



The Brief

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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 Saint 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 Saint 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 have now confirmed what our people have always known: water has memory. Once we address the river as 'Wolastoq,' this river will remember its original name."

Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada Carolyn Bennett has assured the Wolastoq Grand Council in writing that, "Canada is committed to a renewed Nation-to-Nation relationship with indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership."

Minister Bennett also stated that, "Achieving full reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada is at the heart of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's mandate, and that the government of Canada will engage with indigenous peoples, provinces, territories, and Canadians on how to implement the Declaration in accordance with Canada's Constitution."

For the Wolastoq Grand Council, the act of changing the river's name back to its original name will initiate a process of reconciliation and create opportunities for discussions and engagement around Indigenous issues.

The Wolastoq Grand Council is requesting support letters from allies, including individuals and organizations. The Peace and Friendship Alliance, Council of Canadians Fredericton Chapter and No One Is Illegal Fredericton are organizations that support the name change.

Alma Brooks, a member of the Wolastoq Grand Council and St. Mary's First Nation, told the NB Media Co-op in 2012, "The land and water in New Brunswick has never been ceded by our people. The time has long passed for us, natives and non-natives, to get to know each other. It's been over 600 years. We need to protect Aboriginal title to land and water. The process of decolonization needs to begin and it will be a long process. This is just the beginning."

When talking about the Wolastoq, Brooks said, "My people

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 oil pipeline that is proposed.

Renaming the lands was part of the theft of lands of the Wolastoqewiyik as described by 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 wittingly or not, in the ongoing dispossession and displacement of Maliseets."

NB Refugee Clinic supports refugees navigate the law

By TRACY GLYNN

No One Is Illegal Fredericton organized a Borderless Solidarities Workshop on May 6 in Fredericton. The NB Media Co-op interviewed one of the participants, Akram Ben Salah, the executive director of the NB Refugee Clinic, to find out what his organization is doing to support refugees settling in New Brunswick.

NBMC: What does the NB Refugee Clinic (NBRC) do? How long has it been around?

Akram Ben Salah: The NBRC offers free legal assistance and representation to persons making applications to stay as refugees or on other types of humanitarian or risk-based grounds, who cannot afford to hire a private lawyer. Our work includes preparing and submitting the claims, performing mock hearings and representation during the actual hearings as well as assistance with work permit applications for asylum seekers and permanent residence applications for all clients whose claims were successful and approved.

The Clinic opened its doors in Moncton to the public on October 17, 2016. Since then, we have been receiving clients on a regular basis.

Before the Clinic opened, there were no organizations in New Brunswick offering free legal assistance. Our clients cannot afford to hire a lawyer and because of that, without our services, they often had to go through the process without proper guidance or representation.

NBMC: What specific refugee and/or immigration policies need to change in Canada?

Akram Ben Salah: The Province of New Brunswick presently does not accept applications under their Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) from persons who have previously made a refugee claim or filed an application for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. The result is that we have people in New Brunswick who are employed, supported by their employer, speak English or French and wish to remain in the Province – but cannot even apply to the Province to stay because they previously made a refugee claim that was unsuccessful.

We all know that New Brunswick is working toward the goal of boosting the economy and the population growth through immigration among other strategies, but such barriers are minimizing the target candidates. It would be a win-win situation if this policy is amended, which can easily be done since it only falls under the control of the provincial government control.

NBMC: At the Borderless Solidarities Workshop, you mentioned the 'deportation papers' that refugees/newcomers have to sign when they arrive that put people in danger of deportation. Can you explain?

Akram Ben Salah (far right) with UNB law students, Asaf Rashid and Nushka Blais, at the Borderless Solidarities Workshop in Fredericton on May 6, 2017. Photo by Tracy Glynn.



Gang rape survivors from Papua New Guinea denied voice at Barrick’s Annual General Meeting

By SAKURA SAUNDERS



Everlyn Gaupe and Joycelyn Mandi, who say they are survivors of sexual assault at Barrick’s mining operation in Papua New Guinea, were given flowers as they left Barrick’s Annual Shareholders’ Meeting on April 25, 2017 in downtown Toronto. Photo by Allan Lissner.

Everlyn Gaupe and Joycelyn Mandi travelled across the planet from the highlands of Papua New Guinea to downtown Toronto to confront Barrick Gold’s shareholders at the company’s annual general meeting. Both survivors of gang rape at the hands of mine security, their goal was to confront the company about the violence near Barrick’s Porgera mine. But both Guape and Mandi were denied the opportunity to speak to Barrick’s shareholders, despite the fact that they held legal proxies.

“After we came all this way, Barrick silenced our voices,” remarked Mandi, who is representing rape survivors who have never received remedy from Barrick, “So we feel like it’s the same as what they do to us in Porgera.”

After years of denying cases of sexual assault, Canadian mining company Barrick Gold compensated 119 women and girls who were victims of sexual violence by mine security with about \$10,000 each for these abuses in 2012. This redress package, which offered small “business grants” and “business training” to the victims, gave this compensation in exchange for the women signing a legal waiver stating that they could never sue the company. None of these women were offered independent legal counsel, nor were they consulted about the remedy that they received. Additionally, many women victims were never compensated at all and the claims brought to Barrick since this time have been ignored.

“My case was brought to your grievance office at the mine in 2015 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 Coumans 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.”

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.

“In the AGM, Barrick shamed us by not letting us speak,” said Everlyn Gaupe. “When Barrick rejected us, I was very angry, but I was surrounded by police and I felt like I could not do anything. At least our statements were heard by Barrick. They said that they would meet us and I will say more to Barrick then.”

Regarding Barrick’s response to their statements, Joycelyn 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 hold the company accountable while these abuses continue.

Klaire Gain, who was also denied speaking rights despite holding a legal proxy, took the microphone at the end of question period despite lacking the proper pass. She spoke of the impacts at Barrick’s Pueblo Viejo mine in the Dominican Republic. As with Porgera, the primary demand of the people next to the Pueblo Viejo mine is to be resettled away from mining activity.

The Mining Injustice Solidarity Network/ProtestBarrick, which provided proxies for the women to use at the meeting, are looking into legal responses to Barrick’s denial of the voice of these women.

Originally published by the Toronto Media Co-op.
Sakura Saunders is the editor of ProtestBarrick.Net and an organizer with the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network.

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NB Refugee Clinic supports sanctuary city

Akram Ben Salah: The document that refugee claimants are required to sign is called Conditional Departure Order. It is a ‘stand-by’ order to leave Canada. If the claim is rejected or abandoned, this order is activated and the applicant will have to leave Canada voluntarily within the next 30 days. This document is to be signed at the initial eligibility interview where the immigration officer will determine if a person is even allowed to present a refugee claim in Canada. Because of this document, the candidate cannot apply to any other type of immigration programs.

NBMC: Why do you think it is important to support sanctuary cities?

Akram Ben Salah: We believe that it is important for individuals and families to be able to access services from municipal and provincial governments without fear of reprisals due to their immigration status. The scope of the impact of the status of “sanctuary city” will depend upon the types of services that the particular municipality provides. For example, a city with a municipal police force that declares itself a sanctuary city would have an important impact as it would help to permit all people living in the municipality to rely upon policing services without fear of reprisals due to their immigration status. The declaration of status as a “sanctuary city” also carries symbolic importance as it sends the message that the municipality and its residents support equal access to services for all residents, regardless of their immigration situation.

Tracy Glynn is an organizer with No One Is Illegal Fredericton.

In Brief

UNB workers win union challenge in court. A large group of employees at University of New Brunswick, the Administrative, Professional and Technical Workers, received a favourable decision in their long struggle to unionize. On April 7, 2017, Justice Paulette C. Garnett, sitting for the Court of Queen’s Bench, rejected the application by the University of New Brunswick to deny union certification by the Public Alliance of Canada.

Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in trouble. Families, advocates and Indigenous leaders from across Canada are raising concerns with the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. An open letter on May 16, 2017 to the Chair of the Inquiry, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, signed by various signatories including family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, stated, “We are deeply concerned with the continued lack of communication that is causing anxiety, frustration, confusion, and disappointment in this long-awaited process. We request that you, as the leader of this Inquiry, substantially rework your approach in order to regain trust and ensure that families are no longer feeling re-traumatized in this process.”

Colombia’s Wayuú people struggling to live because of coal mine. Colombia’s Wayuú people are struggling to live without water since a dam 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 coal mine, owned by multinational mining giants, BHP Billiton, Anglo American and Glencore, consumes 17 million litres of water a day. Reports says 5,000 Wayuú children have died since the dam was built while the Wayuú say 14,000 children have died.

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Community Calendar

To list your community event, email info@nbmediacoop.org. For an updated listing of events, check nbmediacoop.org.

Common Concern: Standing Together as Global Citizens. June 15-17 at Mount Allison University in Sackville. The conference will reflect on the seismic shift in recent times of the global political landscape - evidenced in the election of a demagogue to the most important political position in the world, volatile referenda and electoral results in Europe, and racist, war-mongering, misogynist and anti-planet discourse, including here in Canada. Participants will explore what role Atlantic Canadians engaged in promoting social justice locally and globally. More information, visit: acicsymposium.org/.

Guatemala Solidarity Potluck. Join a potluck with Sandra Lopez and Lilian Bolvito with the New Hope Foundation in Rabinal, Guatemala, on Wednesday, June 21 at 6:00pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. Organized by the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network.



Award-winning journalist
Bruce Livesey will deliver the keynote address at the NB Media Co-op’s annual general meeting in Fredericton on **Sept. 21**. Livesey has reported on the Irvings in New Brunswick and on the surveillance by the Canadian government on indigenous activists who are opposed to energy projects for The National Observer.
For more information, contact: info@nbmediacoop.org.