copper, cobalt, lithium, manganese, nickel, graphite, and zinc. The most significant driver of new demand for these “transition” minerals comes from electric vehicles, according to research by the Institute for Sustainable Futures.
- Indigenous lands and territories are already imperiled by mining. These lands house significant concentrations of untapped transition mineral reserves globally, and increased mining exacerbates the impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, territories, livelihoods, and health.
- Mining and resource development that occurs without full participation and the Free, Prior, Informed Consent from impacted Indigenous Peoples:
  - Desecrates sacred places, pollutes life-sustaining resources such as water and soil, and decimates animals and plant life integral to Indigenous Peoples' subsistence and cultural practices;
  - Brings an influx of temporary workers, which leads to human trafficking and violence against Indigenous women and children; and
  - Perpetuates harms and rights violations such as forced migration, coerced labor and exploitative labor practices, and the murder of human rights defenders protesting development.



## Recent Data Shows

- Of 5,097 mining projects globally that involve some 30 minerals used in renewable energy technologies, 54% are located on or near Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories (*via Nature Sustainability*).
- In the United States, 97% of nickel, 89% of copper, 79% of lithium and 68% of cobalt reserves – primary minerals needed for the energy transition – are located within 35 miles of Native American reservations (*via MSCI*).

- A just transition to a low carbon economy requires governments and companies involved to observe and implement rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- Without securing Indigenous Peoples' FPIC, and without Indigenous Peoples' participation throughout project development and implementation, transition mineral mining perpetuates the same harms and rights violations as fossil fuel resource development.
- Policy makers should incorporate mandatory requirements to respect Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the right to FPIC as enshrined in the UNDRIP, in policies that prioritize the transition to a green economy.
- The SIRGE Coalition recommends guaranteeing Indigenous Peoples' participation where there are or may be impacts, leading with Indigenous values and solutions, and, as the guiding principle for dealmaking and partnership, operationalizing projects from conception to completion through Indigenous-articulated FPIC protocols.
- Indigenous Peoples manage over a quarter of the Earth's lands, which is home to 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity. Through close relationships with their lands, water, and other natural resources over millennia, Indigenous Peoples have deep understanding of the significant social and environmental impacts that occur from extraction and production of transition minerals, including land use changes, water contamination, and displacement of local communities.

## Recent Data Shows

- Over a period of 10 years, there were 495 human rights allegations made against all 115 companies involved in transition mineral extraction (this figure represents only reported instances); in 2022, 41% of attacks against Indigenous peoples were related to mining (*via Business & Human Rights Resource Centre*).
- Electric vehicles and battery storage are driving the largest growth in demand for transition minerals such as cobalt and lithium; if all existing vehicles were replaced with electric vehicles, mineral requirements for clean energy technologies would quadruple by 2040 (*via the International Energy Agency*).
- Of 18 top electric vehicle automakers, two thirds do not screen for impacts on Indigenous Peoples in any capacity, and no automaker has implemented concrete processes to ensure that commitments to the rights of Indigenous Peoples are realized throughout their supply chains (*via Lead the Charge*).
- Minerals and battery recycling can help reduce primary demand for minerals: 25% for lithium, 35% for cobalt and nickel, and 55% for copper by 2040 (*via the Institute for Sustainable Futures*).
- A transition to zero emissions transportation can occur in far less mining-intensive ways; scaling up recycling, reducing battery size, and investing in robust public transit can cut U.S. lithium demand for transport 92% by 2050 (*via Climate and Community Project and UC Davis*).