Return of the Wolastoq: Giving a river back its name  
BY TRACY GLYNN

Wolastoq Grand Council Chief Ron Tremblay (right) with Harry LaPorte (left, former Wolastoq Grand Council Chief) with members of the Wolastoq First Nations walking across the old train bridge in Fredericton to the traditional longhouse erected across the street from the New Brunswick Legislature in 2013. An eagle soared over them as they walked across the bridge over the Wolastoq. The Wolastoq people invited allies into the longhouse to participate in a ceremony and to hear a letter against shale gas from the Chiefs. Photo by Liane Thibodeau.

The Wolastoq Grand Council is supporting their youth's proposal to change the name of the St. John River, back to its original and proper name, the Wolastoq. Wolastoq means "beautiful and bountiful river" in the Wolastoq (Maliseet) language.

"In a sincere implication of 'Truth and Reconciliation,' Wolastoqewiyik soundly propose to reinstate the name 'Wolastoq' to the river commonly known as St. John River," says Ron Tremblay, the Wolastoq Grand Council Chief. The call for individuals and groups to support the name change issued by the Wolastoq Grand Council states that, "Wolastoq is our identity," and argues that, "scientific studies used to drink from the river and now you can't even swim in it. The river is poisoned and so is the fish." Both Tremblay and Brooks have visited the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York to share their community's struggles with resource extraction on their territory. They are particularly concerned with the Sisson tungsten and molybdenum mine and the Energy East pipeline that is proposed.

Renaming the lands was part of the theft of lands of the Maliseets. According to Andrea Bear-Nicholas, a professor emeritus and former chair of Native Studies at St. Thomas University. In her award-winning paper published in 2016 in the Journal of Canadian Studies, Bear-Nicholas wrote about the erasure of the ugly realities of the dispossession and displacement of the Maliseet by colonial artists. She noted, "By ignoring these realities, artists kept their audiences, especially potential immigrants, oblivious to Indigenous suffering, and effectively assisted, either willingly or not, in the ongoing dispossession and displacement of Maliseets."
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by her side. “We have a case number 3936, but until which was read aloud to the shareholders by Catherine since this time have been ignored.

None of these women were offered independent legal waiver stating that they could never sue the company. Compensation in exchange for the women signing a legal 2012. This redress package, which offered small “business remarked Mandi, who is representing rape survivors who speak to Barrick’s shareholders, despite the fact that mine security, their goal was to confront the company surrounding Barrick’s Porgera mine, to help hold the meet us and I will say more to Barrick then.”

Regarding Barrick’s response to their statements, Jocelyn stressed, “Barrick didn’t answer my second question about how to stop the ongoing violence.”

While the women are in Canada, they are collecting used cell phones with photo and video capacity so that they can distribute these to the women in all of the villages surrounding Barrick’s Porgera mine, to help keep the company accountable while these abuses continue.

Klaire Gain, who was also denied speaking rights 2014, was returned to the house of a colleague, she explained, “I am feeling re-traumatized in this process.”

A large power plant, now the largest in the world, was built for the Cerrejón mine that supplies NB Power and other places around the world with coal. The dam, diverted the Rancheria River that was the only source of water for the people in that region. The dam has harmed not only the environment and also the local people. While the women are in Canada, they are collecting used cell phones with photo and video capacity so that they can distribute these to the women in all of the villages surrounding Barrick’s Porgera mine, to help keep the company accountable while these abuses continue.

Sakura Saunders is the editor of ProtestBarrick.Net and an organizer with the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network.

Gaupe was one of the 119 women who participated in Barrick’s remedy program. She came to Canada to represent the women who have organized to get fair treatment from Barrick. She came to ask Barrick to open up a new dialogue about the remedy of the rape survivors and also asked that Barrick release them from the legal waiver stating that they could never sue the company. She came to Canada to represent the women who have organized to get fair treatment from Barrick.

“My case was brought to your grievance office at the mine in 2010 together with the cases of 80 other women who have never received remedy,” read Mandi’s statement, which was read aloud to the shareholders by Catherine Counsans of MiningWatch Canada while the women stood by her side. “We have a case number 3936, but until today we have had nothing but excuses from Barrick about why our cases have not been addressed and no one has spoken to us personally about our cases.”