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Halifax student group protests Israeli war crimes against occupied Palestine

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – More than 50 protestors led by the group, Students Against Israeli Apartheid Dalhousie, picketed outside Halifax's Public Gardens to demonstrate against Israel's ongoing use of collective punishment against Palestinians.

"These people have lives and families. They're not just numbers," said student and event organizer, Amer Hussein in an interview during the event.

Following the recent kidnapping and deaths of three Israeli teenage boys by a Palestinian militant group, Israel initiated a violence campaign in Gaza, so far killing more than 30 people and arresting nearly 600 more, including women and children, Hussein explains.

"These people were innocent," the third-year engineering student says. "They have

nothing to do with the conflict Israel is blaming them for."

Under the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, collective punishment—the act of taking violence on a group of people as a result of another's behaviour—is defined as a war crime.

Canada's inaction to stop the escalating violence is an act of condoning Israel's apartheid regime, Hussein says.

"So we've taken it upon ourselves to raise awareness and make change."

The student group, which began in March, plans to start a boycott, divestment and sanction campaign in the fall. It will ask Dalhousie's students, faculty, and alumni to stop all investments and purchases of products that support Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Dalhousie University one step closer to divesting from fossil fuels

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Dalhousie could become the first Canadian university to pull its investment from the fossil fuel industry.

"It's hypocritical for an institution of higher learning and research to be projecting itself as sustainability leader while it still has holdings in the fossil fuel industry," said Emilia Belliveau-Thompson, co-organizer of Divest Dal — a group dedicated to campaign for university's fossil fuel divestment.

The university's board of governors recently announced they would begin to investigate withdrawing the \$20.3 million of the school's endowment fund from a number of the world's leading coal, oil and gas companies.

"I'm very excited," Belliveau-Thompson said in an interview Friday. She describes how the board's decision comes after a 14-month campaign by students, faculty, alumni and community members, including a petition signed by more than 800 supporters who believe the university should break all ties with fossil fuel companies.

"This is a huge step forward for us," she says.

The board has agreed to present an update at its next meeting in October, and then table a formal report in November. That's the time to put the question of divestment to a vote, Belliveau-Thompson believes.

Dalhousie has holdings in 35 of the world's top 200 oil, gas and coal corporations, according to a report by the university's investment committee released in April.

In moving forward, Belliveau-Thompson says the campaign will continue to provide the board with research about the impact of fossil fuels on climate change in order to ensure that "a decision is made and a vote happens."

She sees divestment as only one step towards Nova Scotia's climate change strategy and believes real progress begins with policy change and increased public awareness about the urgency of global warming.

"It is sick in there, and people are incarcerated"

by ROBERT DEVET

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – The recent death of Gordon James Longphee, a resident at Quest Regional Rehabilitation Centre, from an alleged attack by a fellow resident, has sparked a province-wide outcry for the closure of all institutional care facilities.

"It is sick in there. People are incarcerated," said Barbara Gillis, mother of a 23-year-old son who lives at Quest, during a rally last month.

She was one of nearly 40 demonstrators who gathered at the centre in Lower Sackville to demand all institutions for people with intellectual disabilities be immediately shut down.

Similar protests took place across the province, organized by the support groups Advocating Parents of Nova Scotia (APNS) and People First Nova Scotia.

Gillis believes Longphee's death, the second death in four years, clearly indicates that Quest cannot provide the care that her son needs — no matter how well intentioned staff may be.

"This is incarceration," she said. "(Residents) are locked up in there. They can't freely go outside ... It's as if life stopped."

She explained that her son, who is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and has lived at Quest for the past five years, was assaulted by another resident in February.

"My son is anxious in there," she said. "In order to cope (staff) medicate him, call the police."

The Department of Community Services recently announced a move away from an institutional model towards a more individualized approach for longterm care.

Brenda Hardiman, co-founder of APNS, says the department's plan is a good start, but believes it lacks a sense of urgency.

"Community Services are looking at a ten year plan," she explained. "We want referrals to stop immediately."

Gillis agrees. "I can't wait for another five or ten years for something to come around. Damage is being done. Mentally, physically, emotionally."

Coburg coffee baristas push to unionize

by TONY TRACY



Coburg Coffee could become the third coffee shop in Halifax to unionize.

| Photo Stephanie Taylor

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Since last month's union certification vote at Coburg Coffee (which was conducted by the Nova Scotia Labour Board) for workers to become members of the Baristas Rise Up movement and SEIU Local 2 Branch Nova Scotia, I've been asked many times by people from across the country about the outcome of the vote.

While I am more than optimistic about the final outcome, the ballot boxes for this vote remained sealed at the labour board offices in Halifax, and will likely remain sealed for some weeks (and perhaps even months) due to Nova Scotia's regulatory difficulties in getting a union certification vote ballot box opened and counted in a timely fashion.

In Nova Scotia, the regulations associated with the Trade Union Act put obstacles in the way of a timely count of ballots following a certification vote. Rather than issues of "inclusions" and "exclusions" being dealt with prior to a union certification vote, as is common in some other provinces, an oftentimes lengthy process of labour board

hearings is conducted in the weeks (and sometimes months) following such a vote. These hearings determine the scope of the proposed bargaining unit, the inclusion (or exclusion) of specific positions from the proposed unit, as well as several other issues.

I would certainly hope to see future regulatory reform to eradicate such red tape and delay. After many years as a union organizer and several years since in other capacities within the labour movement, it seems inconceivable to me that we can conduct municipal, provincial and federal elections and be certain of the outcome within hours of any vote in any jurisdiction in the country. Yet, a ballot box with the votes of a dozen workers indicating their desire to join a union remains sealed for months before being counted.

In this specific case, there has been some speculation on various social media platforms about the number of people who actually voted in Coburg's union certification vote. There have been widespread reports of the employer bringing in various family

members and casual employees who have not had shifts at the café in months to vote, as well as an attempt to enfranchise one former worker by flying them back to Halifax from their British Columbia home.

Rest assured, the one advantage of the process in Nova Scotia is that these votes by former workers, family members or friends of the employer bear little chance of being opened. The provincial union certification process calls for each vote to be first put into a blank envelope, and then that envelope be put into an outer envelope with the worker's name (known as the double-envelope system). Only after an arduous and lengthy process by the labour board to determine who is actually a regular employee as defined under the Trade Union Act, and who is eligible to have their vote count as part of a proposed bargaining unit, will the votes be tallied. In the end, only the envelopes of actual employees entitled to vote will be opened, and the remainder will simply be thrown away.

“We don’t belong here”

Advocacy group calls for age-appropriate housing for young Nova Scotians with disabilities

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

К'ИРУКТУК (Halifax) – I live with the sick and dying,” says 23-year-old Victoria Levack from her bedroom in the Arbourstone nursing home in Halifax.

She moved into the centre’s young adult wing several years ago to gain independence from her parents, while at the same time maintaining full-time care for her cerebral palsy.

But Levack never imagined how alone she would actually feel.

The wing is home to anyone who isn’t a senior, and Levack is only one of a handful of residents who are under 50.

“It’s not appropriate for someone who is 23 to be living with the sick and dying,” Levack said in a recent interview.

Her experience has led her to co-found Independence Now Nova Scotia – an advocacy group that calls on the province to provide more suitable housing for young people with physical disabilities.

The group’s mission: improve the quality of life for young adults with disabilities through better housing options.

Levack describes how living with people who are three times her age has made it nearly impossible to form meaningful friendships and feel a sense of community with other residents. Since she has nothing in common with most of people in her wing, Levack says she spends most of her time alone in her room.

The age gap also impacts the centre’s recreational programming, she says.

“We play a lot of bingo.”

Co-founder Melanie Gaunt, 42, is faced with a similar situation at Ivany Place nursing home in Bedford, which she moved into four years ago when her multiple



Independence Now Nova Scotia is a new advocacy group that calls on the Nova Scotia government to provide more age-appropriate housing for young people with physical disabilities. | stock Photo

sclerosis began to worsen.

“The lady who lives six doors down from me turns 101 next month,” she says.

Both women believe that the emotional well-being of young adults who require institutional care for their disabilities will continue to suffer unless something changes.

Besides age-specific housing, they are also advocating for the province to place stricter guidelines on the staff hiring process to require a wider knowledge of different disabilities and illnesses, as well as better access to alternative therapies in all long-term care homes.

So far, the women say they have received positive feedback from Donna Dill of Continuing Care Evaluation with the Health

Department and the Minister of Health and Wellness Leo Glavine— but say there are no immediate plans to move forward.

The stress that comes with living in a nursing home, surrounded by people who are at life’s end, poses a serious health concern, Gaunt says.

A report by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada on age appropriate housing for younger adults with the disease, says that MS is triggered by stress and sufferers can experience greater pain during emotional situations.

Gaunt remembers she felt excruciating pain in both her legs and back after two of her closest friends at the centre died — both of whom were in their late seventies.

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Clams at Pictou before its pollution

Food insecurity grips small Mi'kmaq community at Pictou Landing First Nation

by **ROBERT DEVET**

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – A lack of healthy, affordable food is a big problem in Pictou Landing First Nation, a small Mi'kmaq community of roughly 400 people.

Many people in Pictou Landing are not growing their own food or accessing traditional foods such as wild game, seafood and berries.

The community is close to the Abercrombie Point Pulp and Paper Mill and the intensely polluted Boat Harbour lagoon, and people are scared that eating those foods will poison them.

This is one of the main findings of a project, initiated from within the community, that looks at food security issues and solutions.

"Boat Harbour [is the biggest problem] because I find the situation is what comes to mind first when I think of problems within the community, and I find it is the most disturbing problem...", a community member states in the report.

"A lot of people are thinking that planting gardens is easy and will take care of our problem, but what we're seeing is that there's a lot of people who lack confidence in our environment for the gardens, they don't trust the air, they don't trust the soil, they don't trust the water because of Boat Harbour."

Dr. Irena Knezevic, a researcher associated with FoodArc, assisted the community

group in its activities.

"We knew that pollution and community concerns about Boat Harbour were serious issues, but we did not expect them to dominate so much of our conversations," Knezevic writes in an email dated May 29.

"We did not set out to explore the issue of Boat Harbour – there is already another, bigger project looking at that (led by Heather Castleden at Dalhousie). We wanted to focus on food security, which is one of the

"All we would do is dig out clams at the shore, and bring a pot, and cook clams there."

– Community member, Pictou Landing

most pressing issues in many Aboriginal communities in Canada," Knezevic adds.

Apart from pollution, Pictou Landing First Nation faces many challenges similar to the ones faced by other poor and marginalized communities in rural Nova Scotia.

The report talks about lack of a decent grocery store in the community and no public transportation to get to the store that is a twenty minute drive away.

And social assistance does not come close to covering the bills.

"There is a need for all levels of government to take food insecurity more seriously –

those in position of power rarely experience such challenges and there is a need to bring food (in)security more effectively to the forefront of social policy," the report recommends.

The report makes many practical suggestions that could bring a degree of healthy relief for the many community members who struggle to make ends meet.

Things like cooking classes, shuttle services to the grocery store or the food bank

in New Glasgow, bulk buying of fresh food, investing in a communal freezer, community gardening, possibly even partnering with a farm.

"Those are things that can be helpful, but they cannot solve the problem, because the problem is systemic," Knezevic cautions in a follow-up phone call.

Memories of better times still persist in the community.

"Everybody else down here used to pick berries and have gardens, and they used to eat from the gardens, carrots, potatoes, corn, peas, tomatoes, whatever, and now these days you can't do that anymore," a community member is quoted as saying in the report.

"We used to live off the land, and we used to swim down at the shore before pollution came, and we'd never even go home for lunch."

"We'd have strawberries, and blueberries, and green apples, and sore stomachs after too (laughter). But all we would do is dig out clams at the shore, and bring a pot, and cook clams there."



Pollution of Pictou County's Boat Harbour is preventing members of Pictou Landing First Nation from growing their own food or accessing traditional foods such as wild game, berries and fish

| **Photo** Miles Howe

Nova Scotia, open for gold diggers

Bureaucrats act as cheerleaders, says former Musquodoboit MLA

by ROBERT DEVET



K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – When DDV Gold Ltd. announced plans to develop an open pit gold mine at Moose River Gold Mines in the Musquodoboit Valley, a few politicians and bureaucrats went out of their way to make it happen.

Too far out of their way some critics believe.

They argue that biased attitudes and sided legislation gives mining, oil and gas—even pipeline projects—an unfair advantage.

Case in point -- the expropriation of residential lands for the construction of a new gold mines.

When owners of the Higgins Family Christmas Trees farm refused to sell land to DDV Gold Ltd., former NDP Minister of the Department of Natural Resources Charlier Parker, issued an order to expropriate the land on behalf of the Australian parent company, Atlantic Gold NL.

Gary Burrill, former NDP MLA for the area, made the case public by raising his voice in opposition.

“Our government complied with this request out of a fear that we would become viewed by the investment world as an inadequately welcoming jurisdiction if we didn’t. This is a poor reason,” Burrill, said in a recent interview.

Test pit at the DDV Gold property in Moose River Gold Mines on the Eastern Shore. Critics charge that in Nova Scotia mining interests take precedence over any concerns Nova Scotians may have. | Photo Dan Hutt

The three-hectares of land had been owned by the family for more 120 years when the province sold it to DDV Gold.

“Mining was prioritized over everything else. Over what we were doing there, and what anybody else would be doing,” Cleve Higgins, spokesperson for the family told the Halifax Media Co-op.

“It is a real disregard for any other use of land.”

DDV Gold promised to create as many as 300 new jobs during the construction of the mine, which was planned to begin in late 2015. The company said close to 150 more jobs would be made once the mine was up and running in the next five to seven years.

But Burrill argues that does not justify what happened.

“The open pit mine is not a public benefit project. It’s a project for private profit which will have some public benefits, he says.

“That is an entirely different thing”

Burrill says he and many other community members are not opposed to the mine in principle, but want to see stricter environmental guidelines put in place to

protect the community.

The Eastern Shore Forest Watch Association, a local environmentalist group, vocalized its opposition to the mine development, believing the environmental risks are far greater than the proposed safety measures can handle.

Mining will release arsenic, copper and other minerals into the county’s water supply, group member Jim Turner said.

Besides the environmental impact, the group’s main concern was the clean-up cost of that would occur in the case of an accident.

They asked the Department of Natural Resources that DDV Gold be required to post a bond for restoration and reclamation that was substantially larger than the \$2-million originally negotiated.

The request was never granted.

“It comes down to a joint interest between the mining companies and the Mineral Resources Branch at the Department of Natural Resources. It’s as if they are all on the same team,” Higgins says.

Blue whale, black oil, and the race for the Gulf

by ZACK METCALFE

The world's largest animal is also one of its most vulnerable.

At 33 metres in length, the blue whale is dwarfed only by the ocean in which it swims. In the words of broadcaster and naturalist David Attenborough, "its tongue weighs as much as an elephant, its heart is the size of a car and some of its blood vessels are so wide, you could swim down them."

Until hunting of this animal was prohibited by the International Whaling Commission in 1966, it's estimated 11,000 blue whales were killed from their northwest Atlantic population, the same population that frequents Canada's east coast and the Gulf of St Lawrence.

Its population before commercial whaling began in the late 1800s is unknown, but it's estimated those 11,000 individuals constituted 70 per cent of the local blue whale population over that period. Updated figures from 2013, provided by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), estimate there are fewer than 250 mature individuals left.

This population made the endangered species list in 2005 under the Canadian Species at Risk Act (SARA), which entitles the blue whale to have its critical habitat protected. SARA committed to identifying this habitat by the end of 2014, but they recently cast doubt on that deadline.

"It's hard to make any promises," said Nicole Bouchard, Quebec regional manager with Species at Risk. As she explained, the gears of government turn slowly. "We're still aiming for the end of 2014."

Like the nomadic hunters of old, the blue whale follows its prey. Anywhere from 20-105 blue whales are observed in the Gulf of St Lawrence every year, stalking the eight tonnes of krill they each consume daily. According to a report published by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in 2010, the Laurentian Channel inside the Gulf houses the North Atlantic's largest known concentration of krill, making it a vital feeding ground for the blue whale and other endangered species, such as the right, bottlenose and gray whales.

This is the domain of the whales, its waters and krill spoken for.

Also residing in the Laurentian Channel

is the Old Harry prospect, 80 km off Newfoundland's west coast and 460 metres underwater. According to the Halifax-based oil and gas company Corridor Resources, Old Harry could contain commercial volumes of crude oil...and they've secured an exploratory license to take a look.

"Corridor plans to drill an exploratory well at Old Harry in 2015 or 2016," said Corridor executive assistant Kathryn Patterson.

Corridor submitted an environmental assessment (EA) for their project to the Canada - Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) in 2011, which still hasn't passed review. Until it does, Corridor can't drill. This EA has been heavily criticised by the DFO and Environment Canada for being too optimistic in projecting oil spills at Old Harry. In spite of these criticisms, Corridor has stood by its projections.

"Corridor is confident that its Old Harry exploratory program will have no significant adverse environment impacts in the Gulf of St Lawrence," said Patterson.

She referenced a strategic environmental assessment published in April, 2014 by the consulting group AMEC Environment & Infrastructure, which concluded petroleum

exploration activities can be undertaken in the Gulf as long as appropriate mitigation measures are in place. This assessment said major oil spills are "possible" but "unlikely."

However, minor oil spills are more common. In late 2013 over 6,000 litres of crude oil were spilled into the Atlantic Ocean from the Hibernia platform and in 2008, 4,470 litres were spilled from the SeaRose production vessel, both located on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. These were preceded by a major spill of 165,000 litres in 2004 from the Terra Nova production vessel in the same region.

Between 1997 and 2013, over 180,000 litres of crude oil have been spilled off Newfoundland's east coast, roughly equivalent to 1,100 barrels of oil.

The fate of the blue whale might hang in the balance as the debate over oil spills rages on. According to a recovery strategy published by the DFO in 2009, fumes from oil spills can severely harm the blue whale's eyes, mouth and lungs; ingesting oil either directly or by eating contaminated krill could cause gastro-intestinal and pulmonary intoxication, and possibly feeding problems.

"The exploitation of oil and gas along the



Northwest Atlantic coasts and in the Gulf of St Lawrence...represents an additional risk for pollution," the strategy said. "Toxic spills are therefore a potential threat that cannot be ignored."

Mary Gorman, with the Save Our Seas and Shores Coalition, said if Old Harry is drilled, it's only a matter of time before oil hits the Gulf.

"A major oil spill is not only likely but inevitable if this development proceeds," said Gorman. "According to eco-toxicology scientists, it will be virtually impossible to clean up an oil spill in the Gulf of St Lawrence, especially under winter ice."

Gorman said water in the Gulf of St Lawrence only empties into the Atlantic Ocean once a year, meaning oil spilled at Old Harry wouldn't be out of sight - out of mind any time soon.

A study published earlier this year by the Université du Québec à Rimousk and the University of Waterloo, suggests oil spilled at Old Harry would coat Newfoundland's southern shore and possibly Cape Breton Island and the Magdalen Islands. If the spill was large enough, much of the Gulf could be severally impacted.

But perhaps the greatest threats to the blue whale's recovery lie not with the near future of exploratory drilling at Old Harry, but with the more distant commercial drilling.

Two seismic surveys have already been completed at Old Harry and more would be needed if they strike oil. According to the C-NLOPB, more wells would be drilled just to determine the size of the oil field, for which seismic testing would again be employed.

Lindy Weilgart, an associate professor at Dalhousie University, is an expert on underwater noise pollution and has written extensively about the impacts of seismic testing on marine life.

Between 1997 and 2013, over 180,000 litres of crude oil have been spilled off Newfoundland's east coast.

"Whales are dependent on sound for all vital aspects of their life," said Weilgart. "So introducing noise that masks or interferes with their signals is almost certain to impact them somehow."

Weilgart said deafness, even death, is possible for whales caught in regions of seismic testing, some species being more vulnerable than others. She can only speculate on the vulnerability of the blue

whale because it's never been studied. However, she's confident seismic testing interferes with blue whale communication and food finding; it could also cause disorientation and behavioural changes in both the whales and their prey.

"Seismic surveys are mainly [in the



Blue whale with calf. Environmentalists fear that oil exploration in the Gulf of St. Lawrence will threaten the survival of this endangered species.

low-frequency range], which is where blue whales communicate, so it must be assumed that there will be some negative consequences," said Weilgart. "Years ago, I would have assumed krill would not be as likely to be affected, but with recent research showing impacts on scallop larvae, affecting development and growth...I am not so sure anymore."

Of special note in the blue whale's 2009 recovery strategy are whale-to-ship

collisions, which are fatal to whales in 70 per cent of cases. The strategy said at least five per cent of blue whales in the Gulf bear scars from such collisions.

"Blue whale mortalities related to collisions with vessels have been reported in various oceans," said the recovery strategy. "Even though there have not been many cases reported in the Northwest Atlantic, the number of St. Lawrence blue whales

with scars from collisions indicates that this threat is real and likely significant. It is possible that whales struck and killed by fast moving vessels sink to the bottom without being detected, leading to an underestimate of the real impact of this threat."

A spokesperson with the C-NLOPB said

an exploratory well at Old Harry wouldn't involve more than two vessels to transport personnel and equipment to and from the drill site. However, oil tankers would be employed if commercial oil production ever took place in the Gulf.

Given the controversy surrounding Old Harry, the C-NLOPB has committed to "extensive public consultation" before completing their review of Corridor's environmental assessment. They have no timeline in place for this public consultation, but the spokesperson said consultation will not happen this summer.

And so the stage is set for important decisions affecting the Gulf of St Lawrence, as two irreconcilable goals meet at Old Harry - establishing the first major oil and gas operation in the Gulf...and the survival of the largest animal ever to call our waters home.

Zack Metcalfe works on the Blue Whale Campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the dangers posed by fossil fuel development in the Gulf.

Not over: Tonya Francis and others stand watch over Pictou Landing burial grounds

Work crews have already disturbed graves, says Francis. Historical documents point to burial site being well known.

by MILES HOWE

In June I reported from a Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) led 'blockade' over an effluent pipe that had burst and spilled its contents on an area likely to be a Mi'kmaq ancestral burial ground. In this article I follow up on the story. A group of PLFN band members remain at the scene of the spill. Historical documentation appears to conclusively identify the area of the spill and beyond as a traditional burial ground.

Here is the follow up.

PIK'TUK (Pictou Landing, Nova Scotia) – Sitting beside a sacred fire, directly beside a fenced-off, ten foot segment of buried pipe that a gush of tens of millions of litres of raw effluent has exposed to the light of day, sit three members of the Pictou Landing First Nation band. As they have been for the past four days, they are fire keeping – sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, but continuously praying.

"I can't leave this spot," says Tonya Francis of Pictou Landing. "We've found graves right along where I'm sitting."

Indeed, archival records buried in Pictou County historical documents suggest the entire area of the recent spill, which gushed an unknown quantity of untreated effluent over the course of an unknown time period, but which likely lasted at least 12 hours according to eye witnesses at the Boat Harbour Effluent Treatment Facility (where the effluent should have gone) was well known as an 'Indian Burial Grounds' until at least the 1870s.

An entry on page six of the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Pictou County reads as follows:

"Here stood at the arrival of the English settlers an iron cross about ten feet high. Hence it is still known to this day as Indian

Cross Point. In this place the Indians buried until a few years ago. Many of the graves can still be traced by the row of flat stones by which they were originally covered, which have now sunk to the level of the ground, and probably were always in that position, and are partially overgrown with grass. Human bones may frequently be found on the shore, caused by water wasting away the bank."

Author D. McLeod concurred in a eloquently worded article in the September 14th, 1912, edition of the Pictou Advocate.

In it, McLeod notes:

"The Indian Cross Point, less than a mile from the old coal wharves, was for many generations the burial place for the Indian dead. It was marked by a deal cross about twelve feet high, and plainly visible from vessels passing up and down the East River channel. The cross was renewed three times within my recollection.

During heavy storms and high tides in autumn the bank around the point gradually wore away, and several of the graves nearest the harbour were undermined and fell over onto the shore. As those dead had probably lain in their graves for over a century, nearly every vestige of their remains had decayed into dust, but occasionally a piece of bone, a tuft of raven hair, a decayed fragment of coffin, some fibrous substances (probably the remains of an old blanket) or a number of rusty nails would be visible in the fallen ground.

One day, over fifty years ago, the Indians turned out in force to repair the breach that time and tide had made on their old burial ground. Their first duty was to gather up every fragment that seemed to belong to the fallen graves. Those relics they interred in a new grave, a short distance inland from the bank. They then piled up boulders and smaller stones at the base of the bank to

protect it from future storms."

Last Saturday, an archaeologist in the employ of the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative (KMKNO), along with Chief Andrea Paul of Pictou Landing, did collect some artifacts that suggested they had located a site of historical interest. Their investigation only lasted a matter of a few hours, however, and was cut short by Francis and Pictou Landing elder Maurina Beadle, who requested that they both be four days sober before returning for further archaeological analysis.

By yesterday, Monday, no archaeological team had returned.

Instead, Paul, under the guidance of a vote taken by Pictou Landing band members, inked an 'Agreement in Principle' with the provincial government of Nova Scotia. The agreement in principle contains promises to bring into law timelines to shut down the decades old Boat Harbour Effluent Treatment Facility.

The province also promises to: "[W]ork with the band to identify any Mi'kmaq burial sites or burial grounds at Indian Cross Point, and the province will protect any such sites."

In return, the Pictou Landing band promised to: "[D]ismantle and disband its blockade of the Boat Harbour Effluent Treatment Facility."

By Monday, mid-afternoon, the CBC out of Pictou, Nova Scotia was broadcasting that the blockade was over. Francis and others at the sacred fire had not attended the meeting – actually they had not left the fire – but by mid-afternoon Pictou Landing Chief and Council were actively encouraging Francis to leave and letting people know at the primary blockade site that everything was over, at least from the Pictou Landing First Nation side.

Publicly, the blockade was over, and local Halifax newspaper *The Chronicle Herald*



Pictou Landing band members Tonya Francis, Maurina Beadle and 'Jono' Beadle remain at a sacred fire adjacent to the ruptured effluent pipe. They and others claim to have found ancestral graves adjacent to the ruptured pipe and say that contractors are already disrupting ancient grave sites. | Photo Don Brooks

1784.”

The exchange itself, under the Royal Proclamation of 1763, was illegal, in that colonialists could not directly purchase land from the Mi'kmaq. But likely this was not known to Paul, Sapier, or perhaps even Carmichael, who appear to have entered into the deal in good faith.

If the holding back of the burial grounds for future generations by Paul and Sapier has gone unnoticed, and indeed it has because presently Northern Pulp holds an effluent pipeline easement on part of the original burial grounds itself, the transfer of title by Paul and Sapier to Carmichael certainly has never been contested. One can trace the land transfer of Carmichael's land, including the burial grounds, down through the years to the present day.

In this case it would appear to be a question of colonial convenience.

The current owner of the remaining burial grounds, minus the segment leased to Northern Pulp's pipeline easement, has offered under anonymity to donate the remaining property back to the Pictou Landing band.

Flash forward to today, and Francis continues to watch over her ancestors' graves while contractors begin to dig around the ruptured pipe.

Likely, if graves have already been covered by effluent and sludge, they will be destroyed or never found. Francis notes that there is currently no archaeologist on scene and a Nova Scotia department of Environment spokesperson today told the Halifax Media Co-op that: “What Northern Pulp does to the pipe is with Northern Pulp.”

Although I am no archaeologist, on Sunday, while investigating the scope of the spill's destruction, I came across what I felt could only be a grave site, nestled beside a massive maple tree, only feet away from calf-deep sludge. It was a collection of medium-sized rocks, clearly made out into an oval shape, about the size of an adult in the fetal position.

“There is a reason why I've had to break all the rules,” says Francis. “This morning my heart was calling me back to this spot.”

today ran a Tuesday headline with Paul and Nova Scotia Environment Minister Randy Delorey posing in a 'victory' photograph, penning the Agreement in Principle.

But as of Tuesday evening, Francis still remains with her crew. They watch work crews begin the process of excavating the area around the 12-foot section of exposed – and broken – pipe.

“They've already disturbed graves we found yesterday,” says Francis. “I can't leave this fire. I need it up so that this can be stopped.”

Historical records also bring into some degree of doubt as to whether the Mi'kmaq peoples ever actually ceded their burial ground to colonial purchasers. Without delving into the argument that Nova Scotia and all the Maritimes are all in fact unceded territory – which indeed they are - it does appear that the burial grounds, including the effluent covered portion, were meant to be reserved by forward thinking Mi'kmaq chiefs

from the 'Pictou tribe', back in 1784.

In Rev. George Patterson's *The History of the County of Pictou*, of 1973, he notes:

“The only land in the county, so far as we have been able to ascertain, reserved for them in Government grants, is a small lot at their burying ground, at the mouth of the East River, but this they sold to the late James Carmichael, with the exception of the burying ground itself.”

In Book 2 of the 1784 'Registry of Deeds', the exchange is outlined in the words of Majors Paul and Sapier, two chiefs of the Mi'kmaq peoples:

“We Major Paul and Sapier the two Indian chieftains of the Pictou tribe for ourselves and in the name of other Pictou Indians for a certain sum of money now paid to us by Mr. James Carmichael, make over to him and his heirs one acre of cleared lands less or more joining Indian Cross reserving the burial grounds to ourselves given under hand at Walmsley the Twenty sixth day of August,



Funmi Olumade,
CUPW Scarborough Local

The HMC meets 8pm, every Monday,
Cafe Cempoal, Agricola Street. Contact us:
hmc@mediacoop.ca



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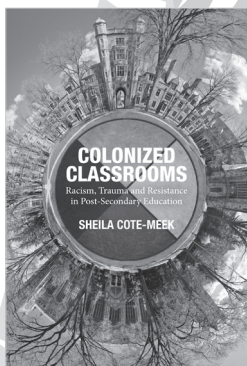
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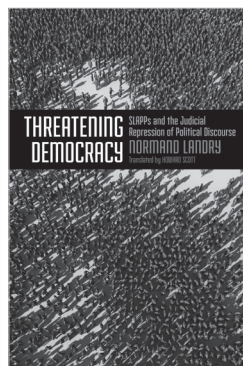
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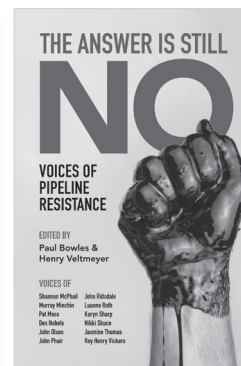
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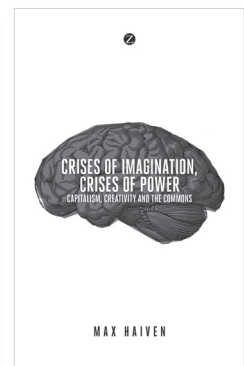
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