

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

Shania is not the only Simoneau family member with asthma. Her younger sister, Kendra, also suffers from the respiratory disease, but not to the same degree.

The Simoneau’s are obvious candidates for band housing that is provided to families in need. Annie Simoneau is a single parent raising three children on a social assistance budget, and two of her children have special medical needs. What is not at all obvious is why the Band Council Housing Committee has yet to recommend the Simoneau family be allowed to rent mould-free band housing that doctors say could save Shania’s life.

It soon became evident that Doctors Rigley and Hayden were not the only doctors urging the Eel Ground Band Council to intervene to help a band member facing a medical crisis. In December 2013, Dr. Michael Mallet, an Internist in the Cardio/Respiratory Clinic in the Miramichi Regional Hospital expressed his concern to the Eel Ground Band Council.

Stating yet again that “Miss Simoneau suffers from very severe asthma,” Dr. Mallet’s frustration was evident in his letter. “I find it disgraceful that human beings have to live in such an environment,” he said. “The mould issue for this patient is quite significant and is literally endangering her life.”

Dr. Mallet’s letter went on to “strongly suggest that the Band Council find appropriate housing for my patient. Painting over mould is not the answer to appropriate housing.” His concerns were echoed a week before last Christmas by Stephan MacMillian, a Child and Family Services Regional Social Worker.

Dated December 18, 2013, this fourth letter to the Eel Ground First Nation, Chief Ginnish and the Band Council about the danger Shania is in, again spoke of Shania’s “severe asthma” and her “allergies to mould.” MacMillan noted that Shania “has been to the hospital on several occasions and trips to the Intensive Care Unit recently.”

Like the doctors, MacMillian urged the Band and its Housing Committee to put the Simoneau family in band housing that is available for families in need “due to the health concerns in the home.”

This spring the band family’s situation went from bad to worse as their landlord moved to evict them from the house they had been renting for two years. Annie Simoneau has even offered to help her landlord clean the house to get rid of the mould, but to no avail.

Simoneau is fighting the eviction because, if she vacates and leaves the reserve, she will no longer be eligible for band housing. The eviction notice she received did not, as the Residential Tenancies Act requires, state the address of the house to be vacated or the effective date of the notice, and was not signed and dated by the landlord or his agent.

Simoneau has questions she wants answered. “At one time the house I’m renting was a ‘band awarded’ home and such houses were provided by the federal government Department of Indian Affairs to help band families in need,” Simoneau says. “Somehow it and a couple of other band houses became privately owned homes, but no one can tell me when and how that 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, however, her first priority is trying to secure the band housing for Shania that does not threaten her life. That means dealing with the Band Council that has so far refused to act.

Fighting for her life a month after graduation day

Almost six months after MacMillian’s Christmas letter, Shania Simoneau graduated from Miramichi Valley High School on June 18, 2014. Less than a month after her graduation day, Shania was again in the Intensive Care Unit of the Miramichi Regional Hospital fighting for her life.

That triggered a fifth letter to the Eel Ground First Nation Band Council warning of the grave danger to its young Band member. This time it was Royal College of Physicians of Canada Fellow Dr. Joe Rigley writing the Eel Ground Band Council a second time in a letter dated July 24.

Not mincing words, Dr. Rigley told the Eel Ground First Nation that “today [Shania] required admission to ICU and intubation. Currently her life still remains in danger.” Moving Shania to better housing, he said, “may save this young lady’s life.”

About the same time as Dr. Rigley’s second letter detailing Shania’s health crisis, it seems the Eel Ground First Nation decided the most appropriate course of action it could take was to help Simoneau’s landlord evict the whole family.

Annie Simoneau, already fighting an eviction notice she says does not comply with the Residential Tenancies Act, received an Eel Ground First Nation Band Council Resolution dated July 17 stating that her rental support would be cut off unless she gave in to her landlord’s demands by Thursday, July 22. That gave her a week to leave, and she refused.

That 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 is so steadfastly refusing to recommend the Simoneau family be allowed to rent band housing remains a mystery, but there is no mystery about the fact a young band member’s life may be hanging in the balance.

The NB Media Co-op did call Eel Ground First Nation Chief George Ginnish and Child and Family Services on July 25, but those calls had not been returned at the time this article was written.

Annie Simoneau does not know 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 another 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 to condemn Israel’s assault on **Gaza**. Fredericton Palestine Solidarity members went to Fredericton MP Keith Ashfield’s office a week earlier to denounce the Canadian government’s support of Israel’s war crimes in Gaza. Ashfield replied to the group, arguing that Hamas, the democratically elected government in Palestine, is to blame for the latest assault on Gaza. According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2,104 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, among them 495 children and 253 women since Israel began its assault on Gaza on July 8. Over a million people took to the streets in solidarity with the people of Gaza and to demand an end to the siege on Gaza. Stephen Harper and the Canadian government have given full support to Israel’s most recent attacks, just as they did for the last war on Gaza and Israel’s war on Lebanon. Canada has also fully supported Israel’s illegal blockade of Gaza, which has restricted food, medicine, and other necessities of life from entering Gaza since 2007. Canada’s position is a violation of international law and numerous UN conventions. Fredericton Palestine Solidarity argues that none of Canada’s main political parties are clearly denouncing Israel’s aggression and therefore it is urgent that social movements stand in solidarity with Gaza.



Fredericton Palestine Solidarity and Jews for a Just Peace Fredericton organized a rally in front of Fredericton City Hall on August 2 to condemn Israel’s brutal siege on Gaza and the Canadian government’s support of that siege. Photo by Jim Taylor.

• **The Mount Polley gold and copper mine tailings disaster** in British Columbia has struck a chord with residents around the proposed Sisson open-pit tungsten and molybdenum mine near Stanley, about 30 km north of Fredericton. A mine

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

Living Theory presents “Why you shouldn’t care who wins the next election” with **Antoni Wysocki**. Saturday, Sept. 20, 2:00 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 for the ecologically suicidal machinations of capital and the worldwide imperialism of the United States. Wysocki is a founding member of Stand, a libertarian communist group in Halifax. The purpose of Living Theory is to create a sustained conversation on how our current capitalist political and economic organization shapes our understanding of the world and our lived experience. Contact: livingtheory@h-a-z.org.

Cinema Politica Fredericton presents **Duncan Campbell Scott: The Poet and the Indians** and book launch of *Dying to Please: Indigenous Suicide in Contemporary Canada* with authors **Roland Chrisjohn** and **Shaunessy McKay**. When: Friday, Sept. 26 at 7:00pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. Duncan Campbell Scott is well known as one of Canada’s prominent early literary figures. He is less famous as a federal civil servant who rose to become a powerful head of the Indian Department, and who, from 1913 to 1932, implemented the most repressive and brutal assimilation programs Canada ever levied against its native peoples: residential schools. Chrisjohn and McKay’s book examines suicides of indigenous peoples in Canada. Visit: www.cinemapolitica.org/fredericton. Contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

NB Media Co-op 5th Annual General Meeting. Tuesday, Sept. 30 at 6:00pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John Street in Fredericton. The event will begin with a panel of newsmakers called “Media and Movements.” All are welcome. For more information, contact info@nbmediacoop.org.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To find out 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. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. Cinema Politica Fredericton is back this fall screening films on Fridays. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

tailings breach at Imperial Gold’s Mount Polley mine site on August 5th spilled an estimated 5 million cubic metres of mine waste into the Fraser River Basin. Residents near Likely, BC, are worried about the environmental and health impacts of the spill. Dead fish and green water have been found downstream from the spill. Lawrence Wuest, a resident of Stanley who has been working on revealing the impacts of the proposed Sisson mine and tailings pond, argues that if such a tailings breach were to occur at the Sisson mine, the volume could be four times more than that spilled at the Mount Polley site; 20 million cubic metres. Wuest notes that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by the Sisson mine developer, Northcliff Resources, ignored calls for an assessment of a possible tailings breach into the Nashwaak River. Fredericton residents are also expressing concern on the potential impact of a tailings breach on the province’s capital city. “Fredericton’s drinking water could be compromised if a similar tailings pond breach occurred at the proposed Sisson mine. Our aquifer is fed via ‘windows’ in the river sediment, one of which is at the base of the Nashwaak River where it flows into the Saint John River,” says Mark D’Arcy with the Fredericton Chapter of the Council of Canadians.

• Atlantic Industrial Services, a wastewater treatment facility in Debert, Nova Scotia, is proposing to dispose of 30 million litres of fracking wastewater in Dieppe’s sewer system. As reported by Miles Howe of the Halifax Media Co-op, their facility currently holds **fracking wastewater** from Triangle Petroleum’s three fracked wells located in Kennetcook and near Noel, Nova Scotia’s only hydraulic fracturing operations. The town of Windsor, Nova Scotia, accepted just over 7 million litres of the wastewater down its sewer system between 2010 and 2011—before the wastewater was found to contain Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials, which triggered a new series of safety measures. Atlantic Industrial Services, seeking a place to dispose of the wastewater, filed a request for an Environmental Impact Assessment with the New Brunswick Department of Environment on June 6, 2014, to move 30 million litres of the fracking wastewater to New Brunswick. Sixty days later, after the 30 day public consultation period had expired, Atlantic Industrial Services presented a proposal to dump 30 million litres of the wastewater in Dieppe’s sewer system. Dieppe’s councillors are asking for more information about the wastewater. Nova Scotia currently has a ban on importing fracking wastewater.

• A rally in solidarity with the Ferguson, Missouri protesters called Halifax, Hands Up was held on August 19 in Halifax. The rally condemned the **police killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed black young man** and the subsequent police violence in that city. Spoken word artist and teacher El Jones told the Halifax Media Co-op: "Systemic violence does not just take place in one part of the globe, it is part of a 500-year history of violence against African people everywhere... I have been in court while the police openly admitted that they committed brutality against black people... We may not have had any police shootings here, but cases such as [former boxer] Kirk Johnson taking the police to court because he got pulled over so many times are all too common. Police shooting may be the most shocking, but certainly gentrification, the closing of schools in our neighborhood, housing issues, all these are part of the same thing."



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 Wikimedia Commons.

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