



The Brief

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Labour fighting back against Gallant's cuts and privatization



Members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in New Brunswick, the province's largest union representing hospital workers, janitors and workers in the public service, have been mobilizing against the Gallant government's cuts to education, and privatization schemes of vital services such as health care. Street demonstrations and rallies have occurred, including a rally at the Legislature on May 28, 2015 attended by hundreds. The widows of health care, seen here, protested the death of public health care at that rally. Photo courtesy of Maggie MacDonald.

Who will stand up for Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women? Not Bernard Valcourt



When the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for a national inquiry on the 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada on June 2, 2015, all stood to show their support except Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Earlier this year, Minister Valcourt said suicides of Aboriginal youth are parents' problem, not his. Suicides in Aboriginal youth occur five to six times more often than non-Aboriginal youth.

How do you stop a pipeline when one family owns both the oil and the media?

By LYNAYA ASTEPHEN

I am a proud resident of Red Head, Saint John, a small rural community with quiet roads and beautiful coastal views.

TransCanada is proposing a 1.1 million barrel per day pipeline from Alberta to Saint John. After travelling almost the entire length of the country, it would end at a new deep water port on the Bay of Fundy. The Energy East project also includes a massive tank "farm" to store the oil that would be loaded onto waiting ships — across the street from my home.

Why do I oppose Energy East?

I'm worried about the air we breathe.

Saint John is highly industrialized, and residents are already exposed to increased health risks from air pollution, not to mention the oil smells near Irving's new rail facility. We have, among other industries, Irving Oil's export terminal and the Canaport LNG terminal. We have 38 times the industrial pollution of Fredericton and 243 times that of Moncton. A recent study found lung cancer rates 30 per cent higher in Saint John than in either of these communities. The health experts I've spoken to say that existing regulations for air pollution are inadequate. Yet TransCanada says air pollution from Energy East would not be significant.

I'm worried about the prospect of a spill or fire at the tank storage farm.

The deputy fire chief in Burnaby, B.C., has issued a scathing report on the risks presented by a similar

oil tank storage facility on the West Coast. The chief warned that a fire at the expanded tank farm could create a "nightmare scenario" resulting in a massive urban evacuation.

I am having trouble trusting TransCanada and Irving Oil. Despite several requests, TransCanada has refused to hold a public meeting with Red Head residents with an open question-and-answer period.

A recent Reuters investigation of the New Brunswick Department of Energy found that since 2012, Irving's export terminal has experienced at least 19 accidents classified as "environmental emergencies." In 2013, Irving received a formal warning for taking more than a day to report a storage tank leak at the Canaport facility.

According to National Energy Board statistics, TransCanada has had more pipeline ruptures than any other company in Canada. The company's electronic monitoring equipment won't even detect a spill that is less than 1.5 per cent of the pipeline's capacity. This means over 2 million litres can spill before anyone is alerted.

My concerns don't stop at the end of my driveway.

The Energy East project would see 115 oil tankers in the Bay of Fundy — and potentially far more now that the Cacouna, Quebec, port has been cancelled. The endangered North Atlantic right whales in the Bay of Fundy are already vulnerable to ship strikes and low-frequency ship noise, both of which Energy East threatens to worsen. Moving in and out of port for export, Energy East tankers would carry 1 to 2 million barrels of oil each.

Energy East would ship diluted bitumen from the tar sands. Sticky and heavy, bitumen from Alberta's tar sands separated from the diluents (chemicals) and sunk in Michigan's Kalamazoo River during a pipeline spill in 2010. This cost Enbridge more than

\$1 billion to clean up, yet submerged oil remains on the river bed to this day.

One federal study found diluted bitumen sunk and formed "tar balls" in marine conditions similar to the Bay of Fundy. A major spill that occurs during loading of the tankers or when the tankers are leaving wouldn't just threaten whales. It could be a serious blow for all ocean-dependent economies and jobs.

A draft federal report accessed through freedom of information admits that not enough is known about the potential toxic effects of tar sands crude in our waterways. Energy East passes through or comes near more than 300 waterways, including at least six of the St. John River's main tributaries.

I want to do my part in helping protect future generations.

The Energy East pipeline would create more climate pollution than any single Atlantic province.

A recent scientific report says 85 per cent of Canada's tar sands need to stay in the ground if we are to avoid the worst of climate change. Industry wants to double production by 2030 and will pursue both pipeline and rail expansion to export their product. Filling the Energy East pipeline would allow a close to 40 per cent increase in tar sands production.

We can do better. This export pipeline puts so much at risk for such short-term benefit. There is much more at stake than profit.

Lynaya Astephen is a resident of Red Head and the spokesperson for the Red Head-Anthony's Cove Preservation Association.

Editors' note: The Telegraph-Journal, owned by J.K. Irving, refused to publish this commentary.

Crossing the line for the land: indigenous land defenders share stories as Canada passes Bill C-51

By TRACY GLYNN



Crisanta Perez, a Maya Mam woman from Guatemala, shared her story of being criminalized for defending her community’s lands and water from Goldcorp, a Canadian mining company, to audiences in Fredericton, Tatamagouche, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto in early June 2015. Photo by Miles Howe.

Fredericton/Unceded Wolastoq territory – On the eve of the Senate passing Harper’s anti-terrorist Bill C-51, dozens gathered at the Three Sisters Cafe in Fredericton to hear three indigenous land defenders share their stories of being criminalized for defending their community’s land and water. The event was organized by the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network.

Crisanta Perez, a Mayan Mam mother and grandmother from the Western highlands of Guatemala, spoke of her community’s struggle against the Goldcorp Marlin mine, a Canadian-owned mine. Perez blames the mine for shortages in water, cracks in homes, health impacts and criminalization and violence against opponents.

Goldcorp has operated the Marlin gold and silver open-pit mine for over a decade in the San Marcos highlands.

Perez became a target for repression in 2008 when she damaged a power line to the mine that was placed on her property. She tried to get the company to remove the power installation on her small plot of land but the company ignored her requests so she said she was forced to take action. Eight women in her community, who became known as the Goldcorp 8, were charged with “obstructing the mine’s operations” when they came to her assistance. Two of the women faced charges for over two years before the charges were finally dropped.

The saddest moment in the struggle, Perez said, was when she was forced to leave her children when they were small to take refuge because she feared arrest. Separated from her

children for six months, Perez came home and was taken into custody a month later but was freed by her community.

Charges against community leaders are seen as a strategy to burn out the community resistance.

Violent deaths are linked to more than one Goldcorp mine in Guatemala. Sixteen-year-old Topacio Reynosa, a youth organizer, was murdered in April 2014 in what many in her community believe was due to her opposition to the Escobal mine, which is partly owned by Tahoe Resources and Goldcorp.

Days before Perez spoke to audiences in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and communities in Atlantic Canada about how her community has been adversely affected by Goldcorp, the YWCA in Vancouver gave their Women of Distinction Award in the Outstanding Workplace category to Goldcorp on May 26.

According to the YWCA, the YWCA Women of Distinction Awards “honours individuals and organizations whose outstanding activities and achievements contribute to the well-being and future of our community, and also honours businesses and organizations that support the wellness and diverse needs of their employees.” In a statement announcing the award, the YWCA judges noted that “Goldcorp treats its people as its greatest asset.” Guatemala solidarity activists in Canada disagree.

Protests against Goldcorp’s activities have been protested in Toronto and Vancouver in recent years. “Goldcorp is Canada’s shame... We are all

complicit so long as Goldcorp continues to operate with impunity in Guatemala,” stated Valerie Croft, a member of Amnesty International at one protest in Toronto in 2012.

Back at the Fredericton event, Annie Clair, the Elsipogtog mother and grandmother who is currently facing charges for her role in the blockade of SWN’s shale gas equipment in 2013, expressed sorrow and regret to Perez for being forced to spend months in refuge away from her children. Clair knows what it is like to be separated from her children. Her son, Junior Breau, was imprisoned for eight months following the RCMP raid on the Rexton camp against shale gas in October 2013.

Clair was cautious about what she could share about the criminalization that she has faced for her opposition to shale gas on Mi’kmaq territory because of her upcoming trial. She is pleading not guilty to charges that include mischief and resisting arrest. She will face the charges in a Moncton court on Sept. 21-24. The Fredericton event raised approximately \$200 for her legal defense fund.

Ron Tremblay, a Wolastoqiyik elder from Tobique, shared his experiences getting arrested for his role in blocking a SWN shale gas truck in Mi’kmaq territory in June 2013 as well as his time in Oka in 1990.

A 29-year-old Tremblay joined a convoy from his community to support the Mohawks when they were under siege for resisting a golf course expansion on their territory.

While en route to Oka, Tremblay said his convoy was stopped, surrounded and held by armed police in Levis, Quebec. They eventually made it to Oka where Tremblay recalled a military officer pointed a gun into his forehead after he told the officer to stop pointing his gun at a woman holding a sign that said, “Go fight a real war.” Tremblay remarked, “It was all over a 9-hole golf course.”

Tremblay and others with the newly formed Peace and Friendship Alliance have been vocal opponents to Bill C-51, which passed the Canadian Senate by 44 votes to 28 on June 9. The bill will become law after receiving Royal Assent from the Governor-General.

The Oka Crisis is only one example of how indigenous people in Canada on the front lines of resistance to development in their territories have been attacked by the police and spied on with reasons of being suspected threats to public security and terrorists.

The 63-page omnibus Bill C-51 gives increased powers to CSIS, Canada’s security intelligence agency, to spy on citizens who it believes are threats and it gives the agency the power to disrupt the activities of their targets.

Indigenous land defenders and environmental activists on the front lines of resistance to oil pipelines, shale gas and mines fear the consequences of the new law but say they remain firm in their resolve to defend the land, water, air, climate and people.

A new campaign, Kill Bill C-51, has been launched and is expected to be a topic of discussion during the federal election campaign. The Conservative and Liberal parties supported the Bill while the Opposition NDP and Green Party opposed it.

Tracy Glynn is a member of the Fredericton committee of the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network and a news writer and editor with the NB Media Co-op.

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Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

March for Jobs, Justice & the Climate. Meet up at NB Legislature at 1:00pm on July 4 for a march on the walking bridge over the Saint John River (the Wolastoq). Thousands of people will mobilize for #jobsjusticeclimate in across Canada, join here: <http://350.org/july/>