



The Brief

Vol. 8 No. 1

A publication of the NB Media Co-op

September 2016

nbmediacoop.org

Forever spirit dancing: An honour song for Hilary Bonnell

By JOSEPHINE L. SAVARESE



Jennifer Brant, pictured here with her co-edited book, will speak about missing and murdered Indigenous women in her lecture, “Forever Loving, Forever Resisting: Recent Research on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” as part of the NB Media Co-op’s 7th annual general meeting on Sept. 29. The event is presented by St. Thomas University’s Women’s and Gender Studies program, UNB History and the NB Media Co-op. The talk will occur at 7:00 pm at Kinsella Auditorium, McCain Hall, St. Thomas University in Fredericton. Photo from Brock University.

TRIGGER WARNING: This article contains information about sexual assault and/or violence, which may be triggering to survivors.

A chapter I wrote in *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (Demeter 2016) examines the homicide of New Brunswick teenager Hilary Bonnell. While writing, I worked to find something beyond a story of tragedy.

Many readers will know that Hilary disappeared in September 2009 while walking on a road on the Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation one early morning. She was 16 and had spent the evening celebrating the end of summer with friends. After weeks of frantic searching, an adult relation, Curtis Bonnell, admitted to detaining Hilary against her will, sexually assaulting her, suffocating her on the lawn in his backyard and disposing of her body. Hilary’s remains were found deep in the woods of the Acadian Peninsula after Curtis revealed the location. Accompanied by an Elder and by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Curtis led the investigative team to the burial site.

In the face of the terrible, heartbreaking facts, the temptation to see only Hilary’s victimization is clear. Admittedly, it was a sad task to track Hilary’s agency while researching the case. It also seemed an important one to foster decolonial aims.

To learn more about Hilary’s life, I listened to her mother, Pam Fillier, share memories of happy moments with her beloved daughter with the Native Women’s Association of Canada. In this moving passage, Pam described a day they spent together when Hilary was around 11 years old. Pam stated that the pair “loved lilacs” because they were “so beautiful.” While driving in a large car, they spotted a lilac bush filled with blooms. Pam continued, “And we took them, as many as we could. We filled the whole back seat full of lilacs. We had lilacs in almost every room.”

Dr. Sandrina de Finney might cite this poignant recollection of a mother and daughter collecting flowers to beautify their home as an example of what she terms “presencing,” after Leanne Simpson’s book,

Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence.

de Finney uses this concept to help us understand Indigenous girls’ ways of communicating to the world that they are vital, valuable, alive and self-determining through seemingly ordinary gestures. Their varied acts of presencing range from “avoiding, protecting, contesting, laughing, hoping” to “dreaming, connecting, documenting, imagining, challenging.” Because de Finney emphasizes the importance of situating “Indigenous girls’ everyday processes of resurgence and presencing” in the context of the “intersecting forms of traumatic violence that colonial states and societies produce,” her insights help contextualize Hilary’s life and last moments.

Hilary’s presencing strategies as a young Indigenous woman are also evident in the details that emerged during the prosecution of Curtis Bonnell. For example, the last time that Pam Fillier heard from her daughter was the night before her death. de Finney would likely see particular significance in the fact that Hilary called her mother at 3:00 AM to discuss their shopping trip scheduled for the next day. Witnesses confirmed that Hilary appeared happy about the plan. Fillier reported the conversation ended with both parties expressing love for the other. Fillier never heard from her only daughter again. That some of Hilary’s last known statements were expressions of love might, in de Finney’s view, complicate settler narratives of Indigenous girls’ as existing in “ungrievable bodies,” which possess no “hope” or “capacity” as “victim bodies, disenfranchised bodies.”

The evidence established that Hilary fought back against Curtis and attempted to resist his sexual violence. One way she did this was to call for support. Text messages Hilary sent to her first cousin and close friend, Haylie, over the course of the evening into the early morning started from a “party atmosphere theme” to her final messages that “demonstrated that she was afraid of something or someone.” Hilary’s bids for assistance went unanswered because her cousin’s cell phone was had no power.

From a presencing perspective, the text messages are important. They work against the characterization of Hilary’s state as one of absolute victimization. Even though Hilary’s extreme fear is obvious, she also had the strength and presence of mind to call for help. These moments show Hilary’s courageous efforts to counter the very real and terrifying violence she encountered using the limited means available: her resolve and her cell phone.

Hilary’s legacy of resistance has the potential to benefit future generations. In response to her death, her friends and family dreamed of building a youth centre they planned to name “Hilary’s House” in Esgenoôpetitj. While they were not able to realize this goal, their efforts to remember Hilary are inspiring, particularly in the broader context of Atlantic Indigenous resurgences. There are many examples including the formation of a Peace and Friendship Alliance, a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous supporters, in March 2015. The coalition is working towards environmental justice and sovereignty guided by Peace and Friendship treaties.

By highlighting presencing, de Finney works to counter “the pervasive image of Indigenous girls as exploitable and dispensable.” Joining her quest to highlight agency seemed especially important when conveying a story about a previously missing and found to be murdered young Indigenous woman who loved many things, including lilacs. It seems worth acknowledging that irrespective of the scale, Hilary’s actions were brave given the powerful forces she confronted.

It is my hope that this effort to honour Hilary’s precious (and too few) acts of presencing might offer a sliver of comfort to her grieving family and community. The impact of her death on those who loved her is made obvious in many ways, including that over 500 people attended her funeral. As her mother and community have made clear, Hilary will be forever loved, as she spirit dances on and beyond the turtle’s back, in perpetual acts of presencing.

Josephine L. Savarese is an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University in Fredericton. A version of this article was first published by Blogging For Equality.

A forest in crisis, a provincial government in denial

By DALLAS MCQUARRIE

A deer biologist who spent 15 years working for the government of N.B. says plunging deer populations in the province are part of a larger crisis in N.B.’s forests. According to Rod Cumberland, foresters in both government and industry have known for more than 20 years that the wood on public land was running out as a result of forestry practices.

Cumberland worked in N.B.’s Department of Natural Resources. He says scientific research makes it very clear that increases in harvest intensity and increased planting and spraying are linked to declining wildlife populations.

Speaking at the Doaktown Salmon Museum on August 10, Cumberland presented a wealth of data showing that as forest habitat was wiped out, deer numbers decreased and moved to other areas. All of that data has been ignored by successive provincial governments.

As a Department of Natural Resources employee, Cumberland personally inspected deer yards across the province and noted that 20 % of two areas that he had visited had what appeared to be adequate deer food.

For the past 20 years, the province’s forest management plans have allowed massive clearcutting followed by applications of glyphosate-based herbicides. Glyphosates are known to cause many serious health problems, and the World Health Organization says they likely cause cancer in humans. They prevent the natural forest, especially hardwood trees, from regenerating after it has been clearcut.

“The forest crisis today is no surprise to the provincial government and no surprise to the forest industry,” Cumberland said. “Studies and research done 25 years ago in the Department predicted the situation we have today. All wildlife species need habitat, and deer need mature forests.”

New Brunswick’s deer harvest in 1985 was 31,205 deer. By 2015, the harvest had fallen to a mere 4,378 deer – a collapse forecasted more than two decades ago by government employees, but ignored by successive governments. Since 1985, New Brunswick’s annual deer harvest has collapsed by 86% while in Quebec the deer harvest actually increased by more than 300%, according to Cumberland.

New Brunswick lets its forestry companies spray more glyphosate on its public forests than any other province, according to the recent report on glyphosate by the province’s Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Critics of the current forestry management regime argue that successive Conservative and Liberal governments have shown no regard for protecting what is a public resource, and made no serious attempt to use that resource for the long-term benefit of New Brunswickers.

Cumberland is not alone in sounding the alarm about disappearing forests. Last year, N.B.’s Auditor General Kim MacPherson’s annual report recommended reducing the amount of clearcutting in the province. MacPherson told the Gallant government that selective and partial cutting methods are recognized as the best management practices because they protect waterways, wildlife habitat, and preserve a healthy range of plant and animal life in the woods.

In a bitter irony for taxpayers, MacPherson’s report states that the province has lost \$7 to 10 million managing the forest its way for each of the last five years.

The story of clearcutting and spraying New Brunswick’s forest is also routinely ignored by the province’s daily newspapers, which are owned by Brunswick News, one of J.D. Irving’s companies. J.D. Irving also holds the largest licence over Crown land in New Brunswick and many argue the company controls the forestry industry in the province.

Following Cumberland’s presentation, Peter Gilbert, representing Stop Spraying New Brunswick, spoke about the forest crisis. He called for sustainable forestry practices that protect the province’s heritage while creating jobs today. A construction surveyor by trade, Gilbert, his wife, and two children live in Smithfield, southwest of Fredericton.

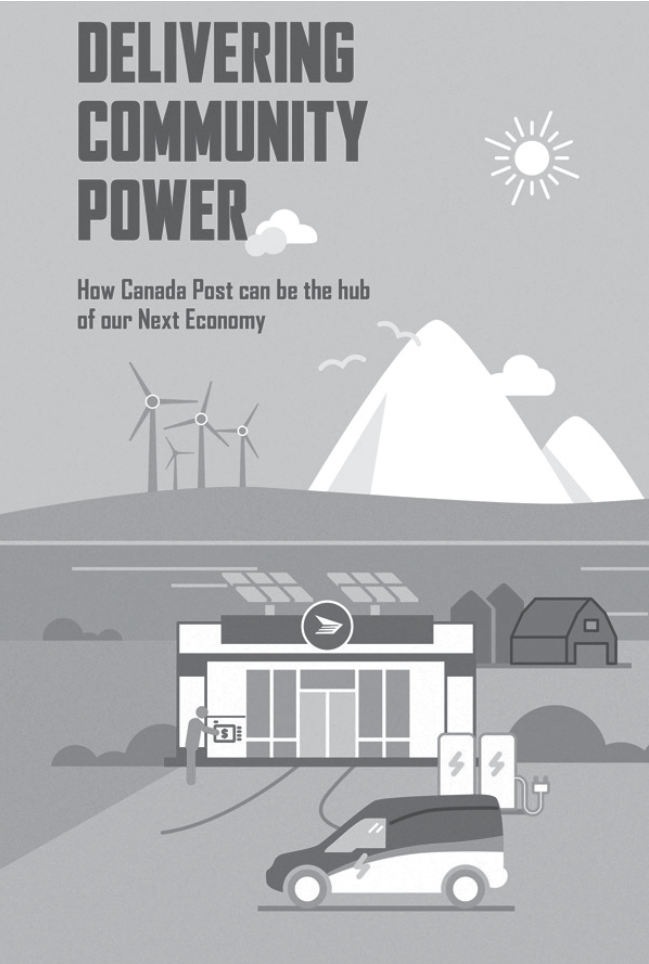
“If we want to stop spraying and actually increase jobs, the people of New Brunswick have to step up and defend

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Postal workers pitching solutions to climate change

By TRACY GLYNN

The NB Media Co-op interviewed Kristin MacEachern with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers’ Atlantic office about the union’s proposal, “Delivering Community Power,” that aims to tackle some big challenges such as climate change and local economies.



NBMC: In a nutshell, what is the “Delivering Community Power” proposal? Who is behind it? How did it originate?

KM: It looks like the post office we could have. It’s about imagining a public postal service that would lead a much needed change in how we think of our public services and the potential that exists through them to make our communities more inclusive, greener and accessible.

The “Delivering Community Power” initiative was taken on by a number of concerned groups consisting of The Leap Manifesto, Friends of Public Services, Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association (CPAA), Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), and Smart Change. These groups are united on many fronts, some of which include economic, environmental and social issues, and how our postal service can be adapted and expanded to assist in some of these critical issues. Canada Post is a powerful and trusted Canadian network that WE own, and we are all interested in developing it to its full potential.

“Delivering Community Power” looks at making Canada Post a green energy producing community hub, a local business supporter and providing new and improved services with something for everyone.

This initiative looks at power – renewable fleets, charging stations for electric vehicles, having the post offices powered by renewable energy and other examples that would make Canada Post a leader in changing the conversation on major challenges such as climate change with much needed actions versus rhetoric.

It also looks at the expansion of the services we provide such as door to door delivery where we would provide a

check in service for an aging population and people with mobility issues. This alone would serve to improve the quality of life for members in our communities.

“Delivery Community Power” is about making our post office an integral part of our communities with services that would enhance the lives of each and every one of us and for future generations.

NBMC: One of the many interesting things mentioned in the proposal is postal banking. How is the current banking system hurting people and how does this proposal attempt to make banking better?

KM: A postal bank would provide services to communities that are currently underserved, or not at all. It would also provide an alternative to payday lenders and the exorbitant fees they charge. It is not hard to go into a small community in any part of Canada and not be able to find a bank, but there is almost always a post office. We have many more post offices than even Tim Hortons in this country, and we should be utilizing that existing infrastructure. All we have to do to prove postal banking as a financially viable alternative is take a look at any one of the countries that have it now: Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Italy and France just to name a few. We all deserve the same services, and this is one way we could close the gap in many of the smaller communities that have long since been forgotten. A study completed shows that only 54 out of 615 First Nations communities are served by a local bank branch. Postal banking would offer this service to those communities as well.

NBMC: What has been the response so far to the proposal?

KM: During a cross Canada tour, Dru Oja Jay from Friends of Public Services in conjunction with CUPW met with community groups to discuss the type of post office we are proposing. The response to these public meetings was wonderful! We are all very concerned about our environment, our public services and building our economy so this initiative has something for everyone. Many senior organizations, community, environmental and public service groups are interested and pursuing these ideas along with us, and they have been vital in sharing this information with the rest of the population. The fact that there are many groups, associations, activists, community and union members working on this is inspiring! The amount of participation we are seeing is the reason this movement is where it is today and why support continues to grow.

NBMC: Postal workers in Canada have been behind other changes that have made lives better for working people. What are some of those achievements?

KM: Postal workers continue to fight for all, whether here in Canada or internationally. We stand in solidarity with all groups that continue to demand a better world and society. Changing the working lives for the better for everyone is one of the things CUPW prides itself on. There have been many gains in the labour movement with the help of CUPW such as maternity and parental leave and protections against sexual harassment. The equalization of some wages within our bargaining units is still a battle. Pay equity is still and will continue to be a major issue we will fight for, as well as winning the right to collective bargaining for all public sector workers and defending that right today.

For CUPW, our history encourages us to continue to engage in social activism because it is who we are, we have policies within our constitution that defines our orientation and ensures that this important work continues to be major part of what we struggle for. A people’s struggle is a people’s struggle, and we need to be united. Instead of worrying about “me,” we need to be worried about “us,” a collective group who are always stronger together.

NBMC: This proposal is a clear example of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers engaging in important social unionism at a time when the postal

workers are also facing struggles of their own. What are some of those struggles and why should all workers support these struggles?

KM: Even during this round of negotiations that we are currently in with Canada Post, CUPW is fighting for the working lives of the next generation of workers. We are demanding an end to the pay inequities between rural and suburban mail carriers and urban carriers and we are fighting to protect the pension plan for future workers.

NBMC: What do you plan to do next on “Delivering Community Power?” How can people support this proposal?

KM: We are sharing the information and materials far and wide in hopes that the public will also ask for this vision to become reality. We will continue to support our allies such as the Friends of Public Services as they promote these initiatives and provide opportunities for the public to meet and discuss these ideas. We will also continue to present and meet with Members of Parliaments, all levels of government, rural communities and all our allies to ask that they, along with us, demand more, imagine more, for our public postal service.



Syrian refugees in Fredericton are growing food this summer at a farm in Keswick Ridge. Ten families with the assistance of community volunteers have planted squash, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and herbs at the Conservation Council’s Tula Farm. The organization has partnered with the Multicultural Association of Fredericton to work with Syrian families to grow a garden that will produce food for the families this year. The project aims to support the newcomers wishing to work on farms or become farmers.
Photo by Angela Bosse.

Community Calendar

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

Cinema Política believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica Fredericton screens films on Friday nights at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. at 7:00pm. Check out the films and venues at: cinemapolitica.org. Cinema Politica Fredericton is back on Sept. 9 with Flin Flon Plaza, a film that examines HudBay’s mining operations from indigenous Cree territory in Canada to Maya Q’eqhi land in Guatemala. Contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

5 Days for the Forest. The Conservation Council’s 5 Days for the Forest will celebrate our forest during its fall glory. Events include: Monday, Sept. 19, 6 pm: Old Forest Hemlock Walk with Naturalist Dr. Jim Goltz; Tuesday, Sept. 20, 6 pm: OMISTA Local Chews & Brews at the Crowne Plaza; Wednesday, Sept. 21, 7:30 pm: TREEvia Night at The Grad House; Thursday, Sept. 22, 7:30 pm: Forest Gala with Gypsophilia at The Playhouse; Friday, Sept. 23, 6 pm: Film screening of APTN’s *A Beautiful Forest*. Visit: conservationcouncil.ca/5daysfortheForest. Contact: forest@conservationcouncil.ca.

Take Back the Night March. Join a march of women and children to stop sexual violence on Sept. 23, 8 pm, at Fredericton City Hall. The march will be followed by guest speakers and refreshments. All welcome.

Wolastoqiyik Sisters In Spirit Vigil. Tuesday, Oct. 4, 6-8 pm. Officer’s Square, 545 Queen St. Every year on October 4th we gather as a united front for social change and to spread awareness for the alarming amount of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and men across Canada. Visit www.sistersinspiritnb.ca for more details.

NB Media Co-op’s 7th Annual General Meeting

The NB Media Co-op chose to be a co-operative because we believed that it would provide a democratic model for producing, disseminating and sustaining media. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a time for our members to review the milestones and challenges of the past year and discuss the future of the NB Media Co-op. We will elect board of directors and editorial board at this meeting. The AGM will occur Tuesday, Sept. 29 at 6:00pm at McCain Hall, Room 102, St. Thomas University, Fredericton. Everyone is welcome to our annual meeting but you must be a member to vote! Not a member yet? Annual memberships are \$30. Join via PayPal online at nbmediacoop.org or send a cheque to NB Media Co-op at 180 Saint John St., Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9. We need your membership to sustain our work. For more information, contact info@nbmediacoop.org.

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Spraying forest lands opposed

their rights to their land,” Gilbert said. “We need to see a forest management policy that respects the natural diversity of the Acadian forest.”

Presenting data from nearby regions on the ratio of jobs created to timber harvested, Gilbert showed how New Brunswick’s record in creating forest jobs is consistently the worst. For those who take the time to analyze forest job creation statistics, it’s evident that provincial forest management strategies and practices are little more than the abuse of a public resource to benefit private interests.

Gilbert also told the Doaktown meeting that because the provincial government only listens to corporate voices, “the voice of the people is not heard” and no consideration is given to “healthy natural resources.”

“Things aren’t looking good for the Acadian Forest and things are looking terrible for wildlife,” he said. “We need diversity for a healthy forest ecosystem and diversity in a wide range of forest products. This is the least we can do to ensure a healthy human population and a strong and resilient forest-based economy.”

“We have to see equitable sharing of benefits,” Gilbert said. “The stranglehold on government policy by industry must end. We need to take back what was once ours.”

Dallas McQuarrie is a retired journalist and civil servant living in unceded Mi’kmaq territory in Kent County.