Eel Ground family fights for housing and health

(continued from page 1) ...Ground Band Council and Housing Committee also notes that "this issue has been brought to your attention already.

Despite family's special needs, band is not helping

Shanina is not the only Simcoe family member with asthma. Her younger sister, Kendra, also suffers from the respiratory ailment.

"The Simcoes are obvious candidates for band housing because of their special needs," said a family friend. "Shanina is a single parent raising three children on a social assistance and disability pension and they need a safe, accessible home with the special medical needs. What is not at all obvious is why the Band Council Housing Committee has yet to recognize the need for a family who requires a accessible, wheelchair-friendly, mold-free band housing that says doctors could say should save Shanina's life.

It soon became evident that Doctors Rigley and Hayxen were not the only doctors urging the Eel Ground Band Council to take action on Shanina's health crisis. In December 2013, Dr. Michael Mallett, an Internist with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, expressed his concern to the Eel Ground Council on this issue.

Paying again it is "Miss Simoneau suffers from very severe asthma," Dr. Mallett's frustration was evident in his letter to the Band Council. "The situation here seems to be in such an environment," he said. "The mould issue for this particular family is of critical importance to Shanina's health.

Dr. Mallett's letter went on to "strongly suggest that the Band Council first appropriate housing for my patient. Painting over mould is not the answer to appropriate housing." His concern was echoed a later Christmas by Stephen MacMillan, a Child and Family Services Worker, Regional Social Worker.

Date December 18, 2013, this letter to the Eel Ground First Nation, Chief Gighinsh and the Band Council about the danger Shanina is in, again spoke of "the severe asthma" and her "allergies to mould." MacMillan noted that "it has been three to four years since the Band Housing Committee to put the Simcoe family in band housing that is available for families in need due to the health issues they are facing.

This spring the band family's situation went from bad to worse as Shanina was finding herself being evicted from the house they had been renting for two years. Annie Simoneau has been offered to help her landlord clean the house, which is not satisfactory for the health of the family.

Simoneau is fighting the eviction because, she says and such houses were provided by the federal government and the Band Council in the past to help band families in need," Simoneau says. "Somehow, it is a couple of other band houses became privately owned homes that are not being maintained and happened.

Simoneau says she is convinced that some record of the privatization of the band houses or their transfer to private ownership must exist somewhere. For the time being what can be done is to find a secure band housing for Shanina that does not threaten her life.

This is the meeting with the Band Council that has so far refused to act.

Fighting for her life a month after graduation day

Almost six months after MacMillan's Christmas letter, Shane Simoneau graduated from Miramichi Regional School on June 18, 2014. Less than a month later her graduate report, she was diagnosed with asthma.

"It's very stressful and it's not healthy for the whole family. And she is already fighting an eviction notice she says does not comply with the Residential Tenancies Act, received an Eel Ground First Nation Band Council resolution and an added admittance letter to ICU and intubation. Currently her life still remains in danger." Meanwhile, Kendra is left to support her younger lady's life.

Amid medical time as Dr. Rigley's second letter detailing Shanina's health crisis, it seems the Eel Ground First Nation decided the most appropriate course of action was to do nothing.

"This game of "let's see who can kill the other first," the whole family.

Amid medical time as Dr. Rigley's second letter detailing Shanina's health crisis, it seems the Eel Ground First Nation decided the most appropriate course of action was to do nothing.

The Simcoes have been fighting with Shanina's family members and other Eel Ground family members about "who is going to help Shanina?"

The Band Council Resolution was subsequently amended to give the Simoneau family an extra 12 days, until August 3, to leave. Why the Band Housing Committee, which was initially stated to be about Shanina Simoneau family be allowed to rent band housing remained a mystery. The resolution was that a young band member's life may be hanging in the balance.

The NB Co-op did call Eel Ground First Nation Chief George Gighinsh and Child and Family Services on July 14, 2014, and those calls had not been returned at the time this article was written.

It remains to be seen whether the family will be allowed to live on the reserve as the band members are entitled to do. The immediate fear that haunts her day and night is the trip to the emergency room with a critically ill daughter.

In Brief

• One hundred people rallied for Gaza in Fredericton in the pouring rain on the Muslim holiday of Eid on Monday, July 28, 2014. The peaceful protest was organized by the Canadian Jewish Congress, which is calling for an immediate end to the violence in Gaza. "The situation in Gaza is completely unacceptable," said Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Stein, who helped lead the rally. "The international community must demand an immediate end to the violence and the dismantling of all blockades and embargoes against Gaza." The rally was held in front of the U.S. Embassy, where protesters held signs calling for an end to the Israeli military operation in Gaza.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org.

Living Theory presents "Why you shouldn't care who wins the next election" with Antoni Wosicky, Saturday, Sept. 20, 2014, 7-20:00 pm, Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. Free and all are welcome. "Structural changes in Canadian and global political economy have produced conditions in which it is now impossible to elect a progressive government. No matter which party wins it will continue to offer unwavering support to the economically self-interests of the most wealthy and the white-collar elites of the United States. Wosicky is a founding member of Stand, a libertarian communist group on the left in New Zealand. He has spent the last two years in sustained conversation on how our current capitalist political and economic system obscures our understanding of the world and our lived experience. Contact: livingtheory@ahad.re.

Cinema Politica Fredericton presents Duncan Campbell Scott: The Potters and the Indian books launch of "Dying to be Free," Saturday, Sept. 20, 2014, 7:00 pm, Centre for Development and Cultural Diversity, 130 Saint John St., Fredericton. Duncan Campbell Scott is well known as one of Canada’s prominent early literary figures. He is less known as a federal and provincial officer who rose to become a powerful voice of the Indian Department, and who, from 1913 to 1932, was also the chief administrator of the Indian residential schools in Canada. He also has led the church to begin to look critically at its history. Contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

NB Media Co-op 5th Annual General Meeting, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2014, 7-9:00 pm, Centre for Development and Cultural Diversity, 130 Saint John St., Fredericton. The event will begin with a panel of newsmakers called “Media and Movements.” All are welcome. For more information, call 506-453-7111.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meeting at the Centre for Development and Cultural Diversity, 130 Saint John St., Fredericton, every third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm and decide what to put in this paper every month. To attend the meeting time and venue, email info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change in the world. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. Cinema Politica is Fredericton is back this fall screening films on Fridays. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at cinemapolitica.org.

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People in Ferguson, Missouri hold a Stolen Lives Project banner that lists people killed by the police days after Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson. Photo from Ianspoliceproject.org.

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