



Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek

GRASSY NARROWS, ONTARIO P0X 1B0 • PHONE: (807) 925-2201 • FAX: (807) 925-2649

January 17, 2007

Open letter

From: Grassy Narrows Chief and Council, Environmental Committee, Blockaders, Trappers, Clan Mothers, Elders, Youth

To: Abitibi Consolidated Inc.,
Weyerhaeuser Corporation,
Companies sourcing from the Grassy Narrows Traditional Territory,
Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty,
Hon. David Ramsay, Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and Aboriginal Affairs,
Prime Minister Steven Harper,
Regional Director of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada,
Hon. Howard Hampton, Member of Provincial Parliament for Kenora-Rainy River,
Governor General Michael Jean,
Retailers, Customers, Investors, Builders, Home Buyers.

Re: Moratorium on industry in our Traditional Territory, and opposition to MNR tender process.

For decades Abitibi Consolidated has clearcut our Asubpeeschoseewagong Traditional Territory (in the Whiskey Jack forest) without our consent and over our objections. Much of this logging is driven by Weyerhaeuser Trus Joist's demand. This clearcut logging has destroyed our traplines and threatens to eliminate our ability to practice our way of life, our culture, our economy, and our spirituality. *Our fundamental ability to traditionally harvest to feed and support our families, as we have for millennia, is being jeopardized.* The companies justify this violation of our inalienable rights as Indigenous people by claiming to provide jobs for local people and support to the local economy. We see none of these benefits.

As we have long warned, Abitibi has now shut down its Kenora mill, putting hundreds of workers out of a job. With the closure of that mill, Abitibi has cut the last strands of their claim to logging rights on this land. Abitibi has destroyed our forests and now violated the basic social contract for logging in Canada by abandoning their workers. They are not contributing anything anymore, only taking, depleting and destroying. It is not in anyone's interest to have Abitibi logging in this area.

The hardwood trees are being logged on our territory for the benefit of Weyerhaeuser Corporation from Seattle Washington. This multinational giant has a clear track record of cut-and-run operations (in Indonesia, the U.S. Pacific Northwest, the B.C. coast, Haida Gwaii, and Saskatchewan). Weyerhaeuser consistently clearcuts the best of a region's forests, exports the profits and then abandons the area - leaving behind them a wake of closed mills, devastated communities, and destroyed forests. By their very structure and law these companies are bound to think only of profit, and are accountable only to their distant shareholders. Weyerhaeuser has no long term interest or commitment to the people or the forests of this area. We cannot sit by and become yet another casualty of Weyerhaeuser's global profit plans.

Now the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is searching for new proposals to clearcut log what is left of the forests on our Traditional Territory. This 'tender process' has excluded our concerns and does not accommodate our interests and long standing grievances.

From time immemorial we, the Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishnaabek (Grassy Narrows Ojibway) have occupied, cherished, and gained sustenance from, our traditional territory. This land is integral to our identity and existence as Anishnaabe people. As the Indigenous people of this area, we retain our language, our culture, our land, our governance, and our spirituality. *On this basis we assert our innate sovereignty and our inalienable right to self determination on our traditional lands.* Our land and these inherent rights are given by the Creator and only the Creator can take them away.

As the Indigenous people of this land we have further inalienable human rights under UN conventions to control our traditional territory, to practice our culture, and to free, prior, and informed consent before any industrial activity occurs on our Traditional Territory. Under Treaty 3, affirmed by the Canadian Constitution, we have the right to hunt, trap, and fish unmolested on our Traditional Territory for all time. And under Supreme Court of Canada rulings (Delgamuukw, Haida, Mikisew) we have, at a minimum, the right to have our interests and concerns meaningfully accommodated in an honourable way. These rights have been consistently violated.

Our primary, life-supporting value is our attachment to the land, and our ability to enjoy the wildlife, forests, waterways and our Anishnaabe way of life - hunting, fishing, trapping, and harvesting - living on the land as our families have for hundreds of years.

Our "oneness" with the land is what sustains us, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

We practice our way of life on our trap lines on our Traditional Territory. Our way of life has been seriously threatened in the past by residential schools, mercury pollution, flooding for hydro dams, and relocation by the Federal Government. *Now what remains of that way of life is being destroyed by clearcut logging of the Boreal Forest for Abitibi and Weyerhaeuser in collusion with the Provincial Government with and the willful blindness of the Federal Government.*

Recent studies show that over 75% of some family traplines have been clearcut, and this cutting continues (RL#36 - Andy Keewatin Jr.). *This threatens to annihilate our very existence as a people. We cannot accept this anymore.*

We need the forest for our survival as a people.

For many years now we have sought respect for our rights to our Traditional Territory, and still we see no benefits for our people and our future generations. We have consistently attempted to voice our concerns within this process but we have seen very little constructive response or progress towards meeting our needs as a community. All we see is the demise of our way of life which disappears every time more cutting areas are extended to Abitibi and Weyerhaeuser. Our forests continue to vanish before our eyes on the backs of huge logging trucks. In despair our trappers are ending up on the streets in the cities to become homeless people and living off the soup lines. For over a century we have shared the land, but you have abused our generosity for too long.

We now declare a moratorium on further industrial activity in our Traditional Territory until such a time as the Governments of Canada and Ontario restore their honour and obtain the consent of our community in these decisions that will forever alter the future of our people.

On behalf of our future generations we call on Abitibi, Weyerhaeuser, and Dalton McGuinty to respect our moratorium. We call on the MNR to halt their tender process, and on the Governments of Ontario and Canada to honour our treaties.

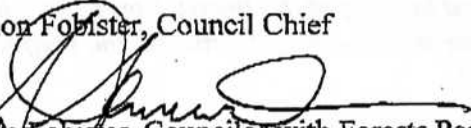
If you choose to ignore our rights we will have no choice but take more action with our supporters in the forest, in the markets, in the legislature, and in the courts to assert our rights as the Indigenous people of this land.

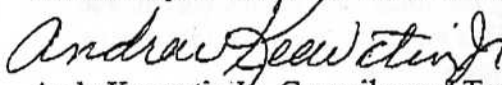
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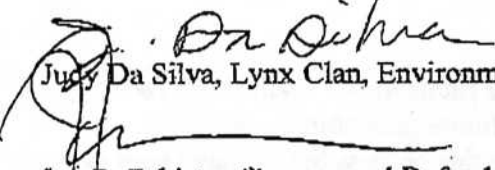
We will determine the course of our own future and we will care for our Traditional Territory.

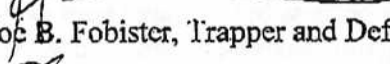
Awsa,


Simon Fobister, Council Chief

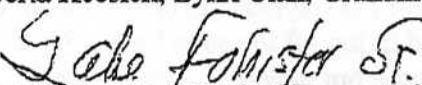

Steve Fobister, Councilor with Forests Portfolio


Andy Keewatin Jr., Councilor and Trapper

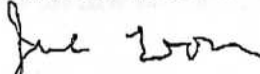

Judy Da Silva, Lynx Clan, Environmental Committee

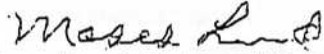

Joe B. Fobister, Trapper and Defender of Anishinabe Lands

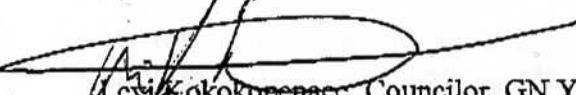

Roberta Keesick, Lynx Clan, Grandmother, Trapper, Hunter, Blockader


Gabriel Fobsister, Head of Trappers Council


Bill Fobister, Elder


Joe Loon, Elder


Moses Land, Elder and Councilor


Levi Kokokopenacc, Councilor, GN Youth Environmental Group