

# Cyclist pride raised as bicycles take their place in traffic



By RYAN HEBERT

Fredericton - The day is brightening on Officer's Square. A man on a bicycle crosses the street, with his son driving a tricycle beside him. They look from the empty Square to a man standing next to a bike tied to a parking meter. He wears glasses and a red helmet. His name is Matthew Hayes, and he is looking for cyclists as well. "Have they left already?" The man asks,"I thought it was at five."

"I thought so too," Hayes says, scanning the park. "But there's no one here yet... it must be at five-thirty."

"Well, we don't want to be late for swimming, do we

son?"

"What should we do?" the child asks.

"Let's just start biking around," the man says smiling. They leave, and soon another cyclist stops by.

"Hello, I'm Jean Philippe. Is this Critical Mass?"

"It will be... Let's go wait in the middle, people will see us better."

It is September 25. On the last Friday of every month cities around the world celebrate active transportation with a Critical Mass bike ride.

"Every biker has a different reason for being in it," Hayes said. "For me, it's about reclaiming the streets from cars. It's a protest in that we're taking on car culture, and disrupting the normalness of it. We're traffic too."

A Critical Mass in Seattle last year saw 300 people. Today in Fredericton there were eleven taking part. The group's small size didn't stop participants asserting their right to the road.

It was Jean Philippe's first time being a part of Critical Mass. "I think it's a great idea. People ride in the streets and have fun. It's about making biking more obvious to cars, because sometimes it's dangerous."

"People get killed in the bike vs. car situation," Hayes said.

At some Critical Masses people have protested by lying down on the streets. Long time member Dave Steele said he would have wanted to also make a 'ghost bike' for the cyclists killed here in Fredericton, and Toronto last month. "We take old junked bikes, paint them white, and chain them there so people know what happened."

Steele has been to many Critical Masses. He has seen groups of a thousand people in Toronto, where he is from.

"It is in a sense a protest against the lack of bicycle lanes, global climate change, and the complete inability for this city's municipal government to plan for alternative modes of transportation," he said. "It is more of a celebration of bicycles, however, and people like to ride together and feel empowered and emboldened by travelling with such a large group of people."

"Let's do this. Let's go!" Hayes says to the rest of the group. Their bikes are yellow, black, red, white. Only two lack helmets. Hayes has a blinker on the back of his seat. They merge into traffic naturally. The group takes the size of a van, altogether. They wait at the stop light, then drive on with everyone else.

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# Community Calendar

**Just a sampling of upcoming events!**  
**For a complete listing, please visit us online at [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org)! To list your event in the community calendar or to receive the community calendar by e-mail once a week, e-mail: [community@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:community@nbmediacoop.org)**

**RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR EVERYONE!** The Canadian Labour Congress and the NB Federation of Labour will be holding two forums on pensions. In Saint John on Nov. 3 at Hotel Courtenay Bay, 350 Haymark Square at 7 pm. In Bathurst on Nov. 4 Bathurst Union Centre 975 King St. at 7 pm. Why are retirement savings of countless workers are at risk and what can be done to create a pension system where no one is left behind?

**IS THERE THE HOLE IN YOUR PAYCHEQUE?** Workshop locations: Nov. 3 – Miramichi (French); Nov. 9 - Caraquet (French); Nov. 24 – Edmundston (French); Nov. 26 – Woodstock (English). Hosted by the NB Coalition for Pay Equity, the workshops will give pay equity tools to individuals working in predominately female jobs. Contact: [www.equitequity.com](http://www.equitequity.com)

**FOOD BANK 25TH ANNIVERSARY.** Recognizing outstanding volunteers and supporters of all nine food banks in District 3. Nov. 5 at 4:30pm at the Fredericton Inn. There will be cake and ice cream, pictures and newspaper clippings.

**CELEBRATION WALK.** Join a walk across the Fredericton train bridge with lights and lanterns to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989. We will gather at 6pm on Monday, Nov. 9 in front of Tilley Hall, UNB and at 6:30pm on the south side of the Old Train Bridge. Bring a candle, lantern or flashlight. Join us for a nightcap at Sweet Belgian Desire (732 Charlotte St.) after the walk. Hosted by the UNB German Club.

**SLAM POET ANDREA GIBSON.** Andrea Gibson will perform live at the Student Union Ballroom at UNB on Thursday, Nov. 12 at 8:00pm. Tickets on sale now (\$10 or \$7/Students) at Westminster Bookstore and the Alden Nolan Grad House. All

# Conference on social inequality examines perceptions of poverty

By EDEE KLEE

Fredericton Theologian George Feenstra and Sociologist Mike Fleming recently hosted a public dialogue on poverty and social inequality at St. Thomas University.

"It's a dreadful thing to be poor not because poverty is hard but because social reality defines poverty as failure or as that otherness that is not acceptable," said Feenstra. As a minister in Vancouver's east end, he witnessed the systematic harassment and forcible removal of "all the poor people, the crack addicts, the street sex-trade workers, the beggars, etc." from that city's core as a result of a visit from the International Olympic Committee and subsequent aggressive gentrification of the area.

"We think it's normal that good people have good things so it seems to follow that people who don't have good things aren't good people. So it's easy to invoke police power to move them out of view."

Feenstra knows that's a hard thing for people in an enlightened western society to come face-to-face with. His personal experience with poverty suggests that this is not an aberration and that it goes on more often than not. "And it goes on systemically. That is to say there are processes and systems and things in place which make it almost impossible to escape from such poor treatment of such vulnerable people."

Sociologist Mike Fleming agreed that the root of the problem is a structural one, citing works of famous sociologists C. Wright Mills and Patricia Hill Collins, Brazilian educator Paolo Freire and political philosopher Iris Young. "We're too concerned by necessity about our own lives. Paying the bills at the end of the week, getting groceries, the everyday impacts of living in modern society. Mills calls for a way of bridging the gap between these individual traps and the broader social structure in which we live. Making that connection, recognizing that we're not alone and that the other people are not alone. Recognizing that the person sleeping on the walking trail near Smythe Street is not sleeping there because of a series of bad choices they made but often because of a social structure that requires it of them."

Fleming said it is a popular conception that oppression is something that occurs in other parts of the world. "That we've solved our oppression problems. We have inequality, an individual problem but not oppression, a structural problem. We are in fact living in an oppressive society."

Several audience members voiced their concern about feeling helpless in knowing how best to bring about change. Feenstra responded that one of the cornerstones of the democratic society is the responsible citizen and moving from one's own comfort zone into the public domain is critical. "If the citizen abdicates and goes into a kind of passive-receptive mode where all they do is have their little corner of comfort and security reinforced and the citizen doesn't learn how to think through things then our dilemma persists."

proceeds go to the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. Andrea Gibson's poetry focuses on war, politics and gender norms. Hosted by: Fredericton Peace Coalition, NB ReBELLEs, Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, NB Public Interest Research Group, UNB Sexuality Centre and University Women's Centre. Contact: [info@frederictonpeace.org](mailto:info@frederictonpeace.org)

**FAIR TRADE COFFEE HOUSE WITH GUATEMALAN FARMER.** Join Herlindo Hernandez Pu from a Guatemalan Coffee farmer's co-op and the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network for music and fair trade refreshments. 6-9pm, Friday, Nov. 20 at Renaissance College, 811 Charlotte St. Contact: [info@frederictonpeace.org](mailto:info@frederictonpeace.org)

**FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY: CANADIAN WORKER CO-OP FEDERATION ANNUAL MEETING.** Thursday, Nov. 19 to Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Memramcook Resort Centre. For the conference agenda or more information, visit: [www.coopzone.coop/CWCF\\_Conf09](http://www.coopzone.coop/CWCF_Conf09)

**PEACE WEEK.** The Fredericton YMCA's 22nd annual Peace Week is Nov. 21-28. Peace flag raising ceremony on Nov. 23 at 12:00pm in front of Fredericton City Hall. Peace Medallion Award ceremony on Saturday, Nov. 28 at 7pm at the Hugh John Flemming Forestry Complex.

**COPS ON CAMPUS: LAW ENFORCEMENT AND STUDENT OCCUPATIONS OF CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES DURING THE 60s.** Public lecture by Roberta Lexier from Mount Allison University on Nov. 23 at 1:00pm at Brian Mulroney Hall, Room 101, St. Thomas University. Co-sponsored by: Criminology and History Departments, St. Thomas University. Contact: [mboudreau@stu.ca](mailto:mboudreau@stu.ca)

## Ongoing

**CRITICAL MASS BIKE RIDE.** Bike ride held on the last Friday of every month. In Fredericton, meet at Peoples' Park (Officer's Square) on the corner of Regent and Queen. In Moncton, meet in front of City Hall. Ride leaves at 5:30pm. Upcoming date: Friday, November 27.

**CINEMA POLITICA.** Cinema Politica Fredericton screens documentaries every Friday in Fredericton at Conserv House, 180 St. John St. Films are free. Donations encouraged. Contact: [fredericton@cinemapolitica.org](mailto:fredericton@cinemapolitica.org) Cinema Politica chapters also exist in Sackville, Moncton, Saint John and Taymouth. Visit: [www.cinemapolitica.org](http://www.cinemapolitica.org)

## Featured Website

**BUY LOCAL.** Check out the Conservation Council's new website - [www.buylocalnb.ca](http://www.buylocalnb.ca) - and find locally produced food anywhere in New Brunswick.