

## **UN Report confirms exploitation of First Nations** **By Will Horter - April 12, 2005**

UN special investigator Rodolfo Stavenhagen [released his report](#) on Canada's Indigenous people, concluding that *"[p]overty, infant mortality, unemployment, morbidity, suicide, criminal detention, children on welfare, women victims of abuse, child prostitution, are all much higher among aboriginal people than in any other sector of Canadian society"*

"

<http://www.dogwoodinitiative.org/Pages/newsroom/bulletin.php>

The conclusions in the UN report are no surprise to anyone knowledgeable about First Nations issues, particularly in BC.

The poverty in First Nations communities is even more deplorable when you consider that most of the wealth in western Canada comes from First Nations' territories.

Billions of dollars in logs, minerals, fossil fuels, and hydro are exported from First Nations' territories with little or no benefits flowing to them. Worse, they are often left with the social and environmental damage these boom and bust industries leave behind. For example:

## UN Report confirms exploitation of First Nations

Written by

Tuesday, 12 April 2005 16:53 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 April 2005 16:53

---

- BC's \$17 billion a year timber industry relies on logs from unceded lands with little payback to affected First Nations;
- The mining industry in BC claims to generate \$4 billion a year but shares little more than token benefits to affected First Nations while leaving them with a legacy of abandoned mines, acid mine drainage and leaking tailing ponds destroy First Nations' traditional lands; and
- The fossil fuel industry shares little of the \$77 billion in gas revenues it generates, while First Nations are left with devastated landscapes and contaminated soils and water.

The report finds that Canada's much-touted high ranking on the United Nations' human development scale would be much lower if judged solely on the economic and social well-being of its First Nations Peoples. It says Canada would be placed 48th out of 174 countries if judged on those criteria. This low position is well below Canada's usual top 10 ranking on the UN's human development scale.

The report's conclusions reinforce earlier finding by NGOs in Canada.

[Global Forest Watch Canada](#)

(GFWC) released a report last year called,

[Aboriginal Peoples in Forest Regions in Canada: Disparities in Socio-Economic Conditions](#)

. The report found that “

*Aboriginal communities within the commercial forest zone had significantly lower average incomes than Aboriginal communities within forest regions but outside of the commercial forest zone*

”

Contrary to conventional wisdom, and the BC government ill-advised [Forest and Range Agreements](#), what the GFWC study shows is that First Nations who have timber companies logging in their territory are worse off according to five standard socio-economic indicators. So much for the argument that logging promotes indigenous economic development.

Perhaps the growing body of evidence about the exploitation of Canada's indigenous people underscores why the unrest in First Nations communities is rising.

Is it any wonder that the Haida, Tahltan, Treaty 8, Tl'azt'en Nation, Tsawataineuk, Carrier Sekani, Hupacasath, Bonaparte and Ktunaxa are fighting back against the Crown and the timber, mining, oil and gas, fish farm and recreation industries?

What non-native community facing severe unemployment, health and suicide issues would sit idly by when resources (natural capital) is shipped out in vast quantities, while governments dither about process, and companies and shareholders get rich? Not many!

That is why First Nations from around BC--that are standing up to defend their territories against unsustainable development--deserve our

## UN Report confirms exploitation of First Nations

Written by

Tuesday, 12 April 2005 16:53 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 April 2005 16:53

---

support. Dogwood Initiative is trying to give it to them.