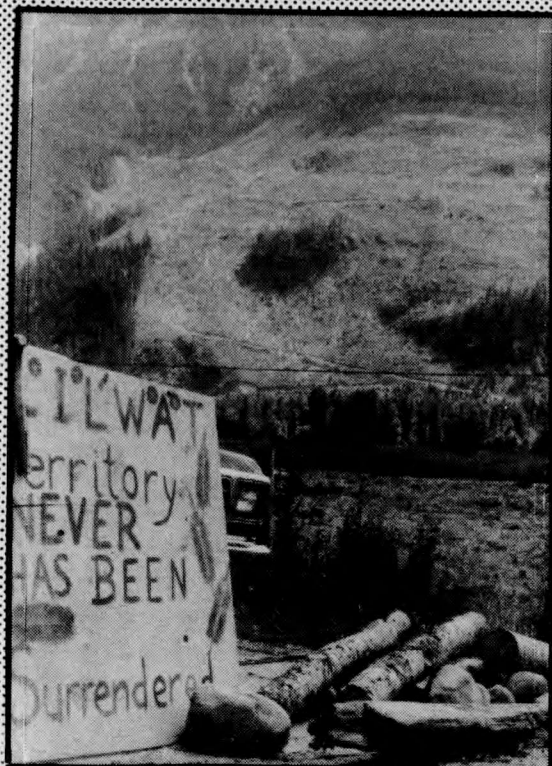


INSIGHT

Each morning for the first month of my stay, I awake to the sounds of clear cut logging. The damage was clearly visible as the logging company made no attempt to hide its taking of trees from the Indian Nation.



continued from page 7

non-violence. Tight security would stop each vehicle. Only those who bared proper papers were permitted to pass, but anyone could walk, cycle or even canoe past the barricade.

The blockade consisted of large mountains of dirt, rocks and vehicles, which made crossing the road difficult. Given permission to take photos of their plight, I jumped at the opportunity. Unfortunately, these photos could not carry the sound of the drums or the cries of the Natives. The roadblock was located three kilometres north of Mt. Currie, cutting off access to the Duffy Lake roads.

Armed RCMP in squad cars and air conditioned vehicles were paid \$44 an hour to stand guard on opposite ends of the barricade. The threat of an outburst of violence and the destruction of this peaceful roadblock became intense. It was only because of the Oka issue and public concern that this has been the longest roadblock without police disturbance. Previous roadblocks were

crushed, and those involved were arrested and taken away. Only now has the government recognised the road as belonging to the Natives, even though Indians had built and maintained it since its construction.

The police and government road maintenance crews, as well as Forestry Ministry officials, used every excuse to get beyond the barricades. Some succeeded temporarily by using back roads and helicopters. Two motorcycles were confiscated, and a warning to the pilot of the aircraft was given. His crew was asked to walk to the airport and given a strict warning never to return.

A feeling of unity filled my soul as I witnessed the Native struggle first hand. It was only recently that they were allowed to practice their rituals and religious beliefs freely. Their language was once prohibited to be learned and spoken. Their land was their shelter, their water their strength.

At the sweat lodge, the air was filled with burning smudge, a

A feeling of unity filled my soul as I witnessed the struggle first hand

combination of the sweet grass and sage which has been used for hundreds of years to cleanse the soul of evil and to give it strength.

The Indians are not a violent people. They are a group which, because of media hype, is sadly misunderstood.

At this meeting, many speakers from all over North America spoke out with anger. Decorated Canadian soldiers who fought on the beaches of Normandy in World War II felt cheated as the country they once defended now put up arms against them. The land Natives have protected long before the arrival of the White Man is being stripped from beneath them.

Without question, our aboriginal people hold a strong link to Canadian history, and until the wrongs against them can be rectified, Canada cannot claim to be true, strong or free.

Canada is a multicultural country. Our government stands for a non-racist society. Why, then, do we treat our own people with such discrimination? We could help end this situation by supporting the Mohawks and the other Nations by encouraging our government to negotiate without violent measures.

The Lil'Wat people have shown me that their cause is important and vital for their survival. That leaves all Canadians with the responsibility of taking some sort of action.

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