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United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples: Land and Environment

Introduction:

The following statement is in support of the Ojibway People Indigenous to Grassy Narrows, Ontario. These people are Indigenous to the land that is now called the Grassy Narrows reserve. In recent history, the people of Grassy Narrows experienced mercury poisoning in the waters surrounding their community; now they cannot drink the water or eat the fish that they have relied on for many thousands of years. These peoples have also been relocated and had to build a new community due to the poison in their water from a near by mill.

Case Statement:

The people of Grassy Narrows are experiencing a new devastation to their land in the form of the logging industry. The logging company Abitibi has signed a deal with the Ministry of Natural Resources to log the land around and on reserve, leaving a small area for the people of Grassy Narrows to sustain themselves on.

The people of Grassy Narrows are trying to lobby various levels of government to stop the logging. The people have been fighting this maneuver for many years without much success.

The logging company Abitibi has continued to implement its contract with the Ministry of Natural Resources. The first stage was to consult with the people. These consultations were in the form of many grandious charts and diagrams, the people conducting the consultations had little or no information, did not speak the Indigenous language or have an interrpreter available, possessed little or no power to facilitate the suggestions of the people and were generally rude when the suggestion of logging elsewhere came up. The consultation process was a mockery of the Indigenous people of this territory due to the bias within these consultations and the obvious mockery of the their traditional land base and hunting grounds due to the Ministry Of Natural Resources claim that the traditional traplines and general environment would not be affected by the loss of the forest.

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Today the logging company has sprayed the land surveyed for logging with various chemicals so that the underbrush and unwanted growth will die and leave the trees needed only. These chemicals are progressing through the food chain and the people have found white spots on the deer and moose that they eat. The chemicals also have killed off the traditional berry grounds, and the medicines available in the area surrounding the community.

The knowledge and sustainability loss within the land surrounding Grassy Narrows is in the millions of dollars but more importantly will effect the future of the Indigenous community which still relies on the land.

In the spirit of continual destruction and degregation the Canadian government has also initiated another environmental threat, Nuclear waste. The people of Grassy Narrows have also had the removal of various rock samples from their area as they are in remote Northwestern Ontario. They found out that the government had taken these rock samples to evaluate whether or not the area would be suitable for a Nuclear Waste Storage Facility.

Solutions:

- That the contract with Abitibi be stopped,
- That the people of Grassy Narrows be heard and recognized by the Canadian Government,
- That the Canadian Government consult and negotiate first with the Indigenous peoples as a community in an arena that both will be able to come to a consensus before samples or contracts have been made.

Madame Chairperson, Delegates and Indigenous Nations:

I plea with you to support these people in their struggle to protect their land by pressuring the Canadian Government- Ministry of Natural Resources to stop the logging and testing as it is Indigenous Ecological genocide.

Thank-you for your time and consideration in this matter!
Megwetch!