

# In Brief...

- Mi'kmaq people have set up a partial blockade of the Trans-Canada Highway in **opposition to the exploration of oil and gas drilling** by PetroWorth Resources, scheduled to begin later this year on the shore of Lake Ainslie in western Cape Breton. Emmett Peters, local sweat lodge keeper, criticized the lack of media coverage, noting that 200 people setting up a blockade merits coverage.
- The Amalgamated Transit Union, representing Acadian Coach Line workers, is calling on the provincial governments of the Maritimes to set up a **publicly-funded intercity bus service** similar to Saskatchewan's. Groupe Orléans Express, Acadian Coach Lines' parent company, plans to close their operations in the Maritimes by the end of November. Private companies are applying to the provincial energy and utility boards to run an intercity bus service.
- An alleged unit of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) blew up heavy equipment at the **Cerrejon coal mine** in La Guajira, Colombia on Sept. 4th. NB Power sources its coal from this mine. No one was injured in this attack, the fifth this year, on the world's largest open-pit coal mine. Cerrejon is owned by a multinational mining companies, BHP Billiton, Anglo American and Xstrata. Communities surrounding Cerrejon have been violently displaced for the mine and Adolfo Montes Gonzales, a union leader at Cerrejon, was murdered in 2008. Despite ongoing attacks on union leaders and violence at mine sites, Canada continues to promote Colombia as a safe and secure place to do business. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) partly funded the rewriting of Colombia's mining laws, making Colombia a more attractive place for Canadian mining companies to do business.
- **U.S. Iraq War resister Kimberly Rivera** voluntarily presented herself at the U.S.-Canada border on the morning of Sept. 20th, after requests to have Canadian Immigration Minister Jason Kenney process her humanitarian and compassionate application were denied. Rivera was immediately arrested and detained, and transferred to military custody. The mother of 4 children was transferred to a military facility in Fort Carson, Colorado, on Sept. 25th where she faces punishment for refusing to return to Iraq, an illegal war. A federal court judge denied her request for a stay of removal, finding arrest and detention to be speculative.
- Thousands marked **Occupy Wall Street's first anniversary** in New York City on the weekend of Sept. 15-17th. They marched on the financial district, celebrated with rebel songs and got schooled at the Free University. Occupy committees have been active on a variety of fronts over the past year including organizing against the commodification of education, providing support to immigrant workers fighting for their rights, defending housing rights and mobilizing against pipelines that would carry shale gas in the state of New York.



**gkisedtanamoogk of the Wampanoag, the Wabanaki Confederacy Council's fire keeper, on the banks of the Wulustuk River (Saint John River) at St. Mary's at the Wabanaki Confederacy Conference on Sept. 2, 2012.** Photo by Miles Howe of the Halifax Media Co-op.

Non-Indigenous peoples were invited for the first time in hundreds of years to participate in the last two days of the Wabanaki Confederacy Gathering. About 150 people attended. The Confederacy includes the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot peoples. Participants spoke of the need for allies in the process of decolonization. They spoke of the obligations found in the peace and friendship territories while stressing that land and water has never been ceded by the indigenous peoples of the Wabanaki territory.

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# How students stopped a tuition hike: Quebec students bring message to New Brunswick



**Rushdia Mehreen and Alex Zawadzki-Turcotte, two representatives from the student coalition, CLASSE, spoke in Fredericton on Sept. 20th.** Photo by Charles Lessard for *The Brunswickan*.

By ADAM MELANSON

- Quebec students have a lot to celebrate and New Brunswick students concerned about education and student debt are taking note. The Quebec student group CLASSE recently completed a three-day speaking tour in New Brunswick from September 19th-21st with stops in Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John.
- The tour came in the wake of good news for Quebec students: newly elected Quebec Premier Pauline Marois of the Parti Québécois had cancelled the proposed tuition hike and repealed controversial Bill 78, which restricted rights to assembly and freedoms of expression.
- CLASSE, which stands for the Coalition Large de l'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale (Broad Coalition of the Association for Union Solidarity), is the main group behind the 2012 Quebec student strikes, which will go down in history as the longest and largest student strike ever to occur in North America. Quebec students took to the streets in the hundreds of thousands to oppose a 75 per cent increase in tuition proposed by the recently defeated Charest Liberal government.
- The two representatives of CLASSE who spoke in Fredericton were Alex Zawadzki-Turcotte of the Social Struggles Committee and Rushdia Mehreen of the Mobilization Committee. They spoke on a variety of topics ranging from the nature of education, to CLASSE as a feminist organization, to how Quebec students are effectively organized to win student demands.
- CLASSE is opposed to the commercialization of universities and is worried about the effect this trend is having on the quality and content of a university education. For CLASSE, higher education teaches people the critical skill needed for democracy to function and how to learn; and is not just a means to pump narrowly skilled workers into the so-called knowledge economy.
- The CLASSE representatives pointed to the cancellation of the tuition hike as a victory for the student movement and a clear example of the success of the use of student strikes as a

tactic. Despite the victory, the members of CLASSE remain wary of the new Quebec government's possible future plans for tuition increases indexed to inflation.

The movement credits its organizational structure with much of their success. While in other parts of Canada, student movements have tended to be top-down organizations, CLASSE is a federation of student departmental organizations governed by democratic general assemblies at the local level. The ability of CLASSE to effectively engage in direct actions and mobilize for a strike is attributed to this democratic model.

Actions and positions taken by CLASSE are always initiated bottom up and never top down. "Because of the process, every student has power to impact and debate the positions taken at the national level," said Mehreen.

The structure of CLASSE has allowed them to credibly pursue what they call "combative syndicalism," which recognizes the need of students to collectively fight to win specific demands. During the talks, this approach was credited with ensuring the lowest tuition fees in Canada for Quebec students, coupled with the highest rate of first generation university students and the highest enrolment of students from middle income backgrounds.

Students have honed their skills at collective demands over the past several years. Successful struggles of seven previous student strikes have resulted in Quebec students paying the lowest tuition in Canada and for the successful financial aid programs that they have today.

The speaking tour from CLASSE comes at a critical time for New Brunswick students. The presidents of New Brunswick universities are currently in negotiations with the provincial government to decide the funding levels of universities, and consequently, the tuition schedule over the next four years. Students, professors, university staff, and community members are being excluded from the negotiations.

Tuition fees rose by \$200 at New Brunswick universities last year and by an additional \$175 this year; this means that over the past two years, students have paid an extra \$575 in tuition fees towards their degree than those who graduated two years ago.

The Alward government and university presidents in New Brunswick have made it clear that this trend will likely continue and that students can expect similar tuition increases over the next four years.

Kate Price, a Saint Thomas University student with Students for Direct Democracy who helped to organize the tour, asked "Why is the government forced to negotiate with students in Quebec, but in New Brunswick, the provincial government rarely feels the need to even feign interest in students issues?"

This year's provincial budget was the first in over five years not to mention the funding of post-secondary education.

"Do Quebec students deserve to be called 'greedy' and 'entitled', as they are often labelled by the reactionary media; or should we be taking notes on their methods?" asked Micah O'Donnell, a University of New Brunswick student who attended the Fredericton event.

"New Brunswick students are taking notice and maybe it is time to attempt something similar here," added O'Donnell.

## 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)

- **Summit on Poverty.** The Common Front for Social Justice is organizing Summits on Poverty, in Bathurst on Oct. 17 and in Moncton on Oct. 20. The Summits' theme is An Economy for Everyone! The Summit will address the growing income gap between the rich and the poor and the impacts this has on our society. Contact [fcjsnb@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:fcjsnb@nbnet.nb.ca) for the programme and registration form.
- **Films en Acadie.** Film lovers in Acadia will be able to see new National Film Board films on the big screen this fall from Sept. 30 to Dec. 20. Screenings start at 7 pm on Sundays in Pointe-de-l'Église (Baie Sainte-Marie), Mondays in Moncton and Caraquet, Tuesdays in Fredericton and some Thursdays in Edmundston. For the season program and locations, visit: [blogue.onf.ca/category/les-rendez-vous-de-lonf-en-acadie/](http://blogue.onf.ca/category/les-rendez-vous-de-lonf-en-acadie/)
- **Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network Annual Gathering.** Nov. 9-11 at the Tatamagouche Centre, Tatamagouche, NS. Exploring movements of resistance and creative alternatives in Latin America and in Canada including movements defending indigenous territory, the right to education, labour organizing and local economic development initiatives. Contact Brian O'Neill at [oneillnatural@gmail.com](mailto:oneillnatural@gmail.com)
- **Cinema Politica's** documentaries take us to places like Afghanistan, Palestine, Jamaica, the Congo, indigenous territories and prisons where dehumanization and destruction wreaked by capitalism and colonialism warrant our examination, analysis and action. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays during the fall and winter at 7 pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. In Moncton, films are screened the first Monday of the month at the United Way Boardroom, Suite T210, 22 Church St. In Sackville, films are screened monthly on Wednesdays at Mount Allison University. Cinema Politica chapters also exist in Sussex (Fundy), Bathurst, Taymouth and Saint John. Check out film schedules of the locals or start your own chapter at: [www.cinemapolitica.org](http://www.cinemapolitica.org)

visit [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org)!

## La Bikery Co-op

- (continued from page 1) ...research of other bicycle centres fed into a solid business plan and budget, which secured funding from the Community Inclusion Network, the City of Moncton, and Mountain Equipment Co-op.
- Over the summer, City of Moncton crews and members of La Bikery renovated the two-room space donated by the City and equipped the shop with tools and two work stations. "With almost 60 members already we are really looking forward to opening the shop," says Herc.
- The co-op is located right on the riverfront trail in the old fire station at 120 Assomption Boulevard.
- La Bikery will rely on its members' energies and imaginations to help build capacity and expand its vision. Membership is a one-time share of \$5 and members will be encouraged to volunteer five hours annually to qualify for membership discounts on bike parts and workshops.
- The Co-operative will host social events, as well as cycling and safety workshops, partnering with community organisations throughout the year to create events encouraging more people to get on their bicycles. All of La Bikery's activities and spaces will aim to be inclusive, bilingual, and welcoming.
- La Bikery's Grand Opening will be on October 20th and will be accompanied by a Tweed Ride from Victoria Park to the Riverfront. So get your best tweed, your bicycle, and your friends and come celebrate the opening of La Bikery.
- *Amanda Hachey is a founding member of La Bikery and works as a Co-op Developer with the Co-operative Enterprise Council of NB.*