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Justice long overdue:

Canada must recognize and protect the rights of the Lubicon Cree

Over the last quarter century, the Lubicon Cree have seen the land on which they depend transformed by logging and large-scale oil and gas extraction to which they've never consented.

The Lubicon, an Indigenous nation of 500 people living in northern Alberta, have never surrendered their rights to their traditional lands. The Lubicon were overlooked when a treaty was negotiated with other Indigenous peoples in the region in 1899.

In the 1970s, the Alberta government initiated a program of massive oil and gas development on what it considered to be Crown land. The Lubicon say that their health, their way of life and their culture itself have been devastated by these developments. And the Lubicon have fought for respect of their rights in Canadian courts and before the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC).

In March 1990, the UNHRC concluded that "historical inequities" and "more recent developments" have endangered the way of life and the culture of the Lubicon Cree. The Committee ruled that "so long as they continue" these threats are a violation of the Lubicons' fundamental human rights.

At the time, the Canadian government assured the UNHRC that it was seeking a settlement that would protect the rights of the Lubicon. To date, however, no such settlement has been reached.

In fact, it has been more than two years since there were any negotiations between the Lubicon and the Canadian government. In the meantime, licenses continue to be granted to allow resource extraction on the disputed territories.

In October 2005, the UNHRC once again criticized the Canadian government for its failure to protect the rights of the Lubicon Cree. The Committee called on Canada to:

- ♦ make every effort to resume negotiations with the Lubicon Lake Band, with a view to finding a solution which respects the rights of the Band under the Covenant, as already found by the Committee. It should consult with the Band before granting licenses for economic exploitation of the disputed land, and ensure that in no case such exploitation jeopardizes the rights recognized under the Covenant.

The Canadian government cannot continue to ignore the rights of the Lubicon Cree. Canadian human rights and social justice organizations are urging the Canadian public to speak out.

Please ask your friends, family, classmates and co-workers to join you in signing our petition.

Friends of the Lubicon

"Never before in our history – and let's hope never again – [was a Band] promised, over 50 years ago, a settlement and a reserve that would have given them a livelihood ... so that they wouldn't have suffered so dreadfully from the loss of their [traditional] livelihood – promises which have not been fulfilled, which have been stymied, which have been met with obfuscation and difficulties [from] the very people responsible for implementing the promise."

The Hon. E. David Fulton

Before the Lubicon Settlement Commission of Review Public Hearings, November 2, 1992