Breaking out of the gender binary

By MITCH RAYNER

When I walk around campus you may not notice who I am. My short red hair and broad shoulders adorned with flannel and wide legged jeans cause my slender frame to appear masculine. Any passerby would honestly confuse me for male and think nothing of it, for which I hold no grudge or frustration.

However, I am currently female, and once the foreseeable awkward confusion occurs I use the opportunity to educate on androgyny and the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

When mistakes are made they are relatively benign, but it took a bloody lip and a rather embarrassing tussie in the ladies room on campus to prompt me to go public.

On countless occasions, I have been wronged in a way that pushed around at work, spit on, and labeled a freak, disgusting and socially awkward. When I stop and think about my own experiences, I realize that this is happening to many others in our community not just myself.

Being accepted to St. Thomas University as a mature student was rather unexpected and exciting. I had visions of finally joining a progressive, open community full of unique and diverse peoples. However, once the second week of classes arrived, I suddenly discovered that my expectations of the University were too high.

Walking into the women’s washroom at James Dunn Hall after class deteriorated an explosive altercation that occurred for no other reason than my presence was unwanted. A fellow student was standing by the sink, waiting for her turn. She verbally voced her discontent of having a male enter the washroom, saying I was a ‘faggot’ and brought down the lowest while punched “female” roles it fails to grant freedom to all people and cements a clear boundary in the minds of its students. I hope that if these facilities were created that homophobia and ignorance on campus would dissipate and social awareness of gender issues would serve to better the lives of everyone.

Mitch Rayner speaks at a Rally to oppose violence and discrimination at St. Thomas University which was held on November 5th. Students and faculty gathered to show their support for students whose identities don’t neatly fit into male or female categories. Rayner, who is biologically female, was recently assaulted by a female student when he used a female washroom. The rally was endorsed by Bullying Canada, StU Students’ Union, UNB Students’ Union, Faculty Association of the University of St. Thomas, Fredericton Pride, Fredericton Peace Coalition, Unifit, Strax, NB RebELLES, the Moncton Transgendered People Support Group, Public Service Alliance of Canada-Atlantic, the STU Anthropology Society, UNB Sexuality Centre and AIDS NB. Photo by Dan McDevitt.

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Acadian Lines won’t increase bus service between cities; union fears job losses

By MARYLYNN CÔTE

The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1229, the union that represents employees, is among many opposed to Acadian Lines request for a variance of a rule issued by the Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) on July 16th, 2010. Citing declining ridership and losses of over $11.6 million in New Brunswick since taking over STM in 2004, Acadian Lines is asking the EUB to approve their request to not increase service on key corridor routes between Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton.

The union fears that if Acadian Lines does not expand its corridor routes as promised, eight drivers will lose their jobs. In 2009, Acadian told the ATU there would be no job losses as the company made cuts to services. Glenn Carr, President and Business Agent for the ATU, says his members believe the company’s losses are related to a lack of marketing skills, overall waste of revenues, bad faith labour relations, management practices... incompetent and wasteful patchwork dispatch decisions, establishment of isolated and antiquated depot locations, disjunctive management decisions, and disregard to the needs of the traveling public.1

In late October, ATU Local 1229 issued a statement concerning Acadian Lines’ moves, saying they had “designated incompetent the public and the Energy and Utility Board (EUB)” at, previous hearings... The Company had no intentions to increase the corridor service but only to get the EUB approval and to avoid our opposition.”

In an application to the EUB last year, the quasi-judicial regulatory body for bus lines, Acadian requested that they be allowed to cut routes and reduce services on their rural routes in the province.

There was widespread opposition to the proposal to cut bus routes and reduce bus services from the Mayors of Miramichi, Bathurst and Saint Stephen, the St. Thomas University Students’ Union, the UNB Students’ Union, the St. Andrews campus of the New Brunswick Community College, the Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, the Conservation Council and many other concerned citizens.

The EUB denied Acadian Lines’ application to cut several bus routes but let them cut three days a week on two routes: Fredericton to Miramichi and Saint John to Bangor, Friday and Sunday service from Moncton to Charlestown was also cut and service was allowed to be reduced on the Fredericton to Riviere-du-Loup route.

In the EUB hearings on Acadian’s proposed cuts are again speaking out against the proposed cuts. In a written submission to the EUB, the St. Thomas University Student Union suggested that “part of the decline in ridership could be due to negative publicity surrounding decisions to move the Fredericton bus station to a less accessible location and the elimination of entire routes.”

The Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, also in a letter to the EUB, points out that “when Acadian requests a service varying for a second time, no changes [by increasing runs in corridor routes] had been implemented.”

The EUB has also received letter submissions in opposition to Acadian’s application for variance from transportation to assisted living facilities to the group, the Mayors of St. Andrews and St. Stephen, and several citizens.

The Conservation Council says the EUB decision to permit Acadian Lines to reduce service in a region of the province does not need for government involvement in providing public transportation. “We want the provincial government to establish a Crown agency to develop a public transportation network for New Brunswick,” said Shary, Energy Coordinator at the Conservation Council.

“The Crown agency can look at models in sparsely populated regions such as Sable Island, where support from government has enabled the Semac Corporation to operate rail services to provide in and out of town transit. A provincial Crown agency could also help coordinate various forms of transit in order to provide transfers easily,” said Shary.

Intra-city bus services in Saskatchewan have been operated by a Crown corporation since 1970. The Saskatchewan Transportation Company, operating at arm’s length from the government, has 28 routes and serves 275 communities.

When the EUB will reach a decision on Acadian’s variance request is not known.