



GINOOGAMING FIRST NATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 31, 2021

NORTHERN ONTARIO FIRST NATION GOES TO COURT ON JUNE 1: SEEKS TO STOP MINERAL EXPLORATION IN SACRED KEYSTONE AREA; ARGUES THAT PROTECTION OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND AREAS IS AN ABORIGINAL RIGHT

Ginoogaming First Nation near Long Lac Ontario, is going to the Ontario Superior Court in Toronto on June 1, to seek an injunction stopping Michael Malouf and his companies from undertaking mineral exploration in a sacred and cultural keystone area within the First Nation's territory, and stopping Ontario from issuing an exploration permit to another company run by William Kerr.

Ginoogaming tried to prevent this litigation by writing letters to Premier Ford and Energy, Northern Development and Mines Minister Rickford proposing many ways under Ontario law that interim and long term protection for this special area could be effected, but both letters went unanswered.

"We are trying to have our sacred and ancestral identity respected as a right," says Ginoogaming Vice Chief Sheri Taylor. "Our rights cannot be reduced to only harvesting on the land. We have always been much more than that. We are a people and our rights to continue to survive as a distinct people were not all swept away by signing a treaty. It is the time that courts recognized that indigenous peoples are not two-dimensional."

"The First Nation has filed a lawsuit seeking declarations that it has aboriginal rights to protect sacred areas and engage in sacred practices, and that these areas must not be desecrated with industrial and exploitative development," says Ginoogaming's lawyer Kate Kempton. "Ontario tries to pigeon hole any burial or other sacred sites as being dots on a map; that it is okay to develop all around and within feet of each one. We are seeking to have an entire 100-plus square mile area protected. And while that case is pending, we are bringing this motion for an injunction to prevent the area and its values from being irreparably harmed by mineral development in the interim."

“If we succeed in the lawsuit, this will mark an important turning point in Canadian law as it affects indigenous peoples,” says Vice Chief Taylor. “Most cases in the courts about our rights are about harvesting – hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering plants. Those were the bases of our economies once, when settlers first came here and until about 50 years ago. But nowhere else are people defined merely by their economies, and we should not be either. We live by the laws of the Creator as interpreted by our ancestors. Our spirituality, culture and laws are one.”

The public and media can tune into the injunction hearing starting at 10 am June 1, at <https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/67596319293?pwd=aGxidGlaL044Tl1Sem9PbW5GVHgydz09>

Meeting ID: 675 9631 9293

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