

# INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK 2010 YOUTH PROFILE

## ERIEL DERANGER

Eriel Deranger was raised in a family of activists and spent much of her youth attending rallies, protests and social justice conferences. Much of her activity was rooted in the struggles facing Indigenous peoples. Specifically, she has worked on Indigenous land claims in Canada. This eventually led to an interest and involvement in broader global issues. “While working on these issues I found myself becoming more interested in the fact that the systems that we are currently living in are fraught with inequities and that change was needed....I found that change would only come from international pressure that asserted our Indigenous sovereignty.”

With the support of TakingItGlobal and Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Affairs, Eriel attended the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York in 2006. After meeting other Indigenous youth at this forum she returned to Canada to help develop the United Nations Indigenous Youth Caucus. In 2007 she attended the International Training Centre for Indigenous People in Illuslisat, Greenland. This led her to research the impact of the Alberta Tar Sands on the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada and to become more involved with environmental organizations.

In partnership with the Rainforest Action Network and the Indigenous Environmental Network, Eriel has worked for the past year and a half to ensure that the public is aware of the impact that Alberta Tar Sands are having on the community, climate change and our dependency on oil. She recently attended the International Climate Negotiations in Copenhagen as a representative of the Rainforest Action Network and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

Through her involvement in these organizations, Eriel is working towards a world that encompasses environ-

mental justice rooted in the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Eriel believes that being a global citizen means being active and engaged with the issues of her community and representing them globally. “It means being accountable to my people and community and engaging with the broader spectrum of the world and those facing similar issues,” she says.

Her vision for an equitable, sustainable future includes the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and creating a world that is free of destructive non-renewable resources extraction.

She says that young people in North America have a unique role in changing the future. “Being from North America we must recognize that we have an ecological debt to the Global South. The comforts of our world come at the expense of many Indigenous peoples worldwide.” Youth have a responsibility to help break this cycle.

Eriel has this advice for other young people looking to get involved in international development work: “Research the area that you are interested in and look for organizations that fit your need. Internships are a great way to get your foot in the door. Many social justice organizations need volunteers. Consider volunteering and getting active in your community. It often leads to more.”

She would also like to remind youth to “...come from a place of love. Try to avoid 'helping' others, but rather work with people.”

## BE BOLD, BE YOURSELF, BE THE CHANGE!

