

RELEASE

Tuesday July 29, 2014

Hunger strike launched by Grassy Narrows mercury survivor at Queens Park

Toronto – A former Grand Chief of Treaty 3 and respected Grassy Narrows Elder is launching a hunger strike at Queens Park today to demand justice for mercury survivors. Steve Fobister Sr., a leader in the fight for indigenous rights and mercury justice, suffers daily from the debilitating neurological impacts of mercury poison.

PRESS CONFERENCE

WHAT: Former Grassy Narrows Chief Steven Fobister Sr. launches hunger strike for mercury justice.

WHERE: Queen's Park.

WHEN: 10:00 a.m. Tuesday July 29, 2014.

“The government talks, stalls, and dodges, but they won't look me in the eye and say sorry for making me sick, and they won't give my people the health care and support that we need,” said Steve Fobister Sr. “By poisoning our river, and then clearcut logging our forests, Ontario has ruined our health and now threatens to destroy who we are.”

Steve Fobister Sr. was a sport fishing guide to magnates and celebrities in the 1960's and 70's. Guides were encouraged to eat their catch for lunch each day alongside the tourists, and many brought fish home for their families. The favourite meal, walleye, has the highest mercury levels of any fish species in the river system.

Once a formidable orator and capable hunter, Steve, now 63, can barely walk, and can no longer work. He trembles so severely that it is difficult to speak, and he has lost sensation in his lips and fingers. Steve's granddaughter suffers from congenital mercury poisoning because her mother was told that that the mercury problem was in the past. Health Canada stopped testing Grassy Narrows people for mercury in the 1990's declaring that it was a minimal risk.

Steve receives \$250 in compensation per month, which buys only half what it did when compensation finally began in 1986. 65% of Grassy Narrows and White Dog people diagnosed with clear cases of mercury poisoning by Japanese expert Dr. Harada do not receive any compensation at all, according to a report released to the public yesterday.

Two years ago this week, Premier Wynne visited Grassy Narrows and committed to rebuild Ontario's relationship with the community and to do it right. But mercury survivors in Grassy Narrows say that nothing has been done to improve their lives.

Yesterday, an expert report was revealed to the public showing that the government has been aware, since 2009 at least, that mercury survivors are receiving inadequate health care, and most are not receiving any compensation. Ontario and Canada have never apologized for even one case of mercury

poisoning in Grassy Narrows despite admitting that 9 tonnes of mercury was dumped into the English-Wabigoon River between 1962 and 1970 with Ontario's permission.

“I don't want more talk from the government, I want solutions,” said Steve Fobister Sr. “I demand a hospital in Grassy Narrows for mercury survivors, proper compensation for everyone, and full assessment and care for the younger generation.”

CONDITIONS

We ask that you respect the limitations that Steve's ill-health, and hunger strike, will place on him. Please only contact him through his helper, and please only visit him during the designated access times.

ACCESS TIMES

Steve will be available for media at 10 a.m. And 4 p.m. daily, at Queens Park.

For background information on mercury in Grassy Narrows go to:

<http://freegrassy.net/2014/05/25/river-run-2014-water-is-sacred/>

#FreeGrassy #RiverRun