A local No More March to St. Thomas University in Fredericton on Jan. 24th. Students and supporters braved minus 30 degree temperatures to take a stand against Bill C-45. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

By TRACY GLYNN

“People say we don’t know what we want. We know what we don’t want,” says Nalina Brooks, a long-time indigenous activist and elder from St. Mary’s First Nation, to a crowd of about 200 gathered at an Idle No More noon rally at Fredericton MP Keith Ashfield’s office on Jan. 11th. Ashfield, who is also the Fisheries Minister, did not meet with the Idle No More demonstrators, in an interview earlier that day with CBC’s Harry Forrestal, Ashfield said that he is committed to moving his country forward. There’s some positive changes for First Nations as well as a lot of positives as to where they are in comparison to where they were when they lost their land.

Federal Omnibus Bill C-45 has sparked hundreds of Idle No More grassroots protests actions across the country, including here in New Brunswick, the territory of the Wabanaki.

Critics of the 400-page bill say it is part of Harper’s dirty fossil fuel development agenda and that it violates Aboriginal treaties and rights, makes life harder for people forced to relocate, and undermines the federal Indian Act. It is a component part of the Conservative government’s 30 years of progress on legislation that protects the environment, and is a positive step forward in the direction of a more balanced approach to development and the environment.

Nélisa Legère, Legère Consulting and Native Affairs, said, “Our goal is to abolish Bill C-45 and to stop additional proposed Bills that directly affect us.”

Brooks, a woman who says she cannot remember a time when she was, remarked, “We signed peace and friendship treaties. We have never surrendered an inch of our land.”

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