

# LNG - Not Now. Not Ever.

## RESPECTING OUR VOICES – KNOWING OUR WAYS

by Vera Francis

Within Wabanaki societies it has long been understood that it's not the financial status of any nation that determines its social condition; it's the status of women and children that measure its wealth. Mary Bassett, a Passamaquoddy great-grandmother, explains that, "traditionally and historically native women's values determined the course of leadership for the welfare of the entire community."

According to a recent focus on economic growth for Native Americans aired on Maine Watch (PBS, January 7, 2005) and Maine Things Considered (MPR, January 4, 2005), those who had previously vigorously opposed Maine tribes in 2003, which include Savvy, Inc. (now "speaking" for Quoddy Bay LLC) and Maine's Council of Churches, are now promising something new. Something about this change in sentiment is confused. Besides making light of his adversarial history with the Passamaquoddy tribe, Dennis Bailey, president of Savvy, Inc., admitted on PBS that he was "not all that familiar in the ways that the tribe operates." At the same time, Bailey expressed certainty about Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) being a good deal for the tribe. Even more perplexing, during a news broadcast on MPR, it was reported that Maine's Council of Churches is raising money intended to lend a hand in tribal initiatives, which include housing projects, small business loans, and "bigger projects" such as LNG. Deanna Francis, a tribal elder opposing LNG states, "While these people may be concerned about souls and money, we are concerned about our safety, our souls, and our land."

Against the recent swell of corporate backed lobbying and PBS coverage, those who might want to "grow" our economy, without first supporting our struggle for sustainable development, need to stop describing us in exaggerated, broken terms. If investors or Maine's Council of Churches now want to ally with indigenous independence, put the money (being raised for "projects such as LNG") and goodwill directly into Native women's lives and Native people will have prosperity. Accomplish that, and we will come to see economic equity and environmental justice.

Much like the non-binding referendum held on August 17, 2004 at Pleasant Point, which concerned a question asking Sipayik members whether or not to host a LNG terminal, the casino no vote (2003) was a false positive. You have only to look as far as Maine's racino referendum result to begin to understand this truth. During the Casino NO! 2003 campaign, Savvy, Inc. got way too much credit for something that was already in the cards.

Make no mistake – it wasn't Savvy, Inc. or their outrageous fees that guaranteed a victory for the opponents to an Indian casino. It was the absence of Native women's voices in the critical decision-making leading up to the casino effort that tribal leaders have to now reevaluate, and contend with as their principal miscalculation. Our survival as indigenous people has always rested upon the shoulders, backs, and hearts of Native women – the sooner Savvy, Inc., Et al. accept this simple fact – the sooner the LNG problem gets resolved, and the sooner it will be realized that LNG type industrial complexes are in conflict with the cultural and spiritual values of the Passamaquoddy people.

Because hidden systems of benefit and privilege are also at play here, question Bailey's downplay of his "lack of knowledge" of Passamaquoddy protocol and glib claims denying that any previous power of influence used against the Passamaquoddy mitigates his current role for Quoddy Bay LLC. My biggest concern about LNG is that we don't really know what the spiritual/cultural impacts will be for Passamaquoddy membership. What we do know is that our concerns/questions about Quoddy Bay LLC and LNG have neither been premature nor exaggerated; our concerns are legitimate and need to be expressed. More important, our concerns and questions need to be heard and answered.

The marriage between Quoddy Bay LLC and Savvy, Inc. emerges as a gross twist and mockery of wills. After all, the previous work of Savvy Inc. not only capitalized on indigenous initiatives and struggle, its primary aim was to disrupt the autonomy of Native people. Yet, even after being denied twice by tribal council for employment to handle its LNG marketing machine (October 15 & December 7, 2004), Savvy, Inc. secured the job for shoring up support for LNG anyway. What does this tell us? If the majority of those opposed to LNG locally are Native women, and their families, exactly who is Savvy, Inc. going to fight this time?

Let all those now posturing to profit at our expense know that Gleason's Cove and Maine's coast will not become the national sacrifice zone.

*Vera Francis is an educator, activist, grandmother of Skylar and Dakota, and lifelong resident of Sipayik.*

## SAVE PASSAMAQUODDY BAY - PROTECT OUR HOMELAND

Visit our website:

[www.savepassamaquoddybay.org](http://www.savepassamaquoddybay.org)

- See more about The Rally for The Bay.
- See photos of the "Celebration of the Cultural Heritage of the Bay" Walk
- Learn about coming events and actions.
- Read from all of the information provided.
- Follow links to other LNG-No sites.
- Sign up to become more involved in this 3-Nation Alliance.
- Fill out a form to send financial support.

*Financial support is needed to continue to create informational materials, fund public events, support Perry's efforts related to Article 40, provide postage and phone assistance, and pay for legal advice.*

Your help is needed as we continue this effort to Save Passamaquoddy Bay:

Please send your contribution to:

Save Passamaquoddy Bay/Protect Our Homeland  
C/o The Commons  
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