

Source of Resistance n° 3 (summer 1997)

COLONIALISM CONTINUES: INSIDE THE  
GUSTAFSEN LAKE STANDOFF

INTERVIEW WITH A DEFENDER  
**Wolverine speaks to John Shafer**

**Excerpts from two interviews with William Ignace (also known as Wolverine) by John Shafer, a long time supporter of the sovereigntist movement. The interviews took place March and September 1996, while the trial was in process.**

**John:** It is an honour and a privilege to be speaking with William Ignace. This summer Mr. Ignace and a number of other Shuswap traditionalists and a number of non-Native settler British Columbians stood with those traditionalists in the defense of scared Sundance and burial grounds in Ts'peten also known as Gustafsen Lake. Mr. Ignace is now in prison awaiting trial on charges of attempted murder. We are speaking to him at the Surrey pre-trial centre where Wolverine is a political prisoner.

**Wolverine:** I believe that the whole treaty process is a fraud because the province is not a nation, therefore it cannot make agreements. The agreements that my people made they made with the Queen. When you look it was the hereditary people that went over in 1906 again in 1924. These were hereditary people and not agents of the crown, like civil servants to the federal government. This is what makes it the fraud to begin with: the people sitting at the negotiating table dealing with the fraudulent government, like the province of British Columbia which has no treaty. First they had to have a treaty with the Indian people before they can assume jurisdiction. Since no treaty has not been made they just assume that they had jurisdiction. Look where they put me answer to criminal charges which stems from the land issue. They never got the agreement with our people with regards to the land so how could they really have jurisdiction on it. Our people are the only ones with the true law here, the only ones.

**John:** Your counsel has been demolishing these crown witnesses [in court] one after the other I've seen some of them just knocking big holes in what is obviously a very slash dash attempt to cover up what really happened, but the thing that is not getting across is jurisdiction and this judge seems to be very determined that the issues of jurisdiction are not going to come through here. What's your feelings about that?

**Wolverine:** Well my feelings are you know its good for a judge to talk about the rule of law but when the rule of law is put squarely in front of him he goes blind and he goes deaf and same with the prosecutor. He talks about the rule of law but I guess they say that just to impress themselves you know to make it sound like really they're going by the rule of law here in this country when in a matter a fact its all been covered up. They know how corrupt they are and yet this is how they deal [with us].

**John:** One lie that being told by the media during the standoff was that you were hunting the RCMP.

**Wolverine:** I believe that the pigs knew who they were dealing with. When the RCMP have orders to eliminate me when spotted, then who is hunting who? Because too much of the truth is coming out. They want to cover up the truth because the land issue is to great for the people of British Columbia. All we want is the respect that we deserve, because we made room in our nations for the non-indigenous people. And yet where is the respect that we should have. Meanwhile it is the RCMP who is the goon squad for the province of British Columbia to carry on the theft of the resources here in our home land to where we will never see justice. The judges sit there and make sure the Indian people will never receive justice here. And the RCMP and the justice department are part of that whole system to keep us down so we will not be able to speak about our rights. ...

One of the things that I said when I testified before the United Nations was that the whole judicial system in British Columbia is so corrupt right to the Attorney-General and right to the Premier's office and right into the Supreme Court of Canada and the Prime Minister's Office. These people know what they are doing and they continue. Everyday they are stealing billions of dollars from the Indian people and look where they put our people to where we can only collect welfare and people start squawking about this. But First People have to realize where the tax base starts from, it starts from the Indian land and all the resources. People say we're living off their backs but we're not-they're living off ours. We been sharing our resources ever since they came here. Now look at the fishermen, they claim that's their fish I would like to ask these fishermen in what country did the creator come down to give them this fish. The fish spawn in our rivers right in our homeland yet

soon as there is some kind of agreement, even fishing for our food, people start squawking but you'd rather waste by the tonne, not even by the pound.

It should be the hereditary people who are signing the agreements. The tribal council is a civil servant who takes order from the federal government-this is where the fraud stems from, between the Crown and the Tribal Council signing agreements on other people's rights. This is wrong. If we had to go to the international agreements this would be thrown out. We filled out a document to the UN. The UN studies on treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between Indigenous populations and the states. I believe that the people out there should read this being put out by the UN and then take a look at what BC and Canada is trying to put out as being legal. In order to talk about the land issue they have to have a treaty. We have to have recognition before we can co-exist.

... What we asked at the stand off was for a third party tribunal. Each time I go to court I ask for the same thing, a third party tribunal that is not set up by the colonial system but a third party with the Queen's Privy Council. Maybe there we might have a little justice.

The reason I'm locked up here in surrey is because people assume they have jurisdiction. They're putting me through the criminal system without dealing with the land issue. This judge wants to deal with this separate without the jury hearing this. Now this is the fraud. Is this judge afraid of something, has he got something to hide? ... The judge has to deal with the land issue. The land issue going to come up again time and time again in the trial. Then we're going to find out where the scam is, where the province of British Columbia has given our land away. This is out right theft of our homeland.

**John:** And we know that we are getting to the consensus stage of the theft where band and tribal councils consent to the theft.

**Wolverine:** The tribal council is just little puppets that get pulled here and yanked here and have a big grin on the face and run after the two dollars that the federal government is giving out while the poor people like myself who have been struggling with the land issue, we never received any moneys from our own band. We have to carry out the work for the people. Now, that was pretty hard for us because the band council, this is the only people who the federal government wants to

talk to because these people are paid puppets. They know who is these people and where the money can be spent in order to get some papers signed and know that's not right.

**John:** Now there are a lot of questions that need to be answered about who made the decisions. The reason what happened and things changed and got very hostile and military up there on the government side had something to do with the NDP's [the New Democratic Party, the provincial government currently in power] bid for re-election.

**Wolverine:** Yeah I think its safe to say these people ordered to kill from Aug 24 and there was moves made while we were still trying to negotiate, talk our way through this and not only that to try to get a third party tribunal in Great Britain. The RCMP officers did not want to go this route...Bruce Clark is the only white lawyer who really brought out the rule of law and here he is being condemned by the court system and by the people, I guess because they feel threatened that we may take back the whole country but all we ask for is just to make a connection so we can coexist.

**John:** You mentioned that fact there have been delegations that went to the Imperial Crown to try to get them to uphold the law. This was basically the central demand made this summer by yourself and the other traditionalists at Ts'peten was that this issue be looked at in an independent impartial international third party tribunal. Clearly the BC domestic system is very threatened by that. They have essentially harassed your chosen counsel out of the country, and made it impossible for him to represent you.

Lavina White, a Haida elder, she is calling for a full and comprehensive public inquiry into the circumstances of Gustafsen Lake. Would you support a full and comprehensive inquiry?

**Wolverine:** Well if was done by a third party. I don't think anybody here in Canada would do us justice. The only thing I want to see come out of this is that if the Canadian government on both levels of government does not want to pay the compensation for what they done to us then they open the door to a third party tribunal with the Queen.

**John:** This is the day [in court] that they alleged that Jojo Ignace fired at one of the emergency response team members. Now I am correct in stating that you and the defense counsel that the crown has known for some time that Jojo I was in fact not in the camp that day but was in fact at your home in Chase.

**Wolverine:** Yeah, I think they know this since August of 17th last year. They had this information all along and yet they just go along like people's time in jail don't mean nothing long as they have someone in jail.

**John:** So in other words they have been holding Jojo full well knowing that he could not possibly have fired that shot since he wasn't there. And while they held him they abused quite a bit there was some beatings and his condition was not good when they released him.

**Wolverine:** Yes it started off at Hundred Mile House at the courthouse where he got clubbed down a bit. I don't know what happened at Kamloops, then they put him on medication which seriously deteriorated his system.

**John:** In addition he was interrogated in some peculiar ways for long hours without his counsel being present and they removed his clothing did they not?

**Wolverine:** Yeah I think he was there bald naked. This is how they, the RCMP, interrogate nowadays I guess.

**John:** Well its a great democracy isn't it.

**Wolverine:** Well it is for the just-us system.

**John:** Now you have been incarcerated in this facility for some time and another one before this. There were certain problems that were happening. One was the interference with cultural and spiritual activities.

**Wolverine:** Well I'm not sure what it is that they are afraid of, maybe something that they don't understand they fear most. But to Indian people we have the pipe which we use to pray with to the creator. In a way, maybe they are fearing the sovereignty of our people because I believe that when you look at sovereignty, in order to practice your spiritual practice anywhere in your territory the pipe is used. In order to be a nation you have to have the four basic elements in order to be a nation. You have to have language, the land base, the culture and the religion.

**John:** Can you give us a sense of what it was like up there [at Gustafsen Lake]?

**Wolverine:** Well there was at the start there was some cowboys said they were gonna string up some red skin niggers and that after that there was some people firing at us and we weren't sure if they were firing right at us. There were gunshots there and when Ovide Mercredi was there and also gun fire when he was leaving. I believe that some of these things were set up by the RCMP so that way they can have a real massacre in there. And when they bring in Michael Webster from Waco Texas I believe to show them to counsel them on how best to massacre people.

**John:** So here we have the psychiatrist, consultant with the US justice department at Waco Texas.

**Wolverine:** Well I hate like hell to really say if he's a good doctor or not. If you just look at what happened at Waco, Texas and look at the fire power that the RCMP had: automatic weapons, about 10 000 rounds fired our way, ... concussion grenades and mines that took out one little truck. ... We wanted to settle this in a peaceful manner yet the RCMP was sent in there just to blow us away. When you start firing about ten thousand rounds you know you're trying to do something. We were portrayed with our little 22's and the little old broken down 303's that we had the bigger weapons. I think they had even bigger weapons they don't want to tell the public what they had. This is to cover up the big lie about what they are doing this because they are the goon squad for the BC government to cover up the land issue... The land issue is the bottom line and this is what we're going to stand on. They don't have jurisdiction on us until this is settled. And it cannot be settled by any civil servant elected system. It has to be dealt with by the traditional people.

**John:** It was good to see the presence of a few pale faces up there. Increasingly people are beginning to realize that what the powers that be have in mind for us is not pleasant that we're looking at corporate rule more and more damaging the ability of everyone to survive except for a small class of the rich. Is there a place in this struggle for non-Native people to break this strangled grip of corporatehowl over land and resources with the original title holders?

**Wolverine:** Yes, I believe we can work together on this cause we've been the targets up to this point. And now the targets are shifting over to you people, to the white people... The only people that is going to survive is people that go back to the land cause land is the issue here so until that is settled.

**John:** Okay we're being told [by the prison guard] that this is over with so its been good talking with you any final words to the people out there?

**Wolverine:** Well I hope that people just stay strong and we may have freedom one day. ... I'd like to thank the people that out there that thinks and prays that we make it through this year cause we have a big fight in ahead of us, the time to expose the people and their corruption in this country is coming.