



Comanche Nation Passes Historic Resolution Opposing Proposed Westwin Elements Cobalt-Nickel Refinery

On Saturday, 3 February 2024, following a long and heated [Comanche Business Council Meeting](#), Comanche Nation passed [Resolution 23-2024](#) opposing the Westwin Elements cobalt-nickel refinery proposed for Lawton, Oklahoma. Exerting the environmental jurisdiction they established decades ago to protect the region, and standing firm on their traditional boundaries, Comanche Nation also called for suspension of Chairman Mark Woommavovah, who [gave the project his blessing](#). He later [issued an apology](#) and shifted blame to the city. Emails were presented during Saturday's meeting that directly linked the Chairman to Westwin Elements, countering his claims to the opposite. The Resolution was introduced by Comanche Nation Vice Chairman Dr. Cornel Pewewardy.

Saturday's historic Resolution came just hours after a [5.1 magnitude earthquake](#) – among the largest in state history. Some residents opposed to Westwin's plant say the area's vulnerability to earthquakes, flooding and tornados – Lawton is located in "[Tornado Alley](#)" – make it an especially dangerous site for an experimental refinery. Westwin Resistance also [noted](#) the explosion risks of the proposed refinery, which would be the first of its kind in the US, during last week's [massive gas pipeline explosion](#) near Elmwood.

Local tribal citizens and residents have been fighting the refinery from the beginning, and recently formed a group called Westwin Resistance. Representatives of Westwin

Resistance will meet with the Lawton mayor Tuesday morning, 6 February. The group's [5 Reasons to Say "NO" to Westwin](#) highlights dangers to the health of humans, animals and the environment, lack of transparency with tribal and community members, false promises of high-paying jobs, and the company's complete lack of experience to build the first-ever cobalt refinery in the United States.

Local tribal public health professional and Comanche citizen Brandon Parker, who recently offered a virtual public information webinar entitled ["Nickel, Cobalt, and "other minerals" Refinery in Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Homelands"](#) covering the history and dangers of Westwin's refinery, will be interviewed on "[Kiowa Talk](#)" this Thursday, 8 February. Westwin has also been invited to speak on the show. On Friday, 9 February, Westwin Resistance is hosting an in-person public meeting and potluck from 5-10pm at the Cahoma Building, 752 NW Quannah Road in Cache, OK.

QUOTES

"As the Comanche Nation Chairman would say, *Comanche Strong, Stronger Together*, those words never resonated with me until yesterday's tribal council meeting. After hours of debate on the cobalt refinery, the concerned citizens of the Comanche Nation stood strong, and with the backing of the Comanche Nation Business Committee, a full resolution was presented and unanimously approved to oppose the Westwin Cobalt Refinery. It was definitely a grand day for the Comanche people and the future of our tribe. The people showed their strength and resilience on a matter that is critical to our children and grandchildren's lives. The refinery will only lead to disease and destruction to those who live nearby and possibly other local communities. The people are ready to defend the sacred Ancestral lands of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache. Westwin Refinery is not welcome here." – **Gen Hadley, Comanche citizen and Elder**

"The term Environmentally Neutral is nothing more than a buzzword used by the resource extraction industry to trick the public into believing that what they are doing poses no harmful impacts, when in fact, their industrial processes are very impactful. I just want that to be clear. They have not proven to me that what they are doing is safe for our community." – **[Brandon Parker](#), Environmental Health Scientist, Comanche citizen**

"This moment is historic, not only for the Comanche Nation and those who live within their environmental jurisdiction, but for all Indigenous and tribal communities across

Turtle Island fighting extraction and standing up for sovereignty and the land. The truth is, this project is another form of green colonialism, which is not an answer to the climate crisis, kicks the can of problems down the road for future generations to contend with, and causes great harm to the land and the people. We hope this sends a clear message to Westwin Elements: we are not a disposable people and this is not a disposable land." – **Ashley LaMont, Absentee Shawnee/Oglala & Sicangu Lakota, National Campaigns Director, Honor the Earth**

"The Indigenous Environmental Network supports the Comanche People's opposition to the Westwin Elements refinery in KCA territory. We oppose green colonialism and using Indigenous communities as guinea pigs for the first cobalt refinery in the country. Communities have the right to say no to harmful and extractive projects, and the Comanche community in Oklahoma has said "no" to Westwin and toxic industries." – **Jordan Harmon, Policy Analyst/Legislative Advocate, Indigenous Environmental Network**

Westwin Resistance statement:

"Today, the Comanche people cleared up the Chairman's delusions that this is not Comanche land, that the refinery is safe and will bring good jobs to the community, and that he answers to the City of Lawton Chamber of Commerce. His heart is not with his people. He should resign immediately.

"With this refinery posing untold risks to our health and environment, the brand-new Westwin company and the Lawton city council are treating residents as disposable people on disposable land. Using our tax dollars, they are also promising high-paying jobs when the company plans to bring in their own people.

"If permitted, this first-ever US cobalt-nickel refinery would be on the homelands of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Caddo, Wichita and Delaware peoples, just miles from our sacred Wichita Mountains. It also threatens the historic Deyo Mission.

"Whether it is gas, oil, nuclear, or an experimental cobalt refinery, Oklahomans are fed up with toxic pollution and paying the price of our independence and sovereignty to benefit outside corporations and corrupt politicians. Together, we can build a good economy that does not ruin our health, land, air and water."

COMANCHE

Resolution to Officially Oppose the Westwin Elements Cobalt Refinery Project

WHEREAS, the Comanche Nation is a federally recognized Indian Tribe with a Constitution approved by the Secretary of the Interior on January 9, 1967, to safeguard tribal rights, powers, and privileges to improve the economic, moral, education, and health of its members; and

WHEREAS, the tradition of sovereignty of the Comanche Nation, since time immemorial long predates the existence of the Nation, establishes the inherent sovereign powers and rights of the Comanche self-government; and

WHEREAS, the Comanche Constitution, Article 6, Section 7, establishes the Comanche Business Committee as the duly elected official body designated to conduct business for and on behalf of the Comanche Nation in legal quorum; and

WHEREAS, each elected member of the Comanche Business Committee (CBC) is entrusted with upholding and safeguarding the Comanche Nation Constitution, the laws of the Comanche Nation, and swore an oath of office to support and defend the Comanche Nation Constitution and to carry out faithfully and impartially the duties of the office to the best of their ability and promote and protect the best interests of the Comanche Nation and its members in accordance with the tribal constitution; and

WHEREAS of this date, no elected official of the CBC, including Chairman Mark Woommavovah, has discussed or authorized any official Comanche Nation public statement to the Comanche Nation regarding the development of the Westwin Elements cobalt refinery; and

WHEREAS Deyo Mission, a recognized Comanche historical and religious property of Comanche people, is within one-half mile from the Westwin Elements' proposed cobalt refinery, the guidelines for research and institutional engagement with Native Nations are expected and required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to recognize fundamental principles of sovereignty, consultation, and respect. Section 106 of NHPA requires that each federal agency, if it has jurisdiction over any land or resource having or may have effects on the historic properties, must take into account the historic properties and must consult with the Secretary of the Interior to determine the effects of the proposed project on the historic properties.

Press Contact for further information and interview connections: Ash LaMont

ash@honorearth.org, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma and the Oglala & Sicangu Lakota nations, National Campaigns Director at Honor the Earth

Westwin Resistance: Email westwinresistance@gmail.com

- Facebook: Westwin Resistance
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/westwinresistance/>
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