

Statement by Hannah Martin

My name is Hannah Martin and I am a Mi'kmaq Citizen and Rights Holder from Taqamiju'jk, a region located in the Sipeknekatik district of Mi'kma'ki. I am also a recent graduate from the Honours Indigenous Studies program at McMaster University, which I completed as a 2015 Joyce Crawford Loran Scholar.

I would firstly like to acknowledge and thank John for inviting me to present a statement today - a simple but powerful testament to his commitment to Treaty relationships and a shared fight for environmental justice in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, traditional territory of my ancestors. In the short time I have known John he has offered his friendship and his most sincere solidarity to the Mi'kmaq fight for justice. He continuously challenges himself to learn more about his place as a settler and a Treaty person, and he further invites others around him to do the same. One thing I admire about John is his humility, and his commitment to walking in a good way alongside his Mi'kmaq relations in the spirit of peace and friendship.

As an Indigenous woman, I am no longer surprised when the self-determination of our own people is attacked when we defend our rights, even when done in the most diplomatic way. For centuries, colonial powers have worked to systemically and strategically dispossess us from our traditional territories in order to colonise, commodify and exploit our non-human relations, our Mother Earth.

But for the first time in my work, I saw what government and corporate actors have done to Indigenous peoples for centuries happen to a settler. Needless to say I was astounded. No longer are colonial powers just targeting the original caretakers of this territory but they are ready to muzzle anyone who stands to protect it. In this case, a citizen attending a public information session to become more informed about the effects of tailings on our environment.

What happened to my friend and colleague John Perkins was unjust and unacceptable. Every person has a right to attend public information sessions, to become more informed of issues that have a potential to impact their wellbeing, without facing violence and oppression.

I recognise my inherent and sacred role as a Mi'kmaq woman to protect the water. This means standing for truth and justice with integrity and courage, and always acting in the best interest of our Mother Earth, and our Inherent and Treaty Rights as they pertain to our existence on our unsurrendered, unceded, beautiful territories. Additionally, I recognise my responsibility as a Mi'kmaw Treaty person in protecting all peoples on this land from acts of violence and colonialism such as what John experienced, and ensuring they can live in peace in Mi'kma'ki, our traditional, unceded territory.

Wela'lioq.