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The spearfishing controversy in northern Wisconsin is one of great concern for both Indians and non-Indians. Speaking from the point of view of an Indian who was in northern Wisconsin the last week of spearfishing, I can say the concerns are legitimate. The potential for confrontation and violence is real.

The Chippewa Indians are a fishing tribe, they have always relied heavily on fish in their culture. They have spearfished for hundreds of years, taking only what they needed. To them it's not a sport, it's not something you hang on the wall, it's one of the main staples in their diet. The courts have upheld their rights to hunt, fish and gather wild rice.

At the boat landings there have been several confrontations shown on the media, but the media can't show you the tension and the anxiety of the people there. I was at the boat landings Friday and Saturday night. I watched Friday night as the woman a few feet in front of me got hit on the head with a full can of beer. I watched as 700 protesters taunted and jeered the 60 to 70 Indians gathered there. Many had children there, witnessing all the hatred and racial slurs thrown at the Indians. Many carried signs "Save a Walleye, Spear a Pregnant Squaw," and some hard to believe, read, "I'm not a Racist." I saw the four bus loads of protesters arrested and hauled away. I heard the most violent and degrading verbal attacks in my life that night.

Saturday night was a little different. There were 1000 supporters at the boat landing to face the 1000 protesters. Again the protesters lashed out with profanity and racial slurs of the ugliest nature. Not only was I hit with that but I was also hit with stones and spit on. I dodged a car that sped into the Indian crowd, hitting several people, and then tried to get away before two state patrols could put up a roadblock. I'll never forget the sickening thud and the screams as that car hit those people.

The hatred that spewed forth at the boat landings this weekend is like nothing I have ever seen in my life. How the Chippewas have put up with this type of abuse is beyond belief. They must be commended for their restraint. Not one Indian has been arrested, while over 200 protesters have.

The ones who suffer the most are the children. Mole Lake Indians pulled all their children out of school because of threats from other children and adults who called the school. Two of their children were assaulted over the weekend. Non-Indian children in school have been found drawing pictures of Indians being shot or speared. I can only hope my children never have to experience the type of hatred I have seen.

To take away the Chippewas treaty rights, as they are now trying to do, would take away their heritage, their culture and their pride. Governor Thompson said these fish are not worth dying for. The Chippewas put their lives on the line every night they were out there.

They believe that these fish and their treaty rights are worth fighting for and if need be, dying for. That's how strongly they feel.

I'm relieved no one was killed on either side. The potential for someone dying was real. Guns and bombs were found regularly. I feared for my life this weekend, and no one should have to live in fear.