

# Seize the moment, stand with Elsipogtog

By DERRICK O’KEEFE

Canada’s colonial past is present, however much Prime Minister Stephen Harper seeks to obfuscate the reality of the history of this land. The violence in Rexton in mid-October serves as a prime example of how denial of past colonialism helps to perpetuate ongoing colonial relationships. The current flashpoint is the small town of Rexton, New Brunswick, where the Elsipogtog First Nation and their supporters are facing down massive RCMP repression of their protests against activity by SWN Resources, a company that is carrying out seismic testing for proposed oil and gas fracking operations in the area.

On October 17, hundreds of RCMP officers, including snipers and many heavily armed officers, moved in against Elsipogtog land defenders who have maintained a protest camp and presence in the area for months. Dozens were arrested, and there were reports of rubber bullets fired by police forces. Several RCMP vehicles were set ablaze.

Fracking may have been the latest spark, but Harper’s government has been fanning the flames for years—denying the true colonial history of Canada even while continuing to actively undermine the sovereignty and rights of First Nations. The day before the raid in Rexton, on Oct. 16th, the Conservative government presented its much-hyped Speech from the Throne, asserting that the founders of Canada “dared to seize the moment that history offered. Pioneers, then, few in number, reached across a vast continent” and “forged an independent country where none would have otherwise existed.”

This was no one-off rhetorical flourish. This was just the latest expression of “Harper’s History.” In 2009, Harper, with a straight face, informed a press conference at a G20 summit that Canada “had no history of colonialism.”

### Colonialism denial

These seem like astounding and easily disproven assertions, but colonialism denial is real and useful because it serves colonialism present; it serves the primary purpose of the Conservative government today, which is to push through resource extraction projects—

many of which are in direct contradiction with Indigenous peoples—at all costs.

The repression at Rexton and Harper’s latest bald-faced lie about Canadian history come in the same week that James Anaya, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, issued a scathing report after a nine-day visit across the country. Anaya concluded that “Canada faces a crisis when it comes to the situation of indigenous peoples of the country.”

Rexton, New Brunswick – Elsipogtog – now takes its place in a long and shameful history, joining Oka, Ipperwash, Gustafsen Lake and so many more. At Ipperwash, unarmed protester Dudley George was murdered by the Ontario Provincial Police. At Gustafsen, 14 Sun Dancers asserting indigenous sovereignty were met with 400 RCMP officers, troops, armoured personnel carriers and 70,000 rounds of ammunition. And this is just recent history.

Contrary to the myth of seamless and peaceful nation-building, the modern Canadian state was built through the projection of force over and against indigenous peoples. The RCMP, and before it the Northwest Mounted Police, was formed with this express purpose. This is the colonial reality behind all assertions of the “rule of law,” past and present. It’s all about whose laws get enforced. Indigenous law? International law? Not in Harper’s Canada today, where the law of corporate profit rules. Only we can change that, and solidarity actions with the courageous land defenders of Elsipogtog are the first order of business.

Susan Levi-Peters, a former chief, makes it clear that protesters remain determined in the face of RCMP sniper rifles, rubber bullets and tear gas: “Nobody is leaving ... We don’t want shale gas here. We have been asking for consultations for three years now and nothing has happened. Instead they just put our people in jail.”

Idle No More has already shown us that creative, determined actions can reach across a vast continent, creating powerful movements where none would otherwise have existed. So let us seize the moment that history is offering. Let us stand with Elsipogtog.

*Find your local solidarity action at [wearepowershift.ca](http://wearepowershift.ca).*

*Derrick O’Keefe is a writer, editor, and activist based in Vancouver. This article first appeared on the [Georgia Straight](http://Georgia Straight) website.*

# Food not just for foodies



**The Fredericton Food Bank was transformed into the Greener Village Community Food Centre. Greener Village celebrated its grand opening in early September, attracting hundreds of visitors who toured the facilities and enjoyed a local breakfast of pancakes and beans.** Photo by Leah Anstis.

(continued from page 1) ...access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences...” (World Food Summit, 1996). We can break that definition down into the five “A’s”: Availability, Accessibility, Adequacy, Acceptability, and Agency.

Is food insecurity just a neoliberal euphemism for hunger? Perhaps it is, but it is also a more nuanced picture of how social, political and economic situations influence people’s relationship with food and to our food system. Food insecurity is definitely about hunger. Being hungry is how most people experience food insecurity. But food insecurity also involves not eating adequate food or balanced meals because of economic barriers—skipping meals, cutting portion sizes and worrying that there isn’t enough food to last. This presents not just a picture of hunger, but a picture of how the food system is broken in Canada. Often the numbers of “hungry people” are reported based on food bank usage, however the PROOF report found that only one quarter of food insecure people used food banks.

Food banks can be demoralizing and the charitable model hardly addresses the roots of food insecurity—namely income and housing. It must also be made clear that we are not talking just about people on social assistance and disability pensions—as our neo-liberal discourse would have us believe. The majority of food insecure people in Canada are employed. This reflects the last “A” of food security—Agency. When people are not afforded control in their decisions about food, what is it saying about how the rest of society perceives them?

Instead of just donating to the food bank during the holidays (which, by the way, is still very important in our current food system), why not also participate in your food system. Join one of the many food organizations in your city, or start a community food hub. Start a garden and share the bounty with others. Food is not just for foodies, food is for everyone.

*Sarah-Jane Thiessen is a student with the Campus Food Strategy Group at St. Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick.*



**Thousands of scientists and supporters held demonstrations across Canada, including in Fredericton seen here, against the muzzling of government scientists and the de-funding of research on Sept. 16th. Speakers at the rallies highlighted the need for funding basic science and allowing federal researchers to communicate their scientific findings freely with the public. "It was public science that provided compelling evidence that smoking was harmful when tobacco manufacturers were claiming that cigarettes were safe," said Ottawa-based physician Dr. Kapil Khatte. The Harper government has been heavily criticized by the global science community for its strict communication policies imposed on government scientists and funding cuts.** Photo by Marie-Josée Abgrall.

# Community Calendar

**For details and updated event listings, visit [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org). To list your event, email: [community@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:community@nbmediacoop.org).**

**13th Annual Silver Wave Film Festival.** Nov. 7-10 in Fredericton. 91 films over 4 days. 56 films made by New Brunswick filmmakers. Silver Wave is co-presenting the film Last Chance with Cinema Politica. The award-winning film is about 5 asylum seekers who flee their native countries to escape homophobic violence. They face hurdles integrating into Canada, fear deportation, and anxiously await a decision that will change their lives forever. Buy festival passes at the NB Film Co-op, Rm 131, Charlotte Street Arts Centre, 732 Charlotte St., Fredericton; tel. 506 455-1632. Visit: [www.swfilmfest.com](http://www.swfilmfest.com) for festival program.

**Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network Annual Gathering.** This year's theme is Media in the Global Economy: Corporate Media, Human Rights Defenders, and Growing Alternatives. We will explore the mass media’s role in shaping perceptions and politics and how it is affecting the work of human rights defenders in Latin America, as well as look into the role that alternative media plays in struggles both here and in Latin America. With Haitian writer and activist Jean St. Vil and investigative journalist Dawn Paley. Last day to register: Nov. 15. Bursaries are limited so apply early. For more information or to register, contact Kirk Morrison at [kirkus\\_morrison@hotmail.com](mailto:kirkus_morrison@hotmail.com).

**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](mailto: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. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays during the fall and winter at 7:00 pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. In Sackville, films are screened monthly at Mt. Allison University. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: [cinemapolitica.org](http://cinemapolitica.org).

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# In Brief

- Women rallied in Fredericton, Moncton and St. Stephen to stop violence against women in **Take Back the Night** marches in September and October. Over the years, Take Back The Night has become internationally known as a way to take a stand against sexual violence.
- **Dr. Tarek Loubani and John Greyson** were released from an Egyptian prison on Oct. 6. Loubani, a London, Ontario based emergency physician and Western University professor who grew up in Bathurst, NB, and Greyson, a filmmaker and York University professor, were held without charge since August 15 when they were in the country en route to Gaza. Greyson was hoping to document Loubani’s humanitarian work in the occupied territories.
- Almost **200 unjustly jailed migrants** are on a hunger strike after being moved from the Toronto West jail to the Central East jail, two hours outside of Toronto. “My wife and four daughters used to see me once a week, but they can’t because this is so far and transportation is expensive,” said Eric Kusi, originally from Liberia, in the *Toronto Star*.
- An investigation by the *Toronto Star* revealed that the **Toronto police continue to target people of colour** disproportionately, stopping them for questioning and searches and adding information about them to a database. “Looking solely at young black male Toronto residents, aged 15 to 24, the *Star* found the number who were ‘carded’ at least once between 2008 and 2012—in the police patrol zone where they live—actually exceeds by a small margin the number of young black males, aged 15 to 24, who live in Toronto,” reads the *Star* report.