

April 23, 2018

To the Honorable Secretary Zinke:

As co-directors of Lybrook Community Ministries, we call on the Department of Interior to uphold and strengthen the Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention Rule.

Lybrook Community Ministries is sandwiched between Sandoval and San Juan Counties in a very rural community. Most of our neighbors are Navajo elders, women, and youth. Our ministry provides food and water delivery, gardening assistance, assistance with car repairs, a thrift store, visits to the elderly, and religious services. We live in a community where homesteads are nestled within canyons and valleys, initially chosen for their protection from the elements. Our area is known as “the checkerboard region” of New Mexico due to the interspersed reservation lands, tribal trust lands, public lands, and private lands. We are surrounded by oil and gas extraction sites, and open methane flares. Nearby in Nageezi, an oil operation had an explosion next to a family home, and there was a fire there for an entire week.

In our area, the canyons and valleys that once seemed so hospitable for families to make their homesteads have become dangerous holding places for toxic volatile organic compounds and methane pollution. Our neighbors as well as health professionals have noticed an increase in illnesses such as asthma and cancer, but we are unaware if anyone is studying the health consequences of extractive industry in our area. Mothers are asking their children to stay indoors instead of play outside in the poor air quality, further compounding local obesity issues. The nearest health clinic to our community is 45-50 miles away, and they don't take appointments. The nearest hospital is in Farmington, more than 75 miles away. Many in our area lack transportation and need to walk places. These health burdens are difficult for our community.

Venting and flaring, as well as methane leaks, disproportionately endanger our community. Yet, there are no public hearings to protest the potential rollback of the protections afforded to us by the Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention Rule. We have not heard any announcements about this proposed rollback in our news channels. Nothing has run on the Navajo radio station, even though the Navajo Nation endorsed the Methane Waste Prevention Rule when it was created. It is wrong that our community had not chance to voice our concerns in hearings, and we urge your department to give us the chance.

We are extremely privileged to have the resources and connections to have been invited to Washington, DC for the Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference, so we had to speak for our community. There are plenty of community members in our area who lack the money and connections to come to DC. They deserve a chance to voice their concerns. We visited our members of Congress on Friday, April 20 with a picture of the methane cloud that hangs over our community.

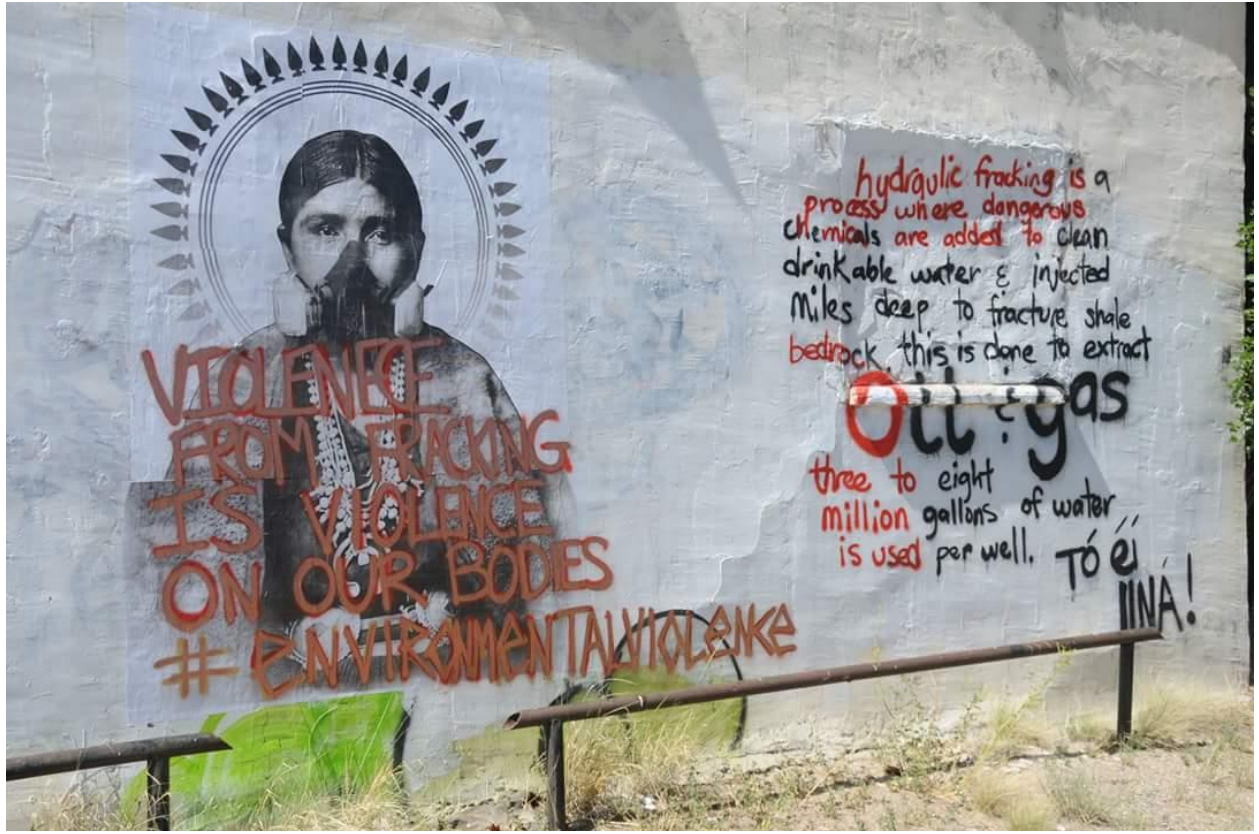
Below are pictures of one of our visits to Congress, and of our community.

Pastor James Therrien

Pastor Kimberly Therrien







VIOLENCE  
FROM FRACKING  
IS VIOLENCE  
ON OUR BODIES  
#ENVIRONMENTALVIOLENCE

hydraulic fracturing is a  
process where dangerous  
chemicals are added to clean  
drinkable water & injected  
miles deep to fracture shale  
bedrock. this is done to extract

Oil & gas

three to eight  
million gallons of water  
is used per well. Tó é' INÁ!