

Chronology - The Great New Brunswick Shale Gas Rebellion of 2013

by Willi Nolan

In June 2013, Southwester Energy Resources (SWN) began seismic testing for shale gas deposits in the Kent County area of New Brunswick. This territory was never ceded in the Peace and Friendship Treaties, and is claimed as traditional land by various Aboriginal communities in the Wabanaki Confederacy, including the Mi'kmaq peoples of the Sikniktuk District. Neither SWN nor the provincial or federal governments have consulted meaningfully or received the free, prior and informed consent of the Aboriginal peoples of Wabanaki regarding resource development plans and activities. The following is a brief chronology of important events during 2013.

June 3: Sacred ceremonies were held on traditional lands near Moncton where thumper trucks, which are used in seismic testing, were being stored before the testing itself occurred. During that day, participants in the ceremonies were repeatedly harassed by police, even after they had explained their concerns about the harmful effects of shale gas development and that they were only there to express these concerns through sacred ceremony.

June 5: A second Sacred ceremony on traditional, unceded lands was performed on Highway 126 north of Moncton. Hundreds of residents opposed to shale gas development in New Brunswick rallied in support. Police again harassed those gathered, created a roadblock and arrested 3 people; a 16-year old Aboriginal youth, a non-Native man and Lorraine Clair, a grandmother from Elsipogtog. During the arrest, Lorraine Clair's arm was injured due to rough treatment by police.. At the time of this writing, Lorraine Clair had not yet fully recovered from her injuries. Media were denied entry to the scene of the arrests.

<http://charlesotherpersonality.blogspot.ca/2013/06/3-people-arrested-at-anti-shale-protest.html>

(video) Anti Shale Protesters before the arrest in Kent County:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4pExHyNciI>

(video) 16 year old Native Youth arrested at Anti-Shale Protest in Kent County:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIQ0IyB8INw>

(video) Female Native hurt by abuse of the R.C.M.P.!!! She crying for help:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gXQ9sUZ7Ww>

RCMP arrest 3 anti-shale gas protesters in Kent County:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2013/06/06/nb-shale-gas-protest-arrests-613.html>

Christian Peacemaker Teams Elsipogtog Fracking Protest Update June 9-14 2013:

<http://www.cpt.org/cptnet/2013/06/18/elsipogtog-fracking-protest-update-9-14-june-2013>

(video) Shale gas truck seized by 'Elsipogtog warriors' in NB:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_HwfdGXi0o

June 8: Christian Peacemaker Teams witnessed non-Native youth being arrested for protesting shale gas development on Highway 126 near Coal Branch, New Brunswick; charges against all of the youth were later dropped. No media were present.

RCMP first arrested one demonstrator and chased another into the woods before arresting Susanne Patles, a Mi'kmaq woman from Eskasoni, Patles had placed a line of sacred tobacco between herself and the approaching police and made a tobacco prayer circle on the highway, where she knelt and began to pray, but she was accosted and arrested by police and charged with mischief.

<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/anti-fracking-arrests-continue-highway-126/17865>

June 10: A sacred fire site was established at the junction of Highways 116 and 126. Peoples allied against anti-shale gas development began asking for support from all non-Native and Native peoples to support their right to protect their lands and waters.

(article) "We've made our sacred fire. We're going to stand our ground here.":

<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/weve-made-our-sacred-fire-were-going-stand-our-gro/17949>

June 14: Thumper trucks with police accompaniment threatened and then invaded a Sacred Sunrise ceremony at a camp site located on traditional unceded land on Highway 126 near Harcourt, New Brunswick. Fourteen people were arrested by police while participating in that Sacred ceremony, including an elder holding a Sacred pipe. Media were not present until after the arrests had been made..

(article) Civil disobedience last resort for shale gas protesters - CBC:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2013/06/17/nb-civil-disobedience-fracking.html>

(video) Warrior Chief John Levi calls on allies to support the peaceful actions in New Brunswick:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFBJ-OEa-N4>

(video) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9frcW7IY_pM&feature=youtu.be

(video) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4pExHyNciI>

June 21: Twelve people were arrested near the Sacred Fire camp site on Highway 126 on National Aboriginal Day. The number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous supporters from across the country is growing by the day with ages ranging from young children to elders.

(article) New Brunswick: Tensions rise as anti-fracking protests dig in:

<http://rabble.ca/news/2013/06/new-brunswick-tensions-rise-anti-fracking-protests-dig>

June -July: A Sacred Fire camp site was set up near Elsipogtog, which included sweat lodge and other sacred ceremonies. One of the participants, Elsipogtog Warrior Chief John Levi, was repeatedly threatened with arrest. Various groups from other territories began to arrive, including Native and non-Native anti- shale gas supporters.

(article) Warrior Chief John Levi released from custody, Christian Peacemaker Teams report:

<http://www.cpt.org/cptnet/2013/07/08/aboriginal-justice-warrior-chief-john-levi-released-custody>

July 7: Fasting ceremonies began near seismic testing sites in forested areas near Elsipogtog. (article) Elsipogtog First Nation members begin fasting ceremonies for forgiveness and protection:

<http://www.cpt.org/cptnet/2013/07/07/aboriginal-justice-elsipogtog-first-nation-members-begin-fasting-ceremonies-forgiv>

July 20-30: 10 days of sacred ceremony were held at a burial ground in Pleasant Ridge, located near Rogersville, New Brunswick. Police not only interfered with the sacred ceremonies, but were found to have falsely informed participants that they had no right to park their vehicles at the site.

July 22: Protectors peacefully confronted the RCMP, who refused to act against their violations of laws and regulations despite knowledge that SWN had allowed highly dangerous misfired explosives to be left unattended.

(video) Elsipogtog: Undoing RCMP Harassment July 22, 2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuyCwYsSKgE>

July 23: Protectors at Meadow Brook Road, in the Rogersville area, made a stand in heavy rain to protect a forested area made ready for seismic testing with highly toxic underground explosives.

(video) Elsipogtog: Prevention at Meadow Brook July 23, 2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5LRkGVPoOA>

June 24: (video) Elsipogtog protector receives national media attention after chaining herself to SWN equipment and holding an impromptu tobacco circle with members of the RCMP:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07OxXF3-jDQ>

July 30: SWN negotiates a deal with Elsipogtog leaders and announces that it will cease seismic testing until mid-September 2013.

(article) Gone for the summer - SWN Resources Canada folds 'til September:

<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/audio/gone-summer-swn-resources-canada-folds-til-septemb/18445>

August - September

August 30: Collective Community of Concerned Members of Sikniktuk issued a Directive to Southwestern Energy Resources (SWN) asserting their authority over the lands and waterways affected by proposed shale gas exploration. <http://www.cpt.org/files/Copy of SWN Directive.pdf>

September 25: Conclusion of the work stoppage. RCMP arrived on the scene where seismic testing was to resume.

(video) Elsipogtog: SWN Round 2 Work Stoppage Hwy 11 Sept 25/13:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmJfV_M7GZw

September 29: Christian Peacemaker Teams chronicled and eye witnesses reported a RCMP vehicle running directly into Lorraine Clair at the peaceful protest camp on Highway 134 near Rexton, New Brunswick. Ms. Clair's subsequent complaints to the RCMP about the incident were met with inaction because of lack of evidence.

October 1: Treaty Day celebrations. Elsipogtog elected chief announced Mi'kmaq peoples of Sikniktuk /District are reclaiming stewardship of mismanaged Native reserved lands (Crown lands)

(video) Elsipogtog: Chief Aaron Sock arrives to blockade site:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7nsbShZXzI>

October 17: The day before an injunction against peaceful protests was to be challenged in a New Brunswick court, hundreds of heavily armed police harassed and attacked people on Highway 134 near Rexton, New Brunswick. This was the site of a Sacred Fire and other sacred ceremonies and is traditional, unceded lands. Solidarity blockades and rallies began across Canada in support of the peaceful land and water protectors.

RCMP raided the shale gas resistance encampment during the early morning hours, October 17.

Following the initial raid and arrests, protectors rushed to the area and, unarmed, confronted the RCMP. The RCMP began to move their line forward, swallowing two protectors who were in prayer and song.

(video) Elsipogtog: RCMP move in on peaceful protesters 17 October filmed by Christian Peacemaker Teams Aboriginal Justice Team: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAWPSv2Vfkw>

(video) Elsipogtog: Tensions, anger, and courage 17 October:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ipp_KC6Hexw

(video) Rexton Oct1713 Cops slinking in the woods with camo dogs and assault rifles:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Gj-PyFj3vc>

(video) Rexton Oct1713 Melee, rubber bullets and pepper spray as Chief and Council are arrested:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwXFc9kuuW8>

November 2013: During a series of peaceful protests on Highway 11 near Rexton, New Brunswick, a number of peaceful protesters were reported to have been victims of hit and run assaults on their persons with vehicle(s) operated by SWN employees. We question whether the Defendants are either sanctioned or adequately insured to permit such activities.