



The Brief

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Maliseet prepare to take action against Energy East pipeline

By ANTHONY DAVID PETER-PAUL

Some New Brunswick Maliseet are interpreting a traditional black snake prophecy as TransCanada's Energy East pipeline that will ravage the people of the Wolastoq (Saint John River) says Tobique First Nation Band member Beverly Perley.

The prophecy was told to Perley by her aunt Barbara Nicholas. "A snake is going to come from the West to the East, across our land and poison our waters and land," says Perley, "The only way to kill it, is to cut off the head of the snake."

Perley questions whether the head of the snake is TransCanada Corporation or the provincial governments involved in the Energy East Pipeline project that plan to pump 1.1 million barrels of crude oil per day from Alberta to marine terminals in Cacouna, Quebec and Saint John, New Brunswick.

The prophecy says that the head of the snake must be cut off before it reaches the Wolastoq area. Perley says the Wolastoqiyik people must "face it head on, stand up to it, and face our fears... once it's here, there is no way to cut the head off the snake."

The pipeline is planned to be laid underneath the Tobique River about mid-point between Tobique First Nation and the town of Plaster Rock where Mayor Alexis Fenner supports the pipeline. The Tobique River runs along the Tobique First Nation and into the Saint John River.

The Maliseet people or Wolastoqiyik in Tobique, Kingsclear, St. Mary's and Oromocto First Nations are located along the Saint John River, downstream. Many Maliseet are worried how they would be affected if a pipeline spill were to occur at the Tobique River crossing.

The environmental impact of a pipeline breach is a major concern for Perley and many Wolastoqiyik people. Perley fears that a spill will contaminate the aquatic habitat in the Tobique and Saint John Rivers, along with the lakes, streams and brooks that flow to and from the rivers. She also fears that foods and medicines from the ground and trees, wildlife and drinking water may be put in jeopardy.

Perley believes that the greatest allies in fighting the black snake will come from Wolastoqiyik ancestors through spiritual ceremony. The sacred pipe, sweat-lodge ceremonies, traditional feasts and interpreting centuries-old wampum-belts will give guidance and direction to combat the black snake. In the end, "a standoff might be the only possible option," says Perley.

Hart Perley, Traditional Turtle Clan Mother of the Maliseet and Tobique resident, says that the black snake will be double-headed. She interprets this as the head of TransCanada Corporation CEO Russ Girling and the head of the Provincial Government Brian Gallant.

The elder believes that the heads of the snake must be cut off but not in the literal... *(continued on page 2)*



Beverly Perley of Tobique is concerned about the impacts of the proposed Energy East pipeline crossing Maliseet territory. Photo courtesy of Beverly Perley.

Fredericton high school students take action against dress code, call for sexual assault policy



Fredericton High School students held a walk-out to protest the school's dress code policy and to demand a sexual assault policy on the afternoon of Nov. 21. They chanted "Our bodies are good! Our bodies are great! Our bodies will not be treated with hate!" The walk-out became a lock-out when the school locked the doors, not allowing the students back inside. The 40 some students then banged on the doors and chanted, "This our school!" Police were called to remove the students from protesting outside the Principal's office. Student protesters were then suspended and banned from extra-curricular activities and graduate ceremonies, sparking outrage from the students, parents and public. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

By NIKITA HARTT

Fredericton high school students say that they are fed up with the school's restrictive dress code policies.

Sorcha Beirne, a 16-year-old at Fredericton High School (FHS), is the founder and coordinator of Fredericton Youth Feminists. She was awarded the 2014 YMCA Peace Medallion for her activism on feminist and social justice causes.

Beirne's group, which includes students from FHS, Leo Hayes High School and École Sainte-Anne, has launched a video and petition to FHS, calling for the removal of the dress code. They are also demanding the creation and strict enforcement of a sexual assault policy.

The petition to FHS begins:

"Your high school contributes to rape culture. Rape culture is a culture where 1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. It's a culture where only 3% of rapists will see a day in prison. It's a culture that cares more about protecting the identities of rapists than supporting rape victims. Dress codes lead to the sexualization of young women, the punishing of women for taking control of their own bodies and the blaming/shaming of women who don't dress overly-modest. And after all that, your school has the audacity to not even have a sexual assault policy. Rather than enforce rape culture in your school, we ask that you discuss and discourage it."

The dress code gives the teachers the power to determine female students' attire based on personal preferences. Beirne says the ambiguity of the dress code makes compliance confusing. More importantly, it encourages slut shaming. Slut-shaming happens when a person insults a woman because she expresses her sexuality in a way that deviates from traditional or orthodox gender expectations. Some examples of circumstances where women are "slut-shamed" include: violating accepted dress codes, requesting access to birth control and having premarital or casual sex.

Beirne explains why she believes the dress code is reflective of this practice: "The dress code says that we [the girls] can't show our undergarments or our midriffs... Aside from that, the only other thing it says is that we have to dress modestly, and that is a problem, because 'modesty' can mean different things to different teachers."

"Basically, this ambiguity allows the teachers to force their own ideas of 'modesty' on us even if our infraction isn't in the dress code, and they can publicly humiliate you for it too."

Beirne has attempted to address this issue with both the district and the school on multiple occasions, but she says that both of these parties have repeatedly ignored her

concerns.

FHS student Arie Wood says that, because the dress code is applied this way, students can have a difficult time discerning what is appropriate to wear and what is not. "Some teachers will say that one outfit is okay and another teacher will say that it's not. It's confusing. I don't think we should be forced to wear something based on a teacher's personal preference."

Mike Dollimore, who is the Coordinator of International Students at the Anglophone West School District, says that this flexibility in school policy is a positive trait - it allows the Principal to work with the staff to create workable policies for a school. "There are so many things to take into account, age being the biggest one, but all of the school's policies must fall in line with district policy and vice versa."

As of 2014, Anglophone West does not have a written dress code policy for the schools in the district.

"I think the dress code is sexist," says Jerry Whitman, another FHS student. This is especially so "because the school focuses on girls' clothing and punishes them a lot more than they do the guys."

Beirne agrees with Whitman on the dress code. "The dress code is definitely enforced with the girls much more often than it is with the boys," she says, "and even though the rules are supposed to apply to everyone, they aren't enforced that way. The guys are allowed to wear tight shirts to class that cling to their muscles, but the staff wanted to ban girls from wearing tights because they defined our legs too much and were a distraction. So, I feel like the dress code is set up to specifically sexualize young women."

FHS student Nyomi Calhoun also notices a double standard in the dress code. "Our school had a themed dance called 'Welcome to the Jungle' last year, and the guys were allowed to wear short skirts for fun, but we [the girls] aren't allowed to wear things like that to dances, because we would get in trouble for it and we have."

Natasha Cliche, a grade 10 student at FHS, says that the dress code's ambiguity allows teachers to force gender binaries on the students. "One of my friends is gender fluid and they were wearing a crop top. They were told by the teacher that a crop top isn't something their sex should wear. The teacher seriously said that."

Because of district policy, the teaching staff at FHS is unable to respond for comment.

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