



The Brief

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“I didn’t do this to be famous:” Elsipogtog land defender Annie Clair fights legal charges

By ROBERT DEVET



Annie Clair, a Mi’kmaq woman from Elsipogtog, spoke on a panel organized by the NB Media Co-op in early 2014 about the media coverage of Elsipogtog and the resistance to shale gas. Clair will be heading to Moncton soon to face charges related to her defense of Mi’kmaq land. She needs help paying her legal fees. Photo from Facebook.

Kjipuktuk (Halifax) – A woman from Elsipogtog will be heading to court in Moncton in April and June to face six charges related to the violent actions of New Brunswick RCMP against defenders of the land in Kent County. Annie Clair intends to fight the charges and she is looking to the wider community for support.

On October 17th, 2013, RCMP officers armed with assault rifles, entered a peaceful anti-shale gas encampment along highway 134, near the town of Rexton. The encampment was erected to stop Texas-based SWN Resources from exploring for shale gas without proper consent on what remains unceded Mi’kmaq territory.

The timing of that cop attack remains suspicious to many protesters and on-lookers. An injunction supposedly enforced by the RCMP on Oct. 17th was to be contested in court by the land defenders the very next day. The RCMP were responsible for defending the injunction yet protesters felt they are half hearted in their efforts.

“We did nothing wrong. It should never have happened,” Clair tells the *Halifax Media Co-op*.

Clair believes that the RCMP attack was unprovoked and broke an earlier promise on the evening of October 16th by the RCMP “negotiators” who were described to protesters as members of indigenous nations as well as law enforcement.

Resistance by the Mi’kmaq, Acadians and English-speaking settlers near Rexton made fracking a high profile issue in last fall’s New Brunswick provincial election.

A shale gas moratorium was put in place by the Liberals shortly after the defeat of pro-fracking

Conservative premier David Alward, but the charges against the land defenders stuck.

Clair and her supporters are requesting financial help for her legal defence.

A few of the Mi’kmaq land defenders charged in 2013 received the support and services of Elispogtog First Nation band lawyer (and former provincial attorney general) T.J. Burke. In contrast, Clair is on her own to finance a potentially expensive defense against the charges.

Clair and her supporters estimate that mounting a legal defence for her minimum two-day trial will cost around \$7000.

The fight against fracking in Kent County and Elsipogtog went well beyond a local issue, she says. It energized environmentalists and ordinary citizens everywhere in the Maritimes in the international battle against hydraulic fracturing.

It sent a message to companies looking to engage in fracking on Canada’s east coast that they had better think twice about spoiling traditional territories – and to expect resistance.

Now, Clair and her supporters hope that people will remember that. Clair deserves support for her courage resisting environmental destruction.

“I didn’t do this to be famous,” says Clair. “I am doing this to protect the water, the air and the land. This is for all the generations to come.”

For those who would like to support Clair’s legal defence, money can be sent via email transfer to supportannie@riseup.net.

Robert Devet writes for the Halifax Media Co-op, where this story first appeared.

Awkward questions raised at investigation of RCMP actions at Rexton shale gas camp

By DALLAS McQUARRIE

Roger Richard, a St. Louis-de-Kent man is asking some very pointed questions about what really happened on October 17, 2013, when RCMP overran a shale gas protest camp at Rexton. During the raid, six police cars were burned. Some mainstream media outlets approached the story uncritically. Using RCMP statements and their own extrapolations, they bolstered the claim by corporations that protesters were responsible for the vandalism.

The day the RCMP attacked the Rexton protest camp, Richard went to the site of the car burnings about 6:00 p.m. and took a long, close-up look at the vehicles. Richard’s inspection of the burned out cars led him to conclude the burnings were “staged” to discredit protesters.

“Those cars were stripped,” Richard says. “There were no burned computers, standard in RCMP cars, nor even the brackets that hold the computers in place.” He also looked in the trunk of a car and noted that there was no spare tire, tire rim, or jack.

Richard, who has practiced dentistry in St. Louis de Kent for 34 years, says computers, spare tires and other equipment are standard equipment in RCMP cars. He says the absence of such standard equipment from the burned vehicles is an important indication that the burnings were staged.

Richard was also shocked that police took no special precautions with the crime scene. “Within hours of the crime, I was able to walk right up to the cars while they were still smoldering,” he says. “The area had not been sealed off with crime scene tape, and there were no police around at all.”

“I could have tampered with those vehicles, and some people obviously did,” Richard says. He recalls being at a nearby coffee shop a few days later and seeing another customer showing people a piece of one of the burned cars he had taken as a souvenir.

“Why didn’t they care about the scene of the crime?” Richard asks. “Why didn’t the police protect the crime scene from tampering? Why didn’t they immediately bring in their own arson experts to gather evidence?” He says that the RCMP’s willingness to let the evidence that might have been gathered be tampered with or removed by passers-by, or destroyed by the weather, fuels his suspicion the burnings were staged.



Tactical police forces move in on people maintaining a blockade against SWN’s shale gas equipment on the highway in Rexton in October 2013. Photo from Warrior Publications.

For weeks after the car burnings, the remains of the cars sat unattended by the side of the road. During that time, rain and snowfall would have further obscured or ruined possible crime scene evidence.

(continued page 2)

Honour Song: With grief and outrage for Cindy Gladue

By JOSEPHINE SAVARESE



Thousands of people rallied across Canada on April 2nd to call for justice for Cindy Gladue and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Photo by Ntawnis/Twitter.

TRIGGER WARNING: This post contains information about sexual assault and physical violence which may be triggering to survivors and to families of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Saturday, April 4, the day before Easter Sunday. Another storm rocks Atlantic Canada. Snow begins to fall in the mid-afternoon covering the signs of spring that were emerging, from bare ground to murky puddles. A good day to stay inside. Almost all of it is spent struggling to write this blog entry. The subject in mind is the acquittal of Ontario trucker, Bradley Barton, for the homicide of Edmonton resident, Cindy Gladue.

The last grainy image of Gladue shows her walking with Barton in the Yellowhead Inn holding his hand. I study the picture, blow it up on my screen for clues that this was a “bad date.” A gesture described by the defence as affectionate looks menacing. Barton clenches Gladue’s right hand. Her left hand is raised, brushing her hair. A large man lurks immediately behind them, carrying a plastic bag. This was the morning after her last night.

To call the facts of Gladue’s death shocking, distasteful seems trite. Cindy Gladue was left to bleed to death in a hotel bathtub. Barton maintains he fell asleep. Claims he asked Gladue to leave without payment hours before he found her lifeless body. Rejected her when his fingers inserted in her vagina became bloodied. Menstrual blood, he claims. To his surprise, he says, she was still in his room the next morning, lying cold in the bathroom. Blood all over. It was an accident, Barton maintains. Not his fault. “He walks into the bathroom and walks into the nightmare of his life,” Barton’s lawyer, Dino Bottos, has the nerve to say at the trial.

Barton was acquitted of the charge of first degree murder as well as the lesser included offense of manslaughter in March 2015. The case has been appealed by the Crown.

The jury was unaware that Barton’s computer is filled with images of violent pornography, some depicting the torture of women. These images were not admitted into evidence. The Crown succumbed to the defence’s claim the evidence would be too

prejudicial. The Crown insisted, against defence objections, that Gladue’s preserved vagina become part of the evidence. The trial breaks ground on this front, pushing the macabre facts to another extreme. It is the same old story, however, in regard to callousness and indifference towards indigenous women generally and indigenous sex workers particularly.

In a poem she penned in 2013, “If My Vagina Was a Gun,” Texas based pro-choice activist, Katie Heim, expressed outrage that guns enjoy protections while women’s vaginas do not. Calling for justice for women, Heim emphasized that her vagina was not a gun. In fact, she called it “a mightier thing.” She demanded that lawmakers “stop messing” with hers. This blog post

is written to demand the same on behalf of Cindy Gladue, her family and her community. To demand that officers of the court, lawyers, judges, lawmakers listen, as Heim stresses, “to the voices of thousands or feel their full force,” to the calls for justice for Cindy Gladue. After all, our vaginas are NOT guns; Cindy Gladue’s vagina was NOT a gun; it was much more. It was part of “a sacred, life-giving, indigenous woman’s body,” as activist Julie Kaye proclaims.

It is time to send the courts, leaders, all Canadians and offenders, like Bradley Barton, that message. It is time to sing an honour song for Cindy Gladue, a mother of three, a worker, a woman who watched cooking shows and was a casualty of colonial inspired violence.

Josephine L. Savarese is an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal at St. Thomas University in Fredericton. Her work relating to indigenous women and sex work has been published in the Canadian Journal of Women and the Law (2010) and in a chapter in Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering (Demeter 2015). She can be reached at savarese@stu.ca. A longer version appeared in Blogging for Equality published by law faculty at the University of Ottawa.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

Intersectional Feminism Panel. Thurs, May 14 at 5:30pm at Marshall D’Avray Hall, UNB Fredericton. Panelists will discuss racism, transphobia and ableism within the feminist community. Organized by the Fredericton Youth Feminists. For more info, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/YouthFeminists>

March to the End of the Line in Red Head. Saturday, May 30, 2015 at 1 pm from Red Head Road to Anthony’s Cove Road, Saint John. The march will support the residents of Red Head, the site of the proposed end of the line for the Energy East pipeline. March for preserving nature and quality of life for Red Head residents, and for protecting our air, land, and the Bay of Fundy.

Investigation of RCMP actions at Rexton shale gas camp

(continued from page 1) Richard further noted that “parts of the engines were actually melted, and that indicates the fire burned at a very high temperature.” He suspects that an “accelerant” of a type not available for public purchase was used on the cars. Accelerants are substance or mixtures used to rapidly accelerate the development of a fire, and are commonly associated with cases of arson.

Richard is a specialist who makes dental prostheses, and his training involved the melting of various metals to make alloys for dental prostheses. “I know something about the fact that metals melt at different temperatures, and I think something more than just ordinary gasoline was used on those cars.”

He also questions the RCMP’s account of what transpired that day. “We were told that the police were afraid and ran away from their cars,” Richard says, “but the many police officers all around the area were highly trained and heavily armed. What were they afraid of and, if they were afraid, why not get in the cars and simply drive away instead of abandoning their vehicles?”

Within days of the Rexton riot, Richard took his observations directly to the RCMP station in Richibucto. He was met with an angry response from officers who promptly invited him to leave. He has since shared his information with the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission Against the RCMP (CRCC) that is now investigating RCMP conduct in Kent County during the shale gas protests.

Richard also says he experienced déjà-vu during his inspection of the burned cars. He is old enough to remember that when Kouchibouguac National Park was formed, local Acadians living there had their land expropriated by governments, and protests were organized by people trying to defend their homes.

“There was a confrontation with the RCMP back then too,” Richard says, “and, just like Rexton, there was an RCMP car abandoned then too. It was pushed into the ditch and the demonstrators were blamed.”

Richard strongly suspects that protesters at the Rexton camp have been wrongly blamed for what was, in reality, a staged event designed to discredit them. Many people here want answers to the kind of pointed questions Richard is asking.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) Against the RCMP is currently investigating RCMP conduct in Kent County during the shale gas protests. Anyone who wishes to submit any evidence to the inquiry and/or share their experiences and perceptions of RCMP conduct during those protests, is invited to e-mail the CRCC and its Senior Reviewer/Analyst Rosemary Morgan at: reviews@crcc-ccetp.gc.ca.

In Brief

About 250 people rallied against **Harper’s Bill C-51** in Fredericton on April 18, 2015 in a national day of action. The Stop Bill-51 Campaign argues that the bill would turn Canada’s intelligence agency, CSIS, into a secret police force with little oversight or accountability, open the door for violations of our Charter Rights and lead to dragnet surveillance and information sharing.

Mayworks, a festival that celebrates the art of working people, was held in late April in Fredericton. The festival, organized by the Fredericton District Labour Council, included a workers’ art exhibition, a screening of Pride, a film about solidarity between striking Welsh coal miners and London-based lesbian and gay activists, the empowering political poetry of El Jones and the play Marx in Soho.

New Brunswick joined the **International World March of Women 2015** in a global day of action on Friday, April 24, which marked the second anniversary of the Bangladesh factory collapse that killed 1,135 workers. The rally, held at the NB Legislature, was part of a global social movement that aims to eliminate the causes of poverty and violence against women. Rally speakers drew attention to the approximately 100,000 people in New Brunswick, almost one in seven, living below the poverty line, and stated their opposition to austerity budgets and their support for pay equity, access to reproductive health care and child care. They called for action for Canada’s missing and murdered indigenous women and made links between gender violence, capitalism, colonization and destruction of the land.

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