

## Barricade still in place

Gilles Gagné

**LISTUGUJ:** – The Listuguj barricade was still present at mile 11.7 of the Gaspé Peninsula railway on the twelfth day of demonstration in support of the Wet'suwet'en First Nations hereditary chiefs in British Columbia.

In Listuguj, there are moments when the demonstrators appear in fewer number on the barricade, and sometimes there is nobody. It was the case on the morning of February 19, as the demonstration location was vacant, with only a fire going.

The Listuguj demonstrators are asking the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to leave the traditional land of Wet'suwet'en. They are also waiting for a signal from that community's hereditary chiefs to the effect of lifting the Gaspesian barricade before doing so.

Are the Listuguj demonstrators showing signs of fatigue or were they busy attending a meeting, or taking a rest between the night and the middle of the day? Around noon, on February 19, there was only a pickup truck with one demonstrator inside along the track.

At the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Government office, spokesperson Hillary Barnaby indicated on that same February 19 that the band council was not taking a stand yet regarding the demonstration issue and she had not been in contact with the demonstrators. "I have not heard anything linked to what is happening with the people demonstrating," she said.

Ms. Barnaby indicated that



*On the tenth day of demonstration in Listuguj, there were times when the location was deserted by the local supporters of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation.*

the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Government will communicate news pertaining to the blockade on its website.

The support given to the demonstrators is not unanimous in Listuguj. A couple of citizens asking to remain anonymous voiced their concerns about the long-term effects of the railway barricade.

"The demonstrators have made their point but it is time now that we go back to a normal life. We don't want to ruin our relations with the Non-Natives. We just hope for a soft dismantling of the blockade," said one Listuguj citizen.

The blockade particularly hurts the Gaspésie Railway Society, as the transporter loses \$15,000 in revenue with each day of demonstration. By February 21, the company had lost at least \$180,000 in revenues. A windmill blade train in New Richmond has been ready to leave since February 15.

The president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé, has been making phone calls every day since February 10 to get the latest news from

the Canadian and Quebec governments regarding crisis resolution. He is in discussions with people from Transports Canada, Transports Québec and the Sûreté du Québec. A liaison officer is assigned to the relations between the Listuguj people and the Non-Natives.

"Nobody is moving. I am waiting. I am not surprised to see such a situation," pointed out Mr. Dubé on February 19. He was still hoping for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, especially because the railway used by the Gaspésie Railway Society will always pass in Mi'gmaq territory.

Trucks are hauling some of the woodchips, lumber and cement that would normally be loaded in freight cars. In the meantime, the crews of the Gaspésie Railway Society were moving loaded cement cars, close to 50 of them, as close as possible to Pointe-à-la-Croix, ready to be delivered when the blockade will be dismantled.

On February 21, the transporter issued a press release announcing 15 temporary layoffs because of the blockade.