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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 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 right data. Our aim is to provide you with the precise tools and information possible.

OROMOCTO FIRST NATION SWEARS IN FIRST FEMALE CHIEF

Shelley Sabattis sworn in with traditional ceremony that hasn't been used in 150 years.

CBC News

Shelley Sabattis was sworn in Monday as the chief of Oromocto First Nation in a traditional ceremony that hasn't been used in 150 years.

Sabattis is the community's first female chief and with her taking office, three of the six Maliseet communities in New Brunswick have female chiefs.

"I was praying in my bedroom for her to get in and my son came in and told me she was in," said Faye Keenan-Mossop, Sabattis's grandmother.

"And I was so proud and I cried."

Juanita Paul said she is confident that Sabattis will excel in her new position.

"I know that she will do the best of her ability. I know that, she's that type of person," said Paul.

Mary Davenport also said she is hopeful that the new chief will usher in change to the community.

"She's going to do better than the rest did. We needed this change, big time," Davenport said.

Sabattis, 47, is a former teacher.

"I've handled stress my entire life," she said.

"I've managed household my entire life, I raised five kids on my own, I'm game for anything.

"We have a young team of councillors, all men, that are all eager, educated and ready to go, so I'm going to put the issues right to them, and we're going to start off with a wham, I hope, a big bang."

Sabattis won a seat on council in addition to the chief's position for a two-year term. She is donating her salary as a councillor to the community's elders for their use.

About half of the First Nation's 600 members live off-reserve. The average age is 30, and one of the councillors is Sabattis's son.

Sabattis says her focus will be on higher education for the young, and tackling growing housing issues.

Maliseet elder Imelda Perley, who led the swearing-in ceremony, notes that half of New Brunswick's six Maliseet communities now have female chiefs.

"I think that's going to be the big shift in leadership, is that we have more women who are spiritually connected," she said.

ALMOST FIRST NATIONS TO LOSE MILLIONS WORTH OF FUNDING FOR FAILING TO POST FINANCIAL INFORMATION ONLINE

The Conservative government will start withholding millions of dollars in salaries and other funding from nearly 200 First Nations after they failed to publish detailed financial information online, as is required by a controversial federal law.

Under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, 581 First Nations from across the country were required to post audited financial statements on the Internet by midnight Tuesday or risk losing non-essential funding from the federal government.

The information to be made public included how much money individual band leaders made during the year, no matter whether the income came from federal funding or the First Nation's business interests.

The federal Aboriginal Affairs department said 191 – or nearly one-third – had not posted their information as of Wednesday. While more are expected to trickle in over the next few days, the figure is still striking after only 10 First Nations did not comply with the law last year.

All Canadians, including First Nations, want and deserve transparency and accountability from their governments

In a statement sent by the Conservative party, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said band councils that have not met the deadline will receive formal reminders. But he added that starting this week, funding for non-essential services will be withheld. Other actions, such as court orders, may also be taken.

"All Canadians, including First Nations, want and deserve transparency and accountability from their governments," Valcourt said. The law applies "the same principles of transparency and accountability to First Nations governments that already exist for other governments in Canada," he added.

Speaking in Ottawa Wednesday, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde described the government's move to withhold funding from First Nations as "heavyhanded."

"A lot of those people in those communities who need those resources, you're going to make them suffer," he said. "That's what's going to happen. It's not proper, it's not right."

Bellegarde said a number of First Nations plan to post their financial statements online but struggled to meet the deadline because of the extra work and cost.

Yet he also said some First Nations have questioned why the government's push for transparency isn't being reciprocated by Aboriginal Affairs, which held back \$1 billion in approved spending over a five-year period. Moreover, he said the law goes too far in terms of revealing personal and commercial information.

Bellegarde said the AFN has no issue with transparency and accountability, but requiring First Nations to post the information on the Internet, "it's a little too far. It's a little too public." The same is true for band leaders having to report income from private ventures, he said.

"Those two pieces are problematic," he said. "Why do we have to do that? Why do First Nations have to do that? So the legislation is flawed in that regard."

The law is currently the subject of a federal court case in Saskatoon, where the government is trying to force five First Nations to publish their financial statements online. The First Nations, two of which have launched lawsuits against the government, say the law violates privacy and confidentiality.

Two days of hearings were held in August. The judge has not yet released a decision. One of the First Nations has also written to the United Nations to complain about the law.

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau had previously indicated he would repeal the legislation if he wins the election, though the party now says a Liberal government would review all laws affecting First Nations that were brought in under the Conservative government without consultation.

The NDP originally voted against the legislation, but Leader Tom Mulcair has not said what he will do if elected to power.

GRASSY NARROWS FIRST NATION TAKES ONTARIO TO COURT OVER CLEAR CUTTING

Court case will test whether Charter of Rights can protect people from environmental harm

CBC News

Grassy Narrows First Nation, in northwestern Ontario, is taking legal action Monday to stop Ontario's plan to allow logging near the community's traditional territory.

Research shows that clear cutting can release methylmercury — a neurotoxin — into the environment, a pressing concern among Grassy Narrows residents already suffering mercury poisoning.

Chief Roger Fobister said the court action is necessary after Ontario turned down the First Nation's request for an individual environmental assessment of the latest forest management plan.

"We're trying to protect our people's health here, our fundamental human rights," Fobister said.

Grassy Narrows, (also known as Asubpeeschoseewagong) will attempt to use the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to protect it from environmental harms.

"This forest management plan is going to violate our right to life, liberty and security of person because they're clearly dumping mercury in our river system and we expect the charter to protect us," Fobister said.

Another section of the charter will be used to argue the forestry plan disproportionately threatens the health of First Nations people who rely on fish from local waterways as a staple food.

"Either the community, individually and collectively, would continue to fish and therefore continue be exposed to mercury, or they have to set aside a central portion of their culture and not fish at all in order to protect themselves from mercury," said lawyer Joe Castrilli. "In our view that would constitute discrimination."

Castrilli, a staff lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association said the case could set a precedent for the use of the charter to protect citizens from environmental harms.

'Controlling uncontrollable government action'

The charter, with its constitutional authority "provides a potentially powerful instrument for controlling uncontrollable government action," he said.

Grassy Narrows has tried many other ways to put an end to clear cutting.

Members of the First Nation have maintained a blockade against logging trucks since Dec. 2, 2002. There have been several rounds of negotiations with the province and another court case in which the Supreme Court ruled the provincial, not the federal government, had authority over resource management in Treaty 3 territory.

Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry was asked at a news conference in June how the province is addressing concerns about clear cutting near Grassy Narrows.

Provincial regulations will provide protection, Bill Mauro said, at the time.

Grassy Narrows Deputy Chief Randy Fobister said it's hard to put faith in a government promise of protection when the lives of people in the community are being cut short from previous exposure to mercury.

"We're not about to sit down and relax regarding the health of our people or the health of our future," he said. "We'll never give up on this mercury. No matter what the outcome is in the court, we'll still keep pushing government to fix this.

"They need to fix this mercury issue once and for all," he said.

ABORIGINAL WORKERS UNDERREPRESENTED IN NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT

Government workforce is comprised of 0.9% Aboriginal people

CBC News

The province of Nova Scotia is raising concerns about its own ability to hire aboriginal people, according to an internal government document.

The government workforce is comprised of 0.9 per cent aboriginal people, below the province's goal of about 2.5 per cent.

"There are concerns within government that hiring staff are not fully aware of diversity programs offered through the [Public Service Commission], in order for government to achieve its targets for employee equity," reads a ministerial briefing prepared for the aboriginal Affairs Minister and Premier Stephen McNeil.

"That doesn't represent achievement of our employee equity objectives. We are concerned about that and working to improve upon that," says Joe Fraser, director of corporate diversity with the Public Service Commission.

'We're concerned'

The numbers have slightly increased in the past five years, but continues to hover below the one-per-cent mark. In 2009, 85 people who identified as aboriginal worked in the public service. That rose to 103 in 2014.

"We're concerned about the lack of upward trending," said Fraser.

"As government we are looked to by Nova Scotians to set an example and to lead by example. As one of the biggest employers in the province and also because government has to provide services that are responsive to all Nova Scotians and Nova Scotians have to be able to see themselves in the services we provide."

There are about 10,082 people working for the Nova Scotia government. A 2012-2013 report shows aboriginal people make up 2.4 per cent of the working-age population.

Fraser says the province is investigating how it hires people in hopes of improving the numbers and reviewing potential barriers, like experience and education.

The province adopted an employment equity strategy last year.

Karen Boyd works for the Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat and said she's not surprised at all by the numbers.

She said the province has set goals without connecting with people in the community.

"That is often the case. These plans are made up without engaging the communities they are trying to target. It's just backwards in my opinion because they need our input, they need to understand the issues from our point of view so we can work on that together," Boyd said. "It kind of baffles me."

'We're seeing what works'

She said she's willing to help the Public Service Commission make those connections

"It's important for any workplace to be reflective of the community they work in and for," she said.

At the same time, Boyd said it's a learning process.

"This is all some what new, considering even my father's generation was in residential schools. He was one of the first students to attend the transition year program at Dalhousie University for example. Education and employment weren't open other than to people in my generation now," she said. "We're seeing what works, we're seeing what doesn't work. We're seeing what needs to happen."

According to Fraser, the government is overhauling the way it tracks demographics in the public service. Instead of filling out a survey when they start, civil servants will be polled every few years.

"Based on an early look at those numbers I think that there are promising signs of how that representation is starting to trend," he said.

OTTAWA BACKS OFF AS FIRST NATIONS IGNORE TRANSPARENCY LAW DEADLINE

About 30% of First Nations remain non-compliant despite threat to withhold non-essential funding

CBC News

he federal government appears to be hedging on its threat to hold back non-essential funding from First Nations that didn't disclose financial information online, at least for now.

The deadline for First Nations to post their financial information online came and went on Tuesday, and days later about a third have yet to submit their financial reports.

"The department and minister are committed to working with First Nation communities to determine why they are unable to be compliant," said Tory MP Kelly Block. "That's the first step before we would move to the second step of withholding funding for non-essential services."

First Nation financial disclosure became mandatory last year under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, a law authored by Block, but it remains unclear what "non-essential services" entail and how much funding could be cut.

Block's explanation? "What is deemed non-essential is anything that has not been identified as essential."

In Manitoba, about 65 per cent of the province's First Nations have not complied with the new legislation.

Brokenhead First Nation is one of them, and while they are planning to submit those numbers, Chief Jim Bear said they aren't happy about it.

"If we're going to be going into competition on a similar venture with whoever — whether it's in the community or off the community — those individuals will have access to our financial situation," he said. "We don't have access to their financial information. It puts us in an uneven [position]."

The new law also requires First Nations to post revenues from non-taxpayer-supported enterprises, such as band businesses, which Bear says is out of bounds.

"We're more than willing to post what the federal government, in terms of revenue, they give us. We're willing to be transparent there," Bear said. "But when we have our own source funding — whether it's from the casino, from VLTs, from our stores or other businesses — that should be up to us, the government and our own people, not the general public."

That complaint is being echoed across the country. As of Friday, 182 First Nations were in non-compliance.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde said the legislation is punitive and prejudicial.

"I think it's pretty heavy-handed and that needs to be revisited because you're basically hurting communities that are very poor," he said. "In a lot of cases, you're not going to continue operations."

Canada's Department of Aboriginal Affairs did not respond to requests for comment.

JEAN CHRÉTIEN SAYS STEPHEN HARPER HAS SHAMED CANADA'

Former prime minister says Harper has tarnished Canada's international reputation as a peaceful country

CBC News

In an open letter published Saturday morning in several newspapers, former prime minister Jean Chrétien says he is ashamed of Stephen Harper.

Chretien wrote in the Globe and Mail, La Presse and Le Devoir that Harper's reaction to the refugee crises in Syria and Iraq have helped to cast Canada as a "cold-hearted" nation in the international community, and that he has "shamed Canada."

"In my travels around the globe, I am regularly asked: What has happened to Canada? What has happened to the advanced, peace-seeking, progressive country Canada once was? What has happened to the country that was a model for peace and stability in a tumultuous world? These questions evoke great sadness in me," Chrétien wrote.

"I am sad to see that in fewer than 10 years, the Harper government has tarnished almost 60 years of Canada's reputation as a builder of peace and progress."

Chrétien, of Shawinigan, Que., served as prime minister of Canada between 1993 and 2003.

He implored Canadians to "choose a government in line with our great tradition of peace-building, initiated by Mr. Pearson and promoted by all of his successors until the arrival of the Harper administration.

"Let's take back our place in the world."

CLOTHING

It was quiet around Minnie's table. Every one was enjoying her cake. The warmth from the stove felt good now that the weather was cooler. One of the men had gone down to St. John to see their Maliseet exhibits in the New Brunswick Museum. He said that he overheard a teenager ask an a museum guide where the fur clothing was that the Indians wear. Everyone at the table burst into laughter. That led to, funny how some of our neighbors visualize us!

A stronger voice chimed in, some of our clothing has changed since we were kids. At the store where we traded there were short posts with leather moccasins tied to them. The tail end was left open. You picked the pair that you wanted, took it home where the tail was sewn to fit you. Stockings and sox were the same way. They were on a big roll. You pulled off the length you wanted and the clerk cut them off. When you got home you sewed up one end and tried them on. Some of the older people just wrapped some old cloths around their feet, called "footings," and shoved their feet into moccasins. The generation prior to that they wrapped rabbit skin ropes around their feet and ankles making a very warm sock. Now you go into a store and there is quite a selection of sox in different materials, colors and sizes.

Most wives made the clothing for their children and shirts for their husbands. The women bought the material, cotton or flannel, by the yard and made their own dresses. Some women worked for towns people cleaning houses and were given cast-off clothing. Some churches sponsored sales of clothing that people no longer wanted. The Maliseet women enjoyed going to those sales. Sometimes the Maliseet were given the clothes that were not sold. The clothing that was considered too worn out to meet the challenge of the forest trees and shrubs pulling and catching them was taken down to the river and burned.

If a man wore a shirt that he bought in a store, he would be referred to as a "gentleman." Soloman Tomah was always known as a "slick dresser." He was a widower for years and worked steady. He would buy a suit and several white shirts. He was the only one that I remember who wore white shirts and a tie. I remember some of the older women would call him "Mollykinses" meaning "young American." Some people would say, "I'll give Mollykinses a chair so he can sit down." A few years later William Polchies began wearing a tie. At that tme collars were celluloid.

All the boys wore short pants with one suspender (brace) across the shoulder. In pleasant weather we would go swimming right from school even in the fall. School was over at three. We ran from the school house right down to the River never stopping to

take off our pants. We just unfastened the suspender and continued running. Our pants would fall off on the grass before we got to the water. Most of the time we went without shoes. Our feet became so tough that we could run on the rocks and fields with bare feet, even if the fields were stubble. The girls went swimming too. They had their own swimming place. They wore cotton dresses.

Maliseet dress changed soon after the strangers came to their land. The long red coats available by trade became prized products worn by chiefs and head men as observed as being worn by top English and French leaders. All Indians living in cold climates with long winters of five to six months of snow enjoyed some colorful garments. Anything of color helped to break up the everlasting white surrounding them. The Maliseet were no exception.

The old hunters retained the moose shank boot worn for cold weather hunting were still favorite footwear for young children as well as the hunters well into the first half of the 20th century. The skin was peeled down starting ten or twelve inches above the hoof, pulled off the moose and fashioned into a waterproof boot. Rabbit skin sox or "footings" kept out the cold. On the coldest days more rabbit skins could be bound around one's leg. These were well-proven cold weather footwear as the neighboring Indians even in northern Quebec made their winter foot ware in the same fashion.

The teen-aged girls enjoyed reading the Movie magazines. A very amazed girl noted that a star had twenty-four pairs of shoes This was culture shock. Why would anyone have that many shoes?

Nicholas Smith

DAN'S CORNER: ON THE THEFT OF TOBIQUE INDIAN RESERVATION LAND BY EUROCANADIAN SQUATTERS

In 1841 Moses H Perley was asked by the provincial government of New Brunswick to survey the Indian population of the Saint John River valley. The survey had two goals, to ascertain whether and how the provincial government should deal with the land reserves which had been set aside for the Indians of the Saint John River valley, as well as whether the provincial government should build schools for the Maliseet Indians. In his report on the Maliseet Indians he states that he visited settlements at Kingsclear, at Meductic, at Tobique Point and at Madawaska. He notes that he found about 400 members of the Maliseet Nation in those settlements along the St. John River.

While Moses Perley visited Maliseet settlement/reserves at Kingsclear, at Meductic, at Tobique Point, and at Madawaska the focus for this letter is my home community of Tobique Point.

At the time of Moses Perley's report the Tobique Indian Reservation consisted of 16,000 acres, extending eight miles in front of the river St. John and running back the same breadth four miles. Its population was 123 Indians.

From Moses Perley's report: "there is a very fine piece of alluvial land, called the Tobique Flat, on which a considerable quantity of hay is cut annually. The grass this year has been sold for thirty pounds, to a person in the neighborhood, who agreed to pay cash but subsequently told the Indians that money was not to be had and they must take provisions. This, it appears, was a "customary" mode of dealing with the Indians. First to bargain with them for cash at a very inadequate price, and then taking advantage of their necessities to palm off inferior articles of provision at an exorbitant rate in payment".

From the Moses Perley report, another example of eurocanadians cheating and stealing from Indians: "In passing up the front of the Tobique Indian Reserve for about three miles above the Tobique Rock, cleared and cultivated by squatters who built houses and barns and appear to make themselves quite at ease. They pay no rent, acknowledge no title and from long impunity have become very insolent and overbearing. Besides occupying the land, they openly plunder the forest in the vicinity and dispose of it, in the face of the Indians, whom they will scarcely allow to set foot upon the land and invariably hunt off like wild beasts."

"As soon as the purpose for which I came was known, they drew themselves up in hostile array and would not communicate. One of the squatters in answer to an inquiry, told me, that he had lived on the land twenty years; that he had been several times sued, sometimes taken to Fredericton and sometimes to Woodstock, but beyond that, nothing had ever come of the suits; and, he supposed, could not. That he would never take a lease of the land, or pay rent, and if driven off, he would burn the buildings and devastate the land."

"He told me that he came on the land in May, 1810; this year he has put up a house, and got in a crop. He has taken possession of a clay-bank for the purpose of commencing the manufacture of brick, and also of a Mill forthwith. I gave him a notice to desist and quit the Property, when he admitted that he came here without any authority, merely because he saw many others do so with impunity, and he thought he also might as well have some benefit from the Indian Land."

"It was stated to me boldly by Mr. John Hanson that it had so long been the "custom" for every person to cut as they pleased on Indian Land, that they considered it right and lawful to do so."

"From all these circumstances, His Excellency will at once perceive the impropriety of allowing timber wilfully cut on the Indian Reserve, to be given up, upon any terms. The only mode of stopping these constant trespasses is to confiscate the timber in all cases. By confiscating the stolen timber, the wholesale plunder now going on, will be brought to an end, and the "morals" of the neighborhood greatly improved."

It appears from the Moses Perley report that the major concern of the government seemed to be to ensure that the Indian population was assimilating into the dominant culture and being "productive". He also suggests forcing some of the Indians to abandon their settlements such as St. John and Meductic.

While framed in paternalistically protective terms, Moses Perley's report is part of the provincial governments process of dispossessing the Indians of their land and their culture under the guise of protecting them.

In terms of eurocanadian mind-set and attitudes toward our people, very little has changed in the ensuing 164 years.

In our two peoples' journey toward that common ground of mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual acceptance, we find our people still waiting upon that common ground, waiting for our eurocanadian brothers who are still where they were in 1841.

I write this factual information in an effort to encourage people to read their history and their history of Indian and white relations since the time of the arrival of Europeans to our homeland. In the process to push our eurocanadian brothers toward that common ground. Moses Perley in his 1841 report lists the names of these eurocanadian squatters who refused to remove themselves and give back to the Indians their ill-gotten gains, they are as follows: Samuel Lovely, James Murphy, Abraham Topham, John Hanson, Benjamin Beveridge, Stillman Armstrong, John Larlee Sr., Elijah Larlee, Thomas Lovely, Joseph Lovely, John Larlee Jr., Daniel Craig, James Taylor, Sutton Armstrong, Anthony Nichols, Joseph Topham, Amos Larlee, David Lewis Dibble, Frederic Giberson, and Barnabas Armstrong.

The best way for our eurocanadian brothers to begin their journey toward that common ground is for them to release and let go of their collective and individual guilt. In its place they must take on responsibility. Responsibility, by first recognizing, acknowledging and accepting the factual history of the origins of the country that has come to be known as Canada. Through these initial steps the way will be open for reconciliation between our two Peoples and we may begin to live the teachings of our Medicine Elders... "we must love one another or die".

All My Relations,

Dan Ennis

DEAN'S DEN — 1) FACE IN THE TREE, 2) BIRDS ON THE WIRES

The Face In The Tree

At first he hardly noticed

For the shape was very vague

Kinda like - a constellation

Where three stars can be a leg,

But then the features fashioned

As the tree boughs did expand

It materialized, and manifested
How was he to understand?
The season came and nearly passed
He watched - and it developed
Yet, still he didn't comprehend
How his life would be enveloped,
Before his eyes it clarified
Became perfected and refined
Gaining evident distinctness
Acquiring credence in his mind,
Until - it took on a visage
An appearance he could trace
Found, in this tree before him
There plainly - was a face,
Every morning he looked to it
For what its countenance might say
And, depending on its aspect
Was how he planned his day,
To it, he looked for answers
To the problems he must solve
And that was how it took control
As their rapport would evolve,
He turned to it - instead of prayer
When he felt abashed or addled
If anguish had him insecure
If life's burdens had him saddled,
For awhile - it was his Master
Made him confident, and strong

But then, some sullen changes
Some responses, that seemed wrong,
He began to disregard it
His psyche breaking free
Not knowing how he'd angered
The very 'spirit' of the tree,
One day he grabbed a sharpened axe
And, on that tree he did descend
He'd chop it all to pieces
This fallacy must end,
Entangled in the branches
His remains would soon be found
Ensnarled and suspended
At, face-height - off the ground,
Was it all imagination
What, for sure, just couldn't be
Or, was it 'nature's essence'
In the face ... found in the tree?
Or, perhaps the only problem
T'was a time of 'things unseen'
When the mind can be embedded
For, that day was ... Halloween!

D.C. Butterfield

Birds On The Wires

Summer retires

Autumn inspires

First season fires

Birds ... on the wires! - D.C. Butterfield