

Climate justice conference looks at environmental racism

(continued from page 1) ...Lickers while showing a picture of the Irving logo. Lickers, who works with Reclaim Turtle Island, shared hard truths of the impacts of settler colonialism. She drew attention to how agreements such as the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement signed between environmental non-governmental organizations and the forestry industry and those signed between Canadian mining companies and international non-governmental organizations ignore and affect indigenous resistance.

Prankster Sean Devlin, of ShitHarperDid.com who made national headlines in January for getting close to Prime Minister Stephen Harper at a Vancouver Board of Trade meeting to protest the Canadian government’s climate policies, had a sobering message for the final keynote talk: “To do this work is to figure out how to fight while we grieve.” He opened his talk with a wallpaper of images of only some of the estimated 800 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. He ended his talk by sharing stories and pictures of his mother’s homeland in the Philippines devastated by a typhoon, the country’s first PowerShift gathering and the relationships being built between activists in Canada and the Philippines.

PowerShift participants had the opportunity to take part in 101 workshops on combating oppression, fracking, shale gas and food commodification, hear about environmental racism from Vanessa Gray and local poet El Jones, get skills on non-violent direct action by long-time labour organizer Tony Tracy and learn how to be an effective storyteller by PowerShift organizer Amara Possian.

The resistance building got creative with Beehive Collective members presenting their giant narrative murals, “Mesoamerica Resiste!” and “The True Cost of Coal.” Dave Bailey led a workshop where participants built a 15 foot fracking rig while banners were painted with messages against the Energy East pipeline. Both props were used two days later, on Monday, March 31, at a protest at the Maritimes Energy Association meeting in Halifax, where two Mi’kmaq women interrupted the Nova Scotia Energy Minister’s address to the oil and gas industry association.

According to PowerShift organizers, “We’ve felt the emergency and growth of resistance to the tar sands, fracking and pipelines, led by First Nations across Canada. We’ve watched the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline grow in the U.S., and a global movement taking on fracking take off. Unions and workers are demanding green jobs and frontline communities are mobilizing against projects that threaten the land and water that affect their daily realities. There is a growing movement standing up against the fossil fuel industry and demanding a safe and just climate future.”

The first PowerShift gathering occurred at the University of New Maryland near Washington, D.C. in 2007. Over 6,000 young people from 50 states gathered there to demand environmental justice. PowerShift came to Canada two years later in 2009. Over 1,000 youth gathered in Ottawa to demand climate action. Between October 2013 and October 2015, PowerShift gatherings are planned across Canada to grow the movement for climate justice and build skills and strategies for collective action. The next PowerShift is planned in Ontario in the fall.

Community Calendar

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

- Dance & Delicacies.** Fri., May 9, 7:30-11:30pm. UNB Student Union Building, Fredericton. A fundraiser for the Multicultural Association of Fredericton’s Newcomer Scholarship Fund to assist newcomers to Canada with post-secondary education. Music by Vinyl2Bits, international hors d’oeuvres and desserts, silent auction and a cash bar. Tickets: \$40 each, \$75 for 2 or a table for 8 for \$300. Tickets on sale at MCAF, 28 Saunders St. For more information, contact MCAF at 506 454-8292.
- Rally for Our Forest.** Tues, May 13, 12:30pm. N.B. Legislature, Fredericton. The N.B. government’s new Forestry Strategy proposes to slash the proportion of public forest set aside to protect nature. The proposed Forest Management Agreement set to be signed by July 1 would effectively implement the Memorandum of Agreements signed with J.D. Irving and the forestry companies. Woodlot owners and workers must be given a viable shot at making a living here. Aboriginal treaties and rights must be respected. Organized by the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and the NB Federation of Woodlot Owners. For more information, call 506-458-8747 or email forest@conservationcouncil.ca.
- NB Media Co-op Story Meetings.** Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To find out the meeting time and venue, email info@nbmediacoop.org.
- Cinema Politica** believes in the power of art, not only to entertain, but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. Cinema Politica Fredericton and Sackville take a break in the summer but watch out for any special screenings. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

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Who’s afraid of the public postal service?

Workers respond as Canada Post begins conversion from door-to-door delivery



Artist, Sarah Mangle, has created two postcards featuring statements in support of home delivery service. The postcard featuring the image above as well as a second design can be ordered at www.etsy.com/shop/SarahMangle

By TONI MacAFEE

- Halifax - On February 20, Canada Post announced the 11 communities as the first sites to be converted from door-to-door delivery to community mailboxes.
- Two Atlantic Canada communities are included on the list: Bedford and Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia. Both communities are part of the Halifax Regional Municipality. According to Canada Post, 9,950 addresses are slated to lose their door-to-door delivery, including over 500 business points of call. And while Canada Post appears to be proceeding full-steam ahead, opposition to their ill-conceived plans continues to grow.
- Postal workers in communities across the country are holding public town hall meetings and hosting information tables in malls, farmers markets, and other community events where the cutbacks have been openly discussed. Judging from the feedback we have received, it’s clear that the Canadian public is opposed to the cuts announced by Canada Post.
- Canada Post and the Conservative government seem to have forgotten that our public postal service belongs to Canadians. How Canada Post operates and what services it provides should be determined by its shareholders, the public. The fate of this successful public institution should not be left to Canada Post or the federal government to mismanage and plunder.
- As part of its “plan”, Canada Post says it will hold public consultations in the communities slated for services cuts. However, as postal workers, we know all too well what “consultation” means to Canada Post; for Canada Post, consultation is anything but meaningful or productive. If they actually wanted to consult with Canadians, they ought to proceed with the Canada Post Service Charter Review which was scheduled to happen this year.
- The reality is that neither Canada Post nor the Conservative government want to hear from Canadians about these cuts in service because they know they are neither supported nor wanted by Canadians. The “public consultation” Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra claims occurred in 46 communities prior to their December 11 announcement was by invitation only. We have learned since then that in many of these communities, local levels of government and even some Members of Parliament were not included in these “public consultations.”

- Canada Post has a requirement under the Canadian Postal Service Charter to consult with communities:
- “Where Canada Post plans to change delivery methods Canada Post will communicate, either in person or in writing, with affected customers and communities at least one month in advance to explain decisions and explore options that address customer concerns.”
- The federal government and Conservative MPs are ignoring the needs and interests of their own constituents rather than holding Canada Post accountable for its actions. Instead of toeing the party line for their political leader, these MPs should realize that they are elected by the people in their ridings, not by Stephen Harper. Ignoring the desires of their constituents will come with a price.
- As Canada Post moves forward with their plans, resistance continues to mount as pressure to reverse the cuts grows from all levels of government. Large and small, municipalities across the country are passing resolutions opposed to the cuts. Over 20 city councils have adopted resolutions and many more are examining ways of diminishing the negative impacts of these plans on their constituents. Cities such as Charlottetown, Antigonish, Miramichi, Dieppe, and larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver have all adopted resolutions opposing the cuts.
- The louder and more sustained the opposition, the harder it will be for the federal government to ignore. Make sure your voice is heard by doing one or all of the following:
- Sign a petition;
- Call, write, or visit your MP, MLA, city council, Mayor and let them know you oppose the cuts;
- Contact the CUPW Local in your community and offer to assist in the campaign;
- Write Canada Post and voice your opposition;
- Put a sign in your window or a lawn sign in your yard;
- Attend a town hall;
- Stay up to date on upcoming events in your community so that you can participate and lend your voice to the growing opposition.
- Canada Post and the Conservative government need to be held accountable for putting our public postal service at risk. They cannot ignore the real owners of our postal service – the Canadian public – and the only way to ensure they hear us is to send our message loud and clear through our collective actions. Canadians are saying they want expanded services not less services. We must demand open and transparent consultations on the future of Canada Post.
- Keep up to date at on the Save Canada Post campaign at www.cupw.ca or follow on twitter @cupw
- Toni MacAfee is the Education and Organization Officer with the Atlantic Region chapter of the CUPW.*
- First published by the Halifax Media Co-op’s The Tide, March 2014, Vol. 6, No. 2.*

In Brief

- The RCMP are confirming that 1,200 **Indigenous women** in Canada have been murdered or have gone missing in the last 30 years.
- In a clear move to support the **fish farm industry**, the Harper government is pushing forth deregulations including a planned exemption from a Fisheries Act prohibition against dumping harmful substances in the ocean. The government and industry officials claim the change will not alter current practices or pose environmental threats.
- Killings of environmental and land rights activists** across the world have tripled over the past decade. An average of two activists are killed per week, according to a new report by the group Global Witness. The group documented the killing of 147 activists in 2012, compared with 51 in 2002.
- Alex Reynoso and Merilyn Topacio Reynoso, a father and daughter resisting the Escobal silver and gold mine in Guatemala, were attacked by unknown assailants on April 13. They were on their way home to Matequesuintla after attending an activity in a nearby community. Merilyn, who was 16 years old, was shot and killed. Her father was severely wounded and remains in intensive care. Both are known for their **resistance to Canadian mining** in their region, where 10,000 of 10,600 people have voted against mining. Their region is affected by Escobal mine, which is owned by Tahoe Resources and Goldcorp, Canadian-owned mining companies.



A large crowd gathered in Guatemala on April 15 to mourn the death of Merilyn Topacio Reynoso. About 60 people gathered at Goldcorp’s Toronto office on May 1 to lay flowers in memory of Topacio. At her funeral, Topacio’s mother promised, “The resistance doesn’t end here, my love.” Photo by Danilo Zuleta.