



The Brief

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Sprayed Kedgwick women fight back for the forest

By TRACY GLYNN

On September 4th of this year a group of mostly women and some men in Kedgwick were doused with chemicals from a helicopter spraying the public forest to kill the leafy hardwoods in a softwood plantation.

Betty St. Pierre, a spokeswoman for the group, said the people sprayed were told to leave the area because of imminent spraying but were sprayed before they had a chance to leave. St. Pierre said the people experienced running eyes, sore throats, nausea and other symptoms after being sprayed with Monsanto's Forza.

Many of the women and men are afraid to speak publicly about the event for fear of losing their jobs planting trees. St. Pierre, who scales trees for a living, says someone has to speak up. "We have had enough. They are scaring people by telling them there will be no work. Meanwhile, they are using us as guinea pigs."

The frustration is apparent in St. Pierre's voice as she describes the situation. "A man reported fish kills along a stream here after the last spraying. It is not normal to do that to the forest. We can't prove we are sick because of the spraying but cancer and pesticides have been linked. People are starting to question why do so many people in our community, in Northern New Brunswick, have cancer and rare cancers," stated St. Pierre.

A new high-tech wind tunnel that will be used to determine the exact location of where spraying planes should fly depending on the weather and wind was unveiled at the Acadia Research Forest near Fredericton on the same day that the news of the call for a ban on spraying broke across the province. The new technology will reduce pesticide use but not eliminate it.

St. Pierre and a group of women have held demonstrations and collected 5,000 signatures on a petition calling for a ban on aerial forest spraying. They plan to present the petition to the Premier when the Legislature reopens on November 17.

On the NB Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website, the province admits it has tried alternatives to spraying herbicides but continues to use them because they are cheaper and involve less labour: "Natural Resources has tried clearing the brush using hand tools and brush saws. Cut stems re-sprout the following year, causing severe competition; therefore, these treatments must be repeated often. This raises the cost to over 10 times that of a single application of herbicide." According to DNR, herbicides are sprayed on approximately 25 per cent of the softwood land cut over each year in the province.

In January of this year the province of New Brunswick announced a new plan for the forest that would allow the



Betty St. Pierre presents a 5,000 signature petition to Burt Paulin, MLA for Restigouche-La-Vallée at a recent protest. The petition calls for an end to the aerial spraying of New Brunswick's forests. The women began their campaign after several people were sprayed by in the northern community of Kedgwick.

area of plantations on public lands to increase to 28%. Plantations currently represent 10% of the public forest. More plantations will mean an increase in herbicide spraying. The increase in plantation area concerns scientists working with the Greater Fundy Ecosystem Research Group. They recommend that plantations not exceed more than 15% of the forest area in order to preserve the biodiversity.

St. Pierre points to other regions that have banned spraying. No herbicides have been sprayed on Quebec's public forest

since 2001. Carol Hughes and Glen Thibeault, two NDP MPs in Northern Ontario, are expressing concerns with aerial forest spraying. Hughes is calling for an investigation on the impacts of aerial spraying of glyphosate over forests in Northern Ontario.

Over half of the forests in New Brunswick are deemed "Crown" lands or public lands. The land has never been ceded by indigenous people.

Community questions slow response to missing teen



Hilary Bonnell has been missing since September 5. Community members question what role racism, colonialism, and misogyny have played in the low level of media coverage and slow pace of the police investigation.

By FRASER MACPHERSON

Esgenoopetitj - Hilary Bonnell has joined the ranks of the more than 500 missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada, and has done so with virtually no national media attention. October 17 marked six weeks since Bonnell was last seen.

Sixteen year-old Hilary Bonnell went missing from Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation in New Brunswick, on Saturday September 5, 2009. She was last seen at 7:30 a.m. walking down a street near a convenience store on the reserve. RCMP have been tight-lipped about the progress of the investigation. Constable Francois Poirier admitted, "Everybody's still pretty positive

but there's nothing really specific that we're working on."

The last contact with Bonnell was a text message received by her cousin Haylie Bonnell later Saturday morning, indicating that she was scared and wanted to get away from wherever she was. Hilary Bonnell's mother, Pamela Fillier, has since been convinced that she is in danger. Fillier has attested several times that Bonnell would never run away from home, and the two have a very open and positive relationship. After six weeks, Fillier continues to reach out and try to raise awareness of her daughter's disappearance. "If you want to help, please help. I need so much help to find her because I really — Saturday's going to be four weeks. She's not home yet. What's taking so long to find her?"

Early on in the case, Hilary Bonnell's family and friends complained about the RCMP response to the girl's disappearance. For the first several days, the team of police was comprised of one constable and a few officers normally assigned to work in Esgenoopetitj. The officers were covering an area from Miramichi to Bathurst, stopping along possible routes at gas stations and convenience stores looking for any sign of Bonnell, leaving the community devoid of officers.

Bonnell's aunt, Kathy Augustine, complained on September 10 that there was a lack of police presence and that promises had already been broken. By this time, members of the community had already begun scouring the area, looking for any sign of Bonnell, unaided by the RCMP. "We're not just going to wait around for someone to come and help us find my niece, we just can't do that and we can't accept that," Augustine said.

A full complement of officers did not arrive in Esgenoopetitj until more than a week after Bonnell was last seen. The first media report was not released until four full days after Bonnell was last seen. RCMP did not hold a news conference asking for the public's help until September 13; more than a week after Bonnell had disappeared.

Local community members have held many events attempting to raise awareness of Bonnell's disappearance. On September 23 the community held a walk to raise

awareness. Several vigils and smudging ceremonies have been held as well. A sacred fire has been burning near the community fire hall since Bonnell went missing, well attended by community members and Bonnell's mother, Pamela Fillier. Bonnell's family has been struggling with the cost of printing posters and flyers and billboards, already having printed hundreds of dollars worth of materials. Their efforts to blanket Esgenoopetitj, Miramichi, and the surrounding areas with images of Bonnell come in a vacuum of media coverage, regionally and nationally.

Coverage of Hilary Bonnell's disappearance was initially restricted to local Miramichi and Moncton area newspapers. Since the girl went missing more than six weeks ago, only one national paper has covered the story, focusing on the \$15,000 reward offered by the Burnt Church First Nation (see The National Post Sept. 15). Many find this chilling in light of the coverage received by Tori Stafford who went missing this summer, and Mariam Makhniashvili, who went missing from her school in Toronto this fall.

Already, it has been more than a month since Bonnell was last seen, and police continue to cite the lack of evidence or new leads. But many question what role society's racism, colonialism, and misogyny have played in the early investigative delays; why untrained community members were left to scour the area alone; and why no public appeal was made until more than a

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