

Sharbot Lake  
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Enquiry Presentation by  
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My name is Pamela Giroux. I became involved with the protest at the Robertsville Mine in July 2007 and participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> march from 509 and highway 7 to Sharbot Lake High School. As we walked along I sang and drummed with a group of Algonquin Grandmothers. Our songs were for Mother Earth because we were alarmed and afraid that this part of our world was about to change drastically if we didn't raise our voices in protest.

There are so many reasons why I would not want to see a mine of any kind so close to Sharbot Lake. One only has to observe what happened at Elliott Lake to see the devastation any mining wreaks on the landscape. My first concern is for the environment and the habitat of countless creatures, besides ourselves, that require clean air, lakes and forests in order to survive. Many scientists have come forward with information regarding contamination of water, air and soil once mining exploration begins. Unfortunately it is often difficult to convince people there is a danger when they can't see it, smell it or taste it.

The mining company would have us believe that they are not going to

disturb the land at this particular stage of their work. I would like to know how they intend to transport the drilling equipment onto the property without disturbing a few trees or rocks. Roads must be built in order for them to begin the drilling process and therefore trees will be cut and rocks bulldozed.

Hundreds of people come from far and near to enjoy our wilderness, our pristine lakes and the abundant wildlife that inhabits our untouched forests. This begs the question, how will a uranium mine affect our tourist industry? All the businesses in and around Sharbot Lake depend on the influx of tourists during the summer months. But already the controversy has sparked concern and had a negative effect in the Real Estate sector. No-one wants to be living close to a uranium mine. A local Real Estate agent told me she lost 2 clients last summer because our area was making the news with the protest marches and the blockade.

We have been informed by numerous scientists about the health risks involved when a uranium mine exists close to local populations. Do we

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want our health compromised by breathing air that is contaminated by uranium waste? Do we want to take a chance that disturbing these uranium deposits will not somehow filter into our lakes and water supply? The protection of the water provided by Mother Earth is considered a sacred trust by Aboriginal women. That is one of the many reasons the Grandmothers sang their songs and beat their drums in protest during the march in July. They were joined by many non-natives as well who felt just as strongly about protecting our natural resources and especially our water.

I have lived in Sharbot Lake for 42 years. My husband, Marcel, and I have raised four sons here. We are fortunate to own a lovely home which overlooks the lake. Every day I look out into our beautiful meadow to see what wildlife has visited or to admire the summer wild flowers scattered through the grasses and around the magnificent rocks. It alarms me that this idyllic pastoral scene could be devastated if a prospector decided to stake a claim on our property. And yet we now know that this is not a bad dream, it could indeed become reality. The

mining act as it now stands allows prospectors free reign to explore and excavate if they so choose. It seems ludicrous in this day and age that we only own the surface rights to our land and what is beneath is free for the taking. The antiquated mining act needs to be addressed quickly and changed to keep up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are at a point in our history when a choice has to be made. On the one hand we have Frontenac Ventures who want to extract uranium, make a profit and possibly offer a few jobs to the local population in the process. On the other hand we have the spectre of Elliott Lake and numerous other mining disasters that have created environmental wastelands, health problems and contaminated water, soil and air. Our dependency on tourism should help us decide what our choice should be at this point. I am compelled to speak out against the proposed uranium mine after examining all the evidence from researchers, scientists, media coverage and the internet. Perhaps there are other grandmothers who for one reason or another are reluctant to speak out but share the same feelings on this issue so I speak for them as well. For me the choice is

clear I must choose our sacred Mother Earth. For the sake of my children and grandchildren I want to leave a legacy of caring for and protecting the environment for future generations.

Since Bob Lovelace has been jailed the media is again focused on our sleepy little hamlet. He has become a martyr to the cause and support for him has grown tremendously as a result. It is also interesting to note that three other protestors who were charged with contempt of court had their charges dropped. What happened here? I would like to quote a comment by Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the UBCIC "It is a brutish and troubling precedent when companies use the courts to jail community members for protecting not only their Aboriginal title and rights but their basic human rights, Furthermore , when provincial government chooses litigation rather than good-faith negotiations it sends a clear message that corporate greed trumps human rights" Although the court has jailed one of their strongest opponents to the uranium mine they cannot stop the ground swell of support that his incarceration has engendered. More people than ever are engaged in doing whatever they can to help Bob

and stop the uranium mine from happening. Native and non native have united in a cause that affects them all.

Our government leaders have been virtually silent throughout this conflict. There could be many reasons or excuses for their inaction but one reason could be this: Frontenac Ventures has supposedly lost money for their investors because of the blockade and court costs etc. so they want to be compensated for their losses and anticipated uranium profits. Where will they get that money? Could it be they want the provincial government to recoup their loss in a hefty settlement? And eventually the tax payers get the bill. So maybe that's why we haven't heard from Dalton McGuinty. There is also the fact that he is promoting Nuclear Energy as environmentally friendly. Is Frontenac Ventures part of a scam to get money from the government? It may sound far fetched but in this day and age anything is possible.

In the meantime we live with the threat of a uranium mine being developed at our back door. What can we do but get attention from the

media by voicing our protest. We have a great leader in our midst who participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> protest march. His name is Grandfather William Commanda and he lives at Maniwaki. He is 93, in frail health but exceedingly strong in spirit as he accompanied us in his wheel chair. He was there as a protector of Mother Earth. To have a native elder of his stature among us was indeed an honor. He has traveled around the world and been entertained by heads of state interested in his teachings and his views on conservation. His teachings come from the medicine wheel, the circle of life, the circle of all nations. The medicine wheel has four directions, represented by 4 races, 4 animals and each direction represents a part of the human psyche and it all connects to Mother Earth. The teachings of the medicine wheel are at the very heart of native spirituality and the deep connection with the natural world. This is one of the main reasons why the native people have reacted so strongly against the mining project. If we want to heal Mother Earth we need to listen to the wisdom of respected elders like Grandfather William Commanda. I think also that the ancestors have listened to our prayers and given us an extra snowy winter to protect the land a little bit

longer.