

## **Conference Report for Aotearoa Indigenous Rights Trust (AIR Trust)**

### **Introduction**

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) was held on 7-19th December in Montreal, Canada. The aim of the conference was to bring together governments, rights-holders and interested parties to agree on a new set of goals to guide global action through 2030 to halt and reverse nature loss. Alongside the negotiations from the 7-19th December, an opportunity arose to also attend the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) preparatory meeting, the pre conference caucus (WG2020-5) and the Nature and Culture Summit. Overall, I was in Montreal for a total of 15 days and with the support of the AIR Trust I was able to participate in these discussions.

### **Conference Overview**

COP15 had a total of 20,000 attendees, from over 190 countries. There were four key outputs from COP15;

- adoption of an equitable and comprehensive framework matched by the resources needed for implementation;
- clear targets to address overexploitation, pollution, fragmentation and unsustainable agricultural practices;
- a plan that safeguards the rights of indigenous peoples and recognizes their contributions as stewards of nature; and
- finance for biodiversity and alignment of financial flows with nature to drive finances toward sustainable investments and away from environmentally harmful ones.

### **My Role at COP15**

I attended COP15 as an Indigenous Representative alongside the IIFB, representing AIR Trust.

My main responsibilities included;

- negotiating policy with the IIFB;
- liaising with the New Zealand Delegation in order to advocate for Māori values, needs and provisions as treaty partners;
- assisting my fellow indigenous brothers and sisters from all over the world to understand various policy wordings and concepts together;
- writing submissions to be presented unitedly as the IIFB; and
- networked amongst various indigenous and academic leaders in order to secure positive future relationships.

### **Key Highlights**

Within my personal capacity as an Indigenous researcher of Intellectual Property (IP), Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDSov), and Digital Sequence Information (DSI), I was able to;

- effectively participate in discussions surrounding:
  - DSI
  - Access to data
  - Data governance

- Benefit sharing in monetary and non monetary forms, as well as it's mechanisms
- Provenance, tracking and tracing of data
- Capacity building
- A range of other relevant matters
- present to interested parties, including DSI users, policy makers, advocates and delegates on Indigenous interests within DSI;
- advocate for records indigenous provenance metadata to be increasingly recorded;
- ensure that the CARE and FAIR principles were referenced as a useful and authoritative source of guidelines when developing relevant policies going forwards; and
- formulate a network of interdisciplinary early career academics researching in the spaces of DSI and Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), formally named (iDSI) containing members from the global north such as France, Sweden, Germany and England.

For a full record of notes taken at COP15, please refer to [the linked document](#). Please note that the document was written verbatim, occasionally contains sensitive material, and may contain many spelling errors due to the rapidity of writing required in the moment.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Since attending COP15, I have;

- continued to work with iDSI to continue advising on various UN policies relating to DSI and ABS. We are planning to output publications, and run a workshop in Berlin in December 2023. I add significant value to this group through my indigenous lens, and continue to make sure the group grows in their capacity in relation to cultural competencies in these spaces internationally. There are also plans to expand the network to those who were not in attendance at COP15, and bring in more members from the Global South and Indigenous Nations;
- presented on Indigenous interests in DSI and COP15 at both [SING Aotearoa](#) and the January [Whāki webinar](#) which allowed me to share my knowledge and experience with a wide audience including Te Mana Raraunga (Māori Data Sovereignty network) members, early career researchers and tertiary genomic undergraduate students;
- worked collaboratively with Te Puni Kokiri to consult with the wider Māori community and advise on DSI and benefit sharing policies, and
- used the information gained at COP15 to enrich project outputs for the [Tikanga in Technology](#) project Data in Systems research theme.

These efforts have allowed me to make significant contributions to the field and to continue advocating for indigenous interests at various levels.

## **Thank You to AIR Trust**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Air Trust for their generous support in facilitating my attendance at COP15. Their sponsorship allowed me to participate in this valuable event and benefit from its knowledge, insights, and networking opportunities, as well as to advocate for key indigenous interests. Their commitment to advancing the field is truly commendable. The

success of COP15 in achieving its goals was due in part to the instrumental support provided by Air Trust. I am eager to collaborate with them again in the future.

*Ngā mihi nui,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KatieLee Riddle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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