

Federal Police and New Brunswick Government Assault First Nations Anti-Fracking Protest

By [Roger Annis](#)

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Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

On October 17 the RCMP [launched a violent assault](#) on a blockade protest against shale gas fracking company on the outskirts of the New Brunswick village of Rexton, just north of Moncton. The protest action has been led by the Mi'kmaw people of the Elsipogtog First Nation. A symbolic protest that was slowing traffic on a nearby highway has been in place since September 30 to halt the fracking activities of Houston-based SWN Resources.

The fracking company obtained an injunction to halt the protest and the RCMP moved in to enforce it yesterday. They attacked the protesters with guns drawn, using pepper spray and dogs while camouflaged police snipers had rifles pointed and at the ready. Forty people were arrested, including Elsipogtog Chief Arren Sock. When Chief Sock was arrested, RCMP vehicles were set on fire and trees were cut to block the nearby highway adjoining the scene.



Former Elsipogtog chief Susan Levi-Peters told the *Globe and Mail*, "It's Oka all over again," referring to the historic, months-long, armed standoff between the Mohawk people and the Canadian and Quebec governments in 1990 at [Oka, Quebec](#), just outside of Montreal.

Chief Sock and some of the other people arrested were released from jail yesterday. [Solidarity actions are taking place](#) across Canada and in the United States today. The *Real News Network* is showing [video footage](#) of the clash.

News: [Grand Chief Stewart Philip of Union of BC Indian Chiefs condemns police assault in New Brunswick](#), from the *Vancouver Observer*, Oct 18, 2013.

The situation has [calmed overnight](#) and presently there are only small numbers of protesters and police on site.

The Mi'kmaw say the fracking is taking place on traditional hunting lands and is a violation of their sovereign rights. Their concerns are shared by many other residents in the region and across the province. All are deeply concerned about the pollution of fresh water and land that fracking will cause.

New Brunswick is governed by a Conservative Party government elected in 2010. It supports gas fracking but the issue is highly contested. [In 2011](#), the Union of New Brunswick Municipalities voted by just 22-18 against a resolution in favour of a province-wide moratorium. Mayors in the eastern New Brunswick region where the RCMP assault took

place [voted 16-1 in July of this year](#) to ask the government to impose a fracking moratorium in their region. (See more background on fracking in New Brunswick [here](#).)

There were [arrests this summer](#) at the protest site near Rexton. Twenty five of 35 charges have been dropped so far, according to *CBC News*.

The Mi'kmaw are the Indigneous people of the lands now known as the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The late [Donald Marshall Jr.](#) was the most well-known modern Mi'kmaw by virtue of his victory against a police frame-up that saw him serve 11 years in prison in the 1970s and 1980s for a murder he did not commit. He later won a court victory establishing historic fishing rights that had been taken from his people.

Pamela Palmateer has written an [excellent background article](#) on this story that appears in today's *Rabble.ca*. She writes,

"Yesterday morning, we awoke to reports from the Mi'kmaw of swarms of RCMP dispatched to Elsipogtog to enforce Harper's aggressive natural resource agenda. He has effectively declared war on the Mi'kmaw."

"It is more than coincidental timing - it was obviously strategically calculated with [the completion of the Governor General's speech from the throne](#) and the end of the United Nations Special Rapporteur James Anaya's visit to Canada."

Her commentary details the long history of police and government assault against the rights of the Mi'kmaw people. •

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