

RELEASE

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Hundreds march with Grassy Narrows for mercury justice, clean water, indigenous rights

Wild river flows through Toronto streets to Queens Park

Toronto – Hundreds of people will form a wild river with Grassy Narrows and flow through Toronto's streets to Queens Park to demand immediate action for mercury survivors. Grassy Narrows people continue to suffer from the neurological impacts of mercury, and most survivors are receiving inadequate health care and no compensation, according to an expert report commissioned in 2009 by the Mercury Disability Board. The expert report was released to the general public for the first time on Monday by FreeGrassy.net.

"I hear that the Minister is committed to resolve our issues at some point in the future," said Grassy Narrows Chief Roger Fobister Sr. "There is nothing stopping Ontario from committing right now that all mercury survivors will receive proper care and compensation, and that never again will Ontario force clearcut logging on our homeland."

VISUALS: People wielding 1,500 meters of blue fabric rippling in the wind, fish cutouts, windsocks on poles, and striking banners will flow up University Ave. Grassy Narrows mercury survivors in wheelchairs will take the lead along with the Grassy Narrows flag.

START: Grange Park (behind the AGO), at Noon.

WALK: From Grange Park to Queens Park. 12:30 – 1:10 p.m.

SPEACHES: Queens Park, 1:15 p.m.

Ontario has made final plans for a decade of clearcut logging on Grassy Narrows' homeland, a practice that has been found to release mercury into boreal lakes, where it is magnified as it works its way up the food chain. Clearcut logging alone can raise mercury levels in fish above the limit for safe human consumption.

"Water is the sacred source of all life," said Judy Da Silva, a Grassy Narrows mother of five. "We cannot allow clearcut logging and mercury poison to harm another generation of our children. The pollution does not stop with First Nations, it will effect everyone. Its time for all peoples to join us in defending our earth."

On Tuesday, Ontario Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Zimmer said he would to attempt a complete review of the current compensation system, and to strive for a mercury treatment centre in Grassy Narrows. However, he did not commit to any specific outcomes that will improve the lives of mercury survivors, and he made all commitments contingent on cooperation from the Government of Canada which has been chronically absent on this issue.

"The mercury problem will not end until there is a cleanup and until clearcut logging is banned on our homeland," said Chief Fobister Sr. of Grassy Narrows. "When will Ontario fix what they have broken

and ensure that this never happens again?”

Former Treaty Three Grand Chief Steve Fobister Sr. ended his hunger strike Wednesday morning so that he can “live and continue to fight for Grassy Narrows, for all aboriginal people, and for environmental justice.”

“I have flushed the government fox out of his fox hole. But our work is not done and I will not stop pushing for justice.”

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High resolution photos and Broll are available.

#FreeGrassy #RiverRun