

MARCH 1983

TO HIS EXCELLENCY EDWARD SHREYER,
GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA
AND PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF HER
MAJESTY THE QUEEN ELIZABETH THE SECOND

THE PETITION OF THE CHIEF, COUNCIL AND PEOPLE
OF THE ALGONQUINS OF GOLDEN LAKE, ON BEHALF OF
THE ALGONQUIN GOLDEN LAKE FIRST NATION

Respectfully Sheweth:

That since time immemorial our Nation has occupied and enjoyed the territory of the valley of the Ottawa River and its tributary streams which form its watershed;

That upon the arrival of the first Europeans in our land, we welcomed them as brothers and became the allies of the King of France, in war and peace and trade;

That in the year 1760 we made a Treaty of Alliance and Friendship with the King of England through his Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson. In that Treaty, we were promised protection and security in return for our friendship. Our relationship with the Crown has often been described as a Silver Covenant Chain;

That by the Articles of Capitulation at Montreal in 1760 the Crown obligated itself to maintain us in the possession of our lands;

That His Majesty King George III, on October 7, 1763, issued a Proclamation at the Court of St. James and that the Proclamation was explained to us by the King's representative in the terms following:

"The hunting grounds which your ancestors and yourselves have from time immemorial occupied and enjoyed and that have been the means of supporting and bringing up your families are reserved to you by order of your great and good Father the King. No strangers, my Children, have a right to establish themselves on your hunting grounds nor molest you in any manner whatever. They are reserved for your tribe as hunting grounds, for the sole benefit of yourselves and children. Your Great Father even forbids his first Officer or any other individual of making a survey of any part thereof as to purchase or otherwise to appropriate to themselves a single particle of your hunting grounds".

We were promised at that time, in conformity with the terms of the said Royal Proclamation, that our lands would not be taken by the Crown except at a public council at which our Chiefs and principal Warriors must be present, to be held for the purpose of making a purchase of our lands in the name of the Crown;

That the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763, forms a part of the laws of Canada today and that its terms have never been repealed, but remain in full force and effect;

We retained our copy of the Royal Proclamation; our ancestors and ourselves were proud of it. We considered it as a sacred document, as it contained the King's word, and we were always persuaded that his words and signature were sufficient to ensure us of the peaceable enjoyment of our hunting grounds and keep us from being molested by strangers of any description;

That we assisted in and took part in the great Treaty at Niagara in 1764, in which further promises were made to us and the Covenant Chain was renewed and extended;

That in performance of our Treaty obligations to the Crown, we have taken up arms in every war in which our services have been requested. Our warriors have served with distinction in the War of the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and most recently two World Wars. In the First World War, every man of Golden Lake volunteered and served in the army. None of these wars were our own. We shed our blood only to keep our promise to the Crown;

That beginning in 1772 we addressed petitions to your predecessors and to the officers who were responsible for the administration of our affairs; among those petitions for protection and simple justice you will find those dated July 14, 1791; August 27, 1794; July 26, 1795; July 19, 1788; September 2, 1820; February 9, 1821; February, 1827; July 29, 1827; April 28, 1829; March 5, 1830; August 11, 1835; April 1836; February 3, 1837; September 6, 1838; March 9, 1840; September 4, 1841; July 11, 1842; February 23, 1847; August 1847; August 15, 1849; February 9, 1851; September 24, 1857 and July 21, 1863.

That these memorials containing complaints praying for the removal of squatters and lumberers from our lands always received good words and great promises from your predecessors, and we were told that steps would be taken immediately to remove and punish them, but these were only promises and so light that they were blown away by the first wind and remain to be accomplished;

That innumerable squatters and lumberers, authorized by your governments, have taken possession of and established themselves on the most fertile parts of our lands, destroyed our magnificent forests, abused our ancestors, and forced them into pitifully small tracts of land in abject poverty;

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That the Crown's Governments have participated in these attacks on our just rights, gaining profit from the sale of our lands and resources; we have seen our people stripped of their nationality in violation of all laws; we have seen them jailed or fined for seeking game or fish for food. These attacks on our rights continue in our woods and lakes and your courts to this day;

That in violation of your laws and ours your Governments took purchases of our lands from Indians who never lived on them and claimed no title to them;

That the Constitution of Canada affirms the aboriginal and Treaty rights of our Nation, and that, while we know that the King's word in the Proclamation of 1763 has given us no protection, and fear that these further promises hold no more protection for us than the many hollow promises we have received in the past, yet we also know that the Crown would want to maintain its honor and keep its word;

That we recognize the strength of our rights and claims, but that we would not wish to create more injustice by seeking justice ourselves, not to dispossess others without compensation as we have been dispossessed ourselves;

WE THEREFORE PRAY:

That all lands in the Province of Ontario which form part of the watershed of the Ottawa River below the Mattawa River that are now in the possession of the Crown be immediately confirmed and recognized as belonging to our Nation;

That the Governments of Canada and of the Province of Ontario make no use or disposition of these lands or any parts of them or any resources appertaining to them without the consent of our Nation;

That discussions begin with your Governments under your personal auspices and direction to settle the questions of compensation for their past use and occupation of our lands and resources, and of compensation for the taking of those lands which have been patented;