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Wulustuk Times

Wulustuk - Indigenous name for St. John River

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Wulustuk Times:

Each month we gather and publish the latest, most current and relevant native information for our readers. Proceeding with this concept, we feel that a well informed person is better able to see, relate with, and assess a situation more accurately when equipped with the right tools. Our aim is to provide the precise tools and the best information possible.

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PROTEST FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN HALTS TRAINS NEAR TYENDINAGA, ONT. NATIONAL NEWS

Rail traffic has been halted between Montreal and Toronto after a protest near Tyendinaga triggered a shut down of CN Rail's main line tracks beginning Tuesday evening to pressure the federal government to call a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The protest started around 9:30 p.m. when about 20 people, led by women from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, shut down the tracks by lighting fires on either side.

"We were called to this. We choose to do our part," a female protester told APTN National News by text Tuesday night.

She didn't identify herself, but said they began Tuesday in preparation of what they were calling a "day of action" Wednesday to force an inquiry into the hundreds of documented missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The government has refused to call one.

By about 11 a.m. Wednesday more women were showing up to the protest and the tracks were still shutdown.

Pictures from the scene show women singing and drumming around a fire.

It was just a couple weeks ago when the several Mohawk men were arrested when they blocked the same tracks.

The OPP arrested them shortly after the protest began. Rail traffic was halted for several hours.

Three were later charged, including Mohawk activist Shawn Brant with two counts of mischief.

The women at the protest have said Brant isn't involved this time.

FIRST NATIONS WEIGH IN ON QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY DEBATE

The Canadian Press

A First Nations leader has a message for anyone talking up the issue of Quebec independence during the province's election campaign: don't forget about us.

Ghislain Picard, chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, says First Nations have the right to determine their own future and aren't bound to the result of another referendum vote.

It's useless to consider Quebec sovereignty while there's still uncertainty about the place of Aboriginal Peoples, Picard said.

"We have the right to self-determination and this right is not negotiable," Picard said in a statement.

If the Parti Quebecois succeeds in getting a majority in the April 7 vote and works toward calling another referendum, Picard says First Nations will take steps to protect the interests of their members.

Let us be even more clear: Quebec can decide what it wants in terms of its culture, its identity and its development, but it cannot claim sovereignty over a territory which is still, fundamentally, First Nation."

Similar concerns were raised in the lead up to the last referendum in 1995.

In that year, Quebec's Cree and Inuit both held referendums of their own and voted overwhelmingly against Quebec becoming independent.

Sovereignty became a major focus of the current campaign after media baron Pierre Karl Peladeau joined the Parti Quebecois last Sunday, when he raised his fist and declared he wanted to help make Quebec a country.

But PQ Leader Pauline Marois has moved away from the issue in recent days. A new poll released Saturday suggests Peladeau's entry into the campaign, and the heightened focus on sovereignty, has favoured the Liberals more than the PQ.

On Saturday, Marois focused on the PQ's plan to address homelessness, while continuing to attack Liberal Leader Philippe Couillard for his approach to getting Quebec's distinctiveness recognized by the rest of Canada. She even suggested Couillard call a referendum of his own on his constitutional plans.

For his part, Couillard appeared to back away from an earlier statement that as premier he would push federal, provincial and territorial officials to take Quebec's unique status into account in any constitutional talks.

Couillard said Saturday his priority in any relations with the rest of Canada would be the economy.

Saturday's Leger Marketing poll for Montreal's Le Devoir newspaper found the PQ and Liberals tied with 37 per cent of the vote, with Francois Legault's Coalition dropping to 14 per cent. The poll suggests the PQ retains a lead over the Liberals amongst key francophone voters.

The poll also said 59 per cent of respondents would vote no in a referendum and 69 per cent want less talk of it during the campaign. The online survey of 1,205 people between March and 13 has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.8 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

QUEBEC MOHAWKS LIKELY TO DECLARE OWN INDEPENDENCE IF PQ WINS SOVEREIGNTY REFERENDUM: GRAND CHIEF

National Posts

Leaders from Mohawk communities near Montreal say they will likely declare their own independence if a re-elected Parti Québécois succeeds in winning a third sovereignty referendum.

“We’d never be part of Quebec or cede out of Canada because we don’t believe we are Canadians to begin with. Our ties are to the land,” said Grand Chief Michael Delisle of Kahnawake, which counts about 8,000 Mohawks. “I would take a wild guess and I’m sure I’d be right my community would absolutely turn down any sovereignty movement by the provincial government.”

At Akwesasne, about 12,000 Mohawks live on a territory that is mostly in Quebec but also straddles Ontario and northern New York.

“I would advise our council and community to hold our own vote in order to determine whether we would stay within the borders of Quebec or separate ourselves,” said Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Grand Chief Mike Kanentakeron Mitchell in a press release Tuesday. “With the potential threat of this region’s culture and language becoming distinctly French, we must concern ourselves with the reality that there is not even 1% of the Akwesasne population that speaks the French language.”

(Leaders at Kanesatake, the third Mohawk territory in the Montreal area, with a population of about 9,900, could not comment this week because of a senior leader’s death.)

Quebec is home to more than 30 communities of aboriginal people of varying descent. There are over 98,500 First Nations and Inuit in Quebec, just over 1% of the province’s population.

The occupants of northern Quebec are almost entirely First Nations and Inuit. Cree and Inuit in northern Quebec had previously raised concerns relating to a potential separation during the 1995 referendum.

“Quebec can decide whatever it wants for itself but as far as the land is concerned to us there are clear arguments,” said Assembly of First Nations regional chief for Quebec and Labrador, Ghislain Picard. “Quebec can decide the fate of its people for itself, but they certainly cannot decide our fate as First Nations people,”

During the 1995 referendum, the majority of First Nations communities in Quebec held referendums of their own and voted overwhelmingly against Quebec becoming independent.

Sovereignty became a major focus of the current campaign after media baron Pierre Karl Peladeau joined the PQ this month, when he raised his fist and declared he wanted to help make Quebec a country. PQ Leader Pauline Marois has moved away from the issue in recent days.

If the PQ is able to obtain a majority government in the election on April 7, a white book on an independent Quebec would be released in the following months.

The Parti Québécois refused to comment when asked their intention for the First Nations territories within the province's borders.

National Post, with files from The Canadian Press

DECLARATION FROM WOLASTOQIYIK AND THE MEMBERS OF THE WABANAKI CONFEDERACY

We the Wolastoqiyik , Members of the Wabanaki confederacy,

Who are the original inhabitants of the land called New Brunswick and who are the direct descendants of the treaty signatories that signed the peace and friendship treaties with the Crown beginning with the treaty of 1725, 1749 1752 1760 1761..Treaties were signed Nation to Nation, they were solemn promises that served as guides for how our peoples would live together. Canada and New Brunswick inherited the responsibility to uphold those treaties and to maintain the honour of the crown. These treaties dealt with land and also protected our hunting and fishing and gathering rights.

We the Wolastokiyik take offense with the announcement of a new forest management plan that gives more wood to industry, and reduces the protected areas from 30% to 23%. Reductions that all forest scientists including Irving own forest advisor have publically stated are potentially catastrophic to many species as well as to the ecological diversity of our shared environment.

This plan was created without the consultation of First Nations.

Not only ethically questionable it is legally wrong as this plan will have a direct impact to our constitutionally protected treaty rights.. The diminishing of intact diverse forests which are home to numerous species that we hunt and gather for will directly impact current and future generations access to those species..

We the undersigned ask for you to rescind this legislation until meaningful levels of consultation are met with us, as well as other directly impacted stakeholders such as private wood lot owners, maple sugar producers environmental scientists and forestry experts.

3 FORMER LOUISIANA GOVERNORS AGREE: LAWSUIT AGAINST 97 OIL AND GAS COMPANIES SHOULD PROCEED

<http://thinkprogress.org/>

Louisiana has given a lot to oil and gas companies, mostly in the form of natural resources. The generosity is not always reciprocated. While the industry brings economic gains and employment to the state, when it comes to environmental costs or socioeconomic strife the exchange is not so smooth. Last summer, the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East took matters into their own hands by filing a lawsuit against 97 oil and gas companies claiming they have caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of acres of coastal wetlands, which increases flood danger. The suit asks the companies to restore damaged wetlands or offer financial compensation for areas beyond repair, money that could be used for levee maintenance or construction.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal was quick to brush off the legitimacy of the claims, demanding that the lawsuit be pulled and asserting that the board is improperly taking over the state's role in coastal policy. The oil and gas companies — the perpetrators of all the digging and dredging of pipeline canals along the coast among other damaging activities — have sided with Jindal, who has already appointed three replacements to the board who see more eye-to-eye with him and share his opposition to the lawsuit after others terms ended.

On Wednesday, three former Louisiana governors took opposition to Jindal and the oil and gas industry. During a panel discussion at Loyola University, Buddy Roemer, Kathleen Blanco, and Edwin Edwards agreed that “no state officials — neither the legislature nor the current governor — should interfere with the local levee board's lawsuit against oil companies,” according to UptownMessenger.com, a local New Orleans news source.

“This ought to be a for-profit state, but those who abuse the privilege and don't pay for damaging the land and water and the air that we breathe ought to pay the cost of it,” said Roemer, a Republican who ran for president in 2012. Roemer also stated that the industry is simply trying to maximize their profits by shirking the responsibility of repairing the coastline.

Edwards and Blanco focused more on the lawsuit itself, with Edwards saying that at the very least it ought to be allowed to go to court to find out who is responsible and for what. Blanco agreed, citing the loss of land due to channel digging, and saying that she helped design the independent levee board to be free of politics. “I'm rather concerned that it is going to be re-politicized,” she added.

The editorial board of the New Orleans Times-Picayune calls the levee boards one of the most positive changes to the area after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. “Residents demanded that the old crony-laden boards be consolidated and that board members have autonomy and the technical expertise to hold the Army Corps of Engineers accountable for its work,” wrote the board in February. “The new flood protection authorities are vastly better watchdogs than the old boards.”

The column was written in protest of State Sen. Robert Adley's bill that would let the governor reject nominations to the board until he finds someone he likes, rather than appoint a nominee from the board's original submissions. Gov. Jindal requested the bill be filed.

Ninety-four percent of New Orleans voters approved the constitutional amendment creating the new levee authorities in October 2006. According to the Times-Picayune, "it would be a betrayal of them to insert politics back into the process."

MALISEET WOODSTOCK HISTORY 1780 - 1800

The worst of winter was over, but there could still be snowy days. The rivers and streams were opening up. The water was high. The muskrat houses dotted the marshes by the rivers flowing into the St. John River. The Kiohus (muskrats) were anxious for their first spring swim. Muskrats cooked right on top of the stove, a bit of salt sprinkled on the stove top before placing the meat on it, was always a sign of spring. Early spring also always started people talking about their ancient large Maliseet village of Meductic. Soon the farmer would plough the flat. There were always a few Maliseet who went down to the flat and walked the newly turned over ground to see what artifacts the frost had pushed up. They returned to the village with a few arrow and spear points, true evidence of their forebears existence and claims to the land.

An elder began, "It was about 1780 when Loyalists started coming on to our land. Two thieves, Watson and Hays were given grants on each side of the Maliseet town of Meductic. They settled at Meductic at the same time. Watson on the northern half, Hays on the southern, Hays River and Hays Falls have been given his name. Their line cut right in the middle of the Meductic. The Indians continued to live on their land for several years when Hays and Watson complained to the Commissioners in Fredericton. They stated that the land was theirs, granted to them for their war service; the Indians shouldn't be there.

A Commissioner was sent to Meductic to ask the Chief what right the Indians had to live there. The Chief knew why the Commissioner came. He was ready for him dressed in his best outfit. A young teenaged son accompanied the Chief when he met the Commissioner. Years later the son, now a grown man said that when the Commissioner arrived, the Chief went out to meet him with the air of a plumed knight and greeted the Commissioner. The Commissioner told the Chief that he was here to ask by what right the Chief had on this ground that you are living on now? The Chief pointed to the grave yard and said, "There are the graves of our grand parents, and the graves of our parents, and the graves of our children."

That was all he answered. It was a good answer for the Commissioner because it was the best evidence that the Maliseet had been there a very long time, much longer than the Loyalists. The Indians were not bothered for a while. Then the Maliseet began to make houses of wood like those of the settlers. It took three to four years for the Indians to hew enough wood for a house. The Indians moved to hunting grounds during the winter and returned to Meductic for the summer. The first year they would have

some hewed logs set aside for their houses, copying the settlers' houses. In the fall they left for their hunting ground. When they returned, in the spring, their lumber was all burned. This went on until about 1790.

The Rev. Frederick Dibble of the Church of England was a Loyalist who fled from Connecticut. He was to work with the Meductic Maliseet as a priest and teacher. He tabulated the Meductic Indian population as 98 men, 74 women, and 165 children. He provided seed corn, hoes, gun flints, powder, lead, blankets and food to the families whose children attended school. The school was an attempt to make the Maliseet become like white people. Dibble provided the families of the school children with food, the parents decided to remain at Meductic during the winter instead of going to their hunting grounds. Dibble asked the English Society of the Propagation of the Faith to send prayer books in Indian for the Maliseet. The Indians were excited that they were going to get prayer books in their language. It took several months for the shipment to arrive. Finally the large box with prayer books arrived from England. The excited Indians gathered around the large box waiting for Rev. Dibble to open it. When the carton was opened, everyone was surprised. The books were Col. Claus' rendition in Mohawk!! Over night the Maliseet fled thinking that the Mohawk were going to attack them. Some went to Kingsclear, some to Tobique, and others to Woodstock. Although the Mohawk war party never arrived, the Maliseet lost their trust in Rev. Dibble. The Maliseet story of how the Norridgewock priest Father Rale deceived the Indians so the Colonial Army could capture Norridgewock was quite fresh in Maliseet minds. Could Rev. Dibble be secretly working with the Mohawks to defeat the Maliseet? Dibble's mistake was that he did not ask for prayer books in Maliseet. By running away, the Maliseet lost Meductic.

Nicholas Smith

STORIES OF THE GITCHII KUWEHS - THE GREAT PINE TREE OF EQPAHAK

CHAPTER 1

One day not long ago an old black Crow whose name is Ka-ka-gus landed on an outstretched limb of a tall and stately pine tree that stands on the bank of the beautiful river. This location is where the wide river wraps itself around several fertile islands and to where the tide from the ocean flows all the way up to and then stops. It is called Eqpahak, meaning "end of tide" or "place where the tide stops coming in." The lofty pine tree is old and craggy with broken stubs of limbs and scars from ancient wounds along its trunk. "Hello" said the pine tree to the old crow as the breeze blew through its boughs, "My name is Gitchii Kuwehs[1], what is your name?" Surprised to hear the tree talking, old Ka-ka-gus said, "You can talk! Trees don't talk." The tree spoke back to him, "You are a smart and wise old crow. You know how to listen. Not all crows know how. I speak without a tongue. I speak the language of Mother Earth. It is the oldest of all languages. It speaks to your heart. It cannot be written. You speak Caw Caw language. I speak in song, a cosmic rhythm, an ancient Song of the Stars[2]. It is as old as the heavens. All crows can hear my voice if they will learn how to listen. You have that special gift. Now tell me your name old crow." "My name is Ka-ka-gus" said the crow,

and then he asked the tree, "How old are you?" The tree answered, "I am 475 rings old." Puzzled by the answer, the old crow replied, "I don't understand. What do you mean?" The tree answered, "I calculate my age by circles of the seasons, by growth rings in my trunk. Each growing season I add a new ring. You can only know my age by cutting me down and counting my rings." Replied the crow, "I cannot do that, and I would never do that to you. You give me a place to roost at night. You are my shelter. How else can you prove to me your age?" Answered the old tree, "I can tell you stories of things I have seen over my lifetime from this place on the bank of the river where my roots go deep." "Please do", said the crow. "I have lived a long time and I have seen many things. There are many stories to tell, some happy and some very sad. It will take me a long time to tell them all to you. You may have to roost here on my branch all night long" warned the tree. "I can stay all night. My belly is full." said the crow, "Today was garbage collection day in the village and I had very good picking."

The Wulustuk and the Wulustukieg:

And so the old tree began as the breezes whispered through its branches. "When I was a young tree of just a few rings old I saw many humans living on that big Island in front of me in the river. These humans lived everywhere in this land of the pine trees. They were called Skigins[3]. They had lived here a long, long time. Their grandfathers and great grandfathers and great, great, grandfathers had all lived here. This river St. John was called by them Wulustuk[4] in their language, because it was a very beautiful and good river that gave them food, and they paddled their birchbark canoes up and down its clear, deep waters. It was a road for them to travel to many places to hunt and fish and gather roots and berries. Over my life on this high bank I have seen many Skigins passing by in their birchbark canoes, sometimes at night with their burning torch lights. Sometimes I saw them in great numbers as warriors going to battle, and one time I saw all of them, mothers, children and elderly grandparents fleeing up the river from a very frightful enemy. Along the shores of the beautiful Wulustuk and on its islands they planted corn and beans in the fertile soils. These Skigins who lived here many years before anyone else called themselves Wulustukieg[5], which means in their language "people of the Wulustuk." The Wulustukieg lived in the summertime on one of the large islands at Eqpahak near my place on the bank which is close to a small stream that empties itself into the river. They built round cabins made of the bark from birch trees that were shaped much like beaver houses. These cabins could be quickly taken apart and carried to another place when they moved away from the river in winter and went into the shelter of the forest. They had one large cabin that could seat many people inside it around a fire. They called this big cabin their Grand Council Chamber. In that big cabin they would meet and tell stories about hunting trips, discuss plans for hunting, assign the hunting territories for each family clan, and celebrate marriages. I knew the names of their leaders, their sakums as they called them, and the names of all the fathers and mothers and children and grandparents. You see that sunken place in the flatland between two gullies on the island. Those are the graves of over 200 Wulustukieg. There are still more graves on the shore of the river near where I am standing. I will tell you stories about those graves and many more stories about these Wulustukieg. This place on the river at Eqpahak is very sacred to them."

“In the spring when the blossoms were on the ewepahqis (serviceberry or shadbush trees) and the shad fish are running they returned to their island from their winter places and set up a summer village. The spring floods with large sheets of ice would clear away old debris and deposit new soil rich in nutrients, which made the mahsusiyl (fiddleheads), tahkitom (groundnuts), mouse beans (hog peanuts), beach plums, and sunroots (Jerusalem artichokes) grow large and abundant. The Wulustukieg made sweet syrup from the sap of maple trees growing on the island. They dug sunroots and groundnuts that were rich in inulin, and they harvested the beach plums growing on the gravel and rocks along the shores. They picked raspberries, strawberries, pin cherries and high bush cranberries. In the late fall they harvested butternuts and hazelnuts. All these edible plants and trees, and many more, can be found growing today on all the islands around Eqpahak. There was plenty of food for all of them here. In the early spring they fished shad and striped bass that were making their spawning run. They also caught the mighty sturgeon fish that can be twice as long as a man is high. But the fish they sought most was the salmon. No other fish tasted so good. They caught the salmon in a deep pool in the river where a small, cool brook emptied into it, a short distance below where I stand here on the bank. The pool was a resting place for the salmon. There were many salmon in the river in those days, and the humans had plenty to eat. But sadly there are almost no salmon left now in the Wulustuk.” Ka-ka-gus asked, “What happened to the salmon?” Answered the old pine tree, “Over my lifetime other humans came from across the ocean and cut down the forests and opened up the land, bringing with them pigs and cows and horses, and they planted potatoes and barley and wheat. They built many roads throughout the land and they put big dams across the beautiful river. Even the small streams that empty themselves into the beautiful Wulastuk had small dams built across them and they used the flowing water to turn big wheels and sharp saw blades to cut up trees and make them into lumber for building houses and barns. The waters became too warm for the salmon because the cool, shading forest was gone. The saw mills dumped their sawdust into the streams. Pulp and paper mills dumped toxic chemicals in the river. The farmers put fertilizers and pesticides on their open farmlands that washed into the rivers and streams whenever it rained. This made the salmon sick.” Ka-ka-gus asked the old pine tree, “Who were these other humans and from where did they come?” The old pine answered, “I call them Parasitans [6] because like parasites they take from the land, from our Earth Mother, and they never give anything back to her. They rob from her. It is a one way relationship. They came from across the ocean from a land where they had lived for so long that they had cut down most of the trees and they had dug all of the gold, silver, copper and coal that there was in the ground. They had polluted their lakes and rivers. They came here to find more trees to cut down, and to dig up more gold and other minerals that they think are very valuable. They came to fish our cod and our salmon because they had no fish left and we had many because we only took what we needed for ourselves. They came to get the furs of our animals like the sabel, mink, marten and beaver. They had killed off almost all of their own beavers and wanted to find more. The land that they came from was called Europe. They called themselves Normans, Basques, Malouins, Britains, Spaniards and Nederlanders. They spoke different languages, French, English, Spanish, Dutch, Nordic and Germanic. They had a religion they called Christianity and they measured their time, not by rings, not by winters, not

by moons, but by a calendar that started counting days and years from the time their first great spiritual leader was born. That calendar started counting from day 1 over 2000 years ago. Every day you see these people driving past here in their noisy cars and trucks. You pick food from their garbage that they leave along the roads and in black bags in front of their houses. With their cars and trucks they run over the wild animals, raccoons, porcupines, skunks and deer and make plenty of road kills. They just leave them there. It makes finding a meal easy for you. You have become dependent upon them for living. You live off their waste. But the Wulustukieg never wasted anything. When an animal gave its life for them, they wasted no part of it. They got food, clothing and tools from that animal. There was no waste. They left no trace.”

“If I go by the calendar of the Europeans I will tell you a story that I remember from the year 1603 in the month of May when I was a young tree. I overheard some Wulustukieg at Eqpahak talking about a long journey they had been on up north to the great river Kanata[7]. At a trading place called Tadoussac on the banks of the river they had joined with other Skigins, the Algonkins and Montagnais, to go fight their most feared enemy the Iroquois. They were in number over 1,000 warriors. They had won the great battle, defeating the Iroquois, and there was a great celebration with dancing and feasting for several days. These same elders told of a large ship that had arrived there at the time of the celebration, one with tall sails and big iron guns mounted on the sides of the deck along its gun walls. It was navigated by Europeans who spoke the language of French[8]. They had come across the big ocean from a country called France. They wanted to trade guns and gun powder for skins of our animals to make warm coats and hats. The beavers, bears, otters and other animals in this land that is colder than France have fur that is much thicker and warmer than their animals do over there across the ocean. The Skigins thought trading skins for guns was a good deal because they could not make guns or powder or lead balls themselves. They were experts at trapping and hunting animals and knew where to find them in the vast forests of this land. They knew how to properly scrape, cure, stretch and dry the pelts using tools they make out of the forests whenever they needed them. They welcomed these strangers from across the ocean and they threw away their bows, arrows, and spears that they had always made for themselves. The guns were stronger than bows and the lead balls that the guns fired were much smaller and easier to carry than large bundles of arrows, yet these little balls were just as powerful. This was when I first heard the sound of guns firing in the woods around Eqpahak. It was a new sound. It was loud like thunder. Arrows and spears made no sound. The sound of a gun was an alert to all creatures that human enemies were nearby. This was the beginning of great change in Wulustuk land. The different nations of peoples who came across the ocean to this land of plenty began to fight over it.”

The sun was setting up river towards the steep cliffs where the face of Glooscap[9] is etched into the rocks. The breezes died down and all of Eqpahak became still, and the old tree’s voice became a soft whisper. But the sounds of cars and trucks going by on the highway drowned out the faint voice of the tree. “I cannot speak loud enough for you to hear,” said the tree. “We should rest for the night, and I will tell you more stories in the morning.”

To be continued in CHAPTER 2

Footnotes on Wulustukieg/Maliseet words in this story:

(1) more accurately Kci kuwes - "the great pine tree"; (2) an ancient Passamaquoddy song about seasons and stars; (3) also skicin, plural skicinuwok or sikiginoowug; (4) also Wolastoq; (5) Wulustukieg, Wolastoqiyik or Wolastoqewiyik - "people of the Wulustuk." In English they might be called Wukustukians much like people of Fredericton are called Frederictonians; (6) Wulustukieg called the Europeans Agumnook-keowyig - "people from across"; (7) the St. Lawrence River; (8) Pierre Du Gua de Monts and Samuel De Champlain; (9) Kluscap, a legendary spirit in stories that preserve landmarks, history, and culture.

NATIONAL AFFORDABLE CARE ACT TRIBAL DAY OF ACTION

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For Immediate Release

National Affordable Care Act Tribal Day of Action

WASHINGTON—Today is the National Affordable Care Act Day of Action and it is a call by the White House to American Indians and Alaska Natives to find out what health insurance benefits and protections are available through the marketplace.

Navajo Nation citizens can view and compare available health insurance plans by going online, or obtaining local in-person assistance.

Although enrolled Navajo Nation citizens qualify for the tribal exemption, many may qualify based upon income for private health insurance plans at reduced or no cost premiums. Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Acting Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS), has stated that one tribal member qualified for a full coverage health insurance plan for only \$0.76 per month.

"One benefit to obtaining a health insurance plan through the marketplace is that they are portable. This means that an insured person can seek medical treatment where they want and is not bound to visiting Indian Health Service facilities. This is especially important for Navajos living outside the Navajo Nation and possibly no where near an IHS facility," said Navajo Nation Washington Office government and legislative affairs associate Carolyn Drouin.

Navajos who lack health insurance and decide not to participate in the marketplace, should complete the tribal exemption application to avoid paying a penalty with their taxes due next spring. Once obtained, the tribal exemption is a life-time exemption.

"The marketplace gives more options and control to Navajo patients over their health care decisions," added Drouin

TA'KAIYA BLANEY, 12, INSPIRES WITH POWERFUL VOICE AT EARTH DAY MEET Vancouver Observer

Earth Day is a special day in our household, because we like to think we do our part to save the planet. It's become an even more important event after I became a dad in 2011.

We make sure our daughter eats mostly organic food, and we have a vegetarian diet. We recycle and up cycle. I ride my bike everywhere and my partner takes the bus to her school. We have a baby seat to carry our daughter on longer trips. I was raised a hippie kid, so it's how I'd like to raise my daughter.

Our daughter happily listens to us read her kid's "green start" books about the planet like One Tree and The Five Senses. She looks beautiful in her specially picked used clothing. She is happy to play with her wooden toys.

Yet despite our mostly eco-friendly lifestyle, I'd still call myself a cynic.

And today, while watching 12 year old Ta'Kaiya Blaney sing "Earth Revolution" at the Grandview Park, I was reminded of my cynicism which contrasted with the optimism and hope of the young girl on stage.

Hearing her beautiful and powerful voice, I was moved to learn more about this young girl.

Spontaneously, I approached her parents and we arranged an interview in the park. I knew nothing about Ta'Kaiya Blaney except what I'd seen of her on the stage, so I thought I'd interview her to explore the "youth" angle in a story about Earth Day.

Little did I know that I'd be left inspired by hearing her speak so clearly and wisely about the importance of Earth Day, and about her worldly experiences attending global events such as the TUNZA UN children and youth conference on the Environment in Indonesia, and the Rio+20 UN conference on the Environment In Rio de Janiero.

We started the interview by talking about the song she wrote called "Shallow waters" about the contested Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. The song is a story, she says, "about a future where the crude oil spills onto the lands, onto the many cultures in BC, onto the waters, onto the animals, and onto the ecosystems, and it reminds of what's at stake and what can be lost".

A few of the lyrics from the song are: "In shallow waters I used to see, Dolphins playing in front of me, Seaweed swaying, keeping time, Tidal rhythms laugh not cry".

So how did a 12-year-old become so interested in the environment? In her mind, it stems from the way she was raised as a child. She spoke of her mother taking her at age two down to the river, and dipping her toes into glacier cold water. Ta'Kaiya was able to experience lush, beautiful and pristine environments growing up.

She was aware even as a young child of what was lost in her environment and her culture and has grown up aware of these issues.

Was it inspiring to be able to travel around the world to events, conferences, and learn about different cultures? Can one meet other kids with the same passion and wisdom? Ta'Kaiya went to the Rio Summit with the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) and Clayton Thomas and Rueben George last year. She met with many other Indigenous people who have traveled worldwide and are facing problems in their territory, such as Squamish and Haida Gwaii nation, and Gitksan people. Hearing people share their songs and stories has inspired Ta'Kaiya.

At the end of our interview, Ta'Kaiya spoke poignantly about Earth Day. While singing, she said she "saw smiling faces, faces full of love and full of passion and that's a great thing to see."

"We're not fighting in sense where we're bringing out our axes, we bring out our shields. We're fighting in a sense that we are defending the land, and defending our Mother Earth. To see these faces out in the audience is a very inspiring thing," she said.

To finish, here are a few words from her song "Environment Revolution" (by Ta'Kaiya Blaney and Aileen De La Cruz):

Let's go the distance
We are a million voices strong
Facing resistance
But there's a choice between right and wrong
Oh oh stop waiting til tomorrow
Stop living yesterday
Cause there won't be a tomorrow
If we don't change today

Note: Ta'Kayia Blaney is from the Sliammon First Nation, B.C.

DEAN'S DEN - LAID BARE

I love to sit here by the stove
My sock feet in the oven
I sup a mug of loose-leaf tea
And munch a homemade muffin,
A full moon mocks a cold clear sky
The wind - a misery moan
My dog lies stretched beside my chair
And - I am not alone,
The old wall-clock goes tick-'n-tock
Ah - the peace it brings
Contentment - pure contentment
While the happy kettle sings,
I shut my eyes to silence
And I hear my lap cat purr
It's such a pleasant soothing sound
From such a humble ball of fur,
The hardwood heat feels oh so good
I thank my God for eve's like this
For friendly fires - damper tuned
Too few - too fine - to miss!

Food, clothing, shelter
Kindness, comfort, care
Faith, hope, and charity
Wants and needs ... laid bare!

~ D.C. Butterfield

Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you can be successful or be happy.