The struggle over the Coastal Gaslink pipeline continues. About four weeks after contractors bulldozed through the traplines of the Wet’suwet’en people, land defenders based at the healing camp continue to resist the pipeline development.

The NB Media Co-op spoke with a representative of the Unist’ot’en healing camp who explained that the people want to keep control of the facility, which is the result of the work of many community members. The healing camp representatives have explored multiple means to halt the further development of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, requiring substantial amounts of legal work. Currently, new investigations and case files are ongoing.

The camp spokesperson said: “We have been struggling to get anyone to listen to what we’ve got going on right now. When the arrests happened all the hotels filled up with news crews from across the country. We know we could get that back if we just shut the gate and put out some people in, but that is not what we want.” Instead, the land defenders are consulting with their own archaeologist about the best way to move forward.

In January, Indigenous people and allies across the country held demonstrations of solidarity and support for the Wet’suwet’en land defenders.

About 100 people rallied on Fredericton’s Westmorland Bridge during the noon hour on Jan. 15, slowing traffic, to show their solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en people and land defenders opposing the Coastal GasLink gas pipeline on their territory. Tremblay told DeCourcy that First Nations are being coerced into supporting pipelines on their territory due to their impoverished conditions, a historical legacy of colonialism. Some First Nations along the path of pipelines in British Columbia are supportive of the projects while hereditary clan chiefs remain opposed.

The Fredericton rally and meeting with MP were part of actions held in mid-January to support the Wet’suwet’en in the wake of 34 people being arrested on Jan. 8 for allegedly failing to comply with a court injunction that ordered people stop blocking the Gitdumt’en access point road so that Coastal GasLink could work on their pipeline.

The Gitdum’t’en blockade was part of the Unist’ot’en Camp set up nine years ago to defend Indigenous territory from various resource extraction projects. According to a Unist’ot’en Camp communiqué released after the take down of the Gitdum’t’en blockade:

“This fight is far from over. We paved the way with the Delgamuuk’w court case and the time has come for Delgamuuk’w II. We have never had the financial resources to challenge the colonial court system, due to the enormous price tag of an Aboriginal title case. Who will stand with us to make sure this pipeline does not go through? Who will support our work to reclaim our territories and assert our right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent? Who will insist that Indigenous peoples have the right to say NO to projects that inflict violence on our people and territories?”

Jared Durelle is a journalism student at St. Thomas University.
“We need to create our own jobs,” says Floyd who is championing local food production as a volunteer with the Hayes Urban Teaching Farm in Fredericton. The teaching farm, one of New Brunswick Community Gardens’ train projects, is repurposing an 8-acre farm in Devon, on the city’s north side, to foster a new generation of farmers.

Floyd grew up in the United Kingdom and had a hand in raising sheep and growing vegetables. She moved to Taymouth in 2015 and is part of the Nashwaak Watershed Association along the Nashwaak River. The boxes provide habitat for cavity nesting birds like wood ducks and kestrels. "In the afternoon I went skiing along the river and enjoyed the trail just as the snowmobile club groomers were leaving. What a beautiful day, I’m so thankful to live out in Nashwaak,” reflects Floyd.

Along with settlers who have deeper roots in what is traditionally Wolastoq territory, they are choosing to live a life on the land and they are among the province’s few proponents to risky resource extraction—namely shale gas and the proposed Sisson open-pit tungsten and molybdenum mine and tailings dam—that could harm the Nashwaak watershed.

The Nashwaak River is deemed one of the most pristine in the province and is one of the last places where the endangered Atlantic salmon spawn.

Floyd and her Nashwaak neighbours are challenging the dominant narrative in New Brunswick, promoted locally by the Irving-owned Brunswick News newspapers and in the three largest cities. Their narrative suggests that the future viability for rural families and communities depends not on their resilience and innovation but rather on their support for mineral and gas extraction and pipelines.

Amanda Wildeman came to New Brunswick from Alberta to study human rights at St. Thomas University. After her degree, she was still in St. Andrews working with farmers growing fair trade coffee and practicing the art of living and working with nature—she decided to stay in New Brunswick.

Wildeman recently settled on a farm in Taymouth on the banks of the Nashwaak River. “I chose to live in Taymouth for the same reasons for growing up on the water. I wanted to be close to Fredericton, I wanted to have a real connection to land and river and bees, and I wanted community,” says Wildeman.

The former executive director of the National Farmer’s Union, Wildeman has been active in the Taymouth area in the 2018 provincial election and has been an outspoken critic of the Sisson mine proposed in the Taymouth area. Like Floyd, she is enjoying the perks of rural life.

“Taymouth has a vibrant community of folks who have been here for generations and folks who have chosen to move there more recently. Being only 20 minutes out of town, I still get to actively participate in my regular activities in Fredericton, but I also get a whole new set of activities and people in my life,” says Wildeman.

“At this moment of rapidly unfolding changes, we need to create a philosophy of land use that is both just and sustainable,” says Wildeman. "We need to create a new narrative that speaks to the land we share, the stories we tell, and the community we create.

Wildeman was inspired both by the beauty of the land and the people when she moved to the area in 2015. "I wanted to be close to Fredericton, I wanted to have a real connection to land and river and bees, and I wanted community,” says Wildeman.

"And it’s breathtakingly beautiful,” adds Wildeman.

Community Calendar

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

RAVEN Digital Storytelling Workshops

Want to learn how to tell stories about your rural community? Join Rural Action & Voices for the Environment (RAVEN) at one of the following workshops or check the schedule, Facebook. Tertulia or contact: fredericton.tertulia@gmail.com.

Nashwaak Cinematic Night

The Nashwaak Cinematic Night is an collaborative screening with the Nashwaak Watershed Association. It will be held on Fridays during the fall, at 7:00 pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at cinematicpolitics.org.

Photo: Sophie M. Lavoie

Gaza is more than a place of “despairing gray,” says author Marcello Di Cintio, despite being deemed possibly “uninhabitable” starting in 2020, according to a UN Report. Di Cintio presented his latest book at the Alumni Memorial Hall at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton on Jan. 30, 2019.

Based in Calgary, Di Cintio has written on various topics, his Wells: Travels Along the Barriques, published with Goose Lane in 2012, examined the growth of the wall phenomenon around the world.

While a writer-in-residence in Palestine, Di Cintio discovered that “there is more to Palestine than the crude accounting of bombings and death, an enduring and unsolvable political problem, a place of despairing gray,” as he specifies in his book.

At the Fredericton event, Di Cintio read from his latest book, Pay No Heed to the Rockets: Personal Dispatches from the Present Tense (2018). The author visited the country for the first time in 1999 when he spent three months there. He returned to the occupied territories in 2015 and 2016 to talk to Palestinian writers and artists who “bare the beauty of a place mostly known for its opposites.”

During his presentation, Di Cintio confessed that he “stole” a line for his book’s title from a text by Mahmoud Darwish, a prominent Palestinian poet, who passed away in 2008. For Di Cintio, this line, which comes after a lengthy recipe for making the perfect cup of coffee, means “we can do the thing that makes us happy” despite being surrounded by “everything [the Israeli] occupation represents.”

For Di Cintio, it was—and is—often literally impossible to “ignore the rockets” and Darwish was clearly being ironic: “preparing for inevitable conflict is a much a part of being Palestinian” as the typical dishes made by two of Di Cintio’s generous hosts in Gaza.

Among the artists and writers who he met, one of the poets that has stayed with Di Cintio is Mohammed el-Kurd who was 17 at the time of his interview. Di Cintio says that has stayed with Di Cintio is Mohammed’s poems challenge manifold ideals. He is now studying in the U.S. Di Cintio was also struck by a religious young Palestinian woman, Najaat Attalah who, surprisingly, wrote “the sexiest and erotic text.”

When asked what advice he would give journalists covering Palestine, he said they should “take the time to talk to regular people” about their stories. For him, activists, politicians and other dignitaries don’t tell the whole story.

For Di Cintio, “no one visiting [Palestine] could ever come out without sympathy” for Palestinians’ plight. Generalizations and statistics “gloss over” the realities of Palestinian citizens and Di Cintio was able to speak to the people in his book to tell “a human story (...) that’s not his beat.”

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Asked if he has future projects in mind, Di Cintio admitted his fascination with this place: “I’ll end up returning to [Palestine] and writing about something else.”

Sophie M. Lavoie, an editorial board of the NB Media Co-op, publishes on arts and culture for the Co-op.