



Peguis First Nation

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Sunterra Peat Mine in Manitoba Sacred Site

Peguis First Nation has advised the Manitoba government about discovery of several sacred artifacts buried at the Sunterra peat mine operation inside Peguis traditional territory and treaty land entitlement notice area. Treatment of these artifacts has been described as sacrilegious, showing little or no respect for the spirituality of Anishinabe Peoples. First Nation lands and resources are not protected by the Manitoba government, and it seems nor are these sacred artifacts.

The Manitoba Heritage Act requires work to stop at the mine, and the site to be assessed, and inventoried. Artifacts recovered to date are held in a secure and respected institution.

The current licence issued to Sunterra Horticulture was processed in a manner that contravened the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate. Accordingly this means the honour of the Crown was not upheld.

Sunterra Horticulture is also seeking an environmental licence for a significant expansion of its operations nearby. The expanded vacuum peat mining operation would impact Peguis First Nation's ability to exercise its rights, including for treaty entitlement land selection. The Sunterra expansion would contribute to drying out the Washow Peninsula where two other new peat mine licences were approved last week. Cottagers, environmental organizations and affected First Nations have appealed these new licences thoroughly since summer 2011.

When the Sunterra expansion proposal was filed under Manitoba's Environment Act hundreds of citizens filed objections.

"We expect the Crown to get to the bottom of the situation at Sunterra's current operation, and to stop approving licences for more peat mines in our territory. This company took steps that contravene the Heritage Act when they discovered this sacred site. We expect that an archeological inventory and field work will locate other sites. This peninsula is a filter for Lake Winnipeg. Drying it out with peat mining makes no sense. Peguis First Nation members continue today to use the peat bogs as our pharmacy. We wish to protect the peat bogs and their species, and continue our traditional activities, including for hunting and medicinal plants," said Councillor Mike Sutherland.

“Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, and the Crown are simply disregarding Peguis First Nation, despite being provided with our technical analysis, and knowing our Section 35, Treaty and TLE rights in this matter,” said Chief Glenn Hudson.

Peguis First Nation expects work to stop at Sunterra’s peat mining operation, and an extensive archeological inventory and assessment to be conducted through the peninsula by the Crown. Traditional knowledge and guidance for inventory will be available from Peguis First Nation.

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