

Take action with Grassy Narrows in June 2012!

In June 2012 members of the Grassy Narrows community will continue their strong leadership in demanding justice for their community and the environment. We need your support to help make this happen.

On the week of June 4th a dozen members of the Grassy Narrows community will come to Toronto for River Run 2012. They will lead a week of events to raise public awareness about their struggle for justice and water protection. The week will culminate in a march of hundreds to Queen's Park. Through these events, the Grassy Narrows community will show their strength, present their demands, and garner public support for their struggle for clean water and control over their lives and their lands.

Particularly, the Grassy Narrows community members will be demanding justice concerning the toxic levels of mercury that are in their fish and the sovereignty over their territory which would prevent such disasters. Fifty years ago a paper mill in Dryden, Ontario began contaminating the Wabigoon River upstream of the Grassy Narrows community. The community continues to be drastically affected by this contamination. Although mercury levels are decreasing, the long term exposure has resulted in increasing symptoms of mercury poisoning in the community, including signs of congenital mercury poisoning in young children.

The week of June 4th will be filled with events that will pressure the McGuinty government to act on this situation.

Events will include:

- A press conference releasing a new report on the increasing severity of cases of mercury poisoning despite decreasing levels of environmental mercury ,
- Public speaking events to educate people from southern Ontario about Grassy Narrows' struggle,
- A fish fry,
- and a march of hundreds to Queen's Park to present the demands of the Grassy Narrows community.

The week's events will be led by the Grassy Narrows Women's Drum Group and are supported by the community's Chief and Council. The invitation letter from the Grassy Narrows Women's Drum Group is attached, as is a support letter from Chief Simon Fobister. A Toronto-based organizing network has formed to take direction from the Grassy Narrows grassroots leaders in helping to implement the logistics of the events that Grassy Narrows has planned.

We need your support:

1) There are costs associated with this week of events. The largest of which is transportation costs for the Grassy Narrows community's 1,700km trip to Toronto, as well as logistical costs for hosting them in Toronto for a week. The estimated costs will be in the region of \$25,000. It is for this reason that we are asking your organization to support this initiative financially as generously as you can.

Please make cheques payable to: **Earth Justice Action** and put "River Run" on the notes line.

You can send them to:

Earth Justice Action
C/o Paul Tucker
537 Runnymede Road
Toronto, ON M6S 2Z8

2) We are also looking for organizations and union locals to endorse the event. If you are able to do this please email: 2012riverrun@gmail.com

3) Since we are trying to raise as much attention as possible to the demands of the Grassy Narrows community we would love to see you and your members at our events. Please circulate information about all of the week's events to your email lists, newsletters, facebook, twitter, website, etc. You will be able to find more information in the near future at: www.freegrassy.org.

We hope that you will be able to support this initiative with finances, endorsements, and participation.

Sincerely,

The River Run Coalition Finance Team

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- 1) The invitation letter from the Grassy Narrows Women's Drum Group
- 2) The support letter from Chief Fobister
- 3) A Toronto Star article from the first River Run in April 2010

Letter from the Grassy Narrows Women's Drum Group:

Take action with Grassy Narrows Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinabek

Please join us in Toronto for River Run 2012, where we'll continue a tradition of community lead action for justice—for our people, and for the protection of the water, air, and forests that give life to us all.

These events will be in the week of June 4th 2012.

In April 2010, we marched together as one wild river flowing onto the steps of Queen's Park to deliver our demands on World Health Day. We ask that you join us again this year to make clear to those at Queen's Park that we're as strong as ever, and will continue to demand justice for our people and protection for our environment.

To endorse, donate, support, or for more information contact us at:

2012riverrun@gmail.com

Over 40 years ago our people were poisoned by mercury from a paper mill that contaminated our river upstream. Our people are demanding justice because we are still dealing with the ongoing health impacts of this avoidable disaster. It's an inescapable truth *that this poison will affect everyone if we don't stand together to protect our water.*

For decades the GNAA community members have been on the front lines of the movement to defend the earth and to uphold Indigenous self-determination, culture and spirituality. We have kicked out logging giant Abitibi for now, but there is still much work to be done. Joining in River Run 2012 is a great opportunity to show your support and to join us in the fight to protect our rights and the water, air, land, and creatures that we all depend on.

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Grassy Narrows Asubpeeschoseewagong Women's Drum Group



Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek

GRASSY NARROWS, ONTARIO P0X 1B0 • PHONE: (807) 925-2201 • FAX: (807) 925-2649

February 10, 2012

RE: Support for Grassy Narrows events in Toronto to bring attention to our ongoing issues of mercury poisoning and unwanted logging threats.

To Whom it May Concern,

Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows) is organizing a series of events in Toronto this summer to bring attention to our ongoing issues of mercury poisoning and the threat of unwanted logging. The series of events is called River Run 2012 and will include a press conference, public speaking event, a rally, and more. The events are being organized with my full support by community member Judy Da Silva, assisted by organizations and individuals in Toronto through our liaison David Sone.

River Run 2012 is tentatively scheduled for late June or early July 2012.

I hope that this letter will suffice in confirming my positive support, attendance, and participation in these events.

These events will be a means for us to release information, raise awareness, and gather support in mainstream Canadian Society, and also to make plans to deal with environmental contamination and destruction in our territory.

I hope that you, and your organization, will be able to provide full support for our community to help make this initiative a success.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 807-925-2201, or leave a message with the receptionist.

Sincerely,

Chief Simon R. Fobister


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Protesters demand action on Grassy Narrows

April 07, 2010

Brendan Kennedy

About 250 people marched peacefully through downtown Toronto Wednesday afternoon to demand action from the Ontario government for the mercury poisoning they say has been occurring on the Grassy Narrows First Nation for decades.

"I think a lot of people in these buildings, in these cities, they don't see ... the devastation in our communities," said Grassy Narrows resident, Judy Da Silva, who organized the rally.

Da Silva said the community's waterways have become like "poison" to its people.

Grassy Narrows First Nation is a community of nearly 1,000 people about an hour's drive northeast of Kenora.

"We still have a long journey to go to make the water clean again, to make the land alive again," Da Silva said.

The protestors accuse the McGuinty government of not taking responsibility for allowing the Dryden Pulp & Paper Co. to dump 9,000 kg of mercury into the Wabigoon River between 1962 and 1970.

They called on the provincial government to acknowledge the long-term effects of mercury poisoning on the community, and demanded federal government strengthen mercury regulations.

"We've been seeking justice for 40 years," said Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister. "Our health condition is worsening, generation after generation. This has got to stop."

Health Canada says mercury levels in the community have fallen below their minimum guidelines, but residents and activists say the long-term effects of mercury poisoning continue to plague the community in the form of chronic health problems, birth defects and contamination of the land and water.

The protest comes a day after a newly translated study of Grassy Narrows by Japanese scientist Dr. Masazumi Harada showed 79 per cent of 187 people tested in 2002 and 2004 had or may have had Minimata disease, a condition arising from exposure to methyl-mercury. Tremor, tunnel vision, impaired hearing and speech and loss of muscular co-ordination and sensation in the extremities are hallmarks of the condition.

Members of several organizations, including the Council of Canadians, Amnesty International and Greenpeace, joined about 40 members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation, who travelled more than three days by car, rail and bus to attend the rally.

"There's a certain kind of violence in telling people they can't eat the fish they have been surviving on for generations," said Meera Karunanathan, national water campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

The protestors, many carrying long stretches of blue fabric meant to resemble flowing water, marched from Grange Park, north on McCowen Ave. across College St. and north on University Ave. to Queen's Park.

Harada first tested community members in 1975. He found people with mercury levels over three times the Health Canada limit in Grassy Narrows and seven times the limit in White Dog. When Harada returned in 2004, the people he tested in 1975 with mercury levels in the blood considered above health guidelines were dead.



Residents from Grassy Narrows First Nation in northern Ontario lead a group of protestors in a downtown march to Queen's Park to call on the Ontario government to acknowledge the long-term health effects of mercury contamination in their waterways. (April 7, 2010)

BRENDAN KENNEDY/TORONTO STAR

While the federal and provincial governments say contamination is no longer a problem, Harada's research indicates the possibility of c
Minamata disease is high, said Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse. Children are being born with neurological problems, mental del
and cerebral palsy, he said.

Premier Dalton McGuinty said Tuesday the province has a "heavy responsibility" to study Harada's findings, because they conflict with
federal government's claim that mercury poisoning at Grassy Narrows is under control.

"It seems we have conflicting data and information," McGuinty told reporters in Peterborough, where he was visiting a health clinic. "We
report, apparently, which says we have a continuing problem and this contrasts with the federal government which is saying, 'Well, this
under control.'"