

Wulustuk Times

Wulustuk - Indigenous name for St John River
This publication produced monthly at Tobique, NB, Canada E7H 5K3



Youth Winter Games at Mactaquac Park, NB 2007- Cross-Country Snowshoeing

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Wulustuk Times:

Each month we gather and publish the latest, most relevant native news, events and stories for our readership. Working with this concept, we feel that an informed public is more apt to understand and relate with aboriginal conditions and situations when equipped with the right tools. Our objective therefore is to provide accurate, concise and well rounded information behind every story. That is our policy.

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DULY AND TIMELY MESSAGE - 'A CALL TO YOUTH'

Patty Saulis

Something came to me the other day, something that I hadn't felt in a long time. It was a feeling of understanding, or realizing something again that I had been already told, which was followed by a knowing that was unmistakable.

In my younger days, I was given many opportunities to hear our Elders speak. I was very fortunate to hear Elders from across the country give teachings on how important our lives are and how important each person is to our communities. One group of people who have the most to gain and the most to lose is our Youth. Our Youth are an incredible group of people. They are the ones with the gifts of energy, courage and vision. Youth can see things that the rest of us cannot – a future that only they can imagine.

I remember as a Youth that I was a seeker. I wanted to know about truth, justice and most importantly, I wanted to be included. Yet the more I sought these out, the more they escaped me. I found people who would include me, as long as I was providing the party. I spend a lot of time with those people and not finding what I was really looking for. Then one day it happened, the party ended and I was alone to feel the consequences. At that same time, Elders and teachings started coming into my life. I had never had the opportunity before to listen to Elders and I began to listen like I had never before in my life. I actually started to find what I had been looking for – truth, justice and a love of all of our people.

To me, the Elders saved my life.

As part of their teachings, the Elders taught that Youth are an integral part of our Nations. As with Elders, the Youth must be consulted and included in all discussions and decisions that affect our Nations. As with the Elders who offer us the gifts of wisdom and guidance, the Youth offer us the gifts of courage and resiliency. The strength of our Nations is built upon our Youth for they are the ones to move forward, take risks and press on when the rest of our Nation is under threat of assimilation and acculturation. Our Youth are the ones who have put their own lives at risk on front lines and who will defend our right to exist. Our Youth are the ones who believe they will live forever and decide that is too long to live in a world that denies them voice and identity.

There is incredible energy and creativity in our Youth. There was a time when the system wanted to separate our Children and Youth from our Nations. They recognized the power and resiliency of our future generations. With that forced separation, came the real separation between parent and child, which led to alienation and isolation. After years of this, many of us have almost forgotten our original real connection, our lines of communication are weak to non-existent, silent. Our Youth walk in our communities like virtual strangers to who they really are and to the difference they could make. Some of our Fathers, Mothers, Aunties, Uncles, Grandparents describe our Youth in disappointed terms. It seems as if we have pushed each other further and further away. Once we were forced to separate, now we are separate by choice. Many of our Youth are seeking and finding the same dead end to inclusion – the drugs, alcohol and abuse.

To end this devastating cycle, our Youth need to reclaim their rightful place in our Nations. We need to support them, believe in them and recognize them. Our Elders, our Women, our Men and our Youth need to join together and end our separation. We live together, work

together, survive together. Yet we can live with all of these divisions – based on money, status, possessions and position. Why? Who does this serve? Why would we feed something that only kills our true spirit? An Elder that had been involved in the conflict at Kahnésatake (Oka), once told a room full of Youth he had never met before – I believe in you. He had witnessed the ability of our Youth to rise to the occasion of uniting to defend the land and its people. He had been deeply impressed by their commitment and belief. He saw their strength and courage under siege. He wept while he spoke of it and he embraced all of the Youth without question.

This I say to our Youth, you have my admiration for the great things you only think of doing and for your endless patience you have for those of us who do not understand your true role. I believe in you and I ask you to do, say, act, believe and create whenever you feel inspired. I trust that you can think, feel and draw on the power of our Ancestors to create a better world. You are in this time for a purpose and you are special. Please share your gifts, talents and vision even when others question or want to deny you. Your spirit is a gift from the Creator and you are stronger than you know.

Feel your life, Believe in yourself, and Tell your truth.

All my Relations,

P.Saulis

McGUINTY MUST STEP IN OVER MINING DISPUTE

Cameron Smith

Judging by the standard of conduct required by the Supreme Court of Canada, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has been dishonourable in his approach to the dispute over drilling for uranium in Eastern Ontario.

As a result, several large fines have been levied, and a decent man, an Algonquin, is in jail for six months.

This is not a criticism of the court that levied the punishment. It's a criticism of the premier, who countenanced an unconstitutionally, hands-off approach that led to the inevitable court decision.

Let me put this in context, beginning with the report of the Ipperwash Inquiry headed by Justice Sidney Linden. The report warned that court injunctions are blunt instruments, which are inappropriate for dealing with aboriginal rights. They should be used only as a last resort, it said.

Then there's the 2004 Supreme Court of Canada decision in Haida vs. the B.C. minister of forests. It said the Constitution Act of 1982, which affirmed aboriginal rights, requires federal and provincial governments to act fairly and honourably to protect aboriginal peoples from exploitation.

This translates, the court said, into a duty to consult and engage in "honourable negotiations" with aboriginal peoples when there's a proposal to exploit a resource within an area where they have a land claim. Governments "cannot cavalierly run roughshod over aboriginal interests," it added.

Now to the facts: The Algonquins have a long-standing land claim, recognized by Ottawa and Queen's Park, covering the Ottawa Valley, including the area north of Sharbot Lake where Frontenac Ventures Corp. has staked a mining claim over more than 12,000 hectares of Crown and private land. Staking gave it the right to do exploratory drilling.

Neither Queen's Park nor Frontenac Ventures warned the Algonquins that the land had been staked, and exploration was to start. There was no consultation, no "honourable negotiation." The Algonquins blocked access to the site; Frontenac Ventures applied for an injunction and got it; the Algonquins asked for a reprieve to allow mediation, and got it; mediation failed when the province refused to agree that a possible outcome could be no drilling.

The Algonquins continued to block access; Frontenac Ventures asked the court to cite Algonquin demonstrators for contempt of court; the Algonquins counterclaimed that the mining act is unconstitutional, because it ignores their right to consultation and negotiation. The act says the mining recorder must record a claim, thus allowing exploration, if a property is properly staked. There is no discretion to order consultation.

The court found the Algonquin demonstrators in contempt; Robert Lovelace, a former chief of one of the local Algonquin First Nations, was jailed and fined \$25,000; the court also ruled it won't hear arguments that the mining act is unconstitutional until Lovelace's prison sentence is served, his fine is paid, and penalties imposed on other demonstrators are met. In the meantime, Frontenac Ventures is free to drill.

This is a political travesty. First the province breaks the law and precipitates a confrontation. Then the blunt instrument of an injunction is used to deal with a sensitive cultural issue. And now if the court eventually decides the mining act is unconstitutional, it will be too late: Drilling will have long been underway. Surely all this is "running roughshod over aboriginal interests."

There's still a way, however, that Premier McGuinty can at least partially redeem himself. He could order Frontenac Ventures to hold off drilling until the constitutionality of the mining act is decided.

NATIVE JAILING TRIGGERS STERN REBUKE FROM ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP

Michael Valpy

Canada's Anglican primate has called the jailing of six Northern Ontario native community members a throwback to colonialism, a dangerous violation of the rights of native people and an act of the Ontario government putting itself above the law.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz's unusually forceful language appears in a letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty, in which the Anglican leader implies that members of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation are being punished solely for defending the sacred trust of their traditional lands.

He also links the jailing of KI Chief Donny Morris, the deputy chief and four councillors to the abuses of the residential school system, and says it has caused a "serious impasse" between Canada's native peoples and the Ontario government.

On March 17, Mr. Justice Patrick Smith of the Ontario Superior Court ordered the KI six jailed for six months for being in contempt of court by refusing to allow mining company Platinex to test drill for minerals on land the band claims as its own.

PROTESTERS STORM CHURCH IN BID TO LEARN ABOUT LOST ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The Canadian Press

TORONTO — Demonstrators protested inside a Toronto church yesterday to raise awareness about the aboriginal children that they say disappeared from Canada's residential school system between 1840 and 1940. The protesters have demanded that the federal government and leaders of several churches reveal the locations of unmarked graves where tens of thousands of children were buried near residential schools.

About two dozen protesters rallied outside the Metropolitan United Church in downtown Toronto, and a few went inside to display a banner at the front of the church. With police standing by, they left shortly thereafter.

The protesters say they will hold more demonstrations at Anglican, Catholic and United churches across the country until their demands are met and more is known about victims of residential schools.

The federal government estimates as many as 100,000 children attended residential schools, which have long been assailed as hotbeds of physical and sexual abuse and other human rights violations.

The federal government apologized in 1998, saying that "attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of aboriginal culture and values."

Ottawa is in the process of establishing a truth and reconciliation commission, which will investigate ways to identify the number of children who died at residential schools and their causes of death.

In January, Roman Catholic bishops pledged their support for a truth commission on Indian residential schools, saying Catholics will speak publicly at the hearings to "balance" the official history of what happened for decades behind closed doors. Participation from the Catholic Church, which operated about 70 per cent of the schools jointly with the federal government, had been uncertain until the announcement.

MONCTON WANTS NB TO BAN URANIUM MINING

City council in Moncton, N.B., voted unanimously Monday night to call on the province to ban all uranium exploration and mining in New Brunswick.

The councillors are particularly worried about uranium exploration on the outskirts of the city.

The mining giant Vale Inco (formerly known as CVRD-Inco) is exploring for uranium south and west of Moncton.

A smaller exploration company announced two weeks ago it found an interesting deposit just north of the city.

Coun. Louisa Barton-Duguay said she feels besieged by the mining companies.

"[That's] because there's properties that have been staked right up to our boundaries. Moncton's ringed," she said.

"I believe this resolution needs to be passed tonight to protect our province too. I don't think it should be the garbage dump of North America, which some of our premiers seem to want to make it."

Councillor Pierre Boudreau said it should be about protecting the environment and people's health.

"We're talking about big money," Boudreau said. "That should not be what rules the day in New Brunswick on an issue that could affect the health of our children and ourselves."

Two councillors noted they've already tried to stop oil and gas exploration in the city's watershed. A resolution to that effect was sent to Premier Shawn Graham months ago.

So far it's been ignored.

BC AND FIRST NATIONS TO DISCUSS LAND USE

Powell River Regional District directors expressed outrage and disbelief when they learned the provincial government is seeking an agreement involving land use with four first nations on the Sunshine Coast, without their input.

Bruce Siefert, director, strategic support and marine planning from the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), told directors at the March 13 regional district committee-of-the-whole meeting that Pat Bell, minister of agriculture and lands, has said he would like to see an agreement with Tla'Amin (Sliammon), Sechelt, Klahoose and Homalco first nations by the end of 2008.

Bell met with representatives from the first nations about a month ago, Siefert said. The government asked the first nations to bring forward a short list of interim measures, identifying areas of high conservation and cultural interest where there would be a hold on selling any land, issuing any licences, or staking any claims, as well as putting in measures that would stop any logging for a year.

In the Powell River area, Tla'Amin put forward two areas of interest, the Upper Powell Daniels, an area with high cultural and conservation interests, and Savary Island, where there is concern about the marine environment and how it is maintained, especially with the issuing of geoduck licences.

The government received the requests for interim measures last week, Siefert said.

Both the Powell River Regional District and the Sunshine Coast Regional District have been lobbying the provincial government to start a land and resource management plan (LRMP) process for the Sunshine Coast Forest District, one of the few areas in BC without the high-level land use plan.

Colin Palmer, Electoral Area C director and regional board chairman, told Siefert the proposed agreement with the first nations would mean there would be no LRMP. "We put a lot of effort locally into getting a LRMP for the area," he said. "We're not talking about the same subject anymore."

Palmer also said any attempt to stop logging would have serious economic consequences. Director Dave Murphy, who represents Texada Island, asked Siefert why this process was going on separately from the treaty table, where there was local government representation. "If you had embarked on a LRMP, you would have gotten comments from everyone," he said. "This is like a backroom deal to me. It stinks."

Siefert explained that Tla'Amin was the only first nation in the area at an advanced stage of treaty negotiations. "We're going to deal in a respectful way with first nations on land that is not treaty settlement land, but has aboriginal rights," he said.

Siefert also said the four first nations want to keep the discussions as a provincial-first nation process. "They are not comfortable with local governments being part of that process," he said.

Palmer said he found the whole issue "very difficult. Someone has decided on priorities without letting us know. Sliammon and the other bands want to have a government-to-government relationship. Why would we react in a positive way?"

The government has committed only to consider actively the interim measures the first nations have submitted, Siefert said. "The decision rests with the cabinet," he said. "The bureaucracy will provide to cabinet the consequences of the decision."

As well, there will be a broad public process and informal channels with the forest industry, which is setting up for that, Siefert added. The government still has to approach proponents of independent power projects who have interests in the area, Siefert said. "We're hoping to have a structured relationship with local governments and a general comment process with the public at large," he explained.

Patrick Brabazon, Electoral Area A director, said the economic impact of shutting down logging in Powell Daniels will be extreme. "The uncertainty is not going to be healthy."

Brabazon also said the fact the provincial government can make such decisions to the exclusion of any meaningful role for local government or public groups was "absurd. It's only going to create trouble for the provincial government. They're very silly to do it this way."

Siefert said he would brief his executive and the minister on the directors' concerns. "Assuming we embark on a path over the next eight months, are you interested in establishing a channel and hearing from us further on how to set that up?"

Palmer replied, "You figure it out. I'm not going to solve your problem. We're not going to answer the question."

CANADA BORDER SERVICES HAS JOBS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CAREERS FOR YOUTH

p.paul

TOBIQUE FIRST NATION, (Special) - During a recent visit with the Canada Border Services Agency located about a dozen kilometers from Tobique First Nation, information was made available stating that the Border Agency is presently seeking qualified individuals, natives and other minorities included, who may be interested in entering into a lifetime career in civil service.

The Agency especially focused on bringing in younger persons who may be at the stage of looking forward to something that is steady, secure, potentially viable for advancement and a career that contributes to protection and security for our country.

The head person, Jennifer B. Campbell, Superintendent of the Andover/Four Falls Border Agency stressed the importance of spreading the word to the native community that the Agency is into a national campaign of recruiting as many as four hundred persons, nationwide, to fill the need that was created from 9/11.

Ms. Campbell also made special emphasis that the standards required for entering Canada Border Service Agency aren't all that rigid or demanding.

For instance anyone with post secondary education, or 2-year college or university can fill an application with us and quite readily be eligible for a nine week course in Customs Services college in Quebec, thereafter entering a lifetime career in Canada Border Service Agency.

So many jobs are open and spread out in such diverse areas, it really would be impossible to enumerate or identify them all for fear of missing the very one a person may be keen on trying. But our doors are open every day of the week to anyone interested in chatting with us about starting a career with Canada Border Service Agency, or call ahead at (506) 273-1821.

Interested applicants can also visit our website at <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>

DAN'S CORNER - Our Lineage Is Our Strength

At some point, it was declared the government of Canada (the Crown) had a fiduciary responsibility to the First Nations peoples of this country. They took upon themselves, unsolicited by the Native peoples of Canada, the role of trustee; a role that assumed responsibility for the well-being and welfare of the Indian people of Canada. Now, I exercise my fiduciary responsibility as a Native to dispute both the presumptuousness of such a decision, and further, the failure of the Canadian government to carry out that which it promised to do when making this decision. The failure of the Canadian government to carry out this responsibility has seriously affected all Indian people, including my own family.

That which began, on the part of the European colonizers, as a genocide relationship to First Nations peoples, continues today. It just changed shape. The wanton destruction and outright killing of Indian people that took place in pioneer times destroyed whole tribes. Consider the

Beothuk, the Saco, the Kennebec or Norridgewak Indians, if you doubt this. Where are they today? Who can speak for them?

The Wabanaki are still here but they are facing another form of genocide, one that is tearing Indian people and their communities apart. Tactics to divide and conquer, destroy from within, are promoted through the imposition of the white reserve system, white government structure, white values, white language, white culture, white controlling legislation, the Indian Act, the British North-America Act, white education, white religion, white identity, white economic system, white justice system, and white-written treaties.

At the time the government of Canada presumed to assume fiduciary responsibility for First Nations peoples, our people knew and used their own language. They knew their culture, their traditional teachings, their true Indian identity, history and traditional values. They knew the Sacred Earth Mother and how to care for her. They knew their birthright and their own spiritual identity. Today, our people know very little, if any, of these things. I can attest to this firsthand.

When Tobique was established by the government of Canada, and our ancestors were forced to move from their camps, their homes at gunpoint, the total size of the reserve was 20,000 acres. Today, it is 6,000 acres. No one knows how this happened. Our people have no awareness of how this happened. Does the government of Canada have an explanation as to how this could have happened? How could we lose so many acres while under the protection of the government of Canada?

I am a Maliseet (Wulustukyeg) Indian, born 60 years ago at Tobique, New Brunswick. For the first five years of my life, I could speak my Maliseet language but after that, it was all English; I was never taught anything in Maliseet again. I don't know my language, my culture, my traditional teachings, my history, my Indian heroes, my spirituality, or my real identity. My birthright was stolen from me by white society. The government failed me and my family in a very profound and serious manner. It failed completely to fulfill its fiduciary responsibility to me and my family.

It is interesting to note that the genocidal relationship has grown and changed over the past 500 years (since 1492) to meet the change in the times. The essential aim is still clear, however, the heart of the colonizer still sees the final solution to the Indian problem to be the elimination of Indian people as a distinct, viable and self-determining people. Take away a peoples' language, culture, identity, religion and traditions, and you destroy them. If you don't know who you are, how can you be distinct, viable or self-determined? If you don't know who you are, you become dependent and weak.

This tactic to destroy a culture is evident in my own family. The Canadian government is still party to this genocide. I need cover only five generations to prove this serious allegation. I will talk about my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my parents, myself and my two sons.

My great-grandparents knew their mother tongue, knew their culture, their traditional teachings, their traditional values, their Maliseet identity, and their traditional spirituality. The imposed and enforced white reserve system, the enforced white religion, and the imposed and enforced white education, was already beginning to have a negative impact in their day.

In my grandparents' time, the negative impact was more evident. They could still speak their mother tongue. They still knew some of the traditional teachings, values and heroes. They still had some understanding of what it meant to be an Indian and of the traditional spiritual ways but slowly the imposition and enforcement of all the outside values, teachings, religion and laws were eroding what had once been a solid foundation. Confusion about identity began to sneak in and crack the foundation that had been there since the beginning of time so all future generations would know their place on this earth.

In my parents' time, they could still speak their mother tongue but they were beginning to lose some of it. There were doubts about identity. Based on their experience, they decided that conforming to the white ways would be in the best interest of their children. They felt that teaching the Indian language to their children would only hinder the possibility of their continued survival and safety. So they stopped teaching their children their mother tongue. They didn't feel they really had any choice. This was when the genocidal process used by our colonizers gained a large victory. It was the real beginning of the death of true Indian identity for my family.

My parents had not been taught much about their culture. They knew nothing about Native spirituality. White religion had taken over. They did not know the traditional teachings or their own Indian identity, so there was little they could pass on to their children - even if they felt it safe to do so. The enforced white reserve system would not permit that nor would the enforced white education system and religion permit it. And certainly the white imposed criteria for socialization (civilization) would not allow that. That is where it stood when it came to my own generation.

Due to my parent's love and concern for their children, and their commitment to protect us from being destroyed or harmed, they chose not to teach their children anything Indian. Not the language, the culture, the traditional teachings, or stories. Absolutely nothing. So none of the things my ancestors preserved for millions of years in order they be passed on to future generations were taught to me or my siblings. We were robbed of our birthright and our identity in order to fit into white society, to survive as human beings. Therefore, I, in turn, could not preserve and pass on to my children so that the seven generations to come might know, all of those things that go into making an Indian - a Maliseet - identity.

As the French of Quebec know, and as most intelligent human beings should realize, if you do not have your own language, culture, traditional teachings and history, you are lost as a human being. Something is missing. Your identity gives you self-determination and that is the right, and necessity, of every human being.

To add insult to injury, we, as Indian people, also continue to lose more of ourselves in the terms of these Treaty rights. The small parcels of land we were allotted after the enforced takeover grow smaller every day. Tobique is a prime example. Treaty rights my people held sacred - for medicine, health care, education and economic development - are being turned over to the provincial government. It is a calculated and underhanded way to devolve even more of this promised fiduciary responsibility for Indian people.

How could Canada take on a fiduciary responsibility to Indian peoples in the first place? Were Indian people ever asked about this? Did they ever willingly give consent? It was a scheme by

the government to rob Indian people of their strongest weapon against annihilation - their sense of identity and autonomy.

I stand today as a broken link in the chain that was to preserve Maliseet culture, language, traditions, teachings, history, religion and identity. I was robbed of my birthright because the Canadian government did not live up to its fiduciary responsibility - a responsibility they presumed to take in the first place - to Native people in Canada. They failed the Indian people terribly and robbed them of their identity. They failed my family terribly, and the effects are evident today. That is why I intend to exercise a true fiduciary responsibility to Indian people and ask for accountability of this government system before our annihilation is complete.

All My relations,

DEAN'S DEN - Going Straight

I had a hard gut feeling
About the cards I was concealing
And I felt my pretext peeling
While I contemplated fate,

There'd be no double-dealing
And no more "almost stealing"
No more fancy wheeling
And no more "poisoned bait",
For I knew I'd hit the ceiling
That the game had left me reeling
And I needed help and healing

If I was ever going straight,
Then in the darkness of my kneeling
Came the Light of Life revealing
Both rescinding and repealing
Taking trouble - off my plate,
There'll be no double-dealing

No more almost stealing
No more fancy wheeling
And, no more contemplating fate,
For I have a brand-new feeling
Since I've gotten help and healing
In the yielding of my kneeling
To who... "shall hear the small,
as well as hear the great"!

D.C. Butterfield

SKYPOWER REP LOOKS AT WIND POWER POTENTIAL FOR TOBIQUE

p.paul

TOBIQUE FN - On the occasion of the Mawiw regional meeting at Tobique on March 28 a representative from Skypower Corporation of Toronto visited Tobique upon the invitation of Pat Paul, a band designate to explore alternative energy sources for the community.

Skypower Corporation is a relatively young wind energy company from Toronto that has built and co-managed several wind energy projects across Canada and internationally for the general public as well as for native people.

As a national corporation Skypower has representatives placed strategically across the country at all times to provide wind energy service and consultation when needed.

In this instance, the eastern representative for Skypower visited Tobique at an opportune time which coincided with the native Mawiw Association regional meeting on Tobique.

At that meeting many members of Mawiw had the opportunity to meet, greet and chat with the Skypower representative, David Patterson, personally to make acquaintance and to secure basic information of the many joint-projects and co-managed operations the company has entered into with native communities across the country over the past dozen years.

At Tobique the visit began with a tour of the territory from border to border putting special attention where wind turbines could be erected to provide the community the maximum production and best benefits of wind energy year around.

The visit was planned primarily and fundamentally to be casual and exploratory in nature with no formal ties, plans or commitments involved on either side at this time.

But not to forget that climate change and other weather variables that come and go without warning in every part of the country underlines the fact that any new energy project is worth considering in light of the steady rise of energy costs in heating and maintaining public buildings and other band facilities on our reserve.

Another significant factor that was raised during the discussions was the huge possibilities and potential in harnessing winds on Tobique's 5-acre property at Grand Manan Island on the Bay of Fundy. Generally speaking, the coastal winds along our Fisheries property on the island are blowing quite steady, day and night, at a velocity normally exceeding 25-30 km/hour.

Our neighboring Maliseet bands, especially Woodstock FN, along the river have apparently expressed interest in contributing on the island investment for a piece of the pie in erecting a wind powered generating station on our fisheries property on Grand Manan. This brings an added dimension to the collective wind power generating picture in our situation.

From every indication therefore, there is a good possibility that future meetings between the band and Skypower may follow soon after this brief March 28th exploratory visit by the Skypower representative.

One prominent board member for Skypower Corporation that we may soon greet is a former head of the Assembly of First Nations, Matthew Coon-Come of the Mestassini Cree First Nation in Quebec, who usually accompanies Skypower representatives in promoting any new ventures on First Nations.

WOODBRIIDGE WOMAN, 53, GETS RECORD WINDFALL

John Goddard

Steady play on a slot machine for under an hour won Anna Falco a record \$9 million on the weekend. The 53-year-old woman from Woodbridge was playing the Megabucks machine at Casino Rama on Saturday. Her husband Franco arrived to share in her triumph. The machine takes a minimum \$1 bet but she was wagering \$3 a spin to qualify for the jackpot, which starts at \$1 million and continues to mount until there's a winner. Falco had spent around \$200 when lights flashed and bells sounded.

"She knew right away she had won," publicist Jenna Hunter said yesterday. "The machine has a big electronic sign above it showing the (jackpot) total and it's continuously going up and up and up and up."

"When she put her money in, it would have said \$8 million, 900 something ... and all the lights and all the bells and whistles went off." She was soon surrounded by a large, excited crowd, Hunter said.

"She's a regular " everybody knew who she was," the publicist said. "We couldn't be more thrilled. They are such nice people."

When a jackpot is won, the slot does not spit out a mountain of coins onto the winner's lap. Instead, Falco took home a cheque for \$8,920,622.89" a record payout for a Canadian casino.

"When we called our two daughters to share the good news, they thought we were kidding," Falco said in a Casino Rama news release. "One even called back to make sure we were serious."

Anna and Franco were out last night visiting a relative, said their daughter Vania, a hairstylist, who answered the phone at the family home where other relatives and friends were gathered. "I'm the one who called them back," she said. "When they go to the casino, I keep telling them to win so they can give some money to me. They said they would." She said her father is retired and her mother has been a homemaker.