



# The Brief

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## “It is important to show up”: Masuma Khan on building solidarity in a fragile world

By TRACY GLYNN



**Masuma Khan speaking at St. Thomas University on Sept. 19, 2018.** Photo by Maria Nazareth Araújo at The Brunswickian.

Dalhousie University student, Masuma Khan, wants people to show up for each other. A newsmaker in 2017, Khan delivered the keynote address at the NB Media Co-op’s Ninth Annual General Meeting on Sept. 19 at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton.

Khan opened her talk with a poem she wrote: “It’s time to talk about white supremacy, did I stutter? (...) while we’re still up with pain, you still slumber.”

Thrust into the limelight in 2017 when she successfully moved that the Dalhousie University Student Union not endorse the Canada 150 celebrations, Khan co-created a campaign called “Unlearn 150” to question the erasure of Indigenous peoples’ history that was implied by this celebration.

Elected to the Dalhousie Student Union on a platform of social justice and equity, Khan said that she was surprised that some of her constituents would not expect her to boycott the Canada 150 celebrations.

Pointing out the white fragility in the backlash she was receiving, Khan took to Facebook and wrote, “White fragility can kiss my ass. Your white tears are not sacred, this land is.”

Dalhousie University administration requested that Khan delete the post from social media, which she said she did but immediately regretted. “No one should ever not speak the truth,” said Khan.

Using the Dalhousie University Student Code of Conduct, a Dalhousie graduate student filed a complaint against Khan alleging “reverse racism.” The Senate Discipline Committee, which Khan is a member, reviewed the complaint and recommended sensitivity training and that Khan apologize. Khan refused to apologize.

When she searched for support on campus, Khan was told by a social worker that “reverse racism” existed. Dalhousie University dismissed the complaint but refused to apologize to Khan.

Khan successfully ran for the Dalhousie University Student Union executive again in 2018 because of her desire to support all marginalized students: “students needed someone to protect them.”

Khan remarked that she is a settler on Mi’kmaq territory in K’jipuktuk (Halifax) and an Afghan woman whose family was also affected by colonialism. Khan shared that her grandfather had searched for the “most British place in Canada” because of how colonization had affected him. “Assimilation is incredibly real,” said Khan.

An articulate advocate against racism and Islamophobia, Khan said she is a threat because she is “a Muslim woman who has a voice and can speak English without an accent and can talk about Indigenous solidarity.” According to Khan, racists feel scared “when two of the people they don’t like hold hands.”

For Khan, building solidarity is about “showing up.” She said a megaphone and materials to make signs can be found in the backseat of her car. She spoke of the need for justice for Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine and for solidarity with Mi’kmaq land defenders fighting Alton Gas in Shubenacadie. She noted the recent removal of the Cornwallis statue in Halifax as a positive step forward. Edward Cornwallis was the British Colonial Governor who proclaimed a bounty on the scalps of Mi’kmaq men, women and children.

To build resilience, Khan said we need to focus on community care. She said the recent focus on “self-care,” while important, can also be too concerned about the individual. “I heal through my mother, elders, community,” shared Khan.

Khan’s words struck a chord with the largely student audience, many of whom lined up after her talk to ask her questions and offer their gratitude.

*With files from Sophie Lavoie.*

## Big pay equity win for rural postal workers

By SUSAN O’DONNELL

More than 350 rural postal workers in New Brunswick are celebrating a legal decision in September that will give them a big pay raise and better benefits. The arbitration ruling is a huge win for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) who successfully argued that rural and suburban postal workers deserved pay equity with urban postal workers. Most of the affected workers are women.

George Nickerson is president of the CUPW Fredericton-Oromocto local that has close to 50 rural and suburban postal workers (RSMCs) including in small centres that have one to three workers in the local post office, such as Stanley, Harvey, Doaktown and Boisetown. All the RSMCs will see a wage increase of about 28 percent, along with improved vacation leave, post-retirement healthcare and other benefits, retroactive to January 1, 2016.

Nickerson believes that because of the way that the new hourly rate is calculated, there may be an increase in job creation in rural areas.

Nickerson pointed out that CUPW has a long history of strengthening rights for workers, especially women, including introducing paid maternity leave in Canada in 1981. The CUPW national women’s committee hosts meetings with representation from women in all regions of the country and is active internationally in union activities involving women’s rights.

As reported in the NB Media Co-op in June, the arbitration case will affect more than 8,000 rural postal workers across Canada. Canada Post, a Crown corporation, had a before-tax profit of \$74 million last year when it called the lower pay for RSMCs a “competitive advantage.” CUPW successfully argued earlier this year that Canada Post had a legal obligation to ensure pay equity. The more recent September ruling by Arbitrator Maureen Flynn was also a win for CUPW because it largely aligned with the union’s perspective of what pay equity should mean in practice.

Nickerson has “been so excited by this win” after a long career as a union activist. He has been organizing rural mail carriers since the late 1990s and said he “has never had a more satisfying moment” as a union organizer than the day the arbitration decision was announced. At press time, Nickerson and his colleagues were planning a celebration party for the following week.

The decision is currently posted in French on the Canada Post website. CUPW will post it in both official languages after they have verified the translation. The union has posted the highlights of the decision.

*Susan O’Donnell is an editorial board member of the NB Media Co-op.*





# Open Farm Day showcases family operations behind food production

By BRIAN BEATON



**Corinne Hersey, Katelyn Copage and Mark Trealout (left to right) during Open Farm Day at the Hayes Urban Teaching Farm in Fredericton.** Photo by Brian Beaton.

Every year, people have an opportunity to visit the farms where their food comes from. This year, farms across New Brunswick opened their gates for visitors on Sunday, Sept. 16, to learn and experience the important work being done to provide safe, local food for families and their communities.

In late September, David Suzuki toured parts of rural New Brunswick, speaking about the importance of everyone’s shared relationship with the land, water, air and “all of our relations.” On September 22, he told a crowd in Elsipogtog First Nation: “Unless we are willing to encourage our children to reconnect with and appreciate the natural world, we can’t expect them to help protect and care for it.”

The Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick (AABN) that coordinates Open Farm Day provides a description for each of the farms participating in this year’s event. Farmers in the produce sector—diary, livestock, crops (blueberries, strawberries, etc.), vineyards, bees, maple sugar bushes, vegetable gardens, and nurseries—all came together to provide learning opportunities for their neighbours and others living in urban centres.

In total, 28 farms in the province participated in this year’s Open Farm Day 2018. This number is down from the 33 in 2017 and a high in 2016 of 55 farms sharing their work with people from neighbouring towns and homes.

Opening up these farming operations takes a lot of effort to prepare the barns, the crops, the animals, the activities and welcoming space for visitors. But, the farmers who participate in this activity understand the importance of helping their neighbours learn about their work and operations.

The folks at the Hayes Urban Teaching Farm—located

in Fredericton—began their day much earlier than their 9am opening so everything would be ready for their guests. Displays, fresh vegetables for sale, tables and chores were prepared as the first family arrived with their young children to tour their neighbourhood farm just after the 9am opening.

Mark Trealout, the Farm’s Manager and an Instructor, describes their farm as a market garden with vegetable and herb crops. A pilot 30-week full-time Regenerative Farming Certificate (RFC) program was launched in April on the Hayes Farm, a 7.5 acre heritage farm nestled in a residential Fredericton neighbourhood. According to the AABN website: “The RFC program provides basic farm business and marketing training, and is further rounded out with field trips to a wide variety of successful farms, orchards, and nurseries in the area. This unique, accessible learning-to-farm program meets learners where they are and the agricultural practices taught are regenerative, human scale and relationship-based.”

At the Hayes farm on Open Farm Day, Trealout along with Claire May and Katelyn Copage who are participating in the RFC training, encouraged visitors to tour the gardens. They answered questions about the farm’s irrigation system, soil preparation and future plans. They also participated in the rotten vegetable toss as well as recruited new farmers for their 2019 RFC training program.

The Hayes farm marketed their vegetables and herbs at the weekly Thursday night Fredericton market on Carleton Street until it closed at the end of August. They are now hosting a weekly stall at the University of New Brunswick Fredericton Campus Market in the Quad behind the Student Union Building on Wednesday afternoons until late October. As well, they sold out their weekly “share of the bounty” offering very quickly.

The New Brunswick Census of Agriculture Report 2016 released in October 2017 claims that the number of farms continued to decline from 2,611 in 2011 to 2,255 in 2016 yet “New Brunswick generated \$619 million in farm revenues (gross receipts) in 2016, up 12 per cent from 2011,” clearly demonstrating the importance of this essential industry.

Farm tours, product sampling, milking cows, demonstrations, solar farming, mazes and wagon rides were just a few of the activities being offered on Open Farm Day at various farms across the province. The efforts of farmers to share and teach their immense knowledge with strangers and neighbours is a wonderful opportunity for everyone.

Working the land, understanding the environment where they are located and the market they depend upon, and caring for their livestock, crops, families and communities takes a very special type of person. Farm families are an important part of making these operations successful.

The various farm descriptions shared on the AABN website by the farmers for Open Farm Day highlight their important relationship with their families and their farm: Le Verger Goguen’s webpage states: “Our company is one of family. It has been in operation since 1982,” and Shore-View Holsteins in Belledune’s webpage states: “Our 2nd generation farm was purchased 63 years ago from the Order of Salesian Priests.”

At the next farmer’s market, be sure to inquire if your local farm was part of Open Farm Day. Let them know about your interest in visiting them at Open Farm Day 2019 when all of New Brunswick can celebrate and support the important agricultural industry providing food for everyone.

*Brian Beaton was raised on a seven-generation dairy farm in the Ottawa Valley in Ontario. New Brunswick has been his home since 2013.*

## Provincial legislature in “uncharted territory”

By NB MEDIA CO-OP EDITORIAL BOARD

A historic provincial election in New Brunswick has brought four political parties to the legislature, with the Green Party and the People’s Alliance Party each winning three seats in addition to the Progressive Conservatives’ 22 and Liberals’ 21 seats. Only twice before have two parties joined the Liberals and Conservatives in the legislature: in 1920 (the United Farmers won nine seats and the Farmer-Labour party won two); and 1995 (the Confederation of Regions party won eight seats and the NDP won one).

“We’re in uncharted territory,” said Green Party of New Brunswick leader David Coon. New Brunswick residents will soon have the opportunity to see in action the different values and visions between new party caucuses. There was strong engagement in the election, with 67.11 percent of voters participating, up from 64.65 percent in the 2014 election.

The NB Media Co-op will continue to write stories about the decisions of the new legislature that have an impact on those ignored or mis-represented in corporate media.



**Left to right – Green Party candidates, Kevin Arseneau (Kent North), Megan Mitton (Memramcook/Tantramar) and David Coon (Fredericton South) were elected to the NB Legislature on Sept. 24.** Photo by Raissa Marks.

**Fall 2018 Feminist Lunch Series.** Mondays at 12:30pm at Tilley 28, UNB Fredericton. Oct. 29: S. Sinclair, E. Effinger & C. Johnson) and Nov. 20 (Gül Çaliskan). Bring your lunch. Organized by the UNB Gender & Women’s Studies Program, UNB/STU University Women’s Centre and UNB Dean of Arts. Contact: Sophie Lavoie at lavoie@unb.ca.

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180 St. John St., Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9  
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## Community Calendar

To list your community event, email **info@nbmediacoop.org**. For an updated listing of events, check **nbmediacoop.org**.

**Cinema Politica** believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire and provoke social change. This winter, Cinema Politica Fredericton will screen films on climate change, indigenous movements to protect the land from Amazonia to Athabasca, prisons and Syrian refugees on Wednesday nights at St. Thomas University, Brian Mulroney Hall, Room 103, at 6:00pm and every second Friday night at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton, at 7:00pm. View the film schedule at: cinemapolitica.org/fredericton.

**Tertulias.** Artistic, literary & social gatherings on Wednesdays (Oct. 17, Oct. 24, Nov. 14, Nov. 21 and Dec. 5) at 7:30pm at Wilser’s Room, Fredericton. Learn about the thinkers and artists who have influenced our world. For the schedule, Facebook: Tertulias or email: tertulias@gmail.com.