



The Brief

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“Bike Club is full of learning, bike club is full of love:” Building community one ride at a time with the Wil-Doo Community Bike Club

By JOSEPHINE L. SAVARESE



Wil-Doo Community Bike Club members having fun on a trail in Fredericton. Photo by Jenn Wambolt.

It is 7 pm on a warm Friday night in August 2016. A group of children and youth are gathered before a row house on the north-side Fredericton streets of Doone Street and Wilson Row. Most are sitting on bicycles, helmets on, poised to depart, laughing and talking. A few others wait for one of the bikes collected into racks in front of a row house. A man with reddish hair is checking the bicycles for safety and suitability for the rider. The approximately 15 cyclists are speaking a range of languages including French, English, Kikongo and Swahili. When everyone is ready, the group proceeds to the nearby bike trail, heading toward Barker’s Point Wading Pool.

The youth are members of the Wil-Doo Community Bike Club, a volunteer operated program for lower income youth aged 7 to 15 years who reside on the two streets forming the club name. The Wil-Doo Community Bike Club is well known to its membership of newcomers, refugees, long-time New Brunswick residents and residents of St. Mary’s First Nation. In the summer months, club members cycle to places like film screenings and wading spots.

A recent adventure included cycling to a concert by Gypsophilia, a 7-piece instrumental band that combines hot jazz with klezmer, funk, and world rhythms. The group performed at the Fredericton Playhouse on Sept. 22 for a Conservation Council of New Brunswick fundraiser. Members of the audience were captivated by the Wil-Doo Community Bike Club members’ enthusiastic response including dance moves, cheers and heart signs to the band. “The gang really enjoyed the show!” wrote founder and chief organizer, Jenn Wambolt, on the group’s Facebook page.

According to Wambolt, the group performs important functions in the Doone Street neighborhood. The club provides respite for parents during the summer months. In addition to learning physical literacy, the bike club builds a sense of belonging and esteem. Importantly, the youth learn to rely on and respect each other. During the rides, they must operate as team members. When conflicts arise, the group uses a restorative justice approach to find solutions that keep the group together.

The Wil-Doo Community Bike Club has been operating since the summer of 2014. In that year, the community centre lost its funding from the Fredericton Community Foundation to run a day camp for the children and youth in the neighbourhood. A long time community volunteer, Wambolt realized the youth were left without needed programming. Wambolt started the bike club with donated

bikes similar to the ones she and her husband, Rusty Wambolt, currently refurbish.

When asked about her inspiration, Wambolt does not hesitate. Because a parent was a teacher, Wambolt knows the importance of skill building and training. In addition, she also cites the musical, *The Sound of Music*. She recalls scenes of Maria, played by Julie Andrews, with the seven von Trapp youth joyously pedaling and singing through the Austrian mountains. Wambolt watched the show with friends whose parents were diplomats. These screenings took place outside of Canada during the nearly five years she spent in Malawi and Nigeria. Wambolt’s international experience provides a context for how she bonds with the children and youth. Many of the cyclists have roots in other countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, the Philippines and Malaysia.

After around twenty minutes of cycling, the group arrives at our destination. Some of the youth head to the wading pool. Wambolt and I sit at a picnic table to discuss the club. Some members describe what the bicycle club means to them on note cards. They state “Bike club Rules”; “bike club is fun.” For one youth, the bike club represents “power.” One youth describes it as “amazing.” For another, it is a chance to “meet the new places.” Many of the cyclists say they are glad to learn more about their city. Wambolt is finishing the interview when one youth says he is getting “freezy,” he wants to head home. The older children laugh gently, knowing he is cold. The bicycle troupe heads out of the park. A young girl slips on loose rocks and falls. Wambolt consoles her, sees to her scrapes as the other riders wait for everyone to rejoin the group. “Flip flops” Wambolt ruefully explains to me. She insists on helmets and footwear, reluctantly allowing open-toed sandals.

Once on the trails, we greet a teenager leaning on her bicycle. She is, Wambolt explains, a former club member. While living with autism, she functioned with the group before adopting other activities. With Wil-Doo, she gained confidence and physical strength. “She is still riding her bike,” Wambolt states with satisfaction, a smile crossing her face. The bicycle club members pedal towards home, as Wambolt and I follow. The cyclists seem to be enjoying the summer evening. Importantly, they are also building strength and fostering community through cycling.

Josephine L. Savarese is a member of the board of directors of the NB Media Co-op.

Make Muskrat right

By BLAKE SHEPPARD-PARDY

Editorial note: Students from Labrador going to universities in Fredericton organized a rally in solidarity with the Innu, Inuit, Métis and Labradorians defending Lake Melville from the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project on Oct. 19 at St. Thomas University. Days before, a number of people were arrested for trespassing on the property of Nalcor, the power company behind the project. The property is located on the traditional territory of the Inuit and Innu. Rally organizers honoured the resistance of Inuk artist Billy Gauthier as well as Delilah Saunders and Jeremias David Zack who had started a hunger strike days before. The project is of concern to local indigenous people because it threatens to release methylmercury into Lake Melville by flooding the river with organic matter. Some people do not want the dam at all while others want the the vegetation and soil cleared before flooding the river occurs to prevent methylmercury poisoning. The government of Newfoundland and Labrador and indigenous leaders reached a deal to make changes to the project to protect the health of residents on Oct. 26.

My family grew up in Labrador, and many of us occupy the land that is being threatened. My family originates from Rigolet, a small inlet town off of Lake Melville. Many of us rely on the natural resources that Lake Melville provides. I was raised by my great Aunt Shirl who was forced to attend a residential school. She taught me the importance of the land, and culture. She taught me to hold onto what I believe in. She is home fighting and I am standing with her. During the fight for Muskrat Falls she watched many protesters, whom are family members and close friends of ours, get arrested. Those arrested were peacefully protesting and the arrests have not been justified. My Aunt wrote something that she has allowed me to share with you:

“Watching the arrests this morning was like something out of a nightmare. Force was used, if not physical force (and that, sure as hell, was used) then the force of having power and the backing of government. I felt helpless as I heard screaming and crying as someone was being dragged away, she was screaming “you’re hurting me.” The feeling was so helpless that I almost became the child watching my mother cry as her children were being taken away. Or, I immediately went back to a place when I was taken away to the dorm. This is a sad day and we can’t continue to let these sad days go on.

Systemic control should not be allowed to go on when it devastates lives like this.

My throat is paining from the desperate useless screams. My Spirit will never be broken though. Or my eyes and ears will ever turn away from the miserable truths around me and I will name them. This is just to show you how those who have already been through a large pain in their lives once by having their culture ripped away are now going through this again.”

The northern communities of Labrador rely heavily on the resources that Lake Melville provides. Especially when the one store is lacking basic necessities during the harsh winters. Our northern communities typically only have one grocery store, with limited access to food. The food is costly, and this is why we rely heavily on the foods that Lake Melville offers.



Pam Duffet, Jessica Lyall, Ondreya Beals, Blake Sheppard-Pardy, Sara Fowler and Samatha Mesher (left-to-right) are students from Labrador studying in Fredericton. They want Lake Melville protected from the Muskrat hydroelectric project. Photo submitted by Blake Sheppard-Pardy.

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“Every single tomato has a story:” Film captures shattered dreams of migrant workers in Canada

By TRACY GLYNN



A crowd gathered for the Fredericton premiere of *Migrant Dreams* on Oct. 21. Pictured left-to-right: Tracy Glynn, organizer with No One Is Illegal-Fredericton, David Coon, MLA for Fredericton South, Tzaznà Miranda, organizer with Justice for Migrant Workers-Ontario, Amanda Wildeman, executive director of the National Farmers Union in NB, Ernie Caissie, President of the Fredericton District Labour Council and Josie Baker with the Cooper Institute in PEI. Photo by Sophie M. Lavoie.

Fredericton - A film documenting systemic oppression and exploitation of migrant workers by recruiters and the government in small-town Ontario premiered to Maritime audiences in late October. *Migrant Dreams*, Min Sook Lee's latest documentary on migrant workers in Canada, follows women and trans migrant workers from Indonesia and other countries who are struggling to make enough money to send back home to their families.

“Every single tomato has a story... it's a story of transnational families and shattered dreams,” said Evelyn Encalada, an organizer with Justice for Migrant Workers in Ontario, who is featured in the film.

“It is important to honour the workers’ resistance,” said Josie Baker from the Cooper Institute, a PEI social justice organization. Baker accompanied Tzaznà Miranda with Justice for Migrant Workers - Ontario on a tour to five communities in the Maritimes, including Shediac, NB, and O'Leary, PEI, where migrants from Jamaica, the Philippines and other countries work at fish plants.

Miranda spoke of the successful Harvesting Freedom Campaign, which recently completed a pilgrimage to Ottawa with migrant farm workers and their allies. The campaign, marking the 50th anniversary of Canada's agricultural migrant worker program, called for permanent residency status for migrant workers. “There is nothing temporary about a program that has been bringing workers here for 50 years,” said Miranda.

Today, about half a million migrant workers with temporary work permits enter Canada every year. The number of migrant workers entering Canada has surpassed the number of immigrants entering the country every year since 2006.

A federal review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program was recently tabled in Parliament. The review

contains 21 recommendations for policy changes, though the timeline and nature of the coming changes are still unclear, according to migrant justice groups. Meanwhile, a number of workers from the Philippines employed at fish plants in PEI are waiting to hear if their six-month work contracts will be extended or if they will be forced to go back home.

Justice for Migrant Workers has also been trying to get the government to make changes to the program's rules to give workers more rights. They say workers are treated as disposable and injured workers are often cut off from health care coverage.

A banner that read, “Sheldon McKenzie Didn't Have to Die,” was put on the wall at the film venue in Fredericton. Miranda said it is important to memorialize workers like McKenzie who have died while working in Canada.

McKenzie, 39, suffered an injury at work on a farm in Leamington, Ontario, in early 2015 that left him on life support. His family tried to stop his deportation so he could access health care. He lost his work visa and health care coverage when he was no longer able to work. McKenzie had been coming back and forth from Jamaica to Canada for twelve years, spending months in Canada doing manual labour on farms, sending the money he made to his wife and two daughters in Jamaica. McKenzie died before his advocates were able to get him a humanitarian visa to extend his stay so he could access health care.

“Nobody should have to die for a pepper, nobody should have to die for a tomato,” Miranda told the audience gathered at the Fredericton film screening. Ernie Caissie, president of the Fredericton District Labour Council, agreed, “Nobody should have to die for a job.”

Tracy Glynn is a member of No One Is Illegal Fredericton.

The Hunting Ground. A film about sexual violence on U.S. university campuses. Marshall d'Avray Hall, Room 143, UNB Fredericton on Dec. 6 at 7:00pm. Marking the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Contact: margaret.kress@unb.ca.

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Make Muskrat right

My grandmother, a respected elder of the Innu community, has tremendous concerns. During the long cold winters of Labrador, she would take a group of people to attend a walk. She taught the youth and anyone else who would like to walk for months at a time. They walked across the frozen river, living solely on the natural resources of the land, by hunting, fishing and gathering. She does this to bring awareness, to keep our land healthy and clean, and to show how important the land is to the Indigenous people.

This dam will have long-lasting effects on everyone in Labrador. The clearing of all organic material in the affected flood zone area will prevent the contamination of methyl-mercury poisoning. We want clean fish, clean game, clean water, and clean gathering. It's not much we are asking for.

In the words of Billy Gauthier, “Take away my culture and you take away me.”

Blake Sheppard-Pardy is a fourth year student at St. Thomas University in Fredericton. She is completing a major in criminology and minor in sociology and psychology. She grew up in Goose Bay, Labrador and considers Rigolet, Labrador her home.

Labour leader resigns from board of Miramichi women's shelter

By ASAF RASHID

Patrick Colford, president of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, resigned from his position on the board of the Miramichi Emergency Center for Women (MECW) on October 16. Colford made his resignation public in order to point out his concerns over labour relations between the board and the staff.

“We, as a board of directors, have made decisions that have put the Miramichi Emergency Center for Women in a crisis situation and that has put our staff in a strike position,” said Colford.

Colford was on the negotiating team for the MECW as they were trying to reach a collective agreement with the staff.

“I was appointed to the negotiations team, then dismissed along with two others. I am confident that a deal could have been reached in a timely manner had the board not chosen to dismiss us and hire the law firm,” argued Colford.

MECW staff are represented by CUPE Local 5243. CUPE representative Guy Ward explained the current position of the staff: “We went into bargaining in late 2015. In April, the board hired lawyers to represent them. We reached an impasse then. We held a strike vote at the end of June and have been in a strike position since then.”

According to Ward, the workers are only asking to put the existing relationship between the staff and MECW into a collective agreement.

“What we are asking is what the (staff) currently enjoy in the workplace today. They have an employee handbook which is a policy and procedures manual. Language on hours of work, vacation time, and other benefits has to be in the collective agreement. It's not something new to add to the budget,” stated Ward.

Ward said that the union has attempted to reach out to the employer to come back to the bargaining table.

“In September, I asked the Department of Post Secondary Education, Training and Labour for a mediator, but both parties have to agree (to the mediator). We were unable to get the employer to agree to come back to the table,” explained Ward.

According to Ward, the tone of bargaining changed once the board decided to negotiate through their lawyers rather than continue to use the board's negotiating team, which included Colford.

“Mr. Colford did not sit with us at the bargaining table, but was there to help on the employer side. This was all new for them. It's an all volunteer board. Patrick offered to help, to assist them, but then, on the advice of their lawyer, the former bargaining committee was removed. If we had continued, we would not be in this situation. We would have a deal,” said Ward.

Ward expressed concern about MECW spending money on legal costs when there were other options.

“The clientele need the money. That's why the MECW get funding from the government, and why people give donations to the shelter, certainly not to waste money on legal bills,” said Ward.

Referring to when Colford was still involved in the negotiations, Ward added, “for a fraction of the money, we would have had a deal.”

Colford was told by the board that he was removed due to a conflict of interest.

“Where it became difficult, quite frankly, was when I gave labour advice and volunteered to help with negotiations. I was removed from the negotiating team along with the two other people, because the law firm told the chair of the board we were all in a conflict of interest simply for the reason that we were union members,” said Colford.

Colford explained that his position as president of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, where he represents workers, while also acting as a member of the board of MECW, where he is on the employer end, was not a conflict.

“I did not occupy the seat as Patrick Colford, President of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. I occupied it as Patrick Colford, member of the community, and wanting to help in any way I could to protect the women and children of the Miramichi area,” argued Colford.

Colford found his decision to leave the board to be quite difficult.

“For the last 3 years, I have had the honour and privilege to be a board member of the MECW, a position that allowed me to play a unique and important role in fighting for the rights of some of most vulnerable people in our community. This was not an easy decision, nor was it taken lightly. I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished bringing the transition house out of a past scandal. I also have a deep appreciation for the level of commitment of the board of directors at that time,” said Colford.

Asaf Rashid is a member of the board of directors of the NB Media Co-op and is a host of CHSR's radio show, *From the Margins*.

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