

Lil'wat Nation , B. Columbia

HONORABLE MEMBERS:

WE BRING YOU GREETINGS FROM THE LIL'WAT NATION SITUATED IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA. IN MY NATION, I AM O'QUA'LUS. CANADA REGISTERS ME AS HARRY HERMAN DICK AND MY TWO COLLEAGUES HERE AS ALVIN NELSON AND LEX JOSEPH.

IT IS OUR INTENTION, AS A NATION, TO SUBMIT TO THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, OUR PRESENTATION CONTAINING VIABLE DOCUMENTATION OF INJUSTICES DONE TO OUR NATIONSHIP.

THROUGH THIS RECOURSE, MAY WE FIND THAT YOUR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESULTS IN MAINTAINING OUR TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

THANK YOU KINDLY FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO OUR DEEP CONCERNS.

WGIP 87/NAM.CAN/17

It gives me great pleasure to tell you that I am from the Lil'wat Nation in Canada. I come to you with honour and I come with the spirit of the Creator as my guide.

The Lil'wat Nation has a vision. The vision to be self-determined, self-sufficient and self-controlling. We feel that, as a nation and as the aboriginal people of Canada, we have the right to self-determination. Our future and the future of our children depends on our exercising this right.

The existence of the Aboriginal people speaks for itself. It speaks loudly and clearly that we are the original inhabitants of Canada. Historians, text-books and documents do not deny or argue that we are the Aboriginal people.

The explorers from Britain and France were the first to contact of my ancestors and to our land. They did not discover a new land, it has been our domain since time immemorial.

The arrival of the British and French changed the course of our lives forever. At first we trusted them and we assisted them in adapting to our land. At no time did the Lil'wat Nation cede ^{our} ~~their~~ lands to these Europeans.

We were well established as a Nation upon the arrival of the immigrants from Britain and France. We have a culture, language tradition, religion and our own form of government. These aspects of a society centered around the Potlatches where social control customs and local organization were addressed. Potlatches were a gathering of our people, to be united, to share and to resolve any problem areas. The arrival of the Europeans was to change that they considered the Aboriginal people as savages, non-humans and proceeded to erase and deny our rights and freedoms. Because of this, the basis of our very existence were denied or recognized as a way of life.

Aboriginal Culture was seen to uncivilized, because it did not measure up to European standards. They began to take measures especially through forced christianity to civilize the indigenous people it became unlawful to hold Potlatches, we were denied the right to use our own language, our religion was seen as heathen and our land was taken without our consent. These are act of genocide. they are deliberate attempts to exterminate the aboriginal people. They to had a vision , a vision to destroy our people. They were quick to see the potential of our land its characteristics and its resources. These immigrants from Europe inspired and conspired with their aristocracy and bureaucracy to observe and to claim the land which came to be known as Canada.

The lands provided my people with the forest for protection, shelter clothing, heat, basketery and beauty. The surrounding lakes, rivers and streams were basic to our livelihood for fish and water.

The earth which we refere to as Mother Earth, provided us with food medicinal herbs and plants. It was customary for permission to take from the earth and to thank Mother Earth for all that she provided for us. We are at one with our land- it is the basic of our survival. Our way of life did not allow for waste, abuse or destruction.

The Lil'wat Nation is mapped out in two different ways. There is Canadian, Provincial model and the Aboriginal knowledge of territories that do not agree. We know the history of our Nation and the bounderies that exists today. The knowledge, understanding and our ties with our ancestors and lands our passed down from generation to generation by the teachings and the wisdom of our elders.

As people we rely on Elders for guidance and wisdom or approval in every aspect of traditional life. It is through them that we have learned our traditional ways, religion, language and natural skills.

because of their persistance generation after generation that
a Nation still exist.

I am emphasizing the fact that despite the attempt to integrate, assimilate or exterminate the indigenous people, we are still here and we have become stronger. The Canadian Government cannot deny us forever. This paternalistic hold over the aboriginal people is weakening as we become stronger.

My own life and work experience have shown me the results of the injustices done to the Lil'wat people.

I am referred to as an Indian, I am not from India. The term Indian was given to us by those explorers who had thought they had reached India.

I live on an Indian Reserve., we are corralled on small plots of land supposedly for our care and protection by the Federal government and the Indian Act. The government of Canada has made us prisoners in our own land and even included us with a number to identify us.

Our rights have steadily and increasingly been denied. These rights to our land, fishing trapping, and hunting are our primary source for existence; these are being manipulated and controlled to the disadvantage of my people.

My own personal attempts to begin a project to promote independence and self-sufficiency are being held back; are choked by the federal and provincial government of Canada. For more than five years, we had tried to develop the Lil'wat Sawmills to a point of being self-reliant. It could provide jobs for my people, it could provide material to build or rebuild homes for us. But our efforts have been futile. I am bound by the Provinces timber laws, Canadian Forest Products and the Indian Act of Canada. They keep us from succeeding in our own lands.

We had designed and proposed an Orientation Center for my people, to attempt to alleviate their social disease called alcoholism. This Center would be operated for and by the Lil'wat Nation People. But this to has been a futile effort. The policies of the Federal and Provincial government are designed so that indigenous people projects would be detined to fail in the long run.

-What ever the efforts of my people, our socio economic plans and rights and freedoms are denied by the Canadian government.

I believe that Internationally it is thought that the Canadian government takes good care of their Aboriginal people. In reality we are kept in a state of dependency and despondency.

For this reason, we are here to implore the United Nations, the people of the world, other aboriginal people to lend us support and to pressure the Canadian government to discontinue their sanctioned descrimination against the Aboriginal--Indigenous people of the Lil'wat Nation in Canada.