

STATEMENT AT REGIONAL DIALOGUES BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MEMBER STATES (NORTH AMERICA)

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE – UNPFII TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

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by

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(Treaty #9, Ontario, Canada)

Guiding Theme: Enhancing Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth

Distinguished delegates and fellow Indigenous Peoples:

My name is Alyssa Lentz. I am from Eabametoong First Nation. I am here with Chief Sheri Taylor of Ginoogaming First Nation and other youth delegates from Ginoogaming, Aroland, Constance Lake, and Marten Falls First Nations in James Bay Treaty No. 9, Canada.

Since 1905, our lands and waters have been expropriated through the imposition of state laws and regulations. Our ancestors did not have the opportunity to sit at the table with the Crown. As youth from Nations in the Matawa region—we have learned from this. We are very much aware of our inherent rights and laws before Treaty No. 9.

North America's prosperity has been as a result of our significant contribution. The *Ogoki and Long Lake Water Diversions*, signed through an agreement between Canada and the US in the 1940's, changed the direction of the flow-of-the waters from—naturally going to us in the north—to engineered to go south. Today, it provides hydro-electric power and is pumped into seaways to allow freighters to navigate and ship within North America and reach international markets. We have never been compensated for this contribution of sharing our waters which were not surrendered in James Bay Treaty No. 9.

We are located on the *largest chromite deposit* not found elsewhere on the continent. As youth, we are keenly aware of how the state is incentivizing extractive industries and opening up our lands for mining staking via online means. We are also aware of the positions of our leaders on this critical-minerals deposit. We are concerned about illegitimate groups in our part of Turtle Island calling themselves the Métis who are encroaching on our lands and being prioritized for benefits prior to our Nations.

What to do with the grandfather rocks (our relatives) in the mineral-loaded area called the '*Ring of Fire*' has been discussed for over a decade. As youth, we are disappointed to have not been included. We call on Canada to secure a meaningful place for Indigenous youth who will be affected by this proposed development.

Many of our communities are remote (not reachable, except for by plane) and our homeland is pristine. BUT we reside in communities in 3rd world conditions *having to deal with a state (and extractive industry) that does not want to address our poverty first*. Instead, they want to build all-season roads for no other reason than to access the minerals. We want prosperity and to establish an economy too but—not at the expense of destroying our lands.

Sadly, our communities are rife with addictions and are trapped in a state of poverty without proper education, housing, infrastructure, clean water, and food. In conclusion, we call on Canada to mandate extractive industries and Ontario to ensure that these needs are addressed (in a measurable way) in tandem or before development takes place.

Thank you.