INDIGENOUS PEOPLE DEMAND MORITORIUM ON QUEBEC LOGGING

Description

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MNN. June 21, 2023.

Indigenous guardians of the ancestral territories of the Innu, Atikamekw and Mohawk are demanding a moratorium on logging in Quebec.

This coalition is made up of the Innu collective Mashk Assi, which defends the unceded territory of Nitassinan; the Ekoni Aci movement, which brings together defenders of the Atikamekw territory of Manawan and Wemotaci; and the Kanienâ??kehÃ :ka Kahnistensera, better known as the Mohawk Mothers.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MASHK ASSI COLLECTIVE

Posted yesterday at 5:10 p.m.

Due to the â??ecological disaster caused by the forest firesâ?•, a coalition of traditionalist Innu, Atikamekw and Mohawk indigenous peoples demands a moratorium on logging and mining activities north of the St. Lawrence River by the end of 2023.

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Innu and Atikamekw activists block logging roads to oppose logging on their unceded ancestral territory.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MASHK ASSI COLLECTIVE

These First Nations activists recall that the millions of hectares burned affect not only the habitat of wildlife that is crucial to their culture, but also the health of many Aboriginal communities.

"With what is happening concerning the quality of the air which is unbreathable in several places, we think that it is really important to put a brake at the moment" , specified Michael Paul of the Mashk Assi collective.

In addition to the moratorium, the Aboriginal people who present themselves as holders of ancestral title to their respective territories are asking for an inquiry into the causes of the forest fires.

â?? The government, through its mismanagement of the forest, has created this situation of extreme danger for which it is responsible. By prioritizing profitability, the government has created monoculture coniferous forests that turn into veritable powder kegs in dry and hot weather, at the risk of public health. Â»

â?? A quote from Excerpt from the letter from the Mashk Assi collective, the Ekoni Aci movement and the Mohawk Mothers

"This forest management is based on cutting potential, industrial development and immediate profit. The priority place of the forest industry in forest management is too great and has created a situation of unprecedented danger. We must act immediately to break this impasse" , continue the Aboriginal traditionalists.

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The Chibougamau forest fire (File photo)

PHOTO: COURTESY

The coalition also calls for an independent environmental impact study to be carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Special Rapporteur and that it be chaired by the indigenous guardians of the territory. "We are the custodians of ancestral knowledge that has allowed the boreal forest to survive until today. We know every corner of our territory and the families of animals with whom we share it. As recognized by a UN report, Indigenous peoples are by far the best guardians of the natural territory and the environment, everywhere on the planet" , supports the coalition.

The blockage maintained in the Laurentides wildlife reserve

Three weeks ago, before the forest fires broke out and restrictions came into effect, Indigenous people from the Mashk Assi collective forced the closure of several logging sites located in the Laurentides wildlife reserve. They denounce the destruction of the forests south of Lake KÃ©nogami.

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This blockage is still in effect on Nitassinan. In particular, a permanent camp has been set up at kilometer 216 of Route 175 to monitor the comings and goings in the forest.

These Innu, who do not benefit from the support of the Mashteuiatsh band council , sent eviction notices to the forestry companies present on their ancestral territory.

Since May 29, indigenous activists have been regularly patrolling Nitassinan to ensure that there are no loggings.

"We are ready to go to court if it is not respected" , mentioned the committed artist Michael Paul.

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Innus have set up a permanent camp along the logging road located at kilometer 216 of the Laurentides wildlife reserve.

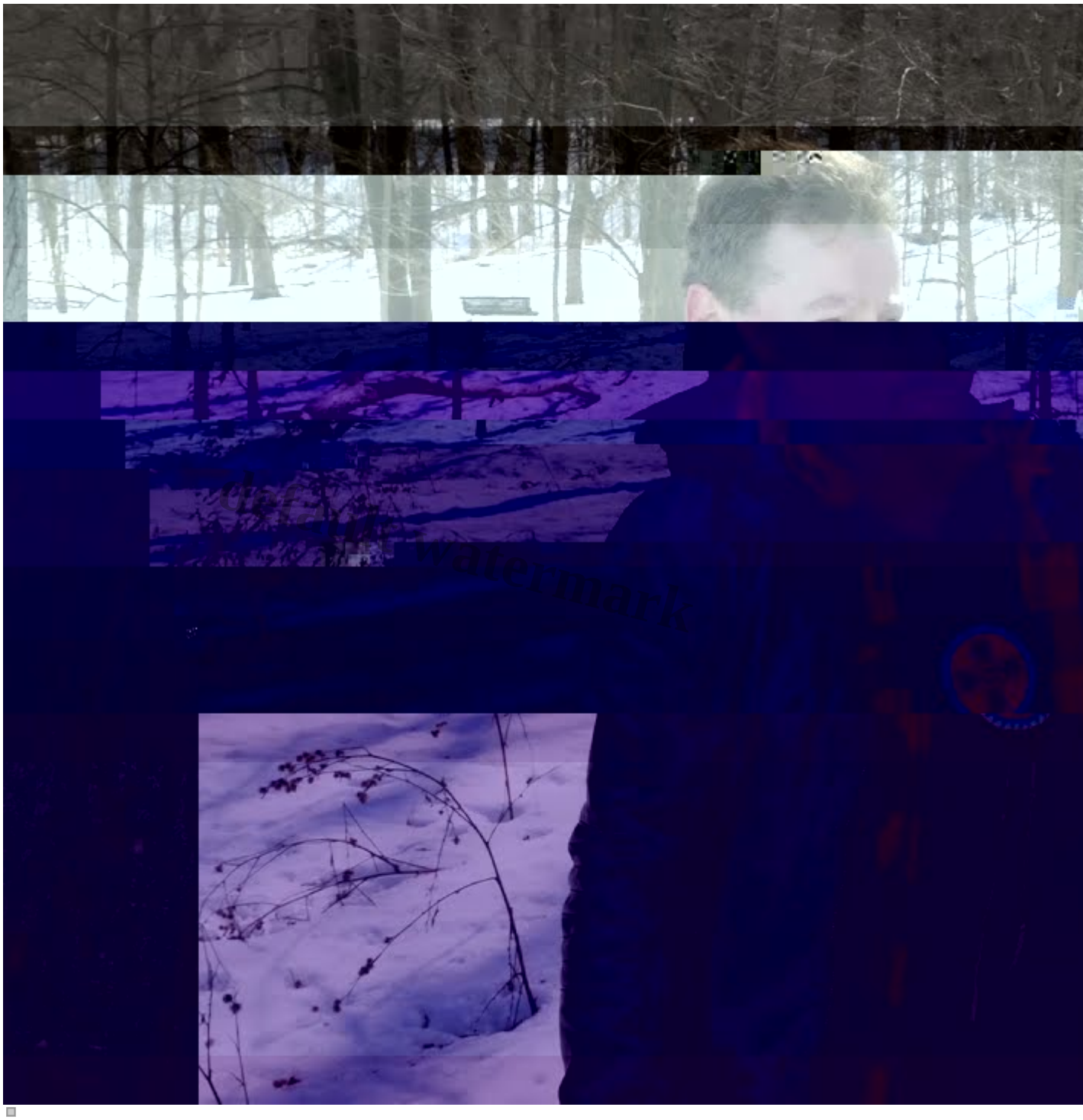

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MASHK ASSI COLLECTIVE

The Lignarex Group, which qualifies this file as "delicate" , is one of the manufacturers who complied by withdrawing their forestry machinery from certain construction sites. From the outset, the leaders of Lignarex said they were ready to negotiate with the Innus .

The collective has also authorized the logging company to recover the trees already felled to avoid wasting wood.

Innu artist Michael Paul Kuekuarsheu sings of the resistance of his people:

With information from Gabrielle Morissette

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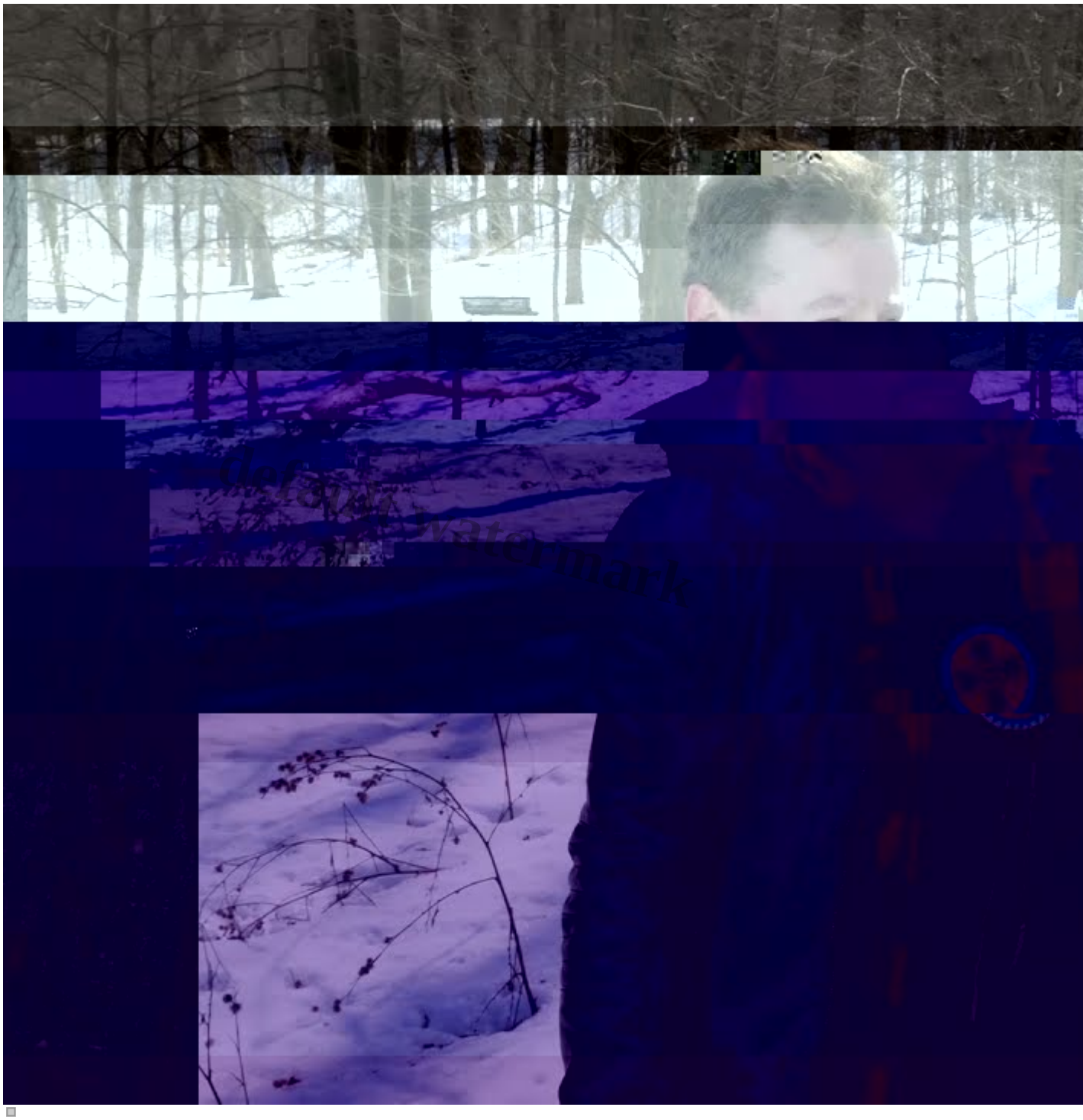
Priscilla Plamondon Lalancette, Radio Canada



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