

Idle No More movement affects Anishinaabeg



DEBRA PINE, DIRECTOR,
UNIT I

Idle No More! — Hi folks! That's the big news happening up here and it's been spreading. Idle No More is a movement that was started in Canada by our Native brothers and sisters. The bill C-45 in the Canadian Parliament is the spark that ignited a nation to mobilize. This is brief overview from the www.CBC.ca reporting on this movement:

CBC News — Posted: Jan 5, 2013 8:17 AM ET — What is Bill C-45? That's the number of the bill introduced by the Harper government on Oct. 18 with the title, "A Second Act to Implement Certain Provisions of the Budget Tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012, and Other Measures." The bill passed and then received royal assent on Dec. 14 and is now known as the "Jobs and Growth Act, 2012."

That doesn't sound like something that would spark a protest movement, especially an aboriginal rights movement. What's the issue? C-45 is better known as the second omnibus budget bill. The act changes the legislation contained in 64 acts or regulations. The act itself runs over more than

400 pages.

The changes that most concern the Idle No More movement are the ones to these acts: Indian Act, Navigation Protection Act (former Navigable Waters Protection Act) and the Environmental Assessment Act.

In addition to the changes, those involved in the movement were angered by what they call a lack of consultation with indigenous peoples. The movement has also expressed concern about other acts and bills from the Harper government.

What are some of the movement's key objections to the changes to those three acts? Indian Act: First Nations communities can now lease designated reserve lands if a majority attending a meeting called for that purpose vote to do so, regardless of how many people show up. Previously, approval required the support of a majority of eligible voters.

The Aboriginal Affairs minister can call the meeting to consider surrendering band territory. The minister can choose to ignore a resolution from the band council that's in opposition to a decision at the meeting.

Idle No More says these changes allow "for easier opening of treaty lands and territory."

Navigation Protection Act: Under the act, major pipeline and power line project advocates aren't required to prove their project won't damage or destroy a navigable waterway it crosses, unless the waterway is on a list prepared by the transportation minister. Idle No More claims the amendments remove that protection for 99.9 percent of lakes and rivers in Canada.

Environmental Assessment Act: The first omnibus budget

bill had already overhauled the assessment process and the second one reduces further the number of projects that would require assessment under the old provisions. Idle No More objects to the faster approval process.

What's the connection between the hunger strike by Chief Theresa Spence and Idle No More? It was on that National Day of Action that Spence, chief of the troubled Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario, announced in Ottawa that she would be starting a hunger strike the next day. Her hunger strike has helped generate media attention for Idle No More and she has become an icon for Idle No More activists.

Substandard living conditions in Attawapiskat attracted widespread media coverage after Spence declared a state of emergency in late 2011 due to a housing crisis in the community.

Why should we be interested or care about this? Many reasons. I will say, the first time I had heard about it, I was scratching my head. It felt to me like our Canadian brothers and sisters were experiencing what would be the equivalent of our AIM movement was for us back in the '70s. However, on further exploration of the topic and after speaking to some elders on it, I realized that we must lend our support to the movement.

We, as Anishinaabe nations across Canada and the United States, have never given up the idea that we are one nation. Just because there is a border between us does not negate the fact of who we are and where we came from. My concern is that the world is watching this unfold, and if the Canadian government thinks it can get away with doing what they

are doing to First Nations people, what makes you think this government isn't going to try the same tactics with our tribal nations?

This omnibus bill also provides for the opening of numerous waterways that go through Native lands and reserves, it weakens environmental laws that were in place to protect Mother Earth and it further erodes at the treaties in place between the Canadian government and the First Nations people. Again, why should we care?

Many of those waterways flow right into our Great Lakes. At home here, in the St. Marys River, we have had to deal with fecal matter floating in the river and it was traced back to the Canadian water treatment facility. It is a very good example of how their actions affect us.

On Dec. 27, we protested in

support of our Canadian brothers and sisters. Chiefs from across the river came and spoke. We held a round dance on Ashmun Street in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. People had their children with them, our elders braved the cold and held signs in support. It was uplifting.

Pollution does not know any race. All Canadian and United States citizens need to be aware of the laws politicians try to pass or implement that hurt our sacred mother. Pollution kills across all cultural boundaries. Please remember, this is the legacy we will be leaving our children and our children's children. This should be a concern for all people who reside on this Mother Earth.

Sincerely,
Debra-Ann Pine
440-1334
debrapine@yahoo.com