



New Brunswick

Tensions are mounting in New Brunswick as David Alward’s Conservative government pushes forward fracking projects in the province despite strong opposition from people and community groups that are pressing instead for a provincial ban or moratorium.

Arguing that fracking – or “shale gas development” as it’s known in the province – would create new jobs and boost the economy, Premier Alward and his government have been staunch industry supporters. In November 2013, the government announced a new royalty regime for natural gas extraction aimed at enticing industry to start new projects.

According to the province’s Environment Minister, New Brunswick has about 80 trillion cubic feet of shale, although it is unclear exactly how much gas is actually trapped in the rock.



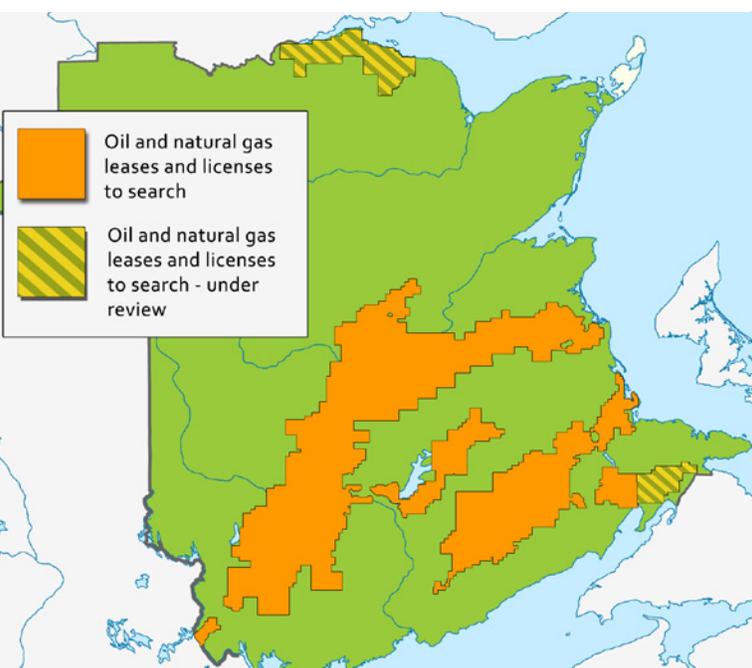
Maude Barlow stops at Richibucto River, New Brunswick on her way to meet Elsipogtog chief to express solidarity.

There are about 30 gas wells operating in southern New Brunswick near Sussex. In many communities around the province, oil and gas companies have held licences to explore and leases to produce fracked oil and gas for years. Several of these companies have drilled test wells or conducted seismic testing.

Penobsquis, a small community in the south-west of the province, had its first non-conventional gas wells drilled in 2000 and 2001. Since then, many more rounds of seismic testing have occurred and several more wells have been drilled. There are currently 30 gas producing wells in Penobsquis. The community faces the dangerous combination of gas production and potash mining, which has led to numerous issues including wells drying up, health concerns, and homes and properties being damaged by the ground settling. Many people in the community have filed complaints with the province’s Mining Commissioner against PotashCorp, and are seeking compensation.²¹

More recently, seismic testing and well drilling are being carried out in communities along the shale formation, including in the Kent County area. Public opposition has been fierce and has led to a dramatic increase in awareness about shale gas development in the province and the Atlantic region.

Oil and Gas Rights in New Brunswick



Oil and natural gas rights data source: GeoNB, geonb.snb.ca/ong/
Map source: [Canada_New_Brunswick_location_map.svg](#) by Wikimedia Commons user NordNordWest, CC BY-SA 3.0

21 www.penobsquis.ca/concerned-citizens/

The protests in Kent County target SWN Resources, a Texas-based company doing exploratory seismic testing. SWN has a provincial licence that allows it to search for trapped gas across about 900,000 hectares of New Brunswick.

SWN is conducting the testing on unceded Mi'kmaq lands of the Signitog District. Members of the Elsipogtog First Nation have said "no" to testing and fracking on their land. After a peaceful blockade throughout the summer, the Elsipogtog and others who oppose shale gas development in the province made international headlines when RCMP officers with riot gear, assault rifles and snipers moved in on peaceful protesters. Most media coverage of the events ignored a key issue: that the Elsipogtog are standing up to protect their land, water and families from the harmful effects of fracking.

New Brunswickers against fracking

Opposition to shale gas development has been growing since 2010, with the formation of 29 community groups across the province that work in coalition and on their own to educate people and try to put the brakes on this growing industry. Groups have lobbied provincial political parties, municipal governments and the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick, Indigenous leaders, and the office of the Ombudsman, and reached out to allies and potential allies about the various risks associated with fracking. In 2012, the New Brunswick government held public consultations on fracking and commissioned Dr. Louis Lapierre to facilitate and summarize them, as well as meetings with other stakeholders, in a report. Around the same time, Dr. Eilish Cleary, Chief Medical Officer of Health for New Brunswick, wrote a report reviewing the health implications and considerations related to shale gas development.

Dr. LaPierre's report, titled *The Path Forward*, compiled data from both public and stakeholder meetings where the majority of participants were against fracking. His 38-page report summarized what issues were raised and then gave recommendations, based on "the economic importance and beneficial impact the shale gas industry." His recommendations focused on how New Brunswickers and the industry could co-exist.²² Dr. Cleary completed her detailed 70-page report titled *Chief Medical Officer of Health's Recommendations Concerning Shale Gas Development in New Brunswick* in September 2012. Her main conclusions identified the province's lack of a comprehensive health risk assessment of fracking, and the lack of a framework for assessing public health risks on a project-by-project basis.²³

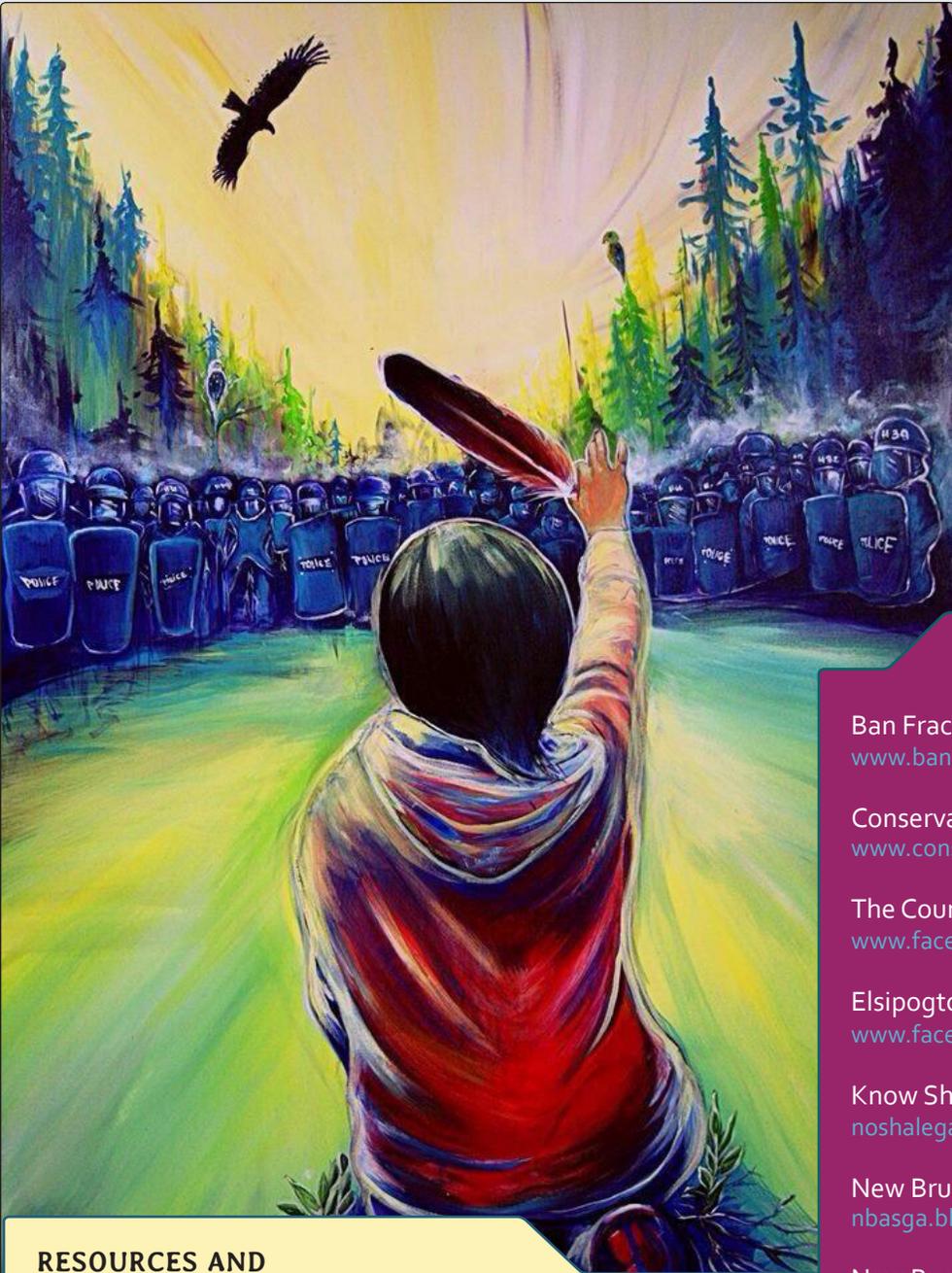
In May 2013, the New Brunswick government announced new regulations for the shale gas industry, which purportedly took into account the recommendations of both the Cleary and LaPierre reports (*The New Brunswick Oil and Natural Gas Blueprint, May 2013*). In fact, none of the Cleary recommendations are in the government plan, whereas LaPierre was named head of the Energy Institute he recommended.

Despite claims by Environment Minister Bruce Fitch that the focus of the government's blueprint was on safeguarding air and water, and "to ensure that the industry can evolve in an environmentally safe manner," few lands are protected from the possibility of fracking – not even wetlands.²⁴

22 www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/ShaleGas/en/ThePathForward.pdf

23 www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/Recommendations_ShaleGasDevelopment.pdf

24 www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/don-t-worry-about-seismic-testing-in-wetland-alward-says-1.1341294; www.conservationcouncil.ca/wetlands-taking-a-blasting/



The New Brunswick government will likely continue to see ongoing protests against its pro-industry stance, which is at odds with many people in the province who say that fracking brings too many risks.

This image, by Fanny Aishaa, is a reimagination of an original photo by Ossie Michelin / APTN. The woman depicted is Amanda Polchies, protecting unceded Mi'kmaq land and water from fracking.

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

Ban Fracking NB
www.banfrackingnb.ca

Conservation Council of New Brunswick
www.conservationcouncil.ca

The Council of Canadians Fredericton Chapter
www.facebook.com/groups/196759017153089/

Elsipogtog Warrior Society
www.facebook.com/groups/265528243458534/

Know Shale Gas NB
noshalegasnb.ca

New Brunswick Anti-Shale Gas Alliance
nbasga.blogspot.ca/

New Brunswick Environmental Network Shale Gas Caucus
www.nben.ca/en/collaborative-action/caucuses/shale-gas-caucus

Sierra Club Atlantic
atlantic.sierraclub.ca

Upriver Environment Watch
upriverenvironmentwatch.com

Water and Environmental Protection for Albert County
protectalbertcounty.wordpress.com

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Ownership and Surface Access and Oil and Gas Legislation
www.gnb.ca/0078/minerals/ONG_Introduction-e.aspx

Water Supply Source Assessment Permit
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.201100.Water_Supply_Source_Assessment_Permit.html

Chief Medical Officer of Health's Recommendations Concerning Shale Gas Development in New Brunswick
www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/HealthyEnvironments/Recommendations_ShaleGasDevelopment.pdf