



# The Brief

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## “We never surrendered:” Wolastoq Grand Council Chief

By TRACY GLYNN



**Wolastoq Grand Council Chief Ron Tremblay calling for justice for Tina Fontaine at a vigil in Fredericton on Feb. 26, 2018.** Photo by Jared Durelle.

Indigenous peoples across Canada are decrying the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on Oct. 11, 2018, that the federal government is not obligated to consult with Indigenous peoples before a law is passed in Parliament. Laws passed could interfere with Indigenous treaty rights. The Wolastoq Grand Council Chief is reminding people that the Wolastoqiyik of what is known today as the Saint John River Valley “never surrendered one inch of land, one drop of water.”

The Mikisew Cree First Nation of Alberta took the case to the Supreme Court in response to two federal bills introduced by the Harper government in 2012 that gutted Canada’s environmental laws. The Mikisew Cree and other Indigenous activists argue that changes to the environmental laws also infringe on their hunting and fishing rights.

Wolastoq Grand Council Chief Ron Tremblay, whose Wolastoqey name is Spasaqsit Possesom, told CBC on Oct. 11 that he is “drastically disappointed” by the Supreme Court ruling.

Since becoming the hereditary chief in 2015, Tremblay has driven efforts to return the Saint John River to its original name, the Wolastoq. The Wolastoq runs through many of New Brunswick’s rural areas, making it possible for the many farms and villages along the river valley to exist and survive. Tremblay wants settlers to lobby their government officials to change the name of the river. “It’s not up to Indigenous people to ask permission of the Premier or Mayors to change the name back to the Wolastoq since no one asked our ancestors about changing the name,” says Tremblay.

Tremblay is worried that the recent Supreme Court ruling will further degrade an already poor obligatory level of consultation on resource development on Indigenous territory, such as with the Sisson mine project. He supports the Wolastoq grandmothers currently occupying the proposed Sisson mine site, near Napadogan, a rural village about 100 km northwest of Fredericton.

Northcliff Resources is currently seeking a Schedule 2 Amendment to the Fisheries Act that would allow them to dump their waste into fish-bearing streams in the Nashwaak Watershed. The Watershed, one of the remaining pristine freshwater environments in the province, is vital to the health of the rural ecosystem in the region. More than 250 people packed a community hall in Stanley in March 2018 to tell federal government officials that they were opposed to the project if it meant destroying precious fish habitat. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has recently asked First Nations in the Wolastoqey territory for meetings on the Schedule 2 amendments.

With ten grandsons, Tremblay has been a champion of Indigenous rights all his life. Having grown up in rural Tobique

First Nation, Tremblay witnessed firsthand the degradation of the Tobique River. Beginning in 1950, NB Power dammed the river for hydroelectricity generation. Abundant Atlantic salmon used to travel through it but today, the salmon are gone.

Alma Brooks, a Wolastoq clan grandmother, is grateful for Tremblay’s “strong determination to protect mother earth.” Brooks notes that Tremblay is a carrier of their people’s sacred pipe and a speaker, teacher and champion of the endangered Wolastoqey language.

Fellow Tobique native, Jeremy Dutcher, shone national attention on the Wolastoqey language and culture when he told CBC viewers, “We are witnessing an Indigenous renaissance” before accepting the 2018 Polaris Prize for his album, Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa, on Sept. 17. When Dutcher performs, he acknowledges Passamaquoddy elder, Maggie Paul, for inspiring him to share the traditional songs of their people.

Like Dutcher and Paul, Tremblay is keeping Wolastoqey culture alive. He regularly invites youth, elders and others to take part in sacred ceremonies. About a decade ago, Tremblay was asked to design a flag for the Wolastoqey Nation by then Wolastoq Grand Council Chief Harry LaPorte. Tremblay says the design, two canoeists following a muskrat, is part of a Wolastoqey story shared with him by Brooks. “Ron works very hard to represent those who have no voice and deserves a lot of acknowledgement and credit for all that he does with little help and practically no resources to speak of,” says Brooks.

Whether in the assembly rooms of the United Nations (UN) or on the frontlines of Indigenous resistance at Oka or Elsipogtog, Tremblay is not afraid to put his body in front of the oppressive structures that are harming his nation and all Indigenous nations.

Accompanied by Indigenous youth and Passamaquoddy Chief Hugh Akagi, Tremblay spoke out against the Sisson mine project at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York in April 2018. He told the Forum that the mining company had failed to properly consult the traditional chiefs and people of his nation and therefore the mining project was in violation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People that Canada claims to endorse.

Speaking of his recent visit to the UN, Tremblay remarked that corporations and international financial institutions such as the World Bank are found there, pushing their demands on world governments while Indigenous voices are sidelined.

Tremblay’s life’s work of protecting the land and water and treaty rights has drawn the attention of state authorities. He has experienced the kind of state harassment and

## “We sink together, we swim together:” An Anglophone perspective on anti-duality rhetoric

By TABATHA ARMSTRONG

Since its inception eight years ago, the People’s Alliance has often led the perpetuation of anti-Francophone rhetoric hidden behind criticisms of “duality” and official bilingualism in New Brunswick. Usually these comments are chalked up to some sort of Francophone conspiracy, bolstered by the Official Languages Act of NB and its Commissioner, to oppress the English majority, force their children to learn French, and “take all the jobs from good English folks!” Like most arguments that cast the blame for perceived misfortunes on one group ahead of another, these claims don’t match up very well with facts or reality.

Some of these messages talk about “poor Anglos not getting work because they don’t speak French.” While the unemployment rate for all New Brunswickers tends to be higher than the national average, the unemployment rate for Francophones in New Brunswick is actually higher than that of Anglophones. In 2016, the unemployment rate for Francophones in the province was 12.4% versus 10.4% for Anglophones. This trend has been in place for decades. (For the record, the unemployment rate across New Brunswick is now around 7.5%, a marked decrease but still higher than the national average.)

Another absurd claim that is sometimes trotted out by anti-duality advocates is that Francophones make up the majority (some 85% supposedly!) of public sector jobs in New Brunswick despite only making up about 30% of the population. Well, unsurprisingly, this is simply not true either. Francophones make up around 43% of public sector jobs with variation among different sectors. That’s nowhere close to the 85% I hear bandied about along with hateful stereotyping of Acadians. Even so, there’s a pretty obvious reason for that discrepancy. We are a bilingual province which necessitates bilingual service provision in our public sector. Francophones are historically much more likely to be functionally bilingual because they are essentially forced to learn English to obtain employment and function in a predominantly English province and North American society. A 2017-18 Annual Report from the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick counted approximately 250,000 bilingual residents. Of these, two thirds are Francophones who speak both English and French and 72% of New Brunswick’s Francophone population are bilingual. Despite this, the main language of work in the public sector is still English with 90% of workers speaking English at work compared to about 36.7% speaking French.

Francophones aren’t getting these public sector jobs because they speak French, they are getting the jobs because they speak ENGLISH – and they speak and write both languages well! There is absolutely nothing in New Brunswick legislation or society that forces Anglophones to learn French. The majority of public sector workers are still Anglophones (around 57% – some of whom are bilingual by choice, and a good chunk of whom are unilingual Anglophones).





# Spraying glyphosate on Crown forests becomes political

By SUSAN O'DONNELL



**Stop Spraying NB organized a discussion with representatives from four political parties on a motion to ban glyphosate in forestry operations on Oct. 17, 2018.** Photo by Susan O'Donnell.

After decades of petitions, protests, meetings and rallies, New Brunswick residents opposed to spraying glyphosate on public lands are finally seeing progress in the legislature. The Liberal throne speech on October 23 included a promise to “introduce a motion to direct a legislative committee to consider recommending a phased-in ban of the use of herbicides, such as glyphosate, with the scope of the ban to be based on objective evidence.”

That promise followed a meeting on Oct. 17, organized by Stop Spraying in New Brunswick (SSNB), the first time all the parties in the Legislature met to discuss a proposal to stop granting licenses to spray glyphosate on public forests. Liberal and PC governments have refused to end the practice, although recently the PCs have indicated they would be willing to consider it. The new Legislature includes three Green MLAs and three People’s Alliance MLAs. Both parties had election platform commitments to end the spraying of glyphosates on public lands.

Almost two years ago, in December 2016, Green Party Leader David Coon proposed legislation to amend the Crown Lands and Forests Act to replace clearcutting and glyphosate spraying with a forest management plan based on ecological sustainability, fairness for private woodlot owners and independent sawmill operators, and acknowledgment of Aboriginal rights. Coon’s proposal was not debated in the Legislature because the government and opposition did not support it. In the new Legislature, at the end of October 2018, Coon tabled a motion calling on the government to ban the spraying of glyphosate and other herbicides over our forests and under power lines.

For Coon, the recent progress on the glyphosate ban is one step further in his multi-year quest to have the herbicide banned from provincial forests. Before he became a politician, Coon headed the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, the organization that issued a petition that eventually gathered more than 30,000 signatures in hard copy. Coon and Conservative MLA Jake Stewart signed the petition at a rally outside the legislature in December 2016. That petition was the largest of many submitted to the legislature over the last decade. In 2015, spraying opponents launched the Facebook group, Stop Spraying in New Brunswick (SSNB), which currently has 13,893 members.

Recently, the NB Media Co-op published an article about a new study detailing how Monsanto, a company that manufactures glyphosate-based products, “used deceit and manipulation to have the chemical herbicide declared safe.” The scientific review found that Monsanto engaged in many unethical research practices, including “ghost writing” scientific articles, interfering in reporting test data by a scientific journal, and preparing presentations for supposedly “independent” scientists.

In late October, a judge in California upheld a jury ruling that glyphosate causes cancer. The jury ordered Monsanto, a company that manufactures glyphosate, to pay \$289 million to a former school groundskeeper

whose exposure to the chemical was found to have caused his cancer. (In an appeal, the judge reduced the jury award for damages to \$39 million).

At the SSNB meeting on Oct. 17, deer biologist Rod Cumberland said the science is clear that spraying glyphosate reduces the deer population. He explained that the herbicide kills the hardwood browse that forms a large part of the deer population diet. According to Cumberland, one acre of hardwood browse provides enough food for one deer for a year, and the current spraying program removes the food for about 30,000 deer per year. The spraying generally occurs on newly planted land which has the richest soil, providing the best environment for the deer population.

SSNB also invited Charles Thériault to their meeting. Thériault lives near Kedgwick in rural northwestern New Brunswick, an area heavily dependent on the forests for its economy and community livelihood. Thériault described the impact of glyphosate spraying on his community and the determination of his community to end it. In October 2018, Thériault gave a keynote talk, “Is our Forest Really Ours?” at Saint Thomas University to an audience of nearly 100 people. He is known for his video series of the same name about forestry management in New Brunswick that is critical of JD Irving. In the recent provincial election, Thériault earned 31% of the vote as a Green Party candidate in his riding of Restigouche West.

Over the past few years, SSNB has made presentations and organized public meetings and protests in many villages and towns across the province. In addition, groups allied to SSNB have organized events in areas particularly affected by spraying, such as the EcoVie group in the Mount Carleton region. Last year, a public protest shut down a presentation on forest spraying by JD Irving to the Petitcodiac Village Council. Young people are also informed and expressing their opposition to spraying, as illustrated by the student Earth Day exhibition in Richibucto earlier this year.

At least one conservation group with ties to J.D. Irving has been intimidated from going public with their opposition to forest spraying. In August 2017, a representative of the Miramichi Headwaters Salmon Federation stated that he was warned by the chief biologist of JD Irving, the largest user of glyphosate in forestry, that the Federation would face reprisals if it went public with their opposition to spraying at a press conference organized by SSNB. Kevin Shaw, a director of the Federation, did participate in the press conference, saying, “We won’t be intimidated.”

New Brunswick uses more glyphosates in forestry than any other province. A report by the Chief Medical Officer of Health in New Brunswick found that 40% of the forest land cut in 2014 was sprayed with glyphosate, compared to 28% in Ontario and 11% in Nova Scotia. In 2001, Quebec banned herbicides in their Crown forest. Dozens of other jurisdictions across Canada, in the US, Europe and around the world have outright or partial bans of the toxic chemical. In New Brunswick, SSNB wants to see a stop spraying bill passed as one of the first pieces of legislation in the new Legislature.

*Susan O'Donnell is a member of the NB Media Co-op Editorial Board and the principal investigator of RAVEN (Rural Action and Voices for the Environment) a research project at the University of New Brunswick.*

## Community Calendar

To list your community event, email [info@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:info@nbmediacoop.org). For an updated listing of events, check [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org).

**Cinema Politica** believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to also inspire social change. This fall, films will be screened on scheduled Fridays at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton, at 7:00pm. View the film schedule at: [cinemapolitica.org/fredericton](http://cinemapolitica.org/fredericton).

**Tertulias** are philosophical/literary/artistic gatherings on scheduled Wednesdays (Nov. 14: Thom Workman on Hannah Arendt; Nov. 21: Ajay Parasram on Eric Williams; Dec. 5: Alain Deneault on Georg Simmel) at 7:30pm at Wilser’s Room, Fredericton. Learn about the thinkers and artists who have influenced our world. For the schedule, Facebook: Tertulias or email: [tertulias@gmail.com](mailto:tertulias@gmail.com).

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## “We sink together, we swim together”

All of this is a sad case of low-income people in a poor province being manipulated into blaming an equally low-income (if not more so in northern parts of the province) linguistic and cultural minority for their problems. It’s fear, insecurity, and lack of social infrastructure fueling bigotry, scapegoating, and hate.

There are lots of things to be upset about in New Brunswick. We should be working to stop the spraying of glyphosate, a known probable carcinogen, on our forests. We should fight for proper health and emergency service provision to rural communities. We should care about the fact that many New Brunswickers, especially many newcomer families, don’t have enough work or food. In other words we’re all in the same boat and it is full of holes. We sink together, we swim together.

I will end this commentary with an appeal to folks who have been swayed by these divisive messages: Don’t let these petty, hateful, and inaccurate conspiracy politics of French versus English be a distraction. We’re a hell of a lot stronger together and there are so many worse things going on behind the language politics/duality debate blinders. Getting rid of “duality” and “bilingualism” will not get you a job. It will not fix our economy. It will not make you happier. Working together to achieve the changes we need might.

*Tabatha Armstrong is a NB Media Co-op editorial board member.*

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## “We never surrendered”

criminalization that is commonly faced by Indigenous land defenders and their allies on the front lines of resistance to oil pipelines, shale gas and mines across the world.

In 1990, Tremblay, then 29 years old, joined a convoy from his community of Tobique to support the Mohawks of Kahnésatake who were under siege for resisting a golf course expansion on their territory. While travelling to Oka, Tremblay’s convoy was stopped, surrounded and held by armed police in Lévis, Quebec. At Oka, Tremblay recalled a soldier pointing a gun into his forehead after he told the soldier to stop aiming his gun at a woman holding a sign that said, “Go fight a real war.”

More than two decades later, Tremblay found himself in the front of armed police again, this time the RCMP. He had joined land defenders opposed to fracking for shale gas in rural New Brunswick. The land defenders were blocking SWN Resources’ shale gas trucks and equipment on Mi’kmaq territory, off a highway near Rexton. Tremblay and other land defenders were arrested during one of the shale gas blockade actions in June 2013.

*Policing Indigenous Movements* is a new book on state surveillance of Indigenous activists by Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan. The authors uncovered that the RCMP were secretly investigating Indigenous activists in an operation called, Project Sitka. Thirty-five of the 89 Indigenous activists profiled by the RCMP as potential threats to public safety had participated in the 2013 anti-shale gas movement in New Brunswick.

During—and months after—the shale gas blockade, Tremblay believed that the RCMP was tracking his movements. A 2017 *National Observer* story reported that Tremblay was followed out of a National Energy Board hearing on the Energy East pipeline at a Fredericton hotel by RCMP Constable Joanne Spacek. Spacek wanted more information about plans for protests against resource development projects such as Energy East. In the summer of 2017, the night before a solidarity caravan set off to the Wolastoq grandmothers camp at the proposed Sisson mine site, the same RCMP officer called Tremblay, trying to get more information about the caravan. Tremblay was surprised that the trip, to bring food and donations to the grandmothers, would elicit such a phone call.

The recent struggles against shale gas, Energy East and glyphosate spraying of the forest in rural New Brunswick are in some ways a blessing, according to Tremblay. He said that it brought together people who share a common concern for protecting the land and water for seven generations.

Tremblay and others have founded the Peace and Friendship Alliance, bringing together Indigenous people and allies across Wabanaki territory, to oppose risky resource development and honour the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed between the Indigenous peoples and British Crown, starting in 1725. With New Brunswick putting into place a moratorium on shale gas, TransCanada shelving the Energy East pipeline, and several of New Brunswick’s newly elected MLAs being against spraying the forest, the strength of such alliances cannot be underestimated.

State surveillance, arrests and court rulings do not deter Tremblay. He remains steadfast in his work to protect the land, water, air and all life.

*This article was made possible with support from RAVEN – Rural Action & Voices for the Environment.*

*Tracy Glynn is working with RAVEN as a doctoral researcher and has had the honour of participating in Peace and Friendship Alliance gatherings.*