

## Reclaiming the Land

*This issue of Taiga News is devoted to a discussion of the role of indigenous people in the boreal region. Unfortunately, much of what is reported is bad news - the destruction of traditional lifestyles, the exploitation of resources and disputes over land ownership. However, it would be misleading to give the impression that such problems are inevitable. Indigenous Communities are perfectly capable of co-existing in harmony with the modern world - given half a chance. Accordingly, we start this issue with some good news....*

Mistik Management Ltd is a joint venture involving the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and non-Aboriginal forest industry partners in Northern Saskatchewan, Canada. Since its inception in 1990, Mistik has structured its public and community involvement activities in relation to the unique socio-demographic makeup of the area, where over half of the population are of Aboriginal descent. Forestry has been part of the regional economy since the 1930s, the scale of operations increasing in recent decades as aspen became a commercially viable resource.

In the 1980s, a newly elected conservative government sold its Meadow Lake sawmill to a local consortium of sawmill employees and a local tribal council. The government also granted a 20-year forest management license and access to timber on 3.3 million hectares. This mill and a new zero water effluent mill in Meadow Lake make up Mistik Management, which has a long-term Forest management License Agreement for the area.

The success of the company lies with the fact that from the beginning it created mechanisms that allowed a diverse range of public interests to provide input into its operations. By incorporating the perspectives of a variety of resource users with both local and non-local residents and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens, Mistik Management is attempting to create a forest management regime that both meets the needs of shareholders, and that reflects the desires of the Province's citizens.

The Cree of Waswanipi in northern Quebec have been involved in small-scale, commercial forest activities for about 35 years. They began to look more seriously at commercial-scale management options in the 1980s and undertook a lengthy process of community consultations, resulting in the establishment of the Mishtuk Corporation.

A major challenge for Mishtuk has been how to balance commercial forestry with the needs of the roughly one third of Cree who practice trapping and hunting. After a series of consultations to explore forest and habitat conservation needs, Mishtuk reduced the harvest, and has set up a fund to compensate trappers negatively affected by harvesting. Mishtuk has also developed a system whereby money from timber rights comes back to the community.

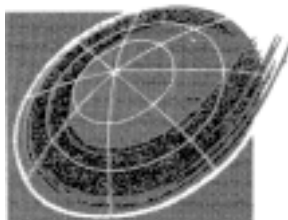
In March 1995, the Mishtuk signed a deal with Domtar Inc., one of the province's largest forest products companies, to build and operate a Can\$5.8 million saw mill. Mishtuk undertook the deal after 80 per cent of the community voted for the mill in a referendum. The project is the first joint venture between an Aboriginal community and the forest products industry in northern Quebec. The saw mill employs about 90 people from the community. Since the saw mill opened, Chief John Kitchen has observed that regular employment and income gains seem to have ameliorated social problems in the community.

*Source: Communities and Forest Management in Canada and the United States - see page 12 for details.*

newsletter  
on boreal  
forests

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**Inside this issue: A six page special issue on  
Indigenous People in the Boreal Region  
Plus news and reviews**

## Indigenous Peoples in the Boreal

*This special issue of Taiga News on Indigenous Peoples in the Boreal reflects TRN's commitment to support indigenous peoples. By spreading information on the challenges they face and publicising indigenous initiatives in the forestry sector, we hope to contribute to stopping the systematic marginalisation of indigenous voices in the debate over the future of the world's boreal forests.*

Russia is home to one million Indigenous People. As with many other indigenous people in the boreal, they are confronted with the depletion of the natural resources that they rely on, weak rights to the ownership, control and management of their traditional lands and lack of political power resulting in a loss of traditional knowledge and social disruption.

In Russia as elsewhere, powerful national and foreign interest groups are increasingly moving into Indigenous Peoples' ancestral lands to access natural resources (i.e. mining, oil and gas exploration, large-scale logging), thereby accelerating the depletion of Indigenous People's resource base.

With the objective of helping Indigenous Peoples' struggle towards self determination in Russia, ten Western environmental NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and support groups, including several TRN participants, gathered in Denmark in May, to lay the basis of a network of groups and individuals working with Indigenous communities and organisations in Russia. A new email listserve was established to facilitate co-operation and the exchange of information between NGOs, Indigenous peoples organisations and scientists in support of the Indigenous Peoples living in the Russian Federation (for more information on how to subscribe to the list, send an email to [taiga@jokkmokk.se](mailto:taiga@jokkmokk.se)).

The meeting participants also agreed to organise a joint workshop on Indigenous Peoples at the next international TRN conference to be held in Moscow in September 2000. The conference will explore multi-use, traditional and indigenous forest management patterns as a viable economic option in the discussion over the future of boreal forests. Workshops will include examples of successful community alternatives, non-timber forest products initiatives, recreation, etc. More details on the conference will be included in the next issue of *Taiga News*.

Elisa Peter

## Global

### WTO update...

Forty forest protection groups from fourteen countries, including TRN participants, came together for a conference on *Forests and Globalization* in Seattle, US at the end of June. An international campaign against the proposed forest trade negotiations at the WTO (see *Taiga News 27*) was launched at the conference which was organised by the Pacific Environment and Resources Center (PERC), International Forum on Globalization and American Lands Alliance. At issue are three primary concerns: the WTO plans to reduce global tariffs on forest products; that existing regulations could be weakened or amended to enhance trade; and that new laws could be introduced to allow companies the right to claim damages for environmental regulation

**Contact:** Paige Fischer, PERC.

Tel: +1-510-251-8800, email: [perc@igc.org](mailto:perc@igc.org)

### Well Watching

Focused on the former Soviet Union, a new listserve has been set up by Oilwatch Europe to spread information on the social and environmental effects of the oil and gas industry in the region.

To join the list send an mail to [majordomo@freeteam.xs4all.nl](mailto:majordomo@freeteam.xs4all.nl) with the message: subscribe oilwatch-neftegaz

## Forest biotechnology

In April, Fletcher Challenge Forests, International Paper, Monsanto and Westvaco announced their intention to form a forestry biotechnology joint venture to produce and market tree seedlings "that will improve forest health and productivity for the forestry market worldwide". The four companies will contribute US\$60 million over five years to the joint venture and hope to become the market leaders in forestry biotech information and technology.

Research will initially concentrate on various eucalyptus and poplar species, Radiata pine, loblolly pine and sweetgum. Targeted genetic improvements include herbicide tolerant planting stock, higher growth rates and improved fibre quality and uniformity.



Meanwhile, the concerns over biotechnology and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) continue to grow. Within the food and agriculture sectors public pressure is increasing the demands on governments to either ban or at least clearly

label products containing GMO and international environmental NGOs are beginning to call, at the very least, for a moratorium on releases until further research has been carried out.

The TRN platform reflects these calls with the statement that: *The use of genetically engineered organisms and exotic species must be halted and native genotypes restored.*

**Contact:** Monsanto, web: <http://www.monsanto.com>

## North America

### Canadian Senators - boreal action

The Senate Subcommittee on the Boreal Forest released its final report, *Competing Realities: The Boreal Forest at Risk* in July. The focus of the report is on ensuring the sustainability of forests. The report recognises that: "*Portions of Canada's remaining natural, undisturbed boreal forest and its areas of old growth are now at risk, from both climate change and over cutting. Highly mechanized timber harvesting is proceeding at a rapid pace, as is mineral and petroleum exploration and extraction. At the same time, the boreal forest is being asked to provide a home and way of life for aboriginal communities, habitat for wildlife, an attraction for tourism and a place where biodiversity and watersheds are protected*".

The report includes 35 recommendations, including that the federal government should accelerate the identification, interim protection and establishment of six new national parks within the boreal zone; complete the promised network of protected areas by 2002; not issue timber or other development permits in proposed park sites; and should not allow industrial development in established national and provincial national parks.

The report also recommends a natural forest landscape based forest use regime whereby the forests are divided into three distinct categories.

- 1) up to 20 per cent of the forest are to be intensively managed for timber production;
- 2) the majority of the area, 60 per cent plus, should be managed for the primary objective of biodiversity conservation;
- 3) up to 20 per cent are to be set aside as protected areas to preserve ecologically and culturally significant areas.

The list of recommendations goes on to include many laudable statements on indigenous rights, endangered species, chemical use, infrastructure development, forest inventories and certification. Only time will tell, however, if this remains just an ideal wish list or a concrete plan for action that will save Canada's northern boreal forests.

**Contact:** The report can be found on the web at: [www.parl.gc.ca/sencom.asp](http://www.parl.gc.ca/sencom.asp) or tel: +1-613-990-0088

### Lubicon Land under threat again

The Lubicon Cree in Northern Alberta claim the provincial government is trying to subvert their land claim negotiations. Last year, the band secured a commitment from Daishowa-Marubeni, not to log in traditional Lubicon territory until their land claim is settled. However, now the government has put that land up for grabs to other forestry companies interested in making a bid.

According to **Fred Lennarson**, advisor to the Lubicon First Nation, "*It looks very much like the provincial government is seeking to subvert the negotiations. Certainly, to challenge politically, Lubicon jurisdiction regarding matters which are at the negotiating table for resolution*". The Minister of Environmental Protection, however, claims the government is not trying to make things difficult for the Lubicon, rather it is simply following a government process for dealing with unallocated land.

In a further development, representative of Daishowa have stated that the company intends to appeal the boycott case and on 1st June Daishowa served the Friends of the Lubicon (FOL) with a notice indicating that they are ready to go to court on their appeal.

**Contact:** FOL, email: [fol@tao.ca](mailto:fol@tao.ca), Lubicon First Nation fax: +1 403 629-3939

### Manitoban plea

Manitoba's Future Forest Alliance is asking for financial support to protect the remaining tracks of primary frontier boreal forests of Canada (see also page 11).

A recent federal court decision - if allowed to go unappealed - will allow a 11 million hectare forest project, the single largest forest licence area given to any forest company in North America, to go ahead without a full federal government environmental review.

The recent federal court decision by **Justice Nadon** means that the only responsibility the federal government has to review this massive forestry project is the assessment of a single bridge, even though the project calls for some 850 km of all weather roads to be built including the construction of dozens of bridges into the remote primary frontier boreal forest of Manitoba. Justice Nadon in his decision also decided - without explanation - that all court cost must be paid by Manitoba's Future Forest Alliance to both the federal government and to Tolko Industries, the proponents of the project. This could cost the small locally based group - if not appealed - hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The decision by Judge Nadon goes against a similar federal court ruling by **Justice Gibson**. Judge Gibson, of the federal court, quashed approval for two forestry-road bridges by Sunpine Forest Products in Alberta's Rocky Mountain Foothills and said the federal environmental assessment was deficient because it failed to link together different parts of the project and examine them as a whole, nor did it take into account the cumulative environmental effects from the project.

**Contact:** Don Sullivan at Manitoba's Future Forest Alliance, email: [sullivan@mbnet.mb.ca](mailto:sullivan@mbnet.mb.ca)

### UN focus on indigenous issues

The United Nations (UN) Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995 to 2004), has received little publicity. In June, however, the first ever meeting between a UN secretary-general and indigenous leaders from Canada took place. The delegation led by **Grand Chief Phil Fontaine** of the Assembly of First Nations, which represents more than 300 native communities in Canada, aimed to advance the efforts made by the UN to correct injustices suffered by indigenous peoples throughout the world.

The Canadian delegation no doubt had on their minds the recent UN human rights panel ruling that Canada's treatment of aboriginals is in violation of international law and the social situation of first nations "*is the most pressing human rights issue facing Canadians*." In the report, described as devastating by native rights activists, the UN Human Rights Committee said that by not implementing the recommendations of the 1996 Royal Commission on aboriginal peoples, the Canadian government is not complying with the international covenant on civil and political rights, one of the UN's key human-rights treaties.

An immediate outcome from the report was the announcement of a formal partnership between the Assembly of First Nations and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), based in the United States. The two organisations aim to campaign for full self-government and sovereignty for all native North Americans.

**Source:** *The Vancouver Sun*, April 10, 1999 and *The Gazette*, Sunday 13 June 1999

# Russia

## FSC Working Group Established in Russia

*A report from Dmitry Aksenov*

A conference on establishing a Russian FSC working group took place in Pushkino near Moscow on June 3-4. The Conference was initiated by the Russian FSC initiative group and organised by Greenpeace Russia and WWF Russian Programme Office, with the assistance of the Forest Club of Russian NGOs and regional FSC working groups. There were about 50 participants from a wide range of interest groups and regions (geographical representation was particularly high from Komi, Krasnojarsk and Khabarovsk regions where regional FSC initiatives are in progress). The main weakness of the conference was the almost complete absence of interested forest business representatives. As with the November 1998 WWF Petrozavodsk Conference, just two representatives from forest companies (from the Leningrad and Moscow regions) plus one consultant and Mikhail Malkevich from Krasnojarsk forestry institute were present.



Although the national-level working group for Russia, which will co-ordinate the regional working groups, provide information and help develop the general framework, was set up, the major obstacle facing the development of FSC standards remains the lack of interest in the process by Russian companies. One key reason for this seems to be that these companies are still not receiving a clear message from their partners abroad. Companies importing wood from Russia (for example Stora Enso) do not demand (or even mention) that timber should be FSC certified. Creating this demand should be a priority within Russia.

Shortly after the conference several new requests were received concerning FSC certification issues in Russia inspired by UK consumers. As yet, however, there are still no industrialists giving us the message that they really want to carry out forest management according to FSC requirements.

Source: Dmitry Aksenov, email: picea@glasnet.ru

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## Logging survey in Leningrad Region

The St. Petersburg Society of Greenpeace Supporters has conducted a study of logging sites in the Karelian Isthmus and Podporozhskii district (Leningrad region). The study, which took place in the summer of 1998, revealed a number of violations of Russian forestry legislation and "extremely poor control over logging". The most common violation was extensive overlogging compared to the forest cutting license.

Source: Igor Babanin, St. Petersburg Greenpeace Supporters, email: babanin@green.spb.su, tel: +7-812-164-2951

## Europe

### Acidification - a continuing problem

Despite the expected reduction in acidifying emissions in Europe over the next decade, acidification will remain a major problem for decades according to a new report, from the Swedish Environmental Research Institute. The report calculates the species and areas of natural interest which will be most effected - even in reductions in emissions are carried out. Seven areas throughout Sweden are highlighted as being threatened by acidification, including the boreal forests of Pärälven reserve and the proposed Sjaunja national park.

Research carried out at the University of Lund in Sweden further highlights the problem. Comparative studies over a ten-year period show forest soils becoming increasingly acid. The study found that 6 million hectares of forestland in southern Sweden had a pH value of less than 5.0, indicating anthropogenic acidification and the likelihood of reduced tree growth.

Source: *Acid News*, No 2, June 1999, The Swedish NGO Secretariat in Acid Rain, Email: info@acidrain.org, web: www.acidrain.org

### Flying squirrel decline

Researchers have warned of a dramatic decline of the endangered flying squirrel (*Pteromys volans*) population in Finland. According to the Finnish Flying Squirrel Association, the decline is due to forest habitats disappearing with high speed because of logging.

The researchers studied squirrels in two large areas in southern and central Finland from 1991-1998. During this period, 30-42 per cent of forest habitats suitable for the flying squirrel were lost as a result of industrial logging.

Contact: Risto Sulkava, Aaponkaari 3, FIN-42800 Haapamaki, Finland

## Kukkuri Forest temporarily saved, but more protection needed

Kukkuri forest in northeastern Finland will not be logged this summer. Following the Greenpeace actions reported in the last issue of *Taiga News*, the Forest and Park Service (FPS) has declared that it will not log in Kukkuri until further surveys of the area have been completed.

The need to study the area further was highlighted by a brief inventory carried out by researchers from Helsinki University in early May. Endangered species of bracket fungi were found at the clear-felled site and in the vicinity of a harvester. This was despite the fact that the Forest and Park Service (FPS) representative had emphasised, in an article published in March, that *"the area [had] not been found to possess any special nature value"*. Curiously, FPS had found endangered species and indicator species in earlier surveys. However, in their ecological plan only 25 hectares of the 400 hectares of old growth forest in Kukkuri were excluded from logging plans. None of the known occurrences of the endangered bracket fungus (which is listed as a special protected species in the Nature Conservation Act) were included in the areas protected from logging.

From the survey findings, according to the classification system developed by researchers from the Finnish Environmental Institute, the spruce dominated sites belong to the category of *"valuable forest for protection"* and the sites dominated by pine into the category of *"very valuable forest"*. Kukkuri can be clearly defined as a biologically valuable old growth forest.

The case of Kukkuri, is not unique in Finland. As a new report from the Finnish Environmental Institute states, the forest protection in Finland is poor. According to the report, at least 10 per cent of the productive forestland should be protected in the different regions. Currently, however, only between 0.5 and 3 per cent of productive forestland is protected in the different forest vegetation zones and their sections excluding the northernmost Finland.

**Contact:** Matti Liimatainen, Finnish Nature League email: liimatainen@sll.fi, web: <http://www.luontoliitto.fi/forest>; Mila Hulsli-Heathfield, campaigner, Greenpeace Nordic, Tel: +46-8-702-78-44 or +46-70-397-66-72, email: mila@nordic.greenpeace.org; Raimo Virkkala, Finnish Environment Institute, PO Box 140, FIN-00251 Helsinki, Finland



# Mining

The threats posed to forests from the exploration for and extraction of metals and minerals has been highlighted in *Taiga News* before (see issue 22). A new report *Metals from the Forest* released by IUCN and WWF has found that mining is now often the first form of disturbance in the world's remaining

natural forests. The report reviews current mining practices and, in particular, highlights the problems of mining in protected areas. Report author, **Andrea Finger** says: *"Of course we need metals. But natural forests are suffering from excessive, badly regulated mining that does little except supply a rich minority with expensive, throwaway products - at the expense of the people and environment in the forest"*.

Mining may be affecting almost half of the world's diminishing tracts of forest wilderness both as a direct and underlying cause of forest loss and degradation. IUCN and WWF suggest that some forests - such as those in protected areas - should be entirely free of mining. Where mining does take place, in many cases conditions need to be drastically improved. The report includes a draft set of guidelines aimed at investors, governments, mining corporations and civil society calling on them to take action to minimise the social and environmental impacts of mining.

In particular, mining poses a threat to forests throughout the boreal region. At present, for instance, there is major international concern about plans to construct an illegal gold mine in the unique and ecologically important buffer zone of a nature reserve on Kunashir, one of the Kurile Islands, a chain that stretches between Russia and Japan. Work is already under way to excavate the open-pit mine. Once operational, the mine will use toxic sodium cyanide, which will threaten an important river system upon which many salmon and many other species depend. The developer, Kurile Mining and Geological Company has a poor environmental track record and continues to skirt environmental regulations in the quest for profit.

In Canada, a report from the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) states that the side deal that would allow mining in protected areas questions the supposed benefits of the Lands for Life proposals (see *Taiga News* 26). The proposals contain three parts: a proposed land strategy, a Forest Accord and a series of announcements by the Ministry of Mines and Northern Development. The latter would allow mining companies to prospect in new parks and protected areas for high mineral content, and if minerals were found, the park boundaries would change, creating a *"floating park"*. The provincial government has also allowed for a Can\$21 million *"treasure hunt"* fund to encourage such exploration by mining companies. CELA is calling for the Ministry of Mines and Northern Development to revoke the mining announcements.

According to the report, the Lands for Life Proposal raises a number of other significant issues, including:

- the absence of First Nations interests from the negotiations and any effective plan to include them in further processes;
- granting of increased tenure rights to the forestry industry which significantly strengthens timber companies' interest in resources allocated to them and may require the province to compensate them should lands be withdrawn from tenure arrangements by the province;
- the 12 per cent target for protected lands is insufficient to protect long-term ecosystem integrity and the vagueness of the process to increase protected areas.

**Contact:** Copies of the IUCN/WWF report, which has been produced in English, French and Spanish, can be order from Ursula Senn at IUCN in Switzerland, email: forests@iucn.hq.org for SF 15.

Information on Kurile from, Julie Edlund, PERC, Tel: +1-907-222-2732, email: jedlund@igc.apc.org and WWF International, see web site: <http://takeaction.worldwildlife.org>.

Canadian Environmental Law Association, tel: +1-416-960-2284, web: <http://www.web.net/~cela/141.htm>



# Taiga News Special Feature: Indigenous Peoples in the Boreal

## ◆ All Our Relations: Indigenous Peoples and the Boreal Forest

by Leanne Simpson of the Anishinaabek Nation

Ahneen. My name is Petasamosake, Walking Towards Women. I am from the Lion Clan, and a member of the Anishinaabek Nation of Ontario, Canada. I have been working with different Aboriginal communities and organisations in the boreal forest regions of Canada on environmental issues for the past seven years. The boreal forest region is home to a great number of Indigenous Peoples, and our cultures depend upon large areas of the forest remaining intact. Unfortunately, as resources in the southern regions become depleted, industry is looking north for trees to feed their hungry mills, rivers to develop into electricity and minerals to mine. This is of great concern to many of our Elders and our leadership because our survival as Indigenous Peoples is depended upon the continued existence of large tracts of boreal forest, untouched by large-scale industrial development and unsustainable forestry practices.

Indigenous Peoples are often misunderstood by our non-Indigenous brothers and sisters, and by some environmentalists. These conflicts often stem from a lack of understanding that Indigenous Peoples have fundamentally different world views than the dominant cultures of the world, and that these world views impact how we conceptualise, relate and interact with the environment. Although our cultures and worldviews are diverse, there exist some essential foundations that characterise our relationship to the environment and to the forest. The principles of respect, reciprocity, sharing, humility, and interconnectedness span across indigenous cultures. Indigenous cultures are dependent on the plants and animals of the boreal forest for well being and our spiritual beliefs connect us to the land. It is these worldviews, values, processes and knowledge that have enabled Indigenous Peoples to live sustainably in the boreal forest regions of the world since time immemorial.

In contemporary Indigenous communities, many people continue to live a traditional life hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering plants and berries in the boreal forest. Although our people may use guns and snowmobiles for transport and to hunt, many of us still abide by the laws of reciprocity, sharing and respect. Humans are related and intimately connected to the plants, animals, trees and spirits in the forest. So the boreal forest provides us with much more than just food. The plants of the forest provide us with our medicines and healing practices. Our sacred areas, burial grounds and ancient travel routes are in the forest. The boreal forest is our library. This is where we learn. We go out on the land to be with our families and to teach our children what it means to be an indigenous person. The boreal forest provides us with our culture, our values and everything that is meaningful to us as Indigenous Peoples.

Colonisation, assimilation, colonialism and globalisation have, of course, devastating impacts on our communities and our relationship to the environment, yet our people remain strong. Indigenous Peoples have resisted five centuries of genocidal practices, and many of our communities have begun to revitalise the traditional ways. As we look back at our traditions, the teachings of our Ancestors, we are preparing ourselves to once again assume our role as the Caretakers of Mother Earth.

This will not be easy. Currently, the boreal forest contributes billions dollars annually to the Canadian economy mainly through forestry, mining and hydroelectric development. Most Indigenous Nations have no control over the development that occurs in their Traditional Territories. Communities are faced with high rates of unemployment, suicide and abuse, and poor housing conditions at the local level, while at the same time huge forestry companies are clear-cutting their land, with the support of national governments, for large profits. Logging companies are clear cutting hunting and trapping grounds, building roads where there were no roads, and spraying pesticides and insecticides over berries and medicinal plants to promote commercially viable species in tree farms. Indigenous Peoples rarely benefit from any of these practices, yet indigenous communities are on the front line when it comes to coping with the devastating impacts of clear cutting.

Unsustainable logging practices are not the only concern. Hydroelectric development has caused the diversion and damming of several major waterways in the boreal forest. Dams have created severe mercury contamination in the reservoirs they create, fluctuating water levels, and transmission line development. They have poisoned the water, the fish and the people while at the same time flooding sacred areas, cemeteries and homes. They have ruined fish spawning grounds and migration patterns, disrupted traditional travel routes and changed the land forever. Again the situation is similar. Indigenous communities feel all of the negative impacts of these mega projects on their lands while the profits go to the companies. Again, these large-scale industrial developments do little to alleviate the hardship and poverty facing indigenous communities, while also destroying the land, the people and their cultures.

Contamination of our water, fish and animals is another major concern for Indigenous Peoples in boreal forest. Long range transport has dumped numerous toxic chemicals on the boreal forest in its northern range, including PCB's mirex and toxaphene. In the southern regions, our Elders tell us that "*the meat tastes funny*" or is a different colour indicating contamination from pulp mill effluent, pesticide and insecticide applications, hydroelectric development, mining, and military activities.



Communicating our message out is difficult given our limited financial resources, the stereotypical images and misinformation many non-Indigenous people have of Indigenous Peoples, our isolation relative to the large urban centres, and media which is more interested in racist stereotypes than our environmental concerns. Environmental groups can help indigenous communities by supporting our Land Rights and our

fight against large-scale industrial development within our lands. Real change however, will only happen when Indigenous Peoples and their advocates force the governments of the dominant societies to recognise Indigenous Peoples as Nations, affording our communities as much respect as any self-governing Nation would expect. It is only then that we will be able to assume our role as caretakers of our Mother, the earth.

## Sweden

### ◆ Forest for every one? Or just for timber?

The Sámi are the indigenous people of Northern Scandinavia. The land they themselves call Sápmi consists of the northern parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. In Sweden there are about 17,000 Sámi, about 3,000 of which rely on reindeer herding for their livelihood.

During the last decades, the Sámi customary right to winter grazing on private lands has been challenged, primarily by private land owners claims that the reindeer are causing damage to their pine plantations by rubbing their antlers against the young trees. It is true that such damage exists locally, although the observed damage is small in comparison with that caused by wild moose.

Some Sámi communities have suggested that the problem could be solved the state compensating individual landowners. No such system is, however, currently in place. The conflict has now culminated in a number of legal processes. Groups of private forest owners are taking the Sámi communities to court, questioning their right to use the land and suing them for the damage caused.

In the absence of written documentation which can prove long-standing use of the land, the Sámi are very likely to lose the court cases and subsequently lose their grazing right as well as large sums of money. Furthermore, compensation to the landowners and all costs of legal processes may have to be paid by the Sámi.

The court cases, currently seven in number, have become a question of survival for the reindeer herding Sámi communities. Without the right to graze on private lands, the Sámi communities will face problems feeding their reindeer herds at the present number of animals, and they cannot financially afford the legal processes.

#### Multiple forest use

Neither forestry nor reindeer herding can claim superior rights to the forests in northern Sweden. This calls for rules governing the coexistence of both these land uses on the same land and mutual respect for both trades and compliance with the fact that both parties may experience damage to their interests.

Since the 1960's forest management practices consisting of clear-cut logging, monoculture plantations and other new techniques have been dominant in Sweden. Modern forestry has

been an impoverishing factor for both reindeer grazing and the biological diversity. However, the Sámi are not saying no to forestry. It is the private forest owners saying no to reindeer and thus monopolizing the forests for their timber producing interests.

Large forestry companies, as well as the state, fully accept reindeer herding on their forest land and do not claim any damages to their forests from it. The conflict has arisen only on privately owned land, which makes up about 50 per cent of Swedish forests.

The wild reindeer live in herds in the northernmost parts of Europe and Asia. Those that belong to the Sámi are semi domesticated. In summer the reindeer graze in the mountains, feeding on grass, leaves, herbs and fungi. In winter, the reindeer move to forested land. Reindeer do not feed on pine, spruce or any other coniferous trees. The forest provides layer of soft snow that the reindeer can dig through, finding the ground lichens needed as basic food during winter. Tree hanging lichens, found in old forests, are important as reserve fodder, when lichens on the ground cannot be reached due to ice and ice cover on the snow. Clear cuts compact the snow and thus hinder the availability of ground lichens.

For the Sámi and their reindeer there are, generally speaking, three conditions that must be met concerning the forest:

1. Access to forest land, i.e. permission to remain and maintain reindeer herding on forest land.
2. Forest with a good supply of ground-growing lichens
3. Old forests with a good supply of tree hanging lichens.

In most forests these conditions are not met.

The Sámi people do not own land. Their customary right to graze their reindeer, on private as well as state land, is confirmed in Swedish legislation. The legislation does not state any clear geographic boundary for the validity of the rights and in case of conflict, the legislation leaves it to the Sámi to prove their customary rights in the courts. This is what is happening now.

What the Sámi ask is: to respect their rights and to allow multiple forest use in Swedish forests. The right to have access to reindeer winter grazing land is a question of survival for the Sámi and their culture. The historical conflicts over land use in areas with private land owners and traditional reindeer grazing must be settled once and for all.

A "reindeer damages fund" should be established and financed by the state. Subsidies would be paid to private land owners if they suffer serious damage from reindeer grazing.

**Source:** TRN brochure *Forests for every one? Or just for timber?* (1999), available from the TRN office or at <http://www.snf.se/TRN/feature/reindeer/index.html>



# Canada

## ◆ **Conflicting Views - Fighting for the Canadian Boreal Forests**

*by Brain Craik and Geoff Quaille, writing on behalf of the Grand Council of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee*

*Presently the Forests Ministry, in conjunction with the large companies, has nearly exclusive use over most of the prime lands on the island. The management practices are unacceptable to our people. The concept of multiple use has been mocked by the forest industry, making public input useless.*

Submission made to the Canadian Government, nearly 20 years ago by the Haida of Gwaii Haans (Queen Charlotte Islands).

(C Notzke, *Aboriginal People and Natural Resources in Canada*, Toronto: Captus University Publications, 1994)

Canada's forests, particularly the boreal forest, play a vital role in the lives of Canada's Indigenous Peoples. Over 80 per cent of Canada's Indigenous Communities are located in the forested areas. In recent years, the rigidity with which both the Canadian government and industry have clung to their monopoly over the forests, and the negative implications of this attitude on the social, economic and environmental conditions of local Aboriginal communities and adjacent forest lands, has led to an increasing number of conflicts.

Last year in New Brunswick, a lower court judge concluded that a treaty signed just over 100 years ago granted the province's Aboriginal Peoples access to harvest timber for commercial purposes. Upon this decision numerous Aboriginal Communities and individuals, traditionally barred from prime stands of timber, invested in equipment and began harvesting wood from areas licensed to non-Aboriginal forestry companies. When the local mills refused to buy wood from what they termed "privateers" the Aboriginal entrepreneurs began making arrangements to sell the wood in the United States or Quebec. The situation became dangerous as confrontations between company loggers and Aboriginals developed. Within months of the original decision, the province won an appeal and the ruling was overturned. Tension remains high as Aboriginal loggers, fresh from investing in new equipment, continuing to pressure the government for a more equitable share of the timber resource.

A similar confrontation occurred last summer in Listuguj Quebec, where Aboriginal loggers, once again frustrated by not having access to the wood near their communities, blocked logging trucks from entering a nearby mill. After a prolonged dispute that threatened to become violent, the loggers and the province were able to reach a compromise.

For the Cree Nation, located in the James Bay Region of Northern Quebec, the desire to protect the integrity of their treaty lands and the need for a greater share in the economic wealth generated by development, is the motivation behind a recent Can\$500,000,000 court action. Launched in the summer of 1998, the action involves the federal and Quebec government

and 27 forestry companies that have clear-cut Cree lands without proper consent since the signing of the *James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement* in 1975. Additionally, the Crees recently filed (July 8, 1999) another legal action, requesting that an immediate injunction be placed on the approval of all new cutting plans in their traditional territories, until these plans undergo thorough environmental assessment and review.

When Canada, Quebec and the Crees entered into the 1975 Treaty, the Crees right to exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping over with their traditional lands of Eeyou Istchee was recognised. The protection of the forests, a necessary condition for exercising this right, was to take precedence over other activities, including forestry.

However, forestry activity within Eeyou Istchee has had disastrous consequences on the Crees' right to subsist from hunting fishing and trapping. Through legal actions the Crees hope that they can bring a satisfactory solution – either by legal judgement or negotiated settlement – to their conflict. The solution for the Crees, like many other First Nations in Canada, would be one that leads to the protection of the subsistence economy and allows the Crees a greater role in the management and development of the forest resource.

These examples are but a few of the growing number of forest related conflicts. In virtually every Canadian province, there are disputes over forest resources. In almost all cases the Aboriginal peoples involved are impacted by both the policies of economic apartheid and the low standards applied to how the forest is harvested. Aboriginal peoples are pushed off the land and forced from their traditional lifestyles by those who would profit from the sale of the forest. These leave behind a devastated environment and offer nothing to Aboriginal peoples.

From our perspective it is clear that forestry as presently conducted in Canada today, is neither sustainable nor equitable. Although some provinces have begun to take steps toward implementing sustainable forest management and more equitable treatment of the Aboriginal communities who depend on the forest, much more needs to be done. These rights have been confirmed in the Canadian courts on numerous occasions and are at the heart of many of the conflicts discussed. Treating Aboriginal Peoples as one of a long list of stakeholders is the prevailing attitude in Canada today. This is despite the fact that the very existence of Aboriginal Peoples with their unique languages and cultures depends on forest protection; and ignores the fact that Aboriginal Peoples have special constitutionally protected and internationally recognised rights beyond those of the average citizen.

Finally, we are concerned by the recent discussions at the United Nations International Forum on Forestry where Canada is pushing for a binding international convention on forests. We question Canada's motivation for supporting this kind of international treaty, especially when they have been unable to meet similar treaty arrangements with Canada's First Nations.

This article has been edited from the longer *Submission Towards Policy Discussions on Indigenous Peoples Within the European Parliament*, submitted to members of the European Green Part in March 1999.



# Russia

## ◆ A Tough Road Ahead: An Account of Indigenous Struggles Today

by Natalia Tcherbokhova, *the Even People*

Today, it is difficult to say whether we Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North, Far East, and Siberia will be able to save our unique traditions and cultures or even ourselves, for that matter. Some nationalities have dropped to startling low numbers. For instance, the Oroki and Enets groups, who live in the Khabarovsk and Krasnoyarsk Krai, respectively, number less than a hundred people each.

There are many reasons for the disappearance of Indigenous Peoples. One of our greatest problems today is large-scale logging. For example, the Evenk people from Yakutia in the Sakha Republic lost 45,000 ha of forests on their traditional territory, a staggering loss considering the strong connection between these people and the forests. Logging here has diminished these people's hunting and fishing base, vital resources for their survival. The carelessness of forest harvesters is sometimes the culprit of terrible forest fires that scorch the territories where indigenous peoples live and hunt. This past summer fires burned approximately 3 million ha in the Khabarovsk Krai. As the fires abated, Ulchi, Even, and Oroki people began to starve in their denuded environment. To date, the Russian government has offered no assistance to these

people who still do not have proper medical care, living conditions, and food.

Another serious threat to our survival is the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas resources that has fragmented the land used for reindeer pastures. As a result, the reindeer population has begun to plunge as has the practice of reindeer herding, the lifeblood of indigenous communities in the north. And the situation is only getting worse. Other consequences of oil development include spills and blazes that spoil the environment and also our health.

Besides a healthy environment for our livelihoods, our traditional knowledge and experience is slipping away. Old people who are usually the keepers of traditions and language have died without replacements as the younger generations have not had many opportunities to study their language and culture. Other serious problems today include alcoholism and forced resettlements to cities.

Although there are some laws on indigenous peoples in Russia, they often do not work as government representatives are not interested in our opinion and they don't even question if the government infringes upon our rights or not. In my view, the government's indifference to our fate is one of the main reasons for the destruction of our territories and cultures.

Natalia Tcherbokhova is a member of the Even people and a researcher in training at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences. This article was produced for *Russian Conservation News* and will be published in that magazine later this year. Many thanks to Stephanie Hitzler the Assistant Editor for the permission to reprint. Russian Conservation News, P.O.Box 71, 117321, Moscow, Russia. Phone/Fax: +7 (095) 190-2368 E-mail: rcn@glasnet.ru

## *Saving the boreal - saving the people*

*Responding to or initiating legal action increasingly seems the only way that the Indigenous Peoples of the boreal region can maintain their lifestyle and the continuity of the boreal forest that they depend on. In Canada, First Nation groups are proposing to take things a step further by lobbying for an act which specifically gives Indigenous People the right to control their own environment. A summary of the proposed legislation is given below.*

The National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) is seeking a means to enable First Nations in Canada to manage and control their forests resources through new optional federal legislation. They see the proposed legislation as an interim measure needed by First Nations to restore depleted forest resources, while gaining economic and social benefits. At the same time, First Nations can achieve a higher standard of forest care on their lands.

Under the proposed First Nations Forest Resources Management Act, a First Nation would decide for itself which reserve lands should come under the Act. It would then put in place its own management plan for these lands. Where the First Nation and province agree, forest lands could also include off-reserve lands.

The legislation would be optional. A First Nation could opt into the Act by preparing a forest management plan and a multi-year financial plan, and negotiating a funding agreement. These would be placed before the members of the First Nation for review and consultation. The First Nation members could then decide whether to approve the decision to opt into the legislation. Their vote would determine whether the First Nation assumed control over forestry under the Act.

First Nations that opt into this Act would have a broad legal capacity to contract, borrow or spend money as necessary under the legislation. This will not include the ability to sell, mortgage or lease reserve land. It will, however, provide the legal capacity for First Nations to independently negotiate arrangements with provinces for First Nations forest management over traditional territories. First Nations could then enforce their laws on these lands.

For more information on the proposed act contact: National Aboriginal Forestry Association, 875 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 3W4, Canada  
Tel: +1-613-233-5563, Fax: +1-613-233-4329. For more details and to pledge your support see NAFA's web site at: <http://www.fnc.ca/nafa/nafa.html>



# Canada

## ◆ Indigenous hotspots in the Canadian Boreal

Though geographically isolated from the major population centres in Canada, the boreal forest (taiga) has been integrated into the national as well as international economies. In fact, forestry, hydro electric development and mining contribute Can\$28 billion dollars annually to Canada's overall economy.

Politically however, the boreal forest and its inhabitants remains periphery, a role designated by the southern centres of power. The resulting situation is one in which the land, plants and animals within it are commodified by decision-makers in the south who disproportionately benefit from industrial exploitation, while those whose well-being depend upon sustained harvests for material goods, ecological services and cultural nourishment lose the local bases of their existence. And nowhere are the above processes more apparent than within indigenous communities of Canada.

Colonialism remains alive and well and Aboriginal peoples across Canada are engaged in daily struggles not only to determine their own futures, but also to retain their cultures and surrounding environments. The boreal ecozone is home to the majority of the one million Canadian First Nation's peoples. Governments across the boreal continue to allow logging, mining and gas, and road-building – essentially ignoring treaty rights, human rights and international commitments to protect biodiversity. The following “hot spots” present a typical picture of resource management across Canada in which companies’ profits soar from destroying the cultural bases of the region's traditional communities.

Don Sullivan



### Grassy Narrows

One resident describes events at Grassy Narrows over the last 50 years, with the words “ ... *what has and is happening to us is cultural genocide...it's that simple.*”

This Northwestern Ontario Ojibway First Nation community of 700 people is located 80km north of Kenora. Prior to the 1950's the community was self-sufficient. However, the community started to unravel in the 1950's when Ontario Hydro began to build dams that had dramatic impacts on the English/Wabigoon water system.

In 1963, after the government threatened to cut off their Family Allowance cheques, the entire community was forcibly relocated five miles away, eventually undermining the entire social and cultural fabric of the community.

In addition to the hydro dams and forced relocation, it was estimated that 20,000 pounds of inorganic mercury entered the English/Wabigoon river system during the 1970's from a pulp and paper mill located in Dryden, Ontario. In the 1970's, after clinical testing, it was found that 87 residents of Grassy Narrows had blood levels of mercury that exceeded the “safe” limits. To this date the government Ontario's obligations to Grassy Narrows under the mediation agreement to deal with the mercury poisoning has yet to be fulfilled.

The community is also currently struggling, with little or no resources, to mount a campaign to protect their Traditional Land Use Areas (TLUA), estimated to be 2,500 square miles in size, from further destruction by the pulp and paper mill located in Kenora. Abitibi-Consolidated, the owners of the mill, have secured the right from Ontario to harvest 434,000 cubic meters of softwoods annually until 2017, the area given to the company includes all of Grassy Narrows First Nation TLUA, an action taken without prior approval by Grassy Narrows.

A position by the Grassy Narrows Environmental Group in April of 1999 states:

- The need for official recognition of their Traditional Land Use Area (TLUA) by all parties.
- Mediation Agreement negotiation must resume immediately and funding reinstated by both the Ontario and Federal government.
- No further resource extraction activities within the TLUA until the Mediation Process reaches acceptable agreement.
- No clearcutting within the boundaries of the TLUA.

Further information on Grassy Narrows can be obtained by contacting Joe Frobister by e-mail at: [fobister@voyageur.ca](mailto:fobister@voyageur.ca) or, go to the home page of [www. EnviroWatch.org](http://www.EnviroWatch.org) and hit their links button.

## East side of Lake Winnipeg

A vast track - 1.7 million hectares - of eastern Manitoba's last remaining roadless boreal forest is about to be cut

Some of Manitoba's most pristine remote wilderness, including many remaining wild rivers such as the Bloodvies - a federally designated heritage river system - are located along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. However, this is about to change. Tembec, a Montreal-based forest company, who own and operate a pulp and paper mill in Pine Falls, Manitoba is seeking government approval for a 10 year Forest Management Plan to expand its operation and wood requirement needs.

Currently, Tembec uses some 360,000 cubic meters of softwoods annually. In their expansion plans, Tembec is looking to increase this volume to 850,000 cubic meters annually to accommodate plans for a new saw mill operation. To access the increased volumes of softwoods, the company, with financial assistance from the government of Manitoba, want to construct a 780 kilometre all-weather road - where none currently exists - up the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

This road, if allowed to go through, would not only alter forever the environmental landscape and wildlife habitat of the area, but would have a devastating impact on the Traditional Land Use Area of 10 First Nation communities.

A government of Manitoba report of 1987 recognised the importance of the area and recommended that the area should be further studied before proceeding with any development proposal for the region. Yet, the government of Manitoba is prepared to ignore this report and hand over responsibility for land use planning to the forest industry, in the hopes that this industry will somehow miraculously accommodate the many other forest values of this important boreal region.

Environmentalists and the affected First Nation communities in Manitoba are incensed with the government and the company's unwillingness to first conduct a comprehensive Land Use Plan for the area that accommodates and recognises the unique heritage of this area.

For more information contact Don Sullivan at email: [sullivan@mbnet.mb.ca](mailto:sullivan@mbnet.mb.ca)

# Russia

## ◆ Local forest use in Siberia and the Russian Far East

by Jenne de Beer

The people living in the taiga of Siberia and the Russian Far East have a long tradition of using its rich natural resources in a non-destructive manner. Among other things, they have for centuries collected various non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for home consumption or trade. However, for most, the situation during the last decade has changed dramatically. While collecting for home consumption persisted or even increased in times of crisis, selling produce locally has become substantially more difficult.

These difficulties coincided with the collapse of the NTFP trade structure during the Soviet area (see de Beer & Zakharenkov, 1999). This development led to hardships in many remote villages. Simultaneously, forests that until recently were unspoiled, became threatened by large-scale logging operations - often involving foreign investment.

Over the years it became clear that action had to be taken and that it would be necessary, not only to resist unwanted destructive interventions, but also to build an alternative. Strategies, which aim at combining forest conservation with the enhancement of local communities' well being, are currently either under discussion, or being implemented, in several regions. These strategies, while focussing on a broad range of NTFPs, return to old practices whilst incorporating these practices in newly established structures. The structures work at combining local expertise in relation to the extraction of NTFPs, with finding markets, development of products and state of the art processing. Against all odds - an exiting perspective!

### Khabarovsk

One of the more mature initiatives in this field is the Far Eastern Association for the Use of NTFPs, which operates in both Primorsky and Khabarovsk krai and particularly in the Ussuri taiga along the Sikhote-Alin mountain range. The area is extremely rich in terms of biodiversity and still has a number of relatively intact watersheds, e.g. along the Bikin, Samarga, Khor, Chukhen and Anui rivers.

The Association, based in the town of Khabarovsk, primarily aims to ensure sustainable development in the region. It supports the economies of remote forest villages through the promotion of sustainable NTFP extraction and trade. Among the partners in the association are several indigenous - particularly Udege - communities. The life of the communities totally revolves around hunting, fishing and NTFP collection.

Major products of the region include: mushrooms and ferns, pine nuts, birch juice, Siberian ginseng and berries, among which the excellent limonik (*Schizandra chinensis*). Various leaves are collected as ingredients for health teas and a high quality honey is produced - as the bees feed on nectar-rich sources such as ginseng and other medicinal plants in a pollution free region.

It is the aim of the association is to link different actors in the region involved in NTFP trade. These range from village organisations to traders, processing plants and scientific institutes. The association advises and supports village organisations with the establishment of primary processing units, adequate storage and packaging facilities and the like. Jointly, the organisations build strength to promote their products, both on the home market and abroad. Already, their trade mark, a young Amur tiger, is becoming well known as a guarantee of a high-quality natural products.

### Other Initiatives and the TRN Meeting

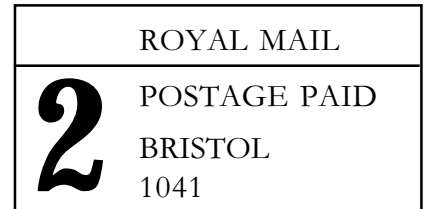
The developments in the Far East are being studied in other regions. For instance, a conference on Sustainable Use of NTFPs in Siberian Forests was held in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia. At the end of the conference a resolution was made to create a non-commercial partnership, the Siberian Association for the Sustainable Use of NTFPs. Reportedly, people in the Komi peninsular are in the process of preparing similar initiatives.

The next international TRN conference on boreal forests will be held in Moscow in September 1999. The theme of this meeting will be local alternatives in forest management and hence NTFP-related activities will be a major subject. As input for the preparation of this meeting TRN would like to hear from grassroots initiatives elsewhere in the Russian Federation.

**Reference:** De Beer, Jenne & Andrey Zakharenkov (1999) Wise Forest Use in the Russian Far East: the Udege Example. In Paul Wolvekamp (ed.) *Forests for the Future; Local Strategies for Forest Protection, Economic Welfare and Social Justice*. The book will be published by Zed Books in late autumn. More about this publication in the next issue of *Taiga News*.

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# new TRN report on the Russian timber trade

TRN and the Finnish Nature League released a joint publication: *The Finnish Forest Industry in Russia - On the Thorny Path Towards Ecological and Social Responsibility* in June. The report is the result of several months of research and attempts to give a picture of Russian forests, forestry, and the role of the Finnish forest industry in the region.

Finland is the largest roundwood importer from Northwestern Russia. The procurement of wood, by more than 100 companies, reaches an area as far East as the Urals. The report shows that last year, Finnish forestry companies imported more wood from Russia than ever before, threatening the large virgin forests that still remain in Russia. Detailed descriptions of the activities of 22 Finnish forestry companies are included in the report.

The report is a starting point for focusing even greater international attention on the impact of Western forestry companies on the Russian taiga. TRN participants have already started similar research projects looking at forest industry activities in Sweden, Norway, Germany, UK, the Netherlands and Belgium and their effect on the Russia taiga. The aim is to collect the results in a comparable way before the end of this year.

A press conference held in Helsinki to launch the report was attended by UPM-Kummene, Stora Enso, Thomesto and Arana as well as 20 journalists.

**Source:** Ovaskainen, O., Pappila, M., Ptry, J.: *The Finnish Forest Industry in Russia on the Thorny Path Towards Ecological and Social Responsibility*. The Finnish Nature League Publications 1999.

Contact TRN to order a copy of the report (EUR 14) or see the web: [www.luontoliitto.fi/draft/finrussia.pdf](http://www.luontoliitto.fi/draft/finrussia.pdf)

## Communities and Forest Management in Canada and the United States

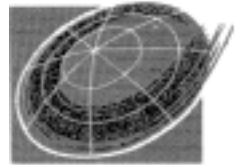
A variety of community management approaches are evolving within the world's diverse forest settings. To help spread information internationally, the IUCN Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management is capturing national and regional experiences with policies and practices that support the sustainable and equitable use of forests. Projects are being published in a series of regional monographs - this volume being the most recent.

This informative volume brings together a review of human-forest relations, forest ecosystems and management options with case studies of collaborative forest management, many of them from Indigenous Groups, across the region.

In a world where the news about the survival of sustainable resource use is often so bad, it makes a pleasant change to read a volume which focus on emerging solutions.

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The deadline  
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