



Indigenous Resistance to Weyerhaeuser in Canada

Weyerhaeuser, one of the world's largest logging companies, is notorious for the social and ecological devastation it has wrought across the globe. Weyerhaeuser operates through a consistent pattern of 'cut and run': rapidly pillaging local resources then laying off workers and moving out, leaving a trail of devastated communities in ecologically depleted and polluted landscapes. In spite of this dismal record, provincial governments have granted Weyerhaeuser control over 35 million acres of forests in Canada, without the consent of the local Indigenous peoples who have legal, customary and ethical rights to their land.

Every valley, river, lake and hill in Weyerhaeuser's Canadian operating areas are part of the traditional lands of Indigenous Nations who have thrived with the forests for millennia, depending on forests to sustain their culture, inspire their spirituality, and support their economy. When Weyerhaeuser clear-cuts an area they not only destroy the capacity for Indigenous communities to engage in the hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering that has traditionally sustained them, they also rob the natural wealth that could allow these communities to re-build their economies and secure a bright future for their unborn generations.

In this way Weyerhaeuser actively and knowingly participates in the ongoing colonization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples – trampling their right to self-determination and looting the basis of their economic and cultural survival and revival. But Indigenous communities across Canada are not giving up their land, livelihood and way of life without a fight. Weyerhaeuser's actions are being actively countered by a vibrant movement of Indigenous resistance that is giving rise to a growing wave of solidarity from students, anti-poverty organizations, and supporters of social and ecological justice. Here are some of the inspiring stories of Indigenous communities acting to re-gain control of their lands.

Grassy Narrows Anishnabeg: A Nation in Struggle

In Kenora, Ontario, most of the trees feeding Weyerhaeuser's Trus Joist mill are clear-cut by Abitibi consolidated in the Whiskey Jack Forest Management Unit [323,000 cubic meters per year]. The community of Grassy Narrows is intimately familiar with this part of the Boreal Forest as their "Traditional Land Use Area" – meaning this is an area where they have hunted, trapped, gathered berries, wild rice, and medicines, and fished for thousands of years. These forests make it possible for the people of Grassy Narrows to maintain sustainable traditions that have been passed down for generations.



Large clear-cuts, that leave nothing standing, have decimated these forests, and altered the Grassy Narrows First Nation's way of life forever. Industrial logging leaves in its wake large piles of wasted trees, left to decay after they have been cut. The scarred land remaining after logging is covered in herbicides and then replaced with monoculture tree-farms, devoid of the blueberry bushes and plants traditionally used for medicinal purposes. Without healthy forests, much of the wildlife is also disappearing, making it difficult for the people to continue hunting and trapping on Grassy Narrows' traditional land.

As one blockader explains "There's Abitibi cutting the softwoods, and there's Trus Joist and Weyerhaeuser cutting the hardwoods and dumping all these chemicals, plus the smoke that goes in the air. We have all these companies that are taking from the forest and then giving us back disease and sickness and death."

In the winter of 2002, after a decade of letter-writing, meetings, protests, petitions and legal efforts, three youth from the community took matters into their own hands and felled trees across a logging road near their home. This sparked a community blockade that has successfully halted logging in the area for over two years and has drawn international attention. To this day no logging truck has crossed the blockade and the people of Grassy Narrows are not backing down. Their courageous stand has served as an beacon of hope to Indigenous communities across the region, many of which now contemplating similar actions to protect their traditional lands. It has also inspired a broad range of people to form groups and organize in support of Indigenous rights and forest defence.

"The land is us. Instead of the land belonging to us, we belong to the land. Protecting the land is like protecting ourselves, Anishnabeg and everybody else on the earth, also future generations," explains a second blockader.

The Grassy Narrows blockaders ask that people "make a knowledgeable decision on the paper products that they use, and if it comes from Weyerhaeuser or Abitibi for them to know that it is destroying our people, our way of life."

"We say that we are already rich people, just

leave us alone. Let us use our land how we want to use it, let us feed our people how we want to feed them, and then our people will become strong again."

For more information check out www.friendsofgrassynarrows.com

Haida Gwaii: Islands Spirit Rising

In April of 2005, through a community action called "Islands Spirit Rising," the Haida Nation set up road blocks which shut down Weyerhaeuser's logging operations on Haida Gwaii (a.k.a. Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia), and seized \$50 million of cedar logs. They, along with many supporters from local communities, demanded that Weyerhaeuser and the BC government respect the Haida's right to determine their own future and control the resources on their island.

In recent years Weyerhaeuser had clear-cut much of the Island's ancient cedar trees – a fountainhead of Haida culture and economy. In a devastating blow to the local economy the company shipped the cedars – many over 700 years old – off the island as raw logs, eliminating the potential for the local economy to benefit from processing and manufacturing. Having made their profit by plundering the ancient forests in less than one generation, Weyerhaeuser was trying cut and run by selling their holdings to Toronto based Brascan corporation.

Haida statements explained that "Weyerhaeuser has shown no respect for the land, the culture, or the



people who have worked for them.... Now the company is poised to sell its interests and in its final hours is attempting to strip all that it can from this land.

The opportunity to design a future that maintains the land and culture while providing for a sustainable economy is in our hands. The next generation will not have the same chance if the forest industry is allowed to strip our lands in the next few years.



When law, diplomacy and negotiations fail, it is time to stand and accept our responsibilities... The signs on the road say it all -- Enough is Enough!"

Dozens of organizations spoke up and put their support behind the Haida's stand. In Seattle, representatives of the Haida Nation held a joint press conference with RAN to coincide with Weyerhaeuser's annual meeting of shareholders. The story was picked up by major US newspapers and TV. RAN activists hung 8 large banners on overhangs along Seattle's main highway, Interstate 5, while 60 to 70 people demonstrated on Weyerhaeuser's corporate headquarters. Over 20 allies attended Weyerhaeuser's shareholder meeting to express their concerns. In Toronto 100 people protested against Weyerhaeuser in solidarity with the Haida's demands. Throngs of business people in the heart of the financial district were confronted by the sound of Native drummers, raging grannies, colorful banners, and pamphlets supporting the Haida and exposing Weyerhaeuser as an unethical and unsafe investment.

On April 22nd, the Haida came to a landmark agreement with the B.C. government that set aside

areas identified in the Haida Land Use Vision to be "protected for cultural and ecological purposes." The government agreed to a new approach to land use planning that "connects land and resources to community viability, with the intent to design a sustainable Island economy." Future logging would follow the principles of Eco-system Based Management, and would be subject to a 200 year outlook Timber Supply Review "done in a manner that takes into account Haida interests and is culturally, ecologically and economically sustainable." There was also a commitment to review options to end the commercial and recreational bear hunt on Haida Gwaii.

This is a significant accomplishment for the Haida that sets a strong precedent for other First Nations who are seeking control over their lands. But the Haida are not resting. These commitments still need to be implemented, and the Haida are still pursuing negotiations for their rights to full title over traditional lands.

For more information check out www.haidanation.ca and www.spruceroots.org

Strong Ojibway Women of Saugeen and Mishkeegogamang

In July of 2003 two Ojibway grandmothers ages 83 and 85 were harvesting blueberries in their traditional hunting territory. Two men from a logging company approached these elders with a rotweiler and ordered them to leave so that the area could be sprayed with herbicide. The Grandmothers walked out of the forest and then 7 Km to a highway where they had to hitch hike back to their homes. While their land was being poisoned they called a meeting to tell their community what had happened.

Four young women from the community borrowed a vehicle and went out to see what was happening on their traditional land. They found kilometers of barren land baking in the sun. Wincing against the glare from a treeless earth they could see puddles of oil, plastic barrels and industrial litter everywhere. When they returned with a video of this trip they brought a meeting hall full of their elders to tears and the Sealing of the North initiative was born. Since then these women have been organizing their community and traveling across North America finding supporters to help them protect their indigenous lands forever. They write:

"Come and stand with the grandmothers, mothers

and daughters from the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen and Mishkeegogamang First Nation.

In the Spirit of our ancestors who have sacrificed everything to preserve what we now have today, we are continuing the legacy of our people as caretakers of Mother Earth. We will ensure the existence of future generations standing strong, proud and free without borders...

This resistance is one of many across Turtle Island, to the theft, sale, and subsequent destruction of lands belonging to First Peoples. Guaranteed in Treaty 9 & Treaty 3 are the rights of the Anishnabek of both Mishkeegogamang First Nation and the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen, to continue to live as their ancestors have lived without obstruction. A lengthy process of attempting to reason with power brokers of the Canadian and American state over the violation of this Nation to Nation agreement has yielded nothing.

The movement towards reclaiming the capacity to once again be, free, self-determining peoples without reservation, is being spearheaded by the Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters of these communities who, in the face of poverty and despair, are committed to creating a strong foundation on which to simultaneously heal wounds inflicted by the process of colonization and defend themselves from the imminent threat of this newly legislated land grab..."

RAN research reveals that trees logged from Saugeen and Mishkeegogamang traditional lands by Bowater are used at Weyerhaeuser's Dryden Ontario mill to make copy paper sold by Xerox at retailers like Costco and OfficeMax.

Conclusion

Socially and ecologically destructive companies like Weyerhaeuser are facing a strong and growing movement of Indigenous resistance to the misappropriation and destruction of traditional lands. These are just a few of the bold and historic actions that are re-defining how governments and corporations deal with First Nations across Canada, as they articulate a clear and hopeful vision of a just and sustainable future.

Let's show that we stand in support of this Indigenous-led movement for self-determination, Indigenous rights, healthy ecosystems, and sustainable local economies. Join the growing wave of people uniting behind these communities in struggle by providing direct support, donating supplies and funds, spreading the word, reducing consumption, boycotting corporate criminals, and organizing solidarity actions to take these struggles into the urban centers, board rooms, legislatures and newspapers.

Boycott

Logging Corporations: Weyerhaeuser, Abitibi, Bowater, West Fraser, Cattermole

Brands: Xerox, Kleenex, Victoria Secret

Resort Developers: Delta Hotels, Resorts West, Nipon Cable, Nancy Green-Raine

More Information

<http://www.haidanation.ca> – Council of the Haida Nation – Haida Gwaii

<http://www.spruceroots.org> – Spruceroots journal by Gowgaia Institute – Haida Gwaii

<http://www.friendsofgrassnarrows.com> – Friends of Grassy Narrows - Winnipeg

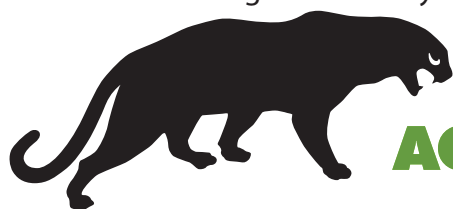
<http://www.redwiremag.com> – Rewire Magazine

http://noii-van.resist.ca/indigenous_sovereignty - No One is Illegal - Vancouver

<http://ipsm.nativeweb.org> - Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement - Montreal

http://apc.resist.ca/indigenous_solidarity - Anti-Poverty Committee - Vancouver

<http://ocap.ca> – Ontario Coalition Against Poverty - Toronto



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