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 Reston 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 Reston, 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 the 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 Reston, on Oct. 16th, the Conservative government presented its much-hyped Speech from the Throne, asserting that the founders of Canada “dared to seize this 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

The claim, like astounding and easily disproven assertions, but colonialism denial is real and useful because of its colonialism pretext: it serves as 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’ land and culture.

The repression at Reston and Harper’s latest bald-faced lie about Canada’s 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.”

But this week, the RCMP, and before it the Northwest Mounted Police, was just the latest in a long and shameful history, joining Oka, Ipperwash, Gustafson Lake and so many more. At Ipperwash, unarmed Ojibway First Nations people, a shift was made by the Ontario Provincial Police. At Gustafson, 34 Sun Dancers asserting indigenous sovereignty were met with 400 RCMP officers, troops, armored 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 just the latest in a long and shameful history, joining Oka, Ipperwash, Gustafson Lake and so many more. At Ipperwash, unarmed Ojibway First Nations people, a shift was made by the Ontario Provincial Police. At Gustafson, 34 Sun Dancers asserting indigenous sovereignty were met with 400 RCMP officers, troops, armored personnel carriers and 70,000 rounds of ammunition. And this is just recent history.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediaaco.org.

13th Annual Silver Wave Film Festival. Nov. 7-10 in Fredericton. 93 films over 4 days. 56 films made by New Brunswick filmmakers. All films part of “Last Chance with Cinema Politica.” The award-winning film is about 5 asylum seekers who flee their native countries to escape political violence and, instead of integrating into Canada, fear deportation, and anxiously await a decision that could change their 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.silverwavefilmfestival.ca for complete information.

Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network Annual Gathering. This year marks a decade of unity and solidarity, from Imagine A Community, Human Rights Defenders, and Growing Alternatives. Where: Fredericton. How: More info at info@arsnetwork.ca. When: Dec. 6-8. Cost: Registration fee to cover expenses. Contact: info@arsnetwork.ca or visit www.arsnetwork.ca.

Eating local has never been more important than now, for the good of our planet and for our health, in that order. Why not start with a picture of how the food you eat is produced. Are you ready to learn about your food? Are you ready to share the bounty with others. Food is not just for foodies.

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 Virtis.

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. For the past three years, Take Back The Night has become internationally known as a way to take a stand against sexual violence. It started in Montreal after a woman was murdered and dismembered from an Egyptian prison on Oct. 6. Loubian, a London, Ont., woman that was添加剂 into the five “A’s:” Avalaion, 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 and food insecurity laws are tied to each other. Nut sometimes what is needed is more food security education and conversations for three years now and nothing has happened. Instead of just saying “we need more food security,” we need to be more specific about what we mean by “food security.”

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