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Indigenous Peruvians win case against Oxy

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- Indigenous communities are celebrating what they see as a victory against big capital. Oxy is one of the largest United States oil producers with operations on four continents.

TeleSUR, 7 March, 2015.- Achuar indigenous communities in Peru have won a settlement against Occidental Petroleum for the pollution of the Corrientes River in the Amazon region.

According to the precedent setting decision, the corporation will have to pay for community development projects chosen by the indigenous communities such as fish farms.

The Peruvian Achuar indigenous community announced Thursday it reached a settlement from a U.S. oil giant over contamination of the Corrientes River. The river runs through Achuar land in the Amazon rainforest.

The company accused of the contamination is Occidental Petroleum, which is one of the largest U.S. oil producers, with operations in four continents. The lawsuit started nine years ago, and the agreement was reached in September 2013, but the Achuar were only able to make it public now.

Under this settlement, most stipulations are confidential but it was revealed that the transnational, also known as Oxy, will have to pay for community development projects chosen by the Achuar communities affected by the contamination.

Marco Simons, a lawyer representing Achuar communities and a member of Earth Rights International, explained that, "Oxy argued that this case should be heard in Peru rather than in the U.S. and eventually, after years of litigation, we won this fight with the court ruling that the lawsuit should proceed in the U.S. And Oxy tried to appeal to the Supreme Court but the Supreme Court rejected their appeal."

The lawyer provided an official settlement statement, saying, "The parties are pleased to confirm a mutual settlement of the claims of the litigation. Oxy will provide assistance to enable the five Achuar communities to carry out community development projects for their benefit. All parties are satisfied with the resolution of this dispute."

Simons concluded by saying that this case sets a precedent that will help future communities affected by pollution, and it is already being quoted in courts.

Achuar representative Pablo Kukush Sandi, explained the process by which the communities will decide how to use the development funds:

"The five communities will decide on their desires at a general assembly. As their representatives, we will fulfil the objectives they have and in accordance with the needs of each community. At the moment, in the most recent assemblies, they only focused on projects for the creation of fish farms."

The fish farms will provide a much-needed source of protein that the contaminated river no longer can supply. Other projects these communities are looking at are education and technological services for the youth and an on site health care system and infrastructure.

Fuente: TeleSUR: <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Peru-Indigenous-Group-Wins-Settlement-from-Oil-Giant-20150306-0014.html> [2]

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