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The Dominion

news from the grassroots

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Nadia Kanji

Assistant Editor, Contributor, Reader

Nadia started working at the Media Co-op last summer as an assistant editor. She began her involvement with alternative media by working at CKUT Radio, a non-profit community radio station in Montreal. From her past experiences—from organizing with Climate Justice Montreal to fighting against tuition fee increases in Quebec—Nadia strongly believes in the importance of creating a just, sustainable and equitable future. Her work is mainly focused on foreign policy in the Middle East and alternative economic structures. She's also interested in political art.

Join Nadia and the growing ranks of people from all walks of life who are choosing to own their media by becoming a member today! Each and every member in our network helps make the news happen. **We are the Media Co-op. Go to www.mediacoop.ca/join to join us today!**

The Dominion magazine is part of the Media Co-op, a pan-Canadian media network that seeks to provide a counterpoint to the corporate media and to direct attention to independent critics and the work of social movements. *The Dominion* is published six times per year in print and on the web.

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A new season brings the things we know: loss, conflict, care, and resistance

by Media Co-op Contributors

On March 9, independent photojournalist **Ali Mustafa** was one of eight people killed in Aleppo, Syria, in an air strike carried out by the Assad government. He had been documenting the impacts of the war in Syria since February. His tragic murder deeply impacted the many independent journalists who knew and worked with him in Toronto and across Canada. The current issue of *The Dominion* features a commemoration of Ali Mustafa, which we hope will inspire our readers to learn more about his life and work.

With spring rolling in over the horizon, many have put down their snow shovels and picked up their picket signs, like those in Halifax who took up **weekly pickets** to protest the sale of **SodaStream** International products that are produced in the Israel-occupied West Bank.

A March 21 demonstration in Montreal in opposition to the "charter of values" drew its power from Indigenous resistance and popular liberation struggles. Photo by Matthew Brett

Other Haligonians have decried the **funding cuts** to non-profit organizations like Kentville's Community Inc. and Valley Community Learning Association. The organizations promote the inclusion of differently-abled workers in the workforce and offer trainings for people who didn't complete high school. Both have been forced to lay-off staff.

In **Quebec**, things heated up as the April 7 provincial election approached, with allegations of student and Anglophone voters being turned away at polling stations due to the 'loi domicile' regulations, and thousands taking to the streets to protest the Parti Quebecois' racist and xenophobic "Charter of Values."

Montreal has seen continued resistance to **municipal bylaw P-6**, a city regulation requiring organizers to submit protest routes to police and banning protestors from wearing masks.

With the recent murder of 26-year-old Inuk student **Loretta Saunders** still present in hearts and minds, members of Tyendinaga First Nation took action, first on March 8 and again on March 18, creating **highway and railway blockades** to call for action on missing and murdered Indigenous women

In **Toronto**, people disrupted the Ontario Liberal Party convention, demanding the party take action to end poverty. This came on the heels of a tragic fire in Toronto's Kensington Market, which killed two and injured several others. The fire struck what was suspected to be an **illegal rooming house**, with cramped and unsafe living conditions, usually inhabited by low-income residents and newly arrived migrants.

New legislation in BC has opened the doors to oil and gas development in **provincial parks**. Meanwhile, RCMP descended on the **Heiltsuk First Nation** for a face-off over the roe-herring fishery.

In Vancouver's **Downtown Eastside**, Canada's lowest-income postal code, land prices have risen more than 300 per cent in just over a decade, causing massive displacement to Vancouver's underhoused.

An announcement from your Media Co-op

Dear readers,

The Dominion be taking the summer off, so don't be alarmed if you miss your next issue of the magazine. Don't worry though, we'll be back in two months with a fresh September/October issue. We'll be taking the extra time to re-envision our staff structure and to talk to our members about what they like, and what they'd like more of, at the Media Co-op. Stay tuned for more ways to share your opinion. Plus, get ready for a special issue coming out at the end of the year!

Until we meet again,

The Dominion Editorial Collective

In Memory of Ali Mustafa

by Jesse Rosenfeld

Clashes began in Cairo after an ongoing cabinet sit-in was violently dispersed by the army in the middle of the night. Protesters gathered on the scene over the course of the battle, which lasted all day, virtually without stop. December 16, 2011. Photo by Ali Mustafa

CAIRO—A committed and courageous journalist, Ali Mustafa died for the values with which he demanded the world engage.

Ali was killed along with seven Syrians on March 9, 2014 during a bombing raid on Aleppo by Basher al-Assad's forces in Syria's unending and horrifically bloody civil war.

From depicting Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and segregation of its people to Egypt's revolution and iron-fisted counter revolution, Ali was unflinching in his display of injustice and peoples' struggles for freedom. However, as a freelance journalist with no institutional protection or even a bulletproof vest and helmet, he went into the field as vulnerable as those he covered. It was these conditions that forced him to pay for his commitment with his life.

I knew Ali in person only briefly but we knew each others' work and had been in touch often. We were like minds that understood each other and instantly became friends when we met in the Middle East. Like Ali, I was a student activist in Canada supporting the Palestinian struggle. Our experiences brought us both to the Middle East with little more than laptops and cameras to report on the oppression we demanded Canadians do something about.

The last time I saw Ali was in Cairo over the October 6, 2013 weekend when security forces massacred more than 60 people. Cairo was hectic, and Ali—as often happens when freelancing—was broke. He hadn't worked since his camera was taken by security forces as he shot the August 16 massacre in Ramses Square and had become increasingly anxious about the crackdown in Egypt, in which the media has become a prime target.

Nonetheless, Ali borrowed a camera and we went into the streets, through the military checkpoints that were everywhere, to cover the protests as they swelled and as the army cracked down.

Fear of Egypt's security forces was taking its toll on Ali and he was visibly nervous whenever we were near police or checkpoints. After the protests he told me about his disillusionment as time and again anti-coup protests ended in a sea of blood. He was looking for a way out of Egypt where he could continue telling the stories of those who need to be heard.

Ironically, Ali felt this could only be done by returning to cover the far more intense violence in Syria, where he had previously reported. I warned him that all my friends who had reported there previously felt it was too dangerous to go back at that point and that no networks were willing to risk sending their correspondents there. But Ali was undeterred. He fully understood the risks. He was committed to those he had met in Syria and believed that he had more protection behind rebel lines than in a country where the state now asserted unquestioning dominance.

Ali also felt that reporting from Syria was the best way to make a more stable income and bolster his career. The choice of taking extreme risks for a paycheck is often a necessity of working as a freelancer in conflict zones.

Being a journalist in a region where social struggle and popular demands are met with war, spectacular violence and oppression, people you meet often die, or are unjustly hauled off to jail.

But no death since I came to the Middle East has hit home like the loss of Ali Mustafa. It is not just that he was an amazing person and a good friend. Nor is it the realization that it could have been me in a different context. Ali's killing was a personal acknowledgment that the price he paid is a possibility for anyone who thought like we did back home, but who ends up here because of the values we share and are unwilling to compromise on.

Jesse Rosenfeld is a Canadian freelance journalist based in the Middle East since 2007. Previously based in Ramallah and Tel Aviv for six years, he currently resides in Cairo. He has reported for *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Beast*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Foreign Policy* and the *Toronto Star*, among others.

TOP: People gather in front of a pool of blood where a protester was shot and reportedly killed during a pre-dawn army raid of Tahrir Square. The trail of blood left behind was 23 metres long. Cairo, December 20, 2011. MIDDLE AND BOTTOM RIGHT: At least 80 supporters of ousted Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi are killed by security forces in a pre-dawn raid of the Rabaa sit-in. Cairo, July 27, 2013. MIDDLE LEFT: Supporters of Egypt's ousted president Mohamed Morsi stage a mass march to demand his return to power. Morsi was overthrown by the military in the face of popular pressure on July 3, 2013. Cairo, July 26, 2013. Photos by Ali Mustafa.

Immigrants Left High and Dry on The Rock

Lack of support forces newcomers out of Newfoundland

by Brad Dunne

Illustration by Carmen Belanger

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND— When refugee claimants arrive in St. John's, Newfoundland, Jose Rivera, executive director of the Refugee and Immigration Advisory Council (RIAC), tells them to go to another province. "Don't go to the airport," he says, "just grab a bus and go to Halifax or anywhere else you can reach."

The reason is simple. There is no one in Newfoundland to help claimants through the different levels of bureaucracy. A 2009 study funded by the Harris Centre at Memorial University reveals a troubling lack of information being shared with newcomers. In a survey of 47 immigrants and international students, only 36.2 per cent had received information on how to contact immigration agencies.

"Services are there," says Rivera, "but you have to get there knowing what you don't know, so you can ask the question you don't know how to ask." He speaks from experience: when he came to Newfoundland with his family as a Colombian refugee in 2002, he was unable to find steady work despite his business background. His organization is a non-profit NGO that assists new Canadians with services such as English language classes, sponsorship contacts, deportation intervention and sanctuary support.

The 2009 study found that fewer than half of those surveyed had received information on how to access medical services and how to find housing. Only 19 per cent had received information on how to get prior education or credentials assessed and obtain Canadian equivalents for international qualifications.

Legal services for newcomers are also paltry. Only two legal aid staff lawyers in Newfoundland handle approximately 60 to 70 immigration and refugee law cases a year and they do not even work exclusively in immigration and refugee law, running a mixed practice that also includes criminal, family and poverty law.

The single available immigration lawyer in Newfoundland, Meghan Felt with McInnes Cooper, rarely works with refugees, instead mostly working on business immigration and helping residents sponsor family members and spouses.

"The biggest problem is that when people come here, they just don't know where to go," says Felt.

The claim process for new refugees can also drag on for several years. "You submit your application, and that gets sent to either Ottawa or the Canadian embassy of your home country, but then there's no one to talk to you," explains Felt. "They end up not filling in the right documentation and they get rejected or they have to appeal, and the whole process can drag on for up to five years."

Legal aid does not even have translators or interpreters on staff for immigration or refugee law work. Instead, staff lawyers hire private translators or interpreters, meaning they must often rely on telephone conversations with translators and interpreters in Ontario.

Newfoundland consistently ranks as the worst province for refugee and immigration retention. A 2005 study prepared for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Coordinating Committee on Newcomer Integration showed that between 1991 and 2001, only 36% of Newfoundland's immigrants stayed in the province, well below the national retention average of 82%.

Contrasting the lack of support for newcomers in Newfoundland is the major labour shortage facing the province over the next decade. A 2011 provincial government report from the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment estimated there will be 70,000 new job openings by 2020.

The problem is such that the local business community in the province is also speaking out, including the St. John's Board of Trade, which has advocated for increasing immigration.

"We need a population growth strategy," says CEO Nancy Healey.

"Newfoundland isn't being pro-active like other provinces," she explains. "We need to bring in people to help with demographic challenges and the labour market."

When asked to comment on the situation, the Newfoundland Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism did not return our repeated calls.

Rivera's initial struggles as a refugee prompted him to take the lead of RIAC and support other immigrants, but he is one of the few that elect to stay in the province.

"Government is almost impenetrable," he bemoans.

RIAC strives to improve diversity in Newfoundland by hosting various events aimed at educating the local community on how newcomers can participate in Newfoundland's economy and culture. After all, with a declining birthrate and steady emigration, Newfoundland needs new Newfoundlanders. As a former refugee-claimant and now proudly integrated Newfoundlander, Rivera knows this more than anyone.

Brad Dunne (@BradDunne1796) is a freelance writer currently located in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Bye Bye, Mondragón

Winnipeggers lose community space after 18 years

by Sheldon Birnie

WINNIPEG—After a remarkable 18 years in business, the anarchist collective Mondragón has shut its doors for good, leaving vegan food enthusiasts hungry and radical Winnipeggers and visiting out-of-towners without a rallying space to call home. What started as a cafe and radical bookstore had evolved over the years into a popular restaurant and bookstore, a performance space and an organic grocery. Over time, Mondragón, which was run cooperatively from the get-go, became a space associated with Winnipeg in radical circles in Canada and beyond.

But over the course of 2013, the collective had dwindled to a few core members, business was lacking and money was tight. So tight, according to collective members, that through the fall of 2013 there was not enough money to pay the bills or pay members a decent wage, if any at all.

"We've had a rough year, a rough couple of years, financially," collective member Cora Wiens told the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

In the face of member burnout and hard economic realities, the collective made the tough decision to close Mondragón for good. A final week-long book sale gave community members one last chance to help out the collective while enjoying a Dragon Bowl or the perennially popular and delicious Southern Fried Tofu Sandwich.

"I think it's amazing that Mondragón lasted so long," Tim Brandt, who operated Heaven Art & Book Café in Winnipeg in the mid-1990s, told *The Dominion*. Lately, Brandt has been involved with the anarchist Junto Library and is an active A-Zone member. "An individual, private-owner capitalist would have cut and run 10 years ago."

"Mondragón was an indispensable hub for activists on the left," Ethan Osland, activist and co-host of CKUW radio's Black Mask, wrote to *The Dominion* in an email. "The participatory economics model they employed was a bumpy intersection of radical meets capital."

Since its first days, Mondragón was cooperatively run on the principles of participatory economics, or Parecon, popularized by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel as a way of organizing anarchist economic ventures. As such, the intent has always been for all members to be involved in all aspects of the business. While former collective members readily admit that the commitment to Parecon itself created its own challenges over the years, perhaps it was that unwavering commitment to ideology that kept Mondragón running when many profit-driven businesses would have folded.

Mondragón Books in Winnipeg is closing its doors after 18 years. Photo by Sheldon Birnie

"The bottom line wasn't a priority," founding collective member Sandra Drosdowech told a panel on CKUW's Black Mask leading up to Mondragón's closure. "We maintained our vision from the beginning."

Other challenges the collective identified over the years included the myriad interpersonal problems that any non-hierarchical group (or any group, for that matter) may experience, as well as the burn-out factor that is all too common in activist circles. On top of the particular troubles of running a Parecon-based business, the normal hassles of running "a standard business" were also always in play.

"The politics were always there," Drosdowech told Black Mask, but the activism upon which the collective was founded could often get lost in the business concerns. It was a balance that the collective struggled with for 18 years.

"It has been a painful loss of safe space for so many," said Osland. "Although, looking forward, if another space like this happens we need to be far more accessible, both physically and idealistically."

Currently, Mondragón's space in the collectively owned A-Zone building at 91 Albert Street sits empty. The A-Zone is keen to fill the space, but so far there is no final word on what will replace the former Winnipeg anarchist institution.

"Winnipeg is a hard fucking place," said Brandt. "What we lost is a place for inspiring the younger generation. I am sad for that and I hope the new radicals can find a way."

Sheldon Birnie is a writer, editor and song & dance man living in Winnipeg, MB. Sheldon had many good, inspirational times at the Mondragón over the years.

Halifax Media Co-op

"We Don't Like Canadians"

Indigenous-led resistance in Guatemala provides lessons for anti-fracking struggle at home

by Stephen Law

K'JIPUKTUK (HALIFAX)— "We don't like Canadians."

Celeste Gutierez, a Guatemalan woman visiting Canada, shared this perspective when visiting Halifax as part of a tour supported by the international-solidarity organization Breaking the Silence.

The tour was set up for her to share why she feels this way.

Upon hearing her story, it was hard not to compare her experiences with those of communities in the Maritimes.

On the surface, fracking in Canada and precious metals mining in Guatemala have little in common. But underneath the surface, we discover that governments, companies and investors of the extractive industry use the same methods.

Celeste comes from the small community of Nueva Santa Rosa, located in the southeastern part of the country.

It sits on one of the largest silver, gold and rare mineral reserves on the planet.

And it is a community that has been wracked by controversy, struggle and resistance since silver-mining giant Tahoe Resources came to town.

Tahoe Resources is a publicly traded Canadian silver-mining company. Its only project is the Escobal mine located near Celeste's community.

The company receives the support of the Canadian government and is financed through contributions of Canadians via the Canada Pension Plan, as well as other investment and mutual funds.

"We didn't even know what they were doing, or what they wanted at first," Celeste recalled. "But when we began to become aware, we organized." Nueva Santa Rosans used their constitutional rights to organize a referendum—one of the few forms of resistance that communities impacted by extractive industries have to oppose the activities of large multinational businesses. "Over 98% of the community voted to oppose the mine," she recalled.

But that wasn't enough.

Resistance to industrial encroachment in Guatemala. Author Stephen Law sees similarities to the Maritime situation. Photo by NISGUA - Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala

Not for the company. According to MiningWatch, a non-profit organization that monitors mining activities in Canada and abroad, "tens of thousands of people closest to the project have voted against the Escobal mine" due to their concerns about the mine's environmental and social impacts.

Yet, according to Celeste, the company has used intimidation tactics, sought arrest warrants for the leaders and portrayed them as terrorists.

In one instance, Celeste had participated in a local referendum in a nearby town. Her colleagues, who had trailed after her, were forced off the road after leaving the community. Two of the men managed to escape; a third, Exaltacíon Marcos, was found murdered, and the fourth man was held captive.

According to Celeste, he was released only because her community "shut down a major highway in the country and refused to budge until he was freed."

The communities have faced harassment, kidnappings, intimidation and murder. According to MiningWatch, "Since September 2012, some 70 people have been slapped with unfounded criminal charges….Several spent months in jail." All done in an attempt to silence the voices of dissent.

So, how is fracking in Nova Scotia related to the tyranny that Celeste faces in Guatemala?

The scale of impact and violence is in no way comparable. However, those who support and advocate for mining or fracking employ similar tactics. The intimidation against peaceful protesters and their portrayal as violent agitators ring true for the actions this past summer in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick, where people opposed SWN Resources Canada for undertaking seismic testing as a precursor to fracking development.

The mining industry, fracking companies, investors, business and economic proponents are all using the same playbook. In Guatemala, it has had tragic consequences.

Celeste was grateful she had the opportunity to come to Canada and speak to Canadians about what is happening. She also conceded that "it was nice to know that there are some good Canadians, that all of you are not like those from the company." But, she reminded us, lest we felt too comfortable, "Your money is tainted, in our blood and in our tears."

When we shared the parallels between fracking and mining, Celeste had a warning for us. "We are still poor, our roads are terrible, there is no health care and our schools have no funding. All you will get in return" for fracking, she said, "is a wounded community."

Stephen Law is an author and activist living in the Kennetcook, Nova Scotia, area.

Discriminating Legal Education in Canada

Nova Scotia Barristers' Society first in Canada to undertake public consultation on Trinity Western law degree

by Sarah Slaunwhite

Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law recently hosted a public forum, titled "The Case against Trinity Western University." Photo by Sylvie Okros

K'JIPUKTUK (HALIFAX)—Bob Kuhn, president of Trinity Western University (TWU), at a public consultation of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society (NSBS) on March 4, claimed that not recognizing a law degree from his university would be discriminatory to future TWU law graduates.

"TWU's Community Covenant is not offensive on its face in any respect," he told NSBS's Executive Council.

TWU is a private Evangelical Christian University in Langley, British Columbia, that has been gaining attention across Canada since the university submitted a proposal in July 2012 to offer a Juris Doctor program. The university's admissions and hiring policies require students and staff to sign a "Community Covenant." This mandatory agreement includes a requirement that students and staff honour the "traditional, biblical Christian values and principles" of the school and not engage in "sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman."

For failure to adhere to the policy, students face expulsion and staff face job termination.

In BC, religious organizations are exempt from adhering to the provincial Human Rights Code. No such provision exists in Nova Scotia's Human Rights Act.

"When someone signs on to this covenant, they agree not to engage in the unacceptable behaviour. The problem is that the behaviour deemed unacceptable is based on sexual orientation," said Megan Leslie, Member of Parliament for Halifax, queer-rights activist and founding member of OUTLaw, a sexual rights society at the Schulich School of Law.

"I do not think TWU should be allowed to make students sign that covenant."

On December 16, 2013, a Special Advisory Committee of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC)—the national governing body representing Canadian lawyers—granted preliminary approval of TWU's proposed law program. The legitimacy of the committee's decision has been questioned, however, for lack of transparency, procedural issues and deficiencies in the committee's membership.

The Dalhousie Student Union (representing the interests of 14,000 students), the Law Students Society (representing 600 Dalhousie law students), the Faculty Council at the Schulich School of Law, and the Canadian Council of Law Deans have all taken stances against TWU's proposed law school.

Each of Canada's 13 provincial and territorial law societies has the right to determine which law degrees are recognized within its province or territory. As a result of the high number of Nova Scotians raising opposition to TWU, the NSBS has been the first society to undertake a public consultation process to help it determine whether TWU graduates will be eligible to practice law in Nova Scotia.

More than 250 individuals and community groups have supported an OUTLaw petition calling on the NSBS to oppose TWU's accreditation in Nova Scotia.

Many have questioned how TWU's discriminatory admissions policies can be reconciled with its requirement to teach human rights law and constitutional law, as well as legal ethics and professional responsibility.

LGBTQ+ students are already significantly underrepresented in legal education, and recognizing a degree from TWU would condone the creation of a legal education system that would have more seats available for straight students than for gay and queer students, according to Lee Staples, second-year Juris Doctor student and executive member of OUTLaw.

Mainstream media and supporters of TWU's proposed school of law are framing this as a Christian versus LGBTQ+ rights issue, added Staples.

"This is an inappropriate and misleading false dichotomy," he said. "There are many gay/queer Christians as well as Christian allies that support LGBTQ+ rights and recognize that using an absolute claim to religious freedom to trump the basic human rights of a marginalized group is inappropriate."

Additionally, the Canadian Bar Association recently passed a motion urging the FLSC and the provincial and territorial law societies to require equal opportunity without discrimination for all persons involved in legal education.

The NSBS was the first barristers' society to both commit to and undertake a comprehensive public consultation before deciding whether Nova Scotia will recognize a degree from TWU's proposed law school. Other territorial societies are watching closely to see how the NSBS reconciles its strategic framework—which encompasses firm commitments to equity, non-discrimination and access to justice—with TWU's discriminatory policies. The NSBS will make its decision on April 25, 2014.

Sheena Jamieson, Support Services Coordinator at The Youth Project in Halifax, a non-profit organization that works with youth around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, says law practice needs to be accountable to the Canadian social landscape.

"If TWU, as a legal educational institution, chooses to actively discriminate against an historically marginalized group (as they are doing through maintaining the Covenant), they should appreciate that one of the consequences might be that Canadians stand up for LGBTQ+ rights."

Sarah Slaunwhite is a contributing member of the Halifax Media Co-op

HIGHER-CALIBRE EDUCATION?

Uncovering the military applications of high-tech research at McGill University

by Laurent Bastien Corbeil and Nicolas Quiazua

On a January morning in 1963, residents of the island nation of Barbados heard a deafening thud. The sound echoed across the country, and white smoke soon billowed from the site of the detonation, saturating the sky with the smell of gunpowder. One of the largest guns in the US arsenal, which had been brought to the island only a few months prior, had just sent its unusual payload hurtling into the upper atmosphere: a 200-pound vehicle known as the Martlet.

"Martlet" is the name of the mythical bird that is found on McGill University's crest and might seem a relatively innocuous school mascot. But the 200-pound vehicle to which it lent its name leads us into McGill's long and little-known history of weapons research. The extent of this research, and its ongoing nature, have recently been revealed by Access to Information (ATI) requests filed by *The Dominion* and by Demilitarize McGill, a student-led campaign to disrupt defence research on campus.

According to a 2010 grant application accessed by the group, McGill prides itself on participating in "state of the art research in the fields of ballistic protection, Shock Wave physics, and detonics" and on being a valued partner in "state-of-the-art [research] in autonomous localization, navigation and mapping for unmanned vehicles."

The university's current enthusiasm for military technology can be traced back more than 50 years, to a man named Gerald Bull. Bull's life story reads like a John le Carré novel. He was born in North Bay, ON, to an affluent family that lost most of its wealth in the Great Depression of the 1930s. While studying at a private college in Kingston, Bull was invited to attend the University of Toronto, where he would find his calling in the fledgling department of aeronautics. His passion for engineering and aerospace more than made up for an initially unremarkable transcript: Bull would become the youngest PhD graduate in the university's history.

By the early 1950s, Bull was working for the Canadian military. He envisioned a world in which artillery fire, not rockets, would be the most widely used method of reaching space. Drawing inspiration from the Paris Gun, a 34-metre German railroad gun used to shell Paris during the First World War, he began working on what was called the High Altitude Research Project, or HARP. Initially funded almost entirely by a $200,000 loan from McGill University, HARP was born for the purpose of launching projectiles—useful for increasing the effectiveness of ballistic missiles—into space.

In 2010, McGill's senate passed a policy on research conduct that specifically omitted ethical regulations for military research

Government money soon began pouring in, and with the support of the US Army's Ballistic Research Laboratory, HARP acquired a 16-inch gun and a $750,000 radar station. Although the Martlet-launched vehicles provided the US military with valuable data on upper atmospheric weather, the project lost most of its American funding after the Vietnam War.

Bull found himself in desperate financial straits. His efforts to sell his work to the highest bidder—first to Iran and Israel, and later more controversially to Saddam Hussein's Iraq—would eventually lead to his assassination in a Brussels apartment, most likely by Israeli agents.

But his legacy is still alive. Though the 16-inch gun is long gone, and Bull's dream of firing satellites into space has diminished, research continues at McGill University where Bull was once a professor. And although the experiments of McGill's Shock Wave Physics Group are not as lofty as Bull's were, many still lead to technical breakthroughs for the Canadian military.

David Frost and Andrew J. Higgins are two McGill professors whose current work benefits the Canadian Forces, particularly in combat situations. According to ATI-obtained documents, Frost and Higgins are conducting research to "develop new field-responsive armours [that] would be invaluable to the Canadian Forces, as well as to other security personnel." Their work involves the testing of what is called "shear thickening fluid," a material whose viscosity increases when strain is applied—the basis for a lightweight fabric that could become harder and more difficult to penetrate if struck by a bullet.

This research is part of an overall effort of Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC), an agency of the Canadian Department of National Defence, to improve the quality of fabrics in armoured vests and other protective gear such as those used by Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan.

Other research carried out by Frost and his colleagues involved more offensive weaponry. One of Frost's papers, published in 2001, contains information pertinent to the development of thermobaric bombs, fuel-air explosives deemed more destructive than conventional explosives because of their longer-lasting blast waves. This paper was later cited in US Air Force research to develop more efficient fragmentation weapons and, according to an abstract, to increase the "lethality" of blasts by "focusing more of the available energy on [a] target."

More recent grant applications accessed through ATI requests suggest that Frost is still involved in the study of explosives. In 2008, Frost sought funding for research on improving "the performance of commercial explosives." This research mainly focused on predicting explosive blasts to facilitate mining operations, but some of Frost's other grant applications also had potential for military use.

One specifically mentions protecting soldiers from the effects of "accidental or deliberate explosions." In another, Frost

proposes to investigate how gas—specifically, the "combustion of large-scale dust clouds of inorganic solid fuels," such as light metals and sulfur—might neutralize chemical agents used against Canadian soldiers in combat.

In 2010, McGill's senate passed a policy on research conduct that specifically omitted ethical regulations for military research. Prior to the decision, Demilitarize McGill had been calling for the creation of a formalized system of approval that would give senior administrators the oversight of any research with "harmful potential."

"Having these things reviewed is fine, but you have to look at what the cost is, and if it's delayed, that might be a graduate student not getting a stipend," Higgins said in an interview with *The Dominion*. In the early 2000s, Higgins had three contracts from defence organizations under review for approval by McGill's board of governors, the university's highest governing body.

"In all cases the researchers have complete freedom to decide if they want to engage in a research collaboration project or a service contract," wrote Rose Goldstein, the university's Vice-Principal of Research and International Relations, in an email to *The Dominion*.

The Shock Wave Physics Group is only one of McGill's laboratories that have been conducting defence research in recent years. Researchers at the university's Aerospace Mechatronics Lab are also helping the Canadian Forces develop drone technology to be used in combat. Drones, or unmanned aerial systems (UAS), are aircraft without a human pilot on board. They be can either remotely controlled, or guided through autonomous navigation technology.

The DRDC's foray into robotics began during the Cold War. In the late '70s, research conducted by the Autonomous Intelligent Systems Section (AISS) of DRDC focused primarily on tele-operation robotics, vehicles remotely controlled by humans. By the early 2000s, remote operation was giving way to autonomous technology, as AISS began shifting its attention to systems that could operate entirely on their own.

Canada's Department of National Defence has been preparing for its vision of battlespace by funnelling research from industry and academia to military branches. Illustration by Tiaré Jung

The DRDC's stated aim, according to its 2004 technical report, was to assemble a fleet of unmanned vehicles that could "operate and interact" with one another in combat. The development of a strategy, or a common software architecture, that integrates different vehicles, would allow the Canadian Forces to harmonize the operations of unmanned air, ground and marine systems. "Systems" here is a military term for vehicles such as drones, armoured cars and submarines.

For DRDC, the battlefields

of the future would be shaped by robotic collective intelligence. Autonomous decision-making would be based on the constant collection of data and exchange of information between the various independent unmanned systems and soldiers on the ground. For example, drones would be able to share their bird's-eye view and mapping capabilities with other unmanned vehicles and soldiers on the ground or at sea.

The Department of National Defence has been preparing for this vision of battlespace by funnelling research from industry and academia to military branches. To this end, the Department's Research and Development agency has been fostering intimate ties with universities, including its "academic partners from McGill University," according to a paper outlining DRDC's approach to unmanned operations.

Since 2011, McGill has received more than $1 million in Department of National Defence contracts. Research on unmanned systems is so prevalent on the campus that the university boasts its own UAS research group. The group was assembled over the course of the last two decades by Inna Sharf, a professor of mechanical engineering.

Sharf has developed an extensive relation with the DRDC-Suffield Research Centre in southern Alberta, which specializes in autonomous systems for ground and air. According to her resume, DRDC-Suffield has awarded Sharf three defence research contracts on unmanned systems since 2004 at a value of over $500,000.

In spite of the increasing application of unmanned systems for military, law enforcement, surveillance and border patrol purposes, some of the research conducted at McGill is being carried out for peaceful use. David Bird, a professor of wildlife biology at McGill's Macdonald Campus, is a strong proponent of the scientific application of unmanned systems. Bird and one of his graduate students have conducted a wildlife preservation project in partnership with Canadian drone company Draganfly.

Yet Draganfly's drones were also used to conduct police surveillance on an Indigenous blockade of CN Rail's tracks near Tyendinaga, ON, in early March of this year. The blockade, which called for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, stopped traffic between Montreal and Toronto. The Ontario Provincial Police took to Twitter to defend its use of drones: "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles are an economical way to take pictures. It is a tool used in investigations."

It seems unlikely that the Department of National Defence would heavily fund research in autonomous technologies in order to satisfy its soldiers' bird-watching hobbies. In fact, the military potential of research is explicit in the language of the funding contracts for which the work is performed.

Draganfly's drones were used to conduct police surveillance on an Indigenous blockade of CN Rail's tracks near Tyendinaga in early March.

"If the work is being sponsored by the research department, you will find in the language [of the] contract how it is relevant to defence. They are not a philanthropic organization. They are funding this, they have some programmatic mandate," Higgins acknowledged.

Sharf's latest DRDC-funded project, according to documents obtained by *The Dominion*, is titled "Autonomous Support for UAVs" and valued at over $380,000. The project intends to provide autonomous unmanned vehicles (UAVs), such as drones, with the ability to land autonomously. Drones capable of this behaviour would be able to conduct surveillance missions more efficiently, and their operators would see their workload diminished.

In an interview with *The Dominion* and *The McGill Daily*, Sharf denied the military applications of her research. "My work focuses on making landing and taking off for [unmanned aerial] vehicles more autonomous," she told *The Dominion*, adding that "there's many applications: fire surveillance, harvest surveillance."

Yet the contracting authority at DRDC-Suffield makes it clear that the objective of Sharf's project is to improve soldiers' effectiveness in combat. The contract mentions that the research would ultimately "provide battle-space awareness" in combat operations and act as a "force multiplier" for soldiers on the ground. In other words, the technology developed at McGill would allow for the rapid crafting of maps in unknown environments and then allow for extended surveillance and data collection. Unmanned aerial systems equipped with this technology would "track and intercept" moving targets. This capacity, supplemented with facial-recognition technology, would allow the drone to match faces against police records or eventually an enemy kill list.

Under third-party contracts with DRDC, the federal government owns intellectual-property rights to the work performed at McGill. Sharf and the team under her supervision do not own the technology and may use the results of their research only for publication and academic purposes.

Likewise, DRDC-Suffield has no say in—or responsibility for—how its technology will be applied. The Canadian military is solely responsible for choosing how to apply the research, for whatever purposes it sees fit.

McGill is not unique in its involvement in weapons development. The Department of National Defence funds research at dozens of universities across Canada. In fact, Queen's University banked $3 million for a single contract in 2012, almost three times what McGill received in three years. It would seem that McGill's funding, for all the persistence it took to uncover it, is just a drop in the bucket.

Nicolas Quiazua is a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker actively involved in supporting the Demilitarize McGill campaign. Laurent Bastien Corbeil is a freelance journalist based in Montreal.

No Justice, No Peace: Montreal's 18th annual protest against police brutality ends in mass arrests

by Justin Canning

TOP: Barely 10 minutes after it started, Montreal police move in and arrest everyone during Montreal's 18th annual protest against police brutality. LEFT: An older protester and riot police clash during the demonstration. RIGHT: A couple of protesters hold signs in front of Montreal police.
Photos by Justin Canning

MONTRÉAL—At 3:00 pm on March 15, 2014, around 300 protesters gathered at Jean-Talon metro for the 18th annual protest against police brutality, organized by the Coalition Opposed to Police Brutality.

Protesters had barely made it 200 metres before Montreal riot police decided to pre-emptively shut it down by arresting everyone. For hours afterwards, the police chased pockets of resistance through the surrounding streets.

By the end, 288 people received fines of $638 for a P-6 municipal bylaw violation, and only four received actual criminal charges.

This is not the first nor will it be the last time Montreal police clamp down heavily on this annual protest.

Justin Canning is a photographer living in Montreal.

Vancouver Media Co-op

Local Environmentalists Reject Transmisogyny

Controversial speaker sparks responses from anti-capitalist groups and land defenders

by Sasha Mann

VANCOUVER, UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES—The radical anti-capitalist environmental collective Rising Tide Vancouver Coast Salish Territories (RTVCST) and Indigenous land defense group Ancestral Pride are among the nearly forty organizations, including Greenpeace USA, who signed a mass letter voicing opposition to a notably transmisogynist speaker.

The letter, posted on February 17 on the Earth First! website, is addressed to the organizers of the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (PIELC), an annual event at the University of Oregon, in Eugene. The event generally boasts an attendance of over 3,000 people, according to its website, and is considered one of the most prominent environmental law conferences in the world.

> ***"Trans people are highly respected among many Indigenous tribes because they carry medicine."***
> —Xhopakelxhit, a founder of Ancestral Pride

The controversial speaker in question is Lierre Keith, co-founder—with Derrick Jensen and Aric McBay—of the environmental group Deep Green Resistance (DGR) and a cisgender, trans-exclusive, self-identified "radical feminist."

Trans-exclusive radical feminist (TERF) is a term coined in 2008 to describe a subsection of cis feminists who, since at least the early '70s, have been attempting to negate trans women's identities and to push them out of women-only feminist spaces.

Keith and other TERFs are often characterized as transphobic, but transmisogynistic may be a more accurate term, because the brunt of their disdain is directed towards trans women, not trans men or non-binary people.

The clearest example of Keith's contempt for the identity of trans women is an article she co-authored with Deep Green Resistance member Derrick Jensen. The article, "The Emperor's New Penis," published in *CounterPunch* on June 21, 2013, refers to trans women as men, and compares the transgender movement with eugenics.

Xhopakelxhit, a founder of Ancestral Pride, finds anyone mixing transphobia with environmentalism suspect.

Ancestral Pride is a group based in Maaqtusiis, off the coast of Tofino, BC, that exists to support "Indigenous reoccupation of ancestral lands," according to their website. Xhopakelxhit noted that the brand of radical feminism espoused by Keith and DGR goes against many Indigenous concepts of gender.

According to Xhopakelxhit, "spirits are as they are," which contrasts with the radical feminist view that sex is biological, while gender is a social construction. "Trans people are highly respected among many Indigenous tribes because they carry medicine," Xhopakelxhit said in an online interview with the Vancouver Media Co-op (VMC). To her, if Keith wants to be an ally to Indigenous struggles, then she should show more respect for Indigenous world views.

In their Radical Feminism FAQs section, DGR skirts the question "what about Two Spirits or other Indigenous third/other gender roles?" by saying that "non-Indigenous people have no right to an opinion on this issue."

For RTVCST, the decision to sign on to the mass letter posted by Earth First! was unanimous. Lisa Barrett, speaking as a collective member but not on behalf of the group, told the VMC that although RTVCST members did not want to create more divisions within the environmental movement, it was ultimately decided that not responding to transphobia would be against the group's principles.

Ancestral Pride was a signatory of the letter released to PIELC. Image courtesy Ancestral Pride

"When it came to the issue of transphobia and the [PIELC] conference," Barrett said, "I don't think there was any question in any of our minds about the fact that that was pretty odious."

At the start of RTVCST meetings, members introduce themselves with their names and their preferred pronouns. Barrett says that simply asking that "basic question" goes a long way.

"The perverseness of essentially saying that [trans people] are anti-feminist by choosing to be who they are is just absurd," Barrett said.

For Ancestral Pride, the world Keith wants to shape is a frightening one.

"What kind of future are we fighting for?" Xhopakelxhit asked. "One where we abuse Two Spirits and trans spirits because of white women's fears about being displaced? Or do we want one free of this kind of bullshit and where everyone is free to be who they are?"

Sasha Mann is a journalism student and musician living on Coast Salish Territories, with a particular interest in queerness, intersectional feminism, radical environmentalism and science fiction.

Paint the Town

Downtown East Side "paint-in" highlights low-income residents' demands for Local Area Plan

by Tamara Herman

VANCOUVER, UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES—On March 9, 2014, Downtown East Side (DTES) residents marched through the streets and painted messages on an empty building that they think should be transformed into an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre as part of the Local Area Plan.

"The paint-in today was a chance for low-income residents to send a clear message to city council: The plan doesn't go nearly far enough to solve the housing, poverty and health crisis in the DTES," said Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) volunteer Harold Lavender. "We've told the city before that we want funding for an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre, more social housing at welfare and pension rates, and stronger controls on retail gentrification. Today we wrote our vision and demands on the wall. We will continue to fight for them."

The event was organized by the CCAP and low-income members of the Local Area Planning Process (LAPP) committee. The Local Area Plan (LAP) was to go before council on Wednesday, March 12.

"The building we painted is owned by Vancouver Coastal Health and has been sitting empty for years," said Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society President Tracey Morrison. "Meanwhile, Downtown East Side residents need a place to heal and have well-being. We want a centre that's run by Aboriginal people, not bureaucrats."

"With an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre, we could have elders involved with the younger generation," said LAPP Low-Income Caucus member Victoria Bull. "What happens now is that people are sent to treatment centres. An Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre would provide a sense of belonging to address past traumatic issues while dealing with addictions and mental health issues."

Downtown Eastside residents painted the walls of a building they say should become a healing centre. Photo courtesy of The Mainlander

The LAP was criticized at the paint-in for failing to put in place adequate measures to solve the housing crisis.

> ***"Today we wrote our vision and demands on the wall. We will continue to fight for them."***
> —Harold Lavender, CCAP volunteer

"The city is only committing $50 million and three lots over a 30-year period for social housing. That's much less than the value of its gift to a new art gallery," said Gwin ga'adihl amaa goot, a Nisga'a Nation member and DTES resident.

"We do support the new zoning proposed for the Oppenheimer District because keeping condos out will keep land values lower," he continued. "This won't get us housing, but it will keep SRO [single-resident occupancy hotels] rents down and land more affordable to build social housing in the future with senior government support. But the LAP only commits to building a maximum of 1,467 new social housing units for people on welfare over a 30-year period. This is completely unacceptable."

"When you crunch the numbers, only one unit of social housing for people on welfare is being built for every 10 unaffordable housing units in the DTES," added LAPP Low-Income Caucus member Tami Starlight. "With the rising land values that come from this equation, low-income people will be priced out of the DTES. We will lose our lifelines. We will be pushed into communities that don't have the services, amenities or community ties we have built and depend on."

Tamara Herman is an independent journalist and works for CCAP.

Visit **vancouver.mediacoop.ca** for updates on the Local Area Plan.

Blacklisting Migrant Workers

Guatemalans speaking out against abuse expelled from temporary foreign worker program

by Valerie Croft

GUATEMALA CITY—When Jose Sicajau left his community in Guatemala to participate in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, he hoped to make enough money doing seasonal agriculture work to be able to provide for his family back home.

But like many other workers who have spoken out against labour rights abuses in Canada, he found himself blacklisted from the program after launching an official complaint against the owner of the farm where he worked in rural Quebec.

Since 2003, when Canada introduced the "lower-skill" category into the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), hundreds of thousands of temporary visas have been granted each year to migrants working in the garment industry, agriculture, care-giving, and construction and cleaning professions, among other so-called "lower-skill" trades.

In the last decade, the number of temporary workers has grown substantially, from almost 180,000 in 2004 to nearly 445,000 in 2011. Teck Resources, Loblaws, Canadian Tire and Blackberry are some of the Canadian companies that employ the highest number of workers under the TFWP. But according to Alfredo Barahona, migrant-relations coordinator of Canadian NGO KAIROS, the lack of oversight in this program has posed many problems for migrant workers.

"There are more and more incidents reported in Canadian media about accidents, where migrant workers are getting injured and even dying on the job," Barahona told *The Dominion* in a phone interview. He explained that although workers pay Canadian taxes and into social programs such as unemployment insurance, they are generally unable to receive any of those benefits.

The workers' status is so temporary and precarious that it lends itself to labour abuses and other human rights violations. Barahona said that migrant workers in the TFWP are usually recruited through private agencies lacking in oversight and are given single-entry visas tied to one particular employer. As a result, they have little access to mechanisms for denouncing labour-rights violations without risking having their status revoked.

Jose Sicajau was one of the first workers from Guatemala to participate in the TFWP when it was piloted in 2003, and he returned to rural Quebec to work on the same farm for several years. In 2006, Sicajau launched an official complaint with several others against his Canadian employer, after witnessing the employer physically and verbally assault a Mexican migrant working on the same farm.

The workers' status is so temporary and precarious that it lends itself to labour abuses and other human rights violations.

A few months after returning to Guatemala in October of that year, the recruitment agency approached him to demand an official retraction of the complaint. "They wanted to make an example of us so that other migrant workers wouldn't speak out," he told *The Dominion*. Sicajau did not retract the complaint, and when he applied to return to Canada the next year under the TFWP, he was denied without explanation.

Alongside 60 other Guatemalans who found themselves expelled from the program with no official reason or appeal process, Sicajau founded the Guatemalan Association United for Our Rights (AGUND) in 2011. Today he is the organization's current president.

AGUND's initial concern was to find out why the workers had been expelled from the program and to be able to return to work. For many migrants, a program like the TFWP offers an opportunity to work for higher wages than they might get back home, allowing them to send back remittances to help feed their families. "It is certainly not all bad," says Sicajau. "Maybe out of 100 stories, there are five or ten who have had bad experiences and their rights violated. But what can you expect from a program that has little regulation and almost no oversight?"

According to Father Juan Luis, from Guatemala's Parish of Human Mobility based in Guatemala City, it is important to recognize the many reasons why people migrate to find work outside of their communities, in order to understand the implications of programs like the TFWP.

"Guatemala is a land filled with freshly spilled blood," he told *The Dominion*, pointing out not only the high levels of violent crime that currently exist in the country, but also historical and continuing state violence. Many people are still looking for family members who were disappeared during Guatemala's 36-year internal armed conflict, and mass graves continue to be found with bodies of those killed in the state-sponsored mass killings leading to acts of genocide.

Human rights defenders in the country, many of whom are pushing for justice for past state-sponsored violence, continue to face high levels of threats, kidnappings, assaults and assassinations. This, combined with the rapid growth of the war on narcotrafficking and organized crime in many parts of Guatemala, has produced a daily per-capita murder rate that is one of the highest in the world.

"Much of this violence is pushing people out of their communities and forcing them to seek work elsewhere," he said. He explained that the majority of this out-migration occurs undocumented, but that some people are attempting to flee this violence through programs like the TFWP.

"The principal cause of migration, however, has always been structural impoverishment," said Father Luis. "The violence that exists in this country is only a manifestation of the unequal distribution of resources and unequal access to land."

The wide expansion of internationally owned plantations growing crops for export, such as bananas and coffee, has

led to massive forced evictions of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. National and foreign companies growing crops such as African palm and sugarcane have converted many of Guatemala's most fertile soils into plantations for biofuel production.

"They wanted to make an example of us so that other migrant workers wouldn't speak out."
—Jose Sicajau

Father Luis added that the development of hydroelectric dams and transnational mining projects—many of which are Canadian—are having similar effects, pushing people off their lands and into increasingly precarious living situations.

"Canadian companies are coming and taking gold from Guatemala, and our government is handing it to them on a silver platter," said Father Luis. "They talk about development, but development for whom? How much wealth is leaving the country? People have to pay a high price to live on top of so much gold."

Canadian companies are extracting many of Guatemala's resources—both mineral and labour resources. "Without a doubt," said Father Luis, "there are many families who have benefited from this work [in the TFWP], who have been able to provide medicine for their children, provide them with housing, food and education. But because of this structural impoverishment that sees many Guatemalans exploited on a daily basis, many are willing to work in exploitative conditions if they are being paid."

In the words of AGUND's Jose Sicajau, "In many cases, all they are recruiting for are strong arms, capable of doing physically demanding work. Sometimes they are surprised when whole bodies—entire human beings—show up. We are people with histories, experiences and families, and that's often not taken into account."

Jose Sicajau (centre) and Father Juan Luis (right) with Basque activist Diego Lorente on a Just Work tour in Ottawa. Photo by Bill Fairbairn

Organizations like AGUND, the Guatemalan Parish of Human Mobility and KAIROS are calling for reforms to this program, to clarify the rights of workers and the Canadian government's responsibility to oversee it effectively and to guarantee labour rights.

According to AGUND, a bilateral agreement between Canada and Guatemala—something which does not currently exist—could clearly outline these responsibilities and standardize recruitment agencies in order to prevent corruption and false promises. All workers should be able to sign a contract, translated into a language they speak, that clearly outlines working and living conditions, hourly wages and working hours.

Meanwhile, KAIROS is petitioning the Canadian government to provide access to settlement services, to ensure that work permits are not tied to a single employer, and to establish an efficient and mandatory national system to monitor employers who break the law. According to Barahona, "There is no question that it is the temporary nature of their immigration status that makes [migrants] vulnerable. Canada should be looking at coming up with alternatives to create paths to permanent residency and not treat migrant workers like a commodity."

Barahona pointed out that Canada's economy has historically been built on migration and migrant labour. "But how are we going about that?" he asked. "Not everyone is wanting to come to Canada. But those who are wanting to come to Canada need to be treated with dignity and respect."

Val Croft lives in Guatemala City, accompanying human rights defenders who receive threats for their work, and is actively involved in issues related to corporate accountability.

Coffee Industry Fails Farmers

Amidst the leaf rust Roya crisis, co-operatives and organic farming shine a light

by Monika Firl

MONTREAL—I begin each day with my usual routine: enjoying a morning cup of organic fair trade coffee and wondering how millions of small-scale coffee farmers across Latin America are getting through the current leaf rust crisis—or "Roya" as it's called in Spanish.

I've worked in different niches of the coffee industry since 1994 in both production and marketing projects with small-scale farmers, while living in Central America and Mexico, and now in direct import, communications and production improvement projects from Montreal. In two decades, I've never seen anything quite as devastating as the current production crisis—which according to the International Coffee Organization (ICO) is expected to cause an estimated loss of 2.5 million 69-kilogram sacks of production, or $550 million of financial loss in farmer income.

The initial industry reaction was a call to summit meetings. A first emergency gathering sponsored by some of the world's largest coffee companies and research organizations, was held in Guatemala in April 2013; the second was in El Salvador in November 2013. But while experts theorize about whether or not climate change is the culprit and share their findings on plant-DNA research, small-scale coffee farmers wait impatiently for viable relief plans.

"Our government has declared a state of emergency, but to date we have seen no concrete supports to producers on the land," said Rodolfo Peñalba, General Manager of the small-farmer organization Café Organico Marcala (COMSA) in Marcala, Honduras.

"The Nicaraguan government has passed a new law that will tax an additional $3 to $5 (depending on the fluctuating market price) on every sack of coffee exported in order to create a Roya Credit Fund for field renovation and other recovery activities," said PROCOCER Coffee Farmer Cooperative Manager Roberto Villegas. "But since the government put the management of those funds in the hands of the National Bank, for us this only represents an additional expense. With the Roya crisis, the National Bank considers campesinos (small-scale farmers) too risky and have stopped lending to us. We will never have access to those credits."

The most consistent message communicated to farmers from industry and technical-support offices has been to spray more fungicides and hope for the best. But nowhere do we hear about the deep-rooted causes of the poverty in the soil and the precarious situation of farmers.

Miguel Medina, Vice Chairman of the Guatemalan national coffee association Anacafé and one of the Guatemala summit organizers, bluntly set the stage. "I don't know how organic coffee can have a future. There is nothing that works to control rust in the field, and I am not seeing anyone in the market offering more to create additional incentives for organic farmers," he said during the working sessions.

But while Mr. Medina and so many industry leaders dismiss the potential for organic solutions, members of the small-scale farmer organization COMSA in Honduras watched the slow decay of their neighbours' conventional (chemically treated) trees—while they were busy harvesting a bumper crop of premium-quality organic coffee from their fields.

Unfortunately, the experiences of farmers like these COMSA members are not being showcased at high-level summits.

Instead of acknowledging and strengthening successful organic practices proven on the land, coffee farmers are being pushed to quick-fix solutions. Some 45% of all green coffee imports are purchased by the five largest roaster parent companies—Philip Morris (Kraft, Maxwell House, etc.), Nestlé, Sara Lee, Procter & Gamble and Tchibo. The large coffee buyers are primarily concerned with getting the volume they need and with satisfying shareholders' expectations of profit. Organic solutions take time, labour investment and financial resources that most small-scale farmers simply don't have.

With the international price of coffee set by a wildly fluctuating commodity market, driven as much by supply and demand as by completely unrelated investment portfolios buying and selling coffee futures contracts, small-scale farmers are price takers and have endured a long history of

the low prices offered by the New York "C" market.

Perhaps it is simply because of the sheer magnitude of the coffee business that the idea of changing production and pricing models at this point is just too much to digest. And with new coffee-producing countries, like Vietnam or up-and-coming China, many traders will simply seek out replacement coffee sources from countries not yet affected by the epidemic—leaving Latin American coffee farmers devastated by Roya to fend for themselves.

I had the opportunity early in 2014 to organize a roaster-producer gathering at the COMSA headquarters in Honduras. This event, sponsored by Cooperative Coffees—an organic green coffee importing cooperative owned by 23 independent and locally based artisanal coffee roasters across Canada and the USA—was intended to demonstrate that organic solutions, in keeping with the economic and cultural realities of small-scale farmers, are the most viable long-term path for a sustainable livelihood. Together with Latin American coffee-farmer representatives, coffee roasters, importers and allied organizations, we united around the crisis to talk about production, quality, price and Roya recovery.

For the roasters present, who base their businesses on values dedicated to fair, direct and sustainable partnerships with small-scale farmer organizations, simply substituting coffees from other regions was not an option.

"As a Canadian boutique roaster sourcing 100 per cent organic and mostly Latin American coffees, I was amazed and encouraged to see how these small-scale organic farmers were able to tackle the Roya problem using a creative combination of sustainable, organic solutions," said Al Teflissi, owner of Coutts Coffee in Perth, Ontario and roaster member of Cooperative Coffees participating in the Honduran event.

"My livelihood is linked to theirs—our customers are asking for organic coffee from small-scale producer co-ops, so we've made it a priority to support these farmers through a special project that will bring information, organic training and additional financial support to cooperatives like COMSA."

This "Roya Summit" was cooperatively organized and led by expert farmer practitioners and intended to help them see, touch, learn and exchange information with each other about the innovative and highly successful organic solutions that many small-scale farmers are implementing to resist and recover from Roya.

Nowhere do we hear about the deep-rooted causes of the poverty in the soil and the precarious situation of farmers.

Roya, a naturally occurring fungus in coffee fields, can be held in check when the fields are kept in ecological balance. But during the 2012–2013 growing season, with peaks of abnormally high temperatures and prolonged periods of excessive humidity combined with vulnerable soils and trees due to the lack of investment and healthy agricultural practices, the orange fungus spread like wildfire. Once the fungus hit its tipping point, it spread across Central America, affecting between 15 and 85 per cent of yields, depending on local conditions. Roya attacks the leaves, the primary source of photosynthesis of the coffee plant, which not only affects ripening of the current-season cherries, but can also cause the flowers of the following season to drop, and depending on the intensity of the infestation can kill a branch or the entire tree—thus affecting the current harvest and harvest yields for many years to come.

COMSA Organic Promoter Victor Contreras explained, "We frequently talk about nutrients, but we often forget about the life-giving energies found in minerals and micro-organisms. Here at COMSA, we are learning to create a model of agriculture in harmony with the laws of nature to feed and nurture the life energy in the soil."

Ironically today in 2014, the "International Year of Family Farming" (IYFF), the perfect storm of environmental, economic and humanitarian disasters is lining up to push struggling small-scale farmers off the land. And with the exception of a very small niche of fair trade or direct commercial relationships between farmers and consumers, no one seems to notice. Is this just another David and Goliath story? Just another unfortunate chapter in the long and twisted story of coffee? Perhaps. But, it's one in which Canadians take part—inadvertently or not, on a daily basis.

According to the Coffee Association of Canada's newly released 2013 Coffee Drinking Study, coffee is second only to tap water as the most consumed beverage in Canada. Nearly two-thirds of adult Canadians will have consumed coffee in the past day, and coffee drinkers consume on average 3.2 cups of coffee per day, for total annual retail sales of some CAD$1.6 billion.

The goal of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the 2014 IYFF is to "reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies in national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equal and balanced development…to promote broad discussion and cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by smallholders and help identify efficient ways to support family farmers."

Sadly, small-scale farmers are experiencing just the opposite.

Prior to her work in fair trade coffee, Monika worked as a freelance writer and supported a variety of locally based development projects, while living in Central America and Mexico from 1991 to 2000. Monika holds a master's degree in journalism as well as a BA in international relations and German.

Soeurs volées, crise ignorée

Les appels répétés à une commission d'enquête nationale sur les femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées restent sans réponse

par Arij Riahi

MONTRÉAL—Tremblante de froid, la main gauche active nerveusement la roulette du briquet du haut vers le bas. L'autre tient une mince chandelle blanche. Devant, des femmes se succèdent devant le micro. La foule est de plus en plus nombreuse, d'un février à l'autre. Pourtant, l'impression que nous prêchons aux converti-es demeure.

D'année en année, nous sommes plusieurs à nous réunir le 14 février et le 4 octobre pour les marches annuelles en mémoire des femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées. Elles se tiennent à plusieurs endroits d'un bout à l'autre du Canada. Celle de Montréal oscille entre le parc Émilie Gamelin et la station de métro St-Laurent.

Cette année, nous marchions au lendemain de la disparition de Loretta Saunders, une femme de 26 ans enceinte et provenant des territoires inuit du Labrador. Étudiante à l'Université St-Mary's à Halifax, Saunders travaillait sur une thèse sur les femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées. Son corps a été retrouvé quelques jours plus tard, en bordure d'une autoroute du Nouveau-Brunswick.

La veille au Parlement, le Comité spécial sur la violence faite aux femmes autochtones achevait sa ronde d'entrevue. L'Association des femmes autochtones du Québec déposait aussi une pétition à la Chambre des communes regroupant plus de 23 000 signatures et appelant à une commission d'enquête nationale sur le cas des femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées.

Couverture internationale

Les appels à une commission d'enquête nationale et indépendante sur les cas des femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées font couler de plus en plus d'encre au Canada, surtout chez les médias anglophones.

Des images de femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées, durant un atelier de Families of Sisters in Spirit. Photo par Arij Riahi

La crise fait aussi jaser à l'international. De Human Rights Watch à Amnistie Internationale, plusieurs groupes de défense des droits humains se sont penchés sur la question de la sécurité des femmes autochtones au Canada.

En août 2013, des représentants de la Commission interaméricaine des droits de l'homme se sont rendus en Colombie-Britannique pour enquêter sur le sujet. Un mois plus tard, c'est le rapporteur spécial des Nations Unies James Anaya qui ramène la proposition d'une commission d'enquête nationale sur le tapis.

Ottawa a toujours refusé de se prêter à l'exercice, estimant suffisantes les mesures qu'il met en place. Les récents événements entourant la mort de Loretta Saunders n'ont pas semblé émouvoir le gouvernement qui, assailli de questions par l'opposition, s'est contenté de répéter ses condoléances.

Le grassroots s'organise

Plusieurs initiatives visant à documenter les cas de femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées ont vu le jour durant les dernières années. Le dernier chiffre qui fait consensus émane du travail de Maryann Pearce, qui a comptabilisé différents cas dans le cadre de son doctorat en puisant dans des sources publiques. Nous en serions à 824 victimes autochtones.

Pour certains organisateurs de terrain et travailleuses communautaires, ces chiffres constituent le plus petit dénominateur commun. Pearce a d'ailleurs mis en ligne une base de donnée regroupant plus de 3000 cas de femmes disparues ou assassinées au Canada. Pour la majorité des noms, l'origine ethnique de la victime n'a pu être confirmée.

En février 2013, le groupe Anonymous a mis sur pied une carte interactive pour répertorier les victimes. Son contenu est alimenté par les réseaux sociaux, chacun pouvant attirer l'attention du groupe sur une nouvelle dépêche.

Au moment d'écrire ces lignes, des Mohawks de la baie de Quinte à Tyendinaga, en Ontario, attisent un feu de camp en bordure d'une autoroute pour attirer l'attention sur la question des femmes autochtones disparues. Ses participant-es décrivent l'évènement comme étant le début d'une série d'actions directes visant à forcer la tenue d'une commission d'enquête nationale.

Arij Riahi (@arijactually) vit et écrit à Montréal.

On Denial and Distraction

The violence of colonialism in Canada

by Darryl Leroux

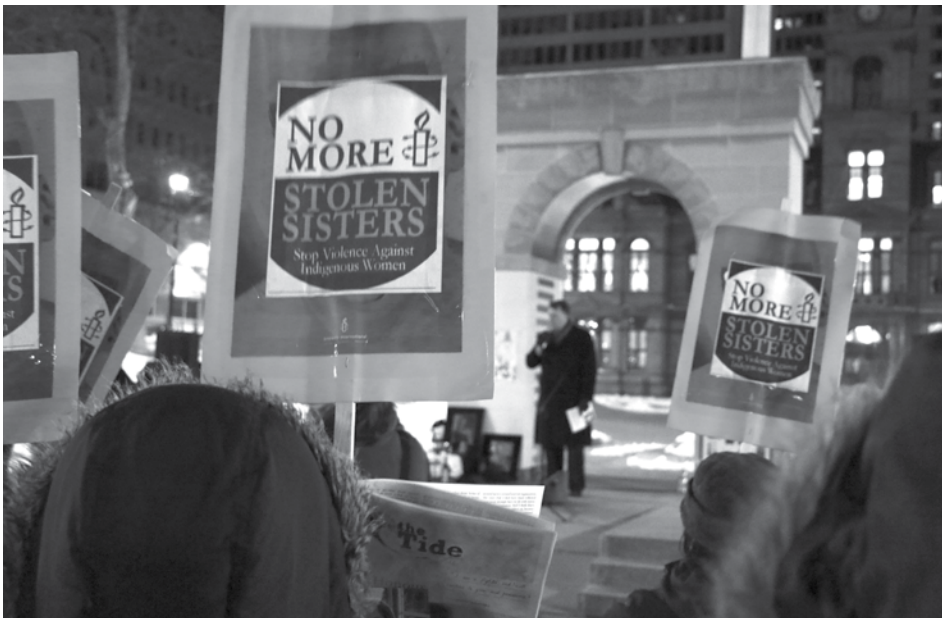
K'JIPUKTUK (HALIFAX)—Since the news of Loretta Saunders' murder was made public, several prominent media and political voices have argued that her murder had nothing to do with her indigeneity. In fact, there seems to be a veritable chorus of commentators—none of whom ever met Saunders—wanting us all to believe that her murder "could seemingly have befallen anyone in her position, male or female, native or non-native."

I have identified two main points in this claim that serve to deny responsibility and distract attention, neither of which supports any meaningful understanding, dialogue or action on the issue at hand.

First, many of the commentators use a very narrow understanding of crime that provides us non-Indigenous folks with an easy alibi. If we are to believe the choir, all crime is simply a matter of being in "the wrong place at the wrong time," and any attempt at explaining patterns of crime is at best hyperbole and at worst conjecture.

Not only is this a handy strategy to deny patterned violence against Indigenous women, violence due in large part to enforced poverty, but it also serves another insidious purpose: the denial of the systematically racist operation of our laws.

Remarkably, the last annual report of the Correctional Investigator of Canada demonstrates that the rate of incarceration of Indigenous women over the past decade has increased by 109 per cent. It is clear that the over-representation of Indigenous women both in prison and among the missing and/or murdered are connected. One need only read a handful of the dozens of community-based and human rights reports published in the past decade to get a picture of these connections. Saunders herself had consulted several of those reports in her research, and her own rejection of the framing I outline is a testament to the struggles of Indigenous women who dare point to the atrocious colonial violence they continue to face.



Dozens braved the cold in Halifax on March 27 at a vigil for Loretta Saunders. Photo by Miles Howe

Second, there have been numerous mentions of Saunders' fair skin and European facial features as evidence that her murder had nothing to do with her indigeneity.

It's certainly strange to witness so many people who adhere strongly to the Canadian ideology of "colour-blindness" suddenly talk openly about race and racism. As one commentator put it plainly, "Pictures of her I've seen depict an attractive young woman who could conceivably pass for virtually any European ancestry. She's blonde in some photos, an attribute that hardly screams Inuit."

All of Saunders' experiences prior to leaving Nunatsiavut for Halifax to attend university are based in her strong relationships with her family, community and territory, despite the Canadian government's continued attempts to eliminate these. Given the history of colonial violence, skin colour and facial features are not the defining feature of her or anybody's indigeneity.

On several occasions in her work, Saunders tragically identified herself as being at risk of the same fate that has befallen so many Indigenous women before her because of her experiences as an Indigenous woman. And she insisted that she would no longer be silenced by the vicious circle of violence that entangled her. We must not stand idly by as these experiences are trivialized, denied, misrepresented or eliminated.

Given all of the predictable attempts to discount Saunders' actual experiences, I insist on centring what we do know about her: Saunders was a passionate advocate for justice for Indigenous women like herself, outspoken about her pride in being Inuk and a tireless researcher on these topics.

Who is to gain by denying Saunders' indigeneity? As she herself recognized, we don't have an Indian problem in Canada. We have a white settler problem.

And it's white people like me who must have those difficult conversations with family and friends, teach ourselves what we were never taught, be ready to feel uncomfortable, and take the lead from the same Indigenous peoples who we have been taught to disregard, devalue and dehumanize. It's time to stop wringing our hands and looking to the authorities to make change. We have seen the devastation that our governments have wrought on Indigenous communities, too often with our (silent) support.

Darryl Leroux works and lives in Mi'kma'ki.

Vancouver Media Co-op

Their Spirits Live Within Us

Remembering missing and murdered women at the 23rd annual Women's Memorial March

Text by Feb 14th Women's Memorial March Committee, photos by Luz Rosas

VANCOUVER, UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES—The February 14 Annual Women's Memorial March is held on Valentine's Day each year to honour the memory of all women from the Downtown Eastside (DTES) who have died due to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual violence in any form. The march brings courage and commitment to remember and honour murdered and missing women, and to end the violence that vulnerable women in the DTES face on a daily basis.

"We are here to honour and remember the women, and we are here because we are failing to protect women from poverty and systemic exploitation, abuse and violence. We are here in sorrow and in anger because the violence continues each and every day and the list of missing and murdered women gets longer every year," said Marlene George, Memorial March Committee organizer.

The Women's Memorial March Committee organizes the annual march in order to come together to grieve the loss of our beloved sisters, remember the women who are still missing, and to dedicate ourselves to justice.

Luz Rosas is a street photographer, living in Vancouver.

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