



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Algonquins campaign against uranium mining, Ontario, Canada, 2007-2008

29 June

2007

to: 1 December

2008

**Country:** Canada

**Location City/State/Province:** Ontario

**Location Description:** 30,000 acres of Canadian Crown land in the Sharbot Lake region of Eastern Ontario

### Goals:

The campaigners demanded a moratorium on uranium exploration and mining on Algonquin land.

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books › Toll booth set up to distribute information.
- 021. Delivering symbolic objects › First Nations poured water on the parliamentary steps.
- 038. Marches
- 041. Pilgrimages › First Nations traveled by canoe from their territory to Ottawa.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Supporters gathered in Ottawa to show support for the paddlers.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Two hundred non-native supporters attended the reading of the court injunction; attendees drummed and chanted during the reading of the injunction.
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents › Police took the role of peacekeepers rather than enforce the court order.
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › First Nations blockade of Frontenac Ventures base camp.

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Dillman and others sent letters to McGuinty.
- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Letters of support received from variety of sources.
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Mining Watch Canada released a position statement opposing uranium mining.
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › CPT and CCAMU organized days of action in Ottawa and Toronto.
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Amnesty International condemned the incarceration of Lovelace.
- 034. Vigils
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › First Nations blockade of Frontenac Ventures base camp.

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 004. Signed public statements › Twenty prominent Canadians signed a public letter opposing the mining.
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › At toll booth and mining site

**Methods in 5th segment:**

**Methods in 6th segment:**

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 006. Group or mass petitions › CCAMU created an online that gathered 1,757 signatures.

**Notes on Methods:**

Campaigners did not seem to take direct actions past June 2008. However, Robert Lovelace continued into 2011 to speak about the need for action to defend the land from uranium mining.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Defense

**Cluster:**

Environment

Human Rights

**Group characterization:**

- Environmentalists
- First Nations
- non-natives against drilling

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, Shabot Obaajiwon First Nation, Robert Lovelace

**Partners:**

Community Coalition Against Mining Uranium, John Kittle

**External allies:**

Christian Peacemaker Teams, Greenpeace Canada, Mining Watch Canada, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Amnesty International, Safe and Green Energy, 20 Municipalities in the surrounding area

**Involvement of social elites:**

Margaret Atwood (author), Stephen Lewis (UN ambassador), Cathy Jones (actor), Ian Wilson (MP Liberal candidate), Rolly Montpellier (Green party MP candidate), Ross Sutherland (New Democratic Party MP candidate), Dr. Syd Brownstein (National Research Council), Elizabeth May (Green Party leader)

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- Community Coalition Against Mining Uranium
- Green Party of Canada
- Ian Wilson
- Rolly Montpellier
- Ross Sutherland

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

- Christian Peacemaker Team (enter and exit)
- Greenpeace
- Mining Watch Canada
- the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

- Amnesty International
- Christian Peacemaker Team (enter)

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

- 20 Municipalities in the surrounding area
- Safe and Green Energy

**Groups in 5th Segment:****Groups in 6th Segment:****Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

It is unclear whether 20 or 200 municipalities passed supportive resolutions.

**Segment Length:** 3 Months

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Frontenac Ventures, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, Randy Hiller (Conservative MP candidate)

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

At first, police refused to enforce the court injunction against the demonstrators, identifying their role as peacekeepers.

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known

**Repressive Violence:**

Police arrested at least seven blockaders, including Robert Lovelace, based on the court injunction.

## Success Outcome

### Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

0 points out of 6 points

### Survival:

0.5 points out of 1 point

### Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

### Notes on outcomes:

The final agreement allowed Frontenac Ventures to begin exploration for uranium, based on input from a steering committee including First Nations representatives. Chief Bob Lovelace called the deal a "sellout." It is unclear whether Frontenac Ventures mined uranium from the area, though the company did drill 15 holes in 2008.

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The Frontenac Ventures Development Corporation received from the Ontario government in Canada a permit to begin exploratory drilling for uranium on 30,000 acres of Canadian Crown land in its eastern region of Sharbot Lake. In June 2007, the company began surveying. The company planned to dig trenches, log the forest, and remove core mineral samples.

However, the Algonquin Ardoch and the Shabot Obaajiwan First Nations claimed the rights to the land and minerals around Sharbot Lake, based on a 1772 treaty. The Ontario government was disregarding that treaty-based claim. Further, the First Nations people opposed the mining because radioactive material might leak into groundwater.

In June, the Algonquin Ardoch and the Shabot Obaajiwan began public demonstrations opposing the uranium exploration.

On 25 June, Frontenac Ventures put its mining exploration on hold.

On 29 June, the Algonquin and the Shabot Obaajiwan First Nations began to occupy the the company's exploration basecamp, in conjunction with a national First Nations day of action. The blockaders hung anti-mining signs on nearby trees and set up residence at the site. They spread awareness about the protest to the surrounding community through bulletins.

On 8 July, about three hundred First Nations people and supporters marched for two hours in the Sharbot Lake area to demonstrate against uranium mining. Following the march, First Nations representatives gave speeches condemning Frontenac Ventures' exploration. Robert Lovelace, a retired Algonquin chief, spoke at this and future rallies, serving as an inspiration for the demonstrators.

Local non-native residents joined the blockade and brought donations of food, water, fuel, and money to the demonstration. Twenty-five local residents formed the Community Coalition Against Mining Uranium (CCAMU), soon boasting 12 subcommittees. First Nations protesters and CCAMU members organized regular marches and gave flyers to passing vehicles.

On 17 July, representatives of Frontenac Ventures met with the First Nations and offered protesters \$10,000 in exchange for ending the blockade. The First Nations refused to be convinced by money and continued blockading the site. Frontenac Ventures then filed a lawsuit against the First Nations peoples for \$77 million.

On 27 August, the Superior Court in Kingston issued an injunction ordering Ontario Provincial Police to remove the protesters' blockade of the mining operations. The Police did not follow these orders, identifying their role as that of peacekeepers. Two hundred non-native supporters attended the reading of the court injunction; attendees drummed and chanted during the reading of the injunction.

On 13 September, Ian Wilson, Liberal MP candidate for the Sharbot Lake region, called for a moratorium on uranium mining in a campaign speech. Green party MP candidate Rolly Montpellier and New Democratic Party MP candidate Ross Sutherland had made similar statements, describing tourism as more beneficial to the region's economy than extraction. The conservative MP

candidate for the region, Randy Hiller, stated that the police should enforce the court injunction against the protesters.

On 20 September, CCAMU spokesperson John Kittle held a press conference in the parliamentary press gallery, along with Dr. Syd Brownstein of the National Research Council who outlined the health impacts of uranium mining.

Later that day, Elizabeth May, the leader of the Canadian Green Party, announced to mass media her opposition to the uranium mining and support of the blockade. CCAMU then carried a petition for a moratorium on uranium mining with 2500 signatures to the office of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty. CCAMU later created an online that gathered 1,757 signatures.

On 22 September 2007 the Algonquin Alliance departed from their territory by canoes in a protest action, heading toward Ottawa. While on route, the paddlers held press conferences in Carleton Place and Almonte.

Upon their arrival on 27 September, the paddlers delivered a proclamation demanding an immediate end to uranium mining on their territory. The paddlers had carried water from their territory, and they poured it on the steps of the Canadian Parliament building to demonstrate that all watersheds are connected. More than 100 supporters welcomed them. On 28 September, they held a rally on Parliament Hill attended by 250 people. The protesters then paddled their canoes to Dow's Lake to deliver their demand to Premier McGuinty.

On 24 September, John Tory, leader of the Canadian Conservative party, proposed a \$2500 fine per day to be required of anyone occupying land that they do not own. Frontenac Ventures offered an alternative to their continued attempts to mine the area: that the Canadian government purchase the proposed mine site from the company at \$80 million.

In September 2007, the Algonquin Ardoch and the Shabot Obaajiwan First Nations invited the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) to be present at the blockade. CPT provided violence-prevention trainings and organized public oaths of nonviolence. They remained at the site for a month, until the Ontario government and Frontenac Ventures agreed to negotiate with the First Nations in October.

On 2 October, the First Nations sent a letter to Premier McGuinty proposing negotiations. On 3 October, police arrested at least seven blockaders, including Robert Lovelace, based on the court injunction.

On 8 October, a local grandmother, Donna Dillman, began a hunger strike to protest the uranium mining. Dillman demanded that Premier McGuinty meet with her.

Frontenac Ventures demanded that within 24 hours the First Nations should vacate the area within a 200-metter buffer around the base camp.

On 11 October, Shabot Obaajiwan chiefs Doreen Davis and Earl Badour Sr. agreed to dissemble the blockade of the proposed mining site. On 19 October, the blockaders had transferred their assembly from the base camp to outside Frontenac Ventures' gate. Eventually, protesters dispersed from this location.

Between October 2007 and January 2008, the Ontario government and the First Nations engaged in negotiations.

By November, the fasting grandmother Donna Dillman had sent six letters to Premier McGuinty; she did not received any reply. On 16 November, CPT organized a day of action at McGuinty's office in Ottawa. Officials only allowed Lovelace and Dillman into the building to deliver a letter. CPT and CCAMU then held an Anti-Uranium Rally in Toronto, also attended by Dillman. McGuinty claimed that he could not comply to Dillman's demands and asked her to eat; McGuinty did not meet with Dillman. Dillman continued her hunger strike. (The strike had begun 8 October.) Supporters continued sending letters to Dillman. Some Canadian MP's met with Dillman individually. CCAMU launched a letter-writing campaign targeting Premier McGuinty.

About two months after her fast had begun, on 9 December, Dillman stops drinking juice, announcing intentions to take water only. Three other women begin hunger striking with Dillman.

On 13 December, the CCAMU along with Greenpeace Canada, Mining Watch Canada, and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment held an event in the Ontario legislative building. At the event, Dillman ended her hunger strike, sixty-eight day since its start. That day, CCAMU announced its intentions to hold a series of public hearings, titled "Citizens' Inquiry on the Impacts of the Uranium Cycle," starting in January, about the health effects of uranium mining.

In December, Mining Watch Canada released a position statement opposing uranium mining.

On 3 February 2008, CPT sent another violence-reduction team to support, in response to an invitation by the Algonquin. CPT also initiated a letter-writing campaign to Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Julian Fantino in support of the protesters.

By 6 February, the negotiations between First Nations representatives and Frontenac Ventures had ended without an agreement. The parties neared an outcome that would have postponed drilling, but Ontario admitted that Frontenac would have been allowed to explore even during further negotiations. Frontenac Ventures announced intentions to begin test drilling, and the First Nations representatives withdrew from the meetings.

On 7 February, the Ardoch Algonquin and Shabot Obaadjiwan reassembled at the gate of the Frontenac Ventures base camp. The First Nations and CCAMU organized frequent marches. On 13 February, the Shabot Obaadjiwan announced their intentions to respect the court order, permitting Frontenac Ventures to begin exploring for uranium.

On 15 February, the Ontario Superior Court sentenced Robert Lovelace and six other protesters to six months imprisonment at the Quinte Detention Center and over \$50,000 in fines. On 19 February, Amnesty International condemned the incarceration of Lovelace. On 23 February, about four hundred protesters assembled outside of the jail to protest his incarceration. Demonstrators beat drums and held signs.

On 17 February, the Ottawa City Council passed a resolution asking the Ontario provincial government to issue a moratorium on uranium mining until health effects had been evaluated and indigenous land conflicts resolved. Many other City Councils began passing similar resolutions.

On 1 March 2008, protesters marched and held a vigil to demand Lovelace's release and to oppose the uranium mining.

On 22 April, twenty prominent Canadians, including author Margaret Atwood, actor Cathy Jones, and UN ambassador Stephen Lewis, sent a letter to Premier McGuinty demanding the immediate release of the seven jailed protesters and a moratorium on uranium exploration.

On 16 May, Lovelace began a hunger strike in jail, demanding that McGuinty enter into negotiations with the First Nations. On 26 May, First Nations representatives spoke at a rally on the lawn in front of the Ontario Provincial Legislature. Speakers called for the Ontario court to release Lovelace.

On 28 May, an Ontario Appeal Court reduced the sentences of seven jailed protesters, releasing Lovelace. On 2 June, Robert Lovelace and ten other protesters appeared at the Kingston courthouse for contempt of court charges from the fall. Frontenac Ventures withdrew the charges.

On 16 June, the Peterborough City Council, in Ontario, passed a resolution asking the Ontario provincial government to issue a moratorium on uranium mining, based on a proposal by Safe and Green Energy. Peterborough was the nineteenth Ontario municipality to pass such a resolution.

On 24 June, the CCAMU released a report based on the content of the "Citizens' Inquiry on the Impacts of the Uranium Cycle," demanding that the government evaluate uranium mining's impacts on health and review Ontario's Mining Act.

On 1 December, representatives of the Algonquin and the Shabot Obaadjiwan, Frontenac Ventures, and Ontario public officials participated in a Superior Court session to finalize an agreement. The deal allowed Frontenac Ventures to begin exploration for uranium, based on input from a steering committee including First Nations representatives. Chief Bob Lovelace called the deal a

“sellout.” It is unclear whether Frontenac Ventures eventually mined uranium from the area, though the company did drill 15 holes in 2008.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

Ipperwash occupation, 1995 and Oka occupation, 1990. (1)

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