

The air in the auditorium smelled faintly of burnt herbs. Josefina Lema Aguilar, a Kichwa elder from the mountains of Ecuador, lit a tiny sacred fire to bless last week’s conference on “Seeking Balance: Indigenous Knowledge, Western Science and Climate Change.” Dressed in traditional garb from the Andes, Aguilar gave the event’s opening prayer at the (now LEED-certified) National Museum of the American Indian in Washington.

“At home we would light a big fire, but here in this developed country, where we are more uptight, we are in an enclosed area, so don’t worry, I will light only a little fire,” Aguilar joked in Spanish (and through a translator). “It’s the custom and tradition of all indigenous peoples to give thanks to Mother Earth, Mother Air, Mother Water and Father Sun for giving us life and having us as part of their family,” she continued. And according to the delegates at the conference, representing more than a dozen Native cultures from around the world, the message is clear: Mother Earth is in trouble. But fortunately, many of the assembled elders were also quick to point out that there is much the Western world can learn from indigenous people to address some of the problems, and to more effectively deal with the impending changes. (...)

The article:

<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2011/10/11/indigenous-people-climate-change/>

Past...present:

http://www.fabiomanzione.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3459:human-rights-council-il-furto-delle-risorse-naturali-e-minerarie-che-danneggia-popoli-autoctoni-ed-ambiente&catid=46:diritti-umani&Itemid=105