



The Brief

Vol. 6 No. 1

A publication of the NB Media Co-op

September 2014

nbmediacoop.org

NB Media Co-op is five! A word of thanks and an invitation



Shale gas resistance has been one of the top stories covered by the NB Media Co-op. Bruce Northrup, then Minister of Natural Resources Minister, and Alma Brooks, Maliseet elder from St. Mary's First Nation, are seen here surrounded by shale gas opponents and media at a brief occupation of the Centennial Building in Fredericton in August 2011. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

By TRACY GLYNN, SARAH KARDASH, ADAM MELANSON (BOARD OF DIRECTORS); MATTHEW HAYES, JULIE MICHAUD, RUTH BREEN, CHRISTINE COOK (EDITORIAL BOARD) & JUDY BURWELL (MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR)

Five years ago, the founders of the NB Media Co-op stayed up all night to fill the pages of our news website in time for a New Brunswick Day 2009 launch. Days before, we had gathered with excitement as the boxes of the first edition of *The Brief* arrived. We were perhaps over-ambitious with our launch date and our desire to immediately start covering under-reported stories. We somehow crammed six stories into our first one-page broadsheet edition of *The Brief*. We launched the NB Media Co-op at Fredericton's Wilmot Park, showing off our fancy banner, distributing *The Brief*, painting faces of kids and taking our first memberships.

The NB Media Co-op was formed in 2009 following a successful New Brunswick Social Forum in 2008 in Fredericton where 200 people rooted in a variety of social movements gathered under the hopeful banner, Another New Brunswick and World are Possible. Following the adage, "Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media," we did just that and the NB Media Co-op was born months later.

The founders of the NB Media Co-op chose the not-for-profit co-operative model as they felt it to be the most democratic model for producing and disseminating media. Free from the constraints of the profit motive, advertisers and state funding, the NB Media Co-op is able to tell stories on the side of people without fear of censorship. We cover stories from the perspectives of those ignored or misrepresented in our corporate media. We aim to combat the anti-worker sentiment found in corporate media and the effects that it has on public policies and the lives of workers.

Over the years, we've told stories that the corporate and state media refused to tell. We've helped cultivate journalists so that they can tell the stories of their own lives through words and photographs. We've also uncovered the many forgotten beautiful moments of our history when the people of Wabanaki or New Brunswick stood up for equality and justice for themselves, their neighbours and for people all over the world. We've organized insightful talks and panel discussions on the media's coverage of current events and social problems with activists, thinkers and trained journalists.

In a province with a virtual media monopoly in the local news market, and where major news networks are understaffed and have to focus on issues that will draw a broad audience from all major regional municipalities, the NB Media Co-op has found a niche covering local struggles and events that the bigger players are unable or unwilling to delve into.

Some of our memorable stories and thoughtful commentary have included:

- the plight of the people of rural Penobscis who blame the loss of their well water to potash mining and bad air days to Corridor's gas operations;
- why Tobique residents took over the hydro-dam on their territory;
- large mobilizations against the proposed sale of NB Power;
- the inspiring Idle No More, Occupy and student movements that resonated with and mobilized New Brunswickers;
- faculty strikes at UNB and Mount Allison University and the postal worker lockout;
- pay equity demands for workers in group home, home support, childcare and transition home sectors;
- the death of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the closure of the Fredericton Morgentaler Clinic and the ongoing fight for accessible reproductive healthcare in New Brunswick;
- how a St. Thomas University student backed by fellow students and faculty shone the light on inequalities and violence experienced by trans people;
- the story of Roger LeBlanc, a sick miner from Eel River Crossing who is demanding

compensation for workplace illness after decades of work at the Brunswick lead and zinc smelter in Belledune;

- first hand accounts of front line resistance to shale gas in Elsipogtog, Rexton and Stanley;
- the brave actions being taken in the face of abuses of Canadian mining companies by visitors to our region from Guatemala, El Salvador, the Philippines and Indonesia;
- small acts of resistance and efforts at alternative ways of living like those of Fredericton community organizers to keep their posters on poles and save the north side berry fields, Sackville's Open Sky Cooperative that gives organic gardening to people with mental health challenges and Moncton's La Bikery Co-operative;
- the city of Fredericton's cuts to fire fighting services;
- critical analysis of the New Brunswick government's poverty reduction strategy;
- concerns of New Brunswickers over clearcutting and herbicide spraying the public forest;
- New Brunswick's connection to Colombian blood coal;
- Harper's rollback of Employment Insurance and cuts to refugee healthcare; and
- Canada's role in the coup of Haiti's democratically-elected government and Canada's complicity in ongoing war crimes in Gaza.

The NB Media Co-op is a labour of political commitment, public service and hope for a more humane world. It's a labour that we share with dozens of volunteers at any given time. They include: editors, writers, photo/video/audio journalists, board members (we're an incorporated non-profit co-operative), a website whiz, university student interns, labour unions that financially contribute and all those working behind-the-scenes—those asking people to become a member and donate, those sharing our stories on Facebook and Twitter, and those hitting the streets to distribute *The Brief* throughout the province of New Brunswick. We thank all of you!

We share this five year experience with many unforgettable people covered in our stories and with our readers. Thank you for sharing your stories and thank you for reading.

Not a member yet or is it time to renew? Sign up today online at www.nbmediacoop.org or check out sign up information on the back of this paper.

Of course there is still lots of room to grow and improve as a media outlet. Join us and help us make it happen. We welcome your story ideas, news stories and commentaries, editing and fact-checking skills, social media likes, shares and retweets, and distribution of *The Brief* at our still fledgling co-op. We meet monthly at story meetings in Fredericton. Get in touch if you would like to join any of these efforts. We can be reached at info@nbmediacoop.org.

Be sure to join us at this year's Annual General Meeting scheduled for the evening of Tuesday, September 30 at 6:00pm at Conservor House, 180 Saint John Street in Fredericton. The event will begin with a panel of newsmakers called "Media and Movements."

Thanks again and here's to another five years!

Indigenous teenager's life in danger; doctors urge Eel Ground First Nation to act

By DALLAS McQUARRIE

Shania Simoneau's life is in danger. Doctors say that mould in the Simoneau home on the Eel Ground First Nation is a threat to Shania's life because of her severe asthma. The Eel Ground First Nation, however, has so far turned a deaf ear to the urgent warnings of three physicians as well as the family's anguished pleas for help.

Annie Simoneau, 43, and her children, Shania, 17, James, 14, and Kendra, 10, are members of the Eel Ground First Nation, living on the reserve just upstream from Newcastle on the Miramichi River.

In November 2013, Dr. Joe Rigley of the South Side Medical Centre in Miramichi wrote to the Eel Ground First Nation Housing Council. Dr. Rigley informed the band that "Shania Simoneau has severe asthma and has tested allergies for mould" and prescribed "a mould free environment" for the teenager.

Saying Shania's asthma is "uncontrolled despite maximal therapy," Dr. Rigley, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Canada, issued a dire warning about the possible consequences of leaving her in the house the family occupies: "If she continues on as she is now, it is very likely that she may be left crippled from a pulmonary standpoint and I think that certainly there would be some risk of a fatal exacerbation."

Shania's mother, Annie Simoneau, says that band housing for families in need is available on the Eel Ground First Nation. Each year, such families can apply to rent band housing built by the federal Department of Indian Affairs for low-income families. Families apply to the Band Council Housing Committee, which then makes recommendations about who should get such housing.

"In the last few years, the number of band homes allotted to families in need has varied between two and eight," Simoneau says. For the last two years, she has been applying to rent the band housing that could save her daughter's life.

At least that's the way the system is supposed to work. The Simoneau family, however, seems invisible to the Eel Ground Band Housing Committee. "I've been waiting for two years," Simoneau says. "If I move off the reserve, our family is no longer a priority, and we'll never be able to live here."

Simoneau does not understand why the Band Council does not want to help band members who want to be part of the community. "We are members of the Eel Ground First Nation and we want to live as band members," says Simoneau.

Less than two weeks after Dr. Rigley's ominous letter telling the Eel Ground Housing Council that Shania's life was in danger, a concerned Emergency Room physician at the Miramichi Regional Hospital wrote a letter to the Eel Ground Housing Committee, Chief George Ginnish, and the Band Council.

Dr. Michal Haydon again informed the band that Shania was "a patient with significant asthma ... who has required at times aggressive treatment in the Emergency Room for her asthma." His note says that "from a medical perspective, given this patient's condition, this would be an issue of some priority."

Dr. Haydon's letter to the Eel... *(continued on page 2)*



The Simoneau children, James, 14, Shania, 17, Kendra, 10, with their mother Annie. Photo from Annie Simoneau.