

Polly Higgins

Lawyer, barrister and advocate for Earth law

Personal life:

Born: 4 July 1968 in Scotland.

Raised near Loch Lomond, in Stirlingshire, along with a brother and sister. The beauty of her surroundings growing up and conversations with her father as she grew up were formative influences in Polly's life.

Education:

University education: Higgins studied for a MA in Cultural History at Aberdeen University between 1986-1991, with a year abroad as an Erasmus Scholar studying Semiology at Utrecht University in the Netherlands in 1990. In a year out in Vienna, Austria, working on her MA thesis, Polly focused on the work of ecologist and artist [Friedensreich Hundertwasser](#) – a proponent of combining nature and architecture. Both the MA and the diploma in Semiology were passed with 1st class honours. Between 1991- 1992 Higgins studied for a post-graduate diploma in Decorative Arts as a Carnegie Scholar at Glasgow University (passed with merit).

Polly moved to London in 1992. She worked for an art dealer before deciding to study for the bar. She studied law at City University (CPE Diploma Law) London, and won three scholarships: the Middle Temple City University Entrance Award, Queen Mother Scholarship and the Scottish Corporation Award. Higgins began her Post-Graduate diploma law at Inns of Court School of Law for two years - 1997 to 1998 - with a full Queen Mother Scholarship and a Scottish Corporation Award.

Professional life:

Between 1998 – 2005 she practised as a barrister. Polly's practise was civil litigation, specialising in employment law and labour relations. It was during her time at the Bar that Polly began to examine whether there was a legal duty of care for the Earth; if she was to represent the Earth as her client, she discovered, there was an absence of law upon which to use.

Between 2006 and 2009 Polly worked as a legal and political adviser for TREC-UK/DESERTEC, the project to advance Concentrating Solar Power production in the Sahara Desert. In 2008, Polly became a founding member of the DESERTEC Foundation, and was a member of the supervisory board until 2010.

In 2008 Polly was invited by the UN to speak on her proposal for a Universal Declaration of Planetary Rights. In 2011 Bolivia proposed the Declaration into the UN, now named the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

In April 2010, Higgins proposed to the UN the law of Ecocide as the 5th Crime against Peace and her proposal includes the use of the existing UN Trusteeship Council to ensure assistance be given to territories damaged by or at risk of ecocide. A campaign was launched.

Publications:

Eradicating Ecocide: Laws and Governance to Prevent the Destruction of our Planet, was published by Shephard-Walwyn, London, 2010. Winner of the People's Prize for non-fiction.

'Eradicating Ecocide, Towards a Garden of Eden: Ecocide, Eco-colonization and the Sacredness of All Life' in Wild Law: A reader in Earth Jurisprudence, ed., P. Burdon, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011.

Another book due out in March 2011: Earth is our Business.