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# RESISTING CANADIAN COLONIALISM:



## THE INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Essays on Indigenous & International Struggles  
by Aaron Mercredi



7th Edition

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# Indigenous People vs. Canadian History: What I Learned in High School

By Aaron Mercredi

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In high school, I remember learning about Canadian history in a Social Sciences class. I remember starting with Jacques Cartier's first encounter with Indigenous people. According to my textbook, what happened to Indigenous people throughout the history of Canada was 'unfortunate' and 'tragic'. This description not only fails to acknowledge the magnitude of the crimes that were committed against Indigenous people, but it also fails to acknowledge that the genocide and colonization that was committed was done systematically.

## **Early Stages of Canada's War on Indigenous People**

Attacks began on Indigenous people well before the Canadian state was even established. When Britain and France were fighting each other for the different territories of North America, both countries knew that they needed to steal Indigenous territory, so that they could be free to plunder and exploit it. As a result of the 7-year war, which began in 1756, countless Indigenous people were displaced or killed, many from smallpox-infected blankets that were traded to them by British forces.

Once Canada was established, the Canadian government began its series of legislated attacks against Indigenous peoples' right to exist. Whether it is the Indian Act of 1876, the long list of treaties that were negotiated almost entirely in English with 'unofficial' promises of friendships, which robbed Native people's lands, or the establishment of apartheid through the forced displacement of Indigenous people on to reserves, these were necessary steps of Canada's expansion as a colonial country.



Mohawk warriors face Canadian soldiers during the Oka stand off.

When the Canadian government stole young Indigenous children from their families and put them in residential schools, forbidding them to speak their own language, this was a step they took to further the destruction of Indigenous people by stripping them of their identity and dignity.

## **The Colonial War Continues Abroad**

When we look at our history of being colonized, of being denied a right to determine our own destiny, and control our own resources, and we compare it with what is going on in Iraq, Afghanistan, and

Haiti, we can see that this is not isolated to us living in Canada, but is a struggle that people are engaged in all over the world. This new era of war and occupation that imperialist countries like Canada have dragged the world into is the extension of the war that has been waged against Indigenous people in North America for over 500 years. And it is the extension of the destruction and colonization that we must fight against.

Since its inception, the Canadian government has been suppressing our right to govern ourselves. We are no strangers to the racist myths that we are incapable of managing our own affairs, and that we need the Canadian government to intervene in our lives. Whether it was the white Indian agents who were responsible for entire Indigenous nations, who had no respect for our traditional governance, or the First Nations Governance Act, which just surfaced in 2002. We are no strangers to the failures of the Canadian government in trying to govern us. Why then, should we believe that this same government is serious about bringing good governance to the people of Afghanistan and Haiti? Why should we believe that the US is bringing 'democracy' to Iraq, since it was founded on the same colonization and genocide as Canada?

### **Colonialism and the Re-writing of History**

Recently, as part of an overall strategy to crush the will of the Iraqi people, to crush the resistance and stabilize the occupation, the US



introduced new history textbooks for Iraqis, written by and produced in the US. With this the US is re-writing the history of Iraq, leaving out anything that would suggest that Iraqis have a history of being able to take things into their own hands. Now, comparing this to the cultural genocide that has been committed against Indigenous people here by the Canadian government, we can see the similarities. This is the same tactic of trying to destroy cultures that the Canadian government used with the forced removal of Indigenous children from their traditional ways of life into residential schools, where they were taught Colonialist values. With the re-education that is instituted in Canada, Indigenous youth grow up learning history from the colonizer's perspective.

### **'Canadian Interests' vs. the Right of Indigenous Peoples to Self-determination**

When the Canadian government attempts to teach us our history, it uses the excuse that it is acting in our own interest. Before the January handover when the Canadian military took the leadership of the NATO forces in Afghanistan, I remember watching a news broadcast where Paul Martin spoke about the interest of Canadians being in putting Canada on the international stage. We need to be especially suspicious when the leaders in the Canadian government talk about acting in

'Canadian interests' abroad because destruction of our traditional ways of life and the theft of our land and resources have all been done in the name of 'Canadian interests'

Are these 'Canadian interests' that Paul Martin talks about the same interests of Indigenous people? With the long history of oppression at the hands of the Canadian government, can we honestly say that Indigenous people have common interests with the Canadian government?

The 'Canadian interests' Paul Martin is referring to were, and continue to be, the theft of Indigenous land for Canadian expansion, the displacement of Indigenous people onto small parcels of land, and our assimilation in to the Canadian capitalist economy. These were all necessary steps towards building a modern industrialized country like Canada. Because there are 'Canadian interests' at home and abroad, these attacks on Indigenous people need to be seen in the context of attacks on oppressed nations globally.

We're living in a period where a global economic crisis is facing all imperialist countries, including Canada. This economic crisis requires the colonial Canadian government to continue to occupy, steal and exploit Indigenous people, our land, and resources in Canada. This same economic crisis requires direct occupations of third-world countries by imperialist countries to further plundering third-world nations. It is the same economic crisis that forces the Canadian government to take the leading role in the brutal occupation of Afghanistan and send occupation troops to Haiti, and the same economic crisis that forces the American government to continue its criminal and immoral occupation of Iraq.

With the photos of abused and tortured Iraqi prisoners being released to the public, it is obvious that the loss of dignity and pride is an inevitable result of living under occupation. In Canada, we live in one of the most 'advanced' countries in the world, yet most of us live in third-world conditions. Indigenous people in Canada have suffered through so much and lost so much dignity at the hands of the Canadian government. Fundamentally, we must fight to reclaim our pride and dignity.

### **End the Occupations**

Looking at the brutal history of 'Canadian interests,' as Indigenous people, we need to see what this government is doing abroad in the name of Canadian interests, and we need to recognize that oppressed people all over the world are under attack by colonial imperialist countries like Canada. The Canadian military has a leading role in the brutal occupation of Afghanistan and is trying to control every aspect of life. They are suppressing the Afghan people's right to self-determination for the sake of pursuing Canadian economic and strategic interests. We must make the connection between Afghanistan and what the Canadian government has been doing to Indigenous people in Canada for hundreds of years. When the Canadian government boasts about being a 'peace-keeping' nation, we know this is a lie because the Canadian military has constantly been used to attacking Indigenous people here in Canada.

Finally, as Indigenous people it is vital for us to support the Afghan, Iraqi and Haitian people's resistance to the occupation of their countries because we have a common struggle, and this struggle needs to be united as an international movement for the right of self-determination for all oppressed people. When Afghans and Haitians resist the Canadian occupation of their country, it weakens the ability of the Canadian government to act out its war at home, and when Indigenous people fight for our self-determination within Canada, it weakens the ability of the Canadian state to carry out its imperialist agenda abroad. Our struggles are very much linked. In order for us to be effective in fighting for our self-determination, for our dignity, we need to demand self-determination for oppressed nations struggling against occupations all over the world.

# **Gordon Campbell's Liberal Government Steps Up Old Colonial Practice:**

## **Stop Making Profit From Stolen Indigenous Land**

**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 17 Aug. 2004*

On Thursday, July 15th, members of the Seton Lake Indian Band set up a temporary blockade of the railway that been handed over to CN Rail the day before, succeeding in blocking a freight train that was trying to pass through the BC rail corridor south of Lillooet. This blockade was set up in response to the BC Liberal government's augmented attacks on Indigenous people's inherent right and title to land in the province. This right and title to land has been ignored and recently took form in the sale of the BC Rail to the Canadian National Railway Company.

The St'at'mic Chiefs Council, which represents 11 Aboriginal bands including the Seton Lake Indian Band, have been fighting for recognition of their inherent right and title to the territory that the rail line passes through. The BC Liberal government has never reached any form of agreement with the St'at'mic about access to and use of their lands that the rail line runs over.

While the province was making plans to sell the line, the council informed potential buyers that the provincial government was in no position to sell the railway until matters with the St'at'mic were addressed and that any potential buyer who wished to invest in the railway would do so at their own risk.

The construction of the BC rail line was an insult to Indigenous people in this province. The line crosses through some of the most impoverished areas of British Columbia, owned by many Indigenous people. Of the billions of dollars worth of materials that have crossed through these territories on the rail line, the people who own the territory have not received any benefits of owning land that is of such valuable use to CN Rail.

The \$1-Billion, 990-year lease of the rail line cemented the BC Liberal government's stance on the legal rights of Indigenous people to land and resources in BC: that they will continue to ignore and suppress them. One question that arises out of this struggle is why hasn't the BC Liberal government reached an agreement with the St'at'mic? Why is the government afraid to meet on an equal basis to discuss the land use? The reason is that, legally, the BC Liberal government does not have jurisdiction over that land, as it was never signed away by the Indigenous nations who look after it. So they rely purely on the same colonial practice of stealing Indigenous land that they have been pursuing since contact, except now they are trying to profit off of it by selling the land to a private corporation. The organizing of Indigenous people against privatization, like the actions of the St'at'mic against the sale of BC Rail, are fundamental steps towards building resistance against the illegal landgrabs, displacement and genocide that Indigenous people have endured for hundreds of years.



## Skwelkwek'welt vs. Sun Peaks!

# The Struggle of Native People to Regain Their Stolen Land in British Columbia

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 18-19 Sept./Oct. 2004*

On August 29th, over two hundred protestors marched on Sun Peaks Ski Resort, located 30 minutes North of Kamloops, to rally against its continued expansion on to Secwepemc (commonly known as Shuswap) territory. The demonstration, which brought out Indigenous people and supporters from all over the country, brought attention to and built solidarity with the struggle against the resort's relentless expansion and development on to unceded Secwepemc land.

The march stopped at various parts of the resort for speakers from different Indigenous nations and solidarity groups to speak, including at the entrance to Delta Hotels, which is one of the main companies involved in the expansion of the resort. The march ended up at a higher point on the mountain, where a new Sun Peaks village and an 18-hole golf course are in the process of being built. At this location, the Skwelkwek'welt Defenders began to build a foundation for a building that would act as their monitoring centre. In a traditional way, Secwepemc people exercised their rights to their land by felling two trees to begin the construction of a permanent structure. The structure will be used to monitor environmental damage at Skwelkwek'welt, to inform tourists and potential investors of the on-going land dispute, to assert and exercise Secwepemc rights and title to their land by occupying it, and act as a cultural centre.

### **How Colonial Expansion in Secwepemc Land Started**

The \$70 Million expansion of the resort that was approved by the government of BC in 1997 without the consultation of Secwepemc people has been increased to a \$285 Million development. This development now includes its expansion to 20,000 bed units, and the development of Mount Morrisey which had previously been untouched. With utter disregard for Secwepemc rights and title to the land in question, this expansion would continue to destroy the natural habitat of the mountain area and continue to infringe on Secwepemc land.

Sun Peaks ski resort was originally purchased in 1992 by the Japanese holding company, Nippon Cable. Since then, the size and scope of the resort has expanded ten-fold from a capacity of 100 beds to 4000, along with other projects like the construction of an 18-hole golf course. Secwepemc people never agreed to the construction or expansion of the ski resort, and have responded by building the Skwelkwek'welt Protection Centre to occupy their own land and put an end the illegal development. Since this began, more than 54 people have been arrested for defending the unceded territory, including youth and elders, and more than 8 Secwepemc homes and traditional sweatlodges have been destroyed by bulldozers. Despite this, Secwepemc people have continued to fight back.

The BC government has continued its colonial policy towards Indigenous nations like the Secwepemc, in spite of recent precedent-setting victories for Indigenous people in the Canada's own colonial courts. Despite the recognition of inherent land rights of Aboriginal people as Aboriginal title in the Delgamuukw case, and the result of the Haida case, which required provincial and private interests to have consent from and accommodate Aboriginal interests before developing on Aboriginal territories, the BC government has undermined the self-determination

of Secwepemc people and ignored their legal right and title to the area currently occupied by Sun Peaks.

### **The Struggle Continues**

On September 3rd, members of the Skwelkwew'welt Protection Centre appeared in BC Supreme Court in Vancouver after they received a trespass notice from Sun Peaks Resort. During the hearing, the judge agreed to an interlocutory injunction by Sun Peaks that ordered the defenders out of the base area occupied by the resort, which would effectively remove them from their own land. This injunction was followed up by an enforcement order that would give the RCMP the authority to arrest anyone who violates that injunction. The defenders refused to leave, and continued to 'occupy' their land despite police harassment. The monitoring centre that began to be constructed on August 29th remained next to the 16th hole of the golf course to be used by Secwepemc people. On September 21st, the RCMP executed the court injunction and enforcement order against the defenders at the camp, arresting three Secwepemc Nationals. Henry Sauls, George Manuel Jr., and Arnie Jack have been charged with contempt of Civil Court order, and are to appear in Court in Kamloops on November 15th, 2004.

The resilience of Secwepemc people has been shown to the people of BC, Canada and the world. Since the Skwelkwew'welt defenders have taken on Sun Peaks and the BC government, they have inspired acts of solidarity by Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists, from Toronto to Germany, building international solidarity against the illegal occupation of their land. With the current direct struggle over Secwepemc land, the BC government's long-standing policy towards Indigenous people, a policy of theft and extinguishment, has been exposed. The convergence at Sun Peaks ski resort on August 29th represented the importance of people uniting against this policy, against Sun Peaks and the BC government who have been working together to undermine the sovereignty and borders of the Secwepemc nation, and who have relied on brute force to act it out. With the level of anger and frustration that exists over this colonial dispute, uniting Secwepemc with other nations, indigenous and non-indigenous people, and other people under attack by the same BC government, in broad mass movement could directly challenge this theft of Indigenous land.



# “We’ll Just Keep Challenging It Over And Over Again”

## Two Interviews with Skwelkwek’welt Defenders, Janice Billy and Ska7cis

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 18-19 Sept./Oct. 2004*

### Janice Billy

**Fire This Time:** Last Friday, you and other members of the Skwelkwek’welt Protection Centre were in court in Vancouver. What was the issue at stake?

**Janice Billy:** Well, we were presented with an injunction and a trespass notice. The trespass came first, then we went to court there were two things brought up: the injunction to remove us from where we are, the trespass charge and the enforcement order to remove people.

**FTT:** Is it related to the protest rally that you had on August 29th?

**JB:** Well, it’s not directly because it is an occupation of our lands that we actually just started the same day as the demonstration.

**FTT:** What was the result of the court hearing?

**JB:** The judge granted the injunction and said that we had to leave immediately, I guess. And then she granted an enforcement order and said that we had to leave immediately, which was Friday at around 4:30pm, when the judge made the decision.

**FTT:** What impact will the court’s decision have on Secwepemc people?

**JB:** Well, we’ve refused to obey all injunctions, all trespass notices, everything they give us. We refuse to obey it.

**FTT:** Now that this injunction has been put in place, what is going to happen to this Protection Centre currently being built by the Swelkwek’welt defenders?

**JB:** Well, it’s still there and it will stay there as long as we keep it there. And if people are willing to be arrested, if that’s what it’s going to take then we’ll just keep challenging it over and over again in court and by whatever other means we have. And it’s not a protection centre, it’s a monitoring centre. It’s also a cultural learning centre because we have people there, the elders, that come up and the people there that teach our youth and even the non-Secwepemc people about our way of life, about the culture, about the environment, about our land rights, so it’s also an education centre too.

**FTT:** How do the Secwepmec people plan on responding to this injunction?

**JB:** Well first of all, by refusing to obey it. Refusing to accept those laws that are imposed upon us. That is the first thing- we just absolutely do not recognize them. We do not recognize the BC Lands Act that the trespass notice was issued under and we do not recognize the assumed ownership of Sun Peaks resort or the government of BC. And then, also looking at all other means of challenging those court decisions imposed on us.

**FTT:** Thank you, Janice.

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**Ska7cis**

(Pronounced “Skaheesh”)

**FTT:** As a young Secwepemc person, why do you oppose the expansion of Sun Peaks ski resort?

**Ska7cis:** To maintain our culture, to maintain our way of life. It’s just genocide. It’s a third party extinguishment of Aboriginal title. That’s what it comes down to. We can’t practice our right to occupy any land we want or cut any trees we want or hunt wherever we want. Right now there’s the injunction that stops us from doing that, right, it’s the beginning of extinguishing our Aboriginal title and the loss of our culture. That’s why I oppose it.

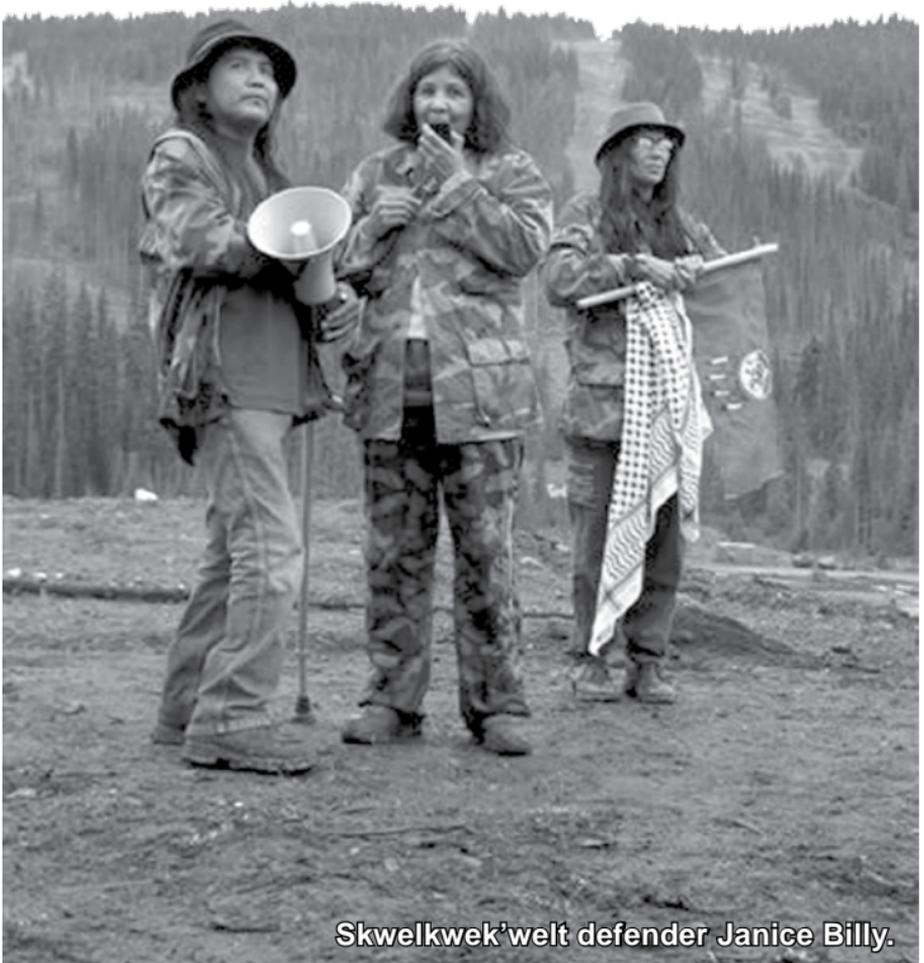
**FTT:** What do you think the effect of not only this injunction, but also the expansion of Sun Peaks Ski Resort will have on the future of Secwepemc people, the Secwepemc youth?

**Ska7cis:** Well, we’ve been here for 10,000 years, the Secwepemc people, and we’ll be here for 10,000 more years. And it’s displacement, right? Basically that’s a “No Indian” zone now. It’s a “No go” zone. No Indians allowed in the base land area of Sun Peaks which is 8.74 hectares, right, so that’s just about 9 square kilometres of Secwepemc territory that the courts don’t want us to occupy. They don’t want us to be Indian in these areas.

**FTT:** Why do you think it’s important for Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous people to support this struggle against Sun Peaks?

**Ska7cis:** Well, first of all it’s for the environment. It’s for the water. It’s for the animals. It’s for the oxygen. To have clean water, everyone should have the right to clean water, because in Europe, for every glass of water you have to pay a dollar. You go to a restaurant and you pay a dollar for a glass of water and you pay for the water in your house. I don’t want it to be like that here in Secwepemculecw where we have to pay for our own water, and eventually it might come to that if we keep on letting developments happen like Sun Peaks, mass tourism and mass logging.

**FTT:** Thank you.



Skwelkwek’welt defender Janice Billy.

# The Same Old Colonial Rule: BC Liberals Increase Attacks on Indigenous Rights



Skwelkwek'welt Defender Nicole Manuel.

By Aaron Mercredi

Originally appeared in *Fire This Time* # 25 Aug. 2005

*"We are standing up for our human rights and our Indigenous rights."*

-Nicole Manuel at July 15<sup>th</sup> press conference

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, Nicole Manuel, a young Secwepemc mother of two was released from Allouette Correctional Facility for Women after serving 30 days of a 45-day sentence for defending her inherent right to Secwepemc territory. The incident in question was a 4-hour roadblock on August 24, 2001 at Skwelkwek'welt, which prevented access to the Sun Peaks Ski Resort. Four other Secwepemc people, Trevor Dennis, Rose Jack, Mark Sauls, and Rod Anderson are still serving sentences for their participation in the roadblock. Sun Peaks ski resort was built on unceded Secwepemc territory, near Kamloops, which has never been surrendered or handed over to the government of Canada.

Family, friends and supporters arranged a press conference at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre for Nicole the day she was released from prison.

Nicole's father and spokesperson for the Indigenous Network on Economies and Trade (INET), Arthur Manuel, opened the press conference by explaining Canada's brutal role in suppressing Indigenous people's sovereignty over their land and resources. In its own colonial Supreme Court of Canada, Aboriginal title and rights are recognized. "In the constitution of this country, it recognizes and acknowledges Aboriginal treaty rights," Art Manuel said. "Yet when our young people go out and exercise those rights, they are thrown in jail. And when Canada throws our young people in jail, what they're doing by depriving them of their liberty, they are violating their human rights. Canada is no different than any other country in the world that throws people in jail for their own self-interest and their own political purposes."

Nicole Manuel spoke next, thankful to be out of prison. She talked about the attacks that the government has made on her and other Secwepemc defenders. "The one main thing that I spent my time thinking of is all the incidents at Sun Peaks, at Skwelkwek'welt, all the experiences of my children. They were there. They experienced things that you think would only occur in war-torn countries. They've had their house demolished. They've had to return home to find their house torn right to the ground. They've had their churches, their sacred sweatlodges, demolished and burned. They've had to witness, their mother, their aunts, their families, arrested and jailed. The places where they gather their food, their berry-picking spots, totally desecrated. Nothing left. And these are interests that the government is protecting at the cost of our freedom. And we're the Indigenous people of this land. This is our homeland."

Rick Quipp, a fisherman from the Cheam Nation, who has been involved in Cheam struggles over fishing rights against the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, explained that the struggles of Indigenous people against the government of Canada are universal "...whether it is to fish or to hunt or to pick berries to survive," he said. "Then we go in to courts facing the corporation of Canada, the government saying that we can't and they will not put up with us. They institutionalize us for things that we believe are our right to do."

Messages of support and solidarity were brought both from Professor June McCue, from the First Nations Legal Studies Department at UBC, as well as from Tara Scurr, a BC-Yukon organizer with the Council of Canadians.

## **BC Liberal Government Continues Colonial Attacks on All Fronts**

All over the province of BC, the rights of Indigenous people are being trampled. This is most clear when we look at the outright theft of Indigenous land and resources and the vicious repression of resistance to this theft and plunder. In the case of Sun Peaks Ski Resort, more and more Secwepemc land has been stolen since its initial development, and if Sun Peaks and the government of BC have their way, this will continue on into the future.

In 1997, the BC government approved a \$70 million expansion of Sun Peaks, inflating the resort from 4,000 beds to 20,000 beds, and developing previously untouched Mt. Morrisey. This expansion now totals \$285 million; an expansion that is going through without the consent, or even the participation, of the Secwepemc people who hold title to all of the territory onto which Sun Peaks is spreading. Since developments began, Secwepemc people have set up the Skwel'kwel'welt Protection Centre at the entrance to Sun Peaks and have continued to assert their inherent rights to their land. The wave of repression that the BC Liberal government has brought down on the Secwepemc defenders has resulted in over 54 arrests of Secwepemc people, mainly youth and elders.

Secwepemc people are not the only ones who have responded to attacks by the provincial government by directly using their land in the face of massive developments.

Since 2000, St'at'imc people have set up a permanent camp in their territory near Melvin Creek, located between Mt. Currie and Pemberton. Known as Sutikahl, the camp was set up to assert St'at'imc rights to their land and to stop the BC government and corporate plans to build the \$500 million Cayoosh Ski Resort in the untouched alpine mountain area. For the last 5 years, St'at'imc people have occupied the threatened territory despite government and corporate plans to go ahead with the deal.

The interests that the government is trying to protect when it attacks the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous people over their mountains are the same interests they are protecting when



**Rick Quipp, Cheam fisherman.**

it attacks members of the Cheam First Nation over fishing rights on their waters. Recently, members of the Sto:lo Nation and Cheam Nation had their fishing nets seized by Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) officers and were threatened with charges for harvesting salmon in their unceded territory. Cheam people have resisted attacks on their waters many times within the last few years and have confronted the DFO directly to defend their sovereignty. This new wave of attacks is a continuation of suppressing Indigenous rights over this area of the Fraser River.

## **Hypocrisy of the BC Liberal government**

The hypocrisy of all the attacks being waged by the governments of BC and Canada in regards to land disputes within BC is that almost this entire province, 97% of it, is unceded Indigenous territory. Almost all of the land was not handed over in any treaty, or surrendered to the Canadian state. Land that doesn't belong to Canada does not belong to its provinces, and the provincial government of BC does not hold legal jurisdiction over unceded Indigenous territory. We see the government dealing with this by trying to push through the treaty process, and trying to get Indigenous nations to sign over what they have left, so that it can consolidate the territory within BC. While the BC government is trying to push through land deals on paper, we see this consolidation of land taking place in its most naked form through the direct theft of Indigenous land and resources and suppression of Indigenous people who defend their sovereignty over their territories.

## **The Right to Fish, the Right to live off the Land are Inherent Rights of Indigenous People**

British Columbia, like all other provinces within Canada, is facing an economic crisis. It is dealing with this crisis by attacking all marginalized, poor and working people within its borders. For working people, this means cuts to social programs, cuts to welfare, attacks on unionized and non-unionized workers. For Indigenous people, this means a continuation of denying their self-determination, while speeding up the theft and destruction that have been caused by the colonial governments of BC and Canada since they were formed. For Indigenous people to assert their rights to their land and resources, it is really a matter of survival. To put food on the table, to gather resources from their land, these are essential rights that Indigenous people hold to survive as people and as nations. The government is directly attacking these rights and the only way to fight against it is by doing what Indigenous people have been doing when coming under attack: fighting back and asserting their rights to their land. Non-Indigenous people need to recognize that these rights are inherent to Indigenous people whose land is occupied by Canada and BC. In recognizing this, we need to support Indigenous peoples' resistance to the theft and destruction of the government of Canada and their call for self-determination.

# Iraqi Youth Under US-UK Military Occupation:

## Is there a Future?

By Aaron  
Mercredi &  
Tamara Hansen

*Originally  
appeared in Fire  
This Time # 17  
Aug. 2004*

The occupation of Iraq has shattered the lives of Iraqi people. The most blatant and obvious example of this is the impact of the occupation on the future of Iraq- its



youth. Under occupation, Iraqi children and young people are growing up in streets where they are constantly under attack, by bombs, tanks, guns, and soldiers. In addition to these dangerous living conditions Iraqi youth are also facing a lack of employment, clean water, electricity, medical care and school closures.

### **No Security Under Occupation**

Underlying these brutal realities of occupation is the fundamental lack of security, which is preventing all Iraqis from meeting their basic needs and carrying out their lives. Like all Iraqis, youth suffer tremendously under the occupation, and live under the constant intimidation and harassment of the occupation forces.

We saw the harsh reality of the U.S. and U.K.'s actions towards Iraqi people with the release of the photos of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison, and the subsequent surfacing of other cases throughout Iraq's prisons. What was not in the news until recently was the fact that young people and children, as young as 10 years old, are among the thousands of Iraqis who are still being held without trial or charge in detention facilities throughout the country.

Reports have also surfaced of the existence of a 'children's wing' of Abu Ghraib prison. A UNICEF report found that children in Basra are being arrested by the British army for 'alleged activities targeting the occupying forces.' The majority of these children are being held as 'internees,' which makes them subject to an indefinite holding time without contact with their family or a trial. That same UNICEF report has discovered that over 100 children are being detained, although the actual number is significantly higher since the organization has been denied access to many prison facilities known to be holding children. Inside these facilities, the names of the children being held are not known, nor is how long they have been kept for and what has happened to them during their detention.

The treatment of young Iraqi prisoners is shocking; just as the treatment of adult Iraqi prisoners, but what makes this abuse even more disturbing is that these are children suffering at the hands of adult guards. Accounts of torture, interrogations, rapes and molestations of young people and children have surfaced which have been detailed by reporters, soldiers, and former inmates. In Abu Ghraib, there was the case of a 15-year old boy who was raped by a soldier. The same interrogation methods used on adult Iraqis are being used on incarcerated children. Beyond the beatings and rapes, Iraqi children are being used against their family members. There is the case of a 16-year old Iraqi boy who was arrested, interrogated, and tortured. He was then shown in a physically wounded and humiliated state to his father who was also being interrogated as a way for the interrogators to crack their witness. Young women also make up Iraq's prison population, and as reported by the same agencies they are not safe from humiliation, violence, rape and torture.

Outside of prison, women are still in danger. A report by Human Rights Watch found that since the occupation began, kidnappings, rapes and other violence against young women have dramatically increased. It is also difficult to keep an accurate count on the number of rapes and violence against women since many cases go unreported, and when they are many cases get lost in the paper-shuffle which is part of the breakdown in police record-keeping. The situation is so severe that young women are being abducted from busy streets in broad daylight. Because of these dangers many young women are forced to stay home from work and school.

From Abu Ghraib to the streets of Iraq, youth are living under occupation. Concretely this means they are living in an insecure and unstable environment, which is preventing them from going to school, going to work and being able to learn and grow as human beings. Living under the fear and humiliation of occupation has stopped the ability of Iraq youth to live normally and has forced them to adapt to these extraordinary and horrible circumstances.

### **Books of Lies and Empty Classrooms**

The dangerous reality of life under occupation is preventing Iraqi youth from going to school.

During the first stages of war and occupation in Iraq schools were closed. However on October 1st 2003 the US officially reopened schools with coalition soldiers handing out pencils and notebooks to children and youth as they went to their first day back in class. In spite of this, most parents chose to keep their children home because of insecurity caused by continued violence.

Baghdad University has also been a major site of violence and controversy. In April 2003 there was a major fight between Iraqi fighters and US military on the same day that US forces took down the statue of Saddam Hussein and Iraq was 'liberated'. Violence and hypocrisy such as this is inhibiting students' ability to work and study as well as inflicting terror upon those who seek education.

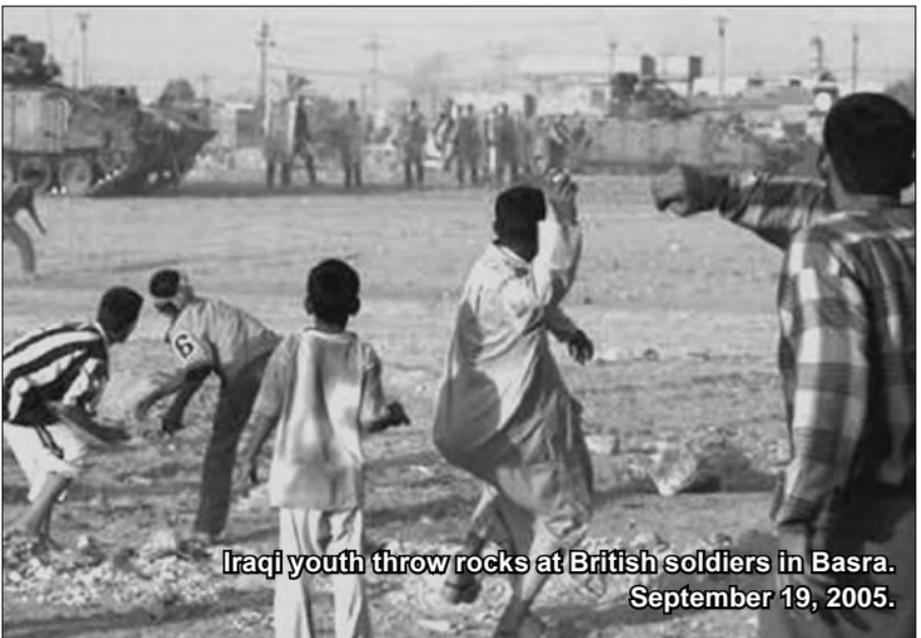
The youth who do make it to school will be learning from new next books made by the US occupiers. The new ministry of Education in Iraq under the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the US-led coalition removed any 'controversial' events from Texts books including the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war, and anything considered anti-Israeli, anti-American, and all images of Saddam or members of the Baath party. Textbooks were manufactured in US by a US company eliminating any chance that the creation of the 5 million new textbooks.

The war and occupation of Iraq has brought a lack of security, violence, mental stress and terror to the Iraqi people. These things are all impeding the youth from receiving the education they need to build a successful future for Iraq. The occupation of Iraq is not liberating anyone, in fact it is preventing their learning and growth and is extremely detrimental to their existence as a proud nation.

### **No Jobs for the Youth**

The occupation of Iraq is hindering growth of the youth of Iraq and causing widespread unemployment. Joblessness which is a direct result of the occupation forces who slashed government workers jobs and gave out most reconstruction projects to foreign owned companies, is leading to many problems on top of the lack of security, such as lack of money, food and clean drinking water.

On August 1st, a study by the college of economics at Baghdad University reported that the unemployment level in Iraq reached 70%. With the plans to continue to privatize state industries, more and more Iraqis will be losing their source of income. More Iraqi youth will have fathers and mothers without jobs to provide for their families and more there will be no opportunities for these Iraqi youth when they enter the job market. What makes this drastic situation even worse is that over the next 5 years, the number of



**Iraqi youth throw rocks at British soldiers in Basra. September 19, 2005.**

young people entering the job market in Iraq will almost double in what some analysts are referring to as a 'youth explosion.'

Of the meagre amount of jobs that are available, many Iraqis refuse to work for the U.S. authorities. Young people who have grown up under the asphyxiating grip of this occupation, see that they are in a position where they need to fight back.

### **Youth Health Under Occupation**

With the lack of jobs and mounting violence in Iraq, health is a major concern for all

youth living under occupation. Under 13 years of UN sanctions Iraq's healthcare was crippled to the point that much of the medication used in hospitals was being purchased on the black market, the number of hospital beds declined, infant mortality went up and life expectancy decreased. According to Aljazeera.net, "It could hardly have gotten worse, but it has."

The case of Ahmad, an 8 year old boy who was diagnosed with leukaemia three years ago is one example of the deterioration of access to healthcare. In March 2003 under sanctions doctors were able to wipe the cancer out of his system and he started receiving a monthly treatment of chemotherapy to avoid a relapse. However when occupation forces entered Iraq, they blocked Ahmad's parents from entering Baghdad where he needed to get the treatment. When he and his family were finally able to get to the hospital they had to cut his medication in half due to medication shortages under occupation. Almost a year later in March 2004 cancer has invaded 70% of Ahmad's bone marrow and he is suffering from secondary infections due to his vulnerable immune system.

*"They [Iraqis] deserve a country that is united, that's independent, and that is released from years of sanctions and sorrow."* – George W. Bush at Camp Lejeune April 3rd 2003

Iraqi youth living with poor health under occupation, such as Ahmad, show how although the sanctions were lifted to supposedly alleviate the sorrow of the Iraqi people the occupation has in fact created a much more desperate healthcare system. Doctors at the main hospital in Baghdad have reported major support from the community in hospitals with people volunteering to use their cars as ambulances. This community support has also been shown by medical students coming in to volunteer at the hospital and replacing doctors and nurses who are unable to leave their houses because of the lack of safety on the streets of Baghdad.

### End the Occupation of Iraq!

We must look to the example set by these medical students from the University of Baghdad who are living in the same desperate situation as other youth under occupation. These students along with many other youth recognize their situation and have decided to fight against it by volunteering their time to work with doctors at the hospital to help other youth and their families. Those who volunteer and those who are out fighting directly against the occupying forces are both working towards a better future for youth in Iraq.

The youth of Iraq need stability and security to be able to establish a better future for their country, one with better education, healthcare and employment, and one without a repressive occupying forces. To be able to establish these positive steps towards better living conditions for all for those in Iraq, the youth of Iraq are demanding US/UK Out Now! Iraq for Iraqis!



Military offensive in the northern Iraqi town of Tal Afar. September 11, 2005.



# Colonization, Indigenous People and Poverty in Canada

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in  
Fire This Time # 20-21  
Dec./Jan. 2004*

*“Once I was in Victoria,  
and I saw a very large  
house. They told me it  
was a bank and that white  
men place their money  
there to be taken care of,  
and that by and by they  
got it back with interest.”  
“We are Indians and we  
have no such bank; but*

*when we have plenty of money or blankets, we give them away to other chiefs and people, and by and by they return them with interest, and our hearts feel good. Our way of giving is our bank.” -Chief Maquinna, Nu-chah-nulth*

Like every Indigenous nation that has existed within the borders of what is now Canada, the history of the Nu-chah-nulth from first contact with European colonizers is a story of theft, war and genocide. In fact, the land that the British acquired from the Nu-chah-nulth, on the South-East tip of Vancouver Island, is what enabled them to begin to lay claim to all of the Western coast of North America. The clashing of two cultures with opposing economic needs and aims led to the destruction of communal Indigenous society and has brought with it the state of poverty and displacement that exists among them today.

The impact of colonization is still felt by every Indigenous person living in Canada, because the war of extermination and destruction that began with first contact has never ended. Indigenous people are kept poor and displaced within a country rich in land and resources. Of the many ways that Indigenous people fare much worse than the average person in Canada, one of the most blatant examples is the level of poverty that exists among Indigenous people. Through research that has been collected over the last decade, Statistics Canada reported in 1995 that 55.6 percent of Aboriginal people living in cities were living in poverty, compared to 24 percent of non-Aboriginal people. Since then, the economic conditions that Indigenous people have lived under have not changed. According to the 2004 ‘Report Card on Child Poverty’, issued by *Campaign 2000* (a cross-Canada organization that builds awareness about the Canadian government’s resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000), the child poverty rate was 40% among the Native children living off-reserve, which is more than double the average for all children in Canada. Despite the growing Native population in urban centres, few supports are available for Aboriginal families who live in the cities. The report also found that Aboriginal people are still less likely to be employed than non-Native workers and when they are employed, they have the lowest average employment earnings of all workers.

Housing conditions that Indigenous people live under are also drastically affected by the poverty that is so entrenched in everyday life. According to Statistics Canada, Aboriginal people were more than twice as likely to live in homes requiring major repairs than non-Indigenous people living in Canada, and the homes of all Aboriginal people were more crowded than those of all other Canadians throughout the country.

Through these conditions of poverty, the health and well being of Indigenous people is severely affected. *Campaign 2000* reported that Aboriginal children

were four times as likely to go hungry as non-Aboriginal children. The desperation felt by this hardship is represented by the high level of alcoholism, drug abuse and suicides that run rampant from North to South, and East to West along Indigenous communities. According to Statistics Canada, Indigenous people are three times more likely to commit suicide than the general Canadian population, with the highest rate being among women between the ages of 15 and 24, who are overwhelmingly 8 times more likely to commit suicide than the general Canadian population.

### **Colonization: the Source of Indigenous Poverty**

World attention was brought to the plight of Indigenous children committing suicide in the 1990s, when it was discovered that of the 169 Innu children living in the isolated community of Davis Inlet, 80 of them were chronically addicted to sniffing gasoline, and the town began to have one of the highest suicide rates in the world. The conditions that the Innu were living under were a direct result of being displaced from their traditional territory and culture. The Government of Canada established Davis Inlet in 1967 for the nomadic Innu people. With promises of comfortable homes, indoor plumbing and a decent standard of living, the Innu settled there. The promises, of course, were never kept and as a result of living in third world conditions, without running water or a proper sewage system, and being displaced from their traditional livelihoods, alcoholism, drug abuse and tuberculosis began to run rampant.

Chief Maquinna's observations on the difference between the values of generous Indigenous nations that inhabit North America and the values of European colonizers ring true when looking at cases like Davis Inlet, the high concentration of Indigenous people in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and the position of the majority of Indigenous people within Canada. The very core



of this problem is that in order to establish a settler state on top of the backs of Indigenous nations, the destruction of those nations and suppression of their development and their communal economies became the first criminal choice for European settlers. This trend enforced and accelerated stealing more land and resources from Indigenous nations. As a result of the hundreds of years of war that ravaged Indigenous nations, most have been displaced from their original territories and cut off from their traditional economies, forced on to small parcels of land through the reservation system. Every problem facing Indigenous people today is a direct result of the theft of land and resources by the colonial forces.

### **Self-Determination: the Only Solution to Hundreds of Years of Poverty**

*“The dominant society teaches us to be in front, be aggressive...Our culture teaches us not to compete but to cooperate with each other, to find balance [and] unity. We go as fast as the slowest person. The warriors need to lead from the back. ”*

- Phillip Whiteman, Northern Cheyenne

As Canada was consolidating itself and figuring out how to deal with the 'Indian problem,' the solutions that it has come up with have been in the form of different Acts and Bills. All of this legislation was designed to exterminate Indigenous people's inherent rights and to suppress any independent governance that existed among the different nations. Through the White Paper, and more recently, the First Nations Governance Act, the Government of Canada is not actually interested in Indigenous people having full self determination, but

rather in further entrenching the Government of Canada's interference in these affairs.

As long as the Government of Canada maintains its grip on suppressing Indigenous nations from developing their own governance, and from having control over their own land and resources, Indigenous people will be kept poor. In order for Indigenous people to pull themselves out of the depths of hunger and homelessness that Canada has plunged them into, Indigenous people need to regain their self-determination.

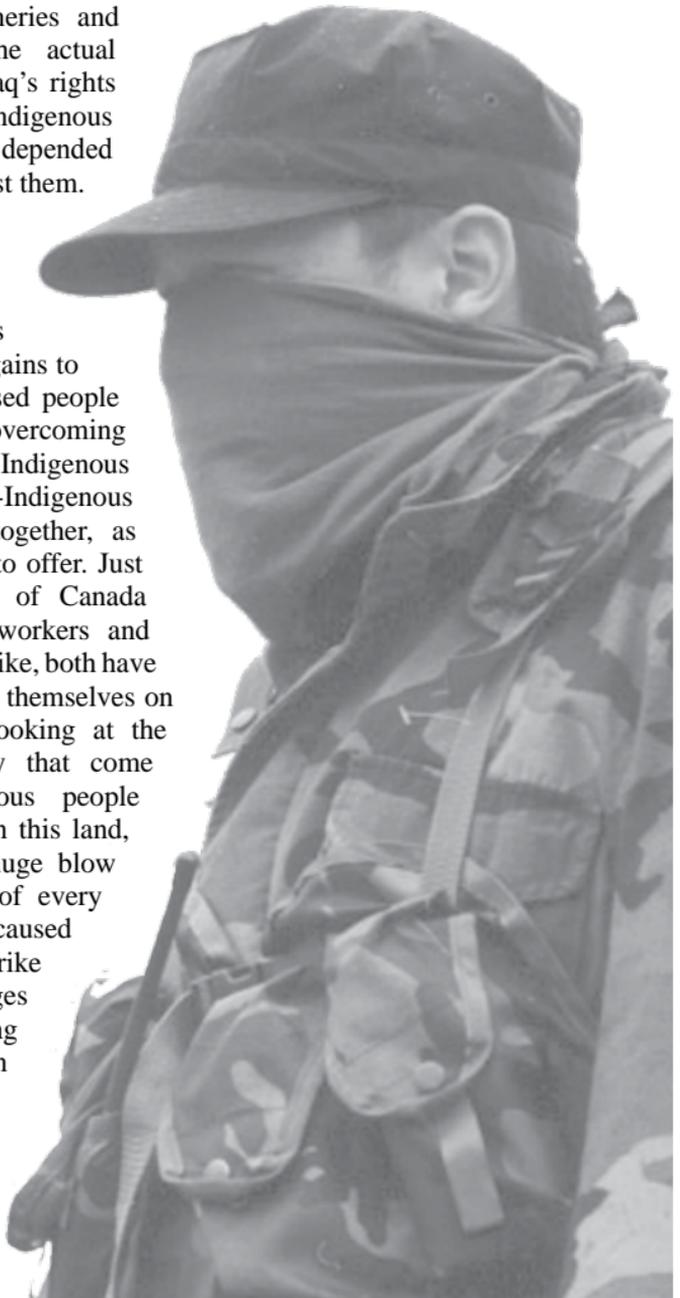
### **The 'Indigenous Problem:' not Just a Problem for Indigenous People**

For as long as the Canadian ruling class has been suppressing the self-determination of Indigenous people, and trampling their inherent rights to the land and resources, resistance to colonization has existed. Just as millions of Indigenous people lost their lives fighting for their dignity and livelihood throughout the beginning of the conquest of this land, resistance continues today. Looking at what hundreds of years of colonization has done to Indigenous people, they have continually been put in the position to fight back. Whether it is the current struggle of the Secwepemc people against the expansion of Sun Peaks ski resort on to more of their unceded territory, or the continuing fight for Mi'kmaq fishing rights at Burnt Church, the foundation of these struggles is deeply rooted in the history and relationship that has always existed between the Canadian ruling class and Indigenous people here.

As the Canadian ruling class continues to try to solve its economic crisis by plundering third world countries like Afghanistan and Haiti, and as it continues to steal more Indigenous land in Canada, it also continues its attacks on all oppressed people within its borders. Whether it is the cuts to welfare and minimum wage, or attacks on unionized and non-unionized labour, poverty is on the rise among all working and oppressed people. The shaky and destructive system that is exploiting all people in Canada benefits from the divisions created among different oppressed layers of our society. When Mi'kmaq at Burnt Church were asserting their rights to fish for lobster in their waters, the Canadian government and the

Department of Fisheries and Oceans clouded the actual issue of the Mi'kmaq's rights by pitting non-Indigenous fishermen, who also depended on the lobster, against them.

Overcoming the divisions created and fuelled by the Canadian ruling class is essential for any gains to be made by oppressed people on this land. By overcoming these divisions, Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people can work together, as we each have a lot to offer. Just as the government of Canada makes attacks on workers and Indigenous people alike, both have the ability to defend themselves on their own front. Looking at the waves of solidarity that come any time Indigenous people assert their rights on this land, or looking at the huge blow to the functioning of every day life that can be caused when workers strike against unfair wages and unsafe working conditions, we can see that allying ourselves together is key to achieving any justice on this land.



# Indigenous Youth, A Failed Tragedy by the Canadian Colonial State

## How Criminal Colonial Policies are Destroying Indigenous Youth

By Aaron Mercredi

Originally appeared in *Fire This Time* # 22-23 Feb./Mar. 2005

In December 2004, a copy of a report on the education system in the new Labrador community of Natuashish was leaked to the media. This report, *An Educational Profile of the Learning Needs of Innu Youth*, was commissioned by the Government of Canada to study the development of Innu youth over a period of two years, and outlines failure after failure of the colonial schooling that was imposed on them.



Innu youth huffing Gas.

Some of the most significant results of the report were the failures of providing an adequate education for the Innu children. The study found that only one in three Innu children in Labrador ever attends school, and most never make it to high school. Fifteen-year-olds who were tested were an average of five years behind on their math and reading levels. Of these statistics, the most damning is the fact that since 1993, only three of the hundreds of students studied have actually graduated from high school.

The report also found many other problems facing young people in Natuashish. Thirty-five percent of children studied suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. A separate report found that close to three-quarters of youth showed high levels of distress and more than 40 percent had contemplated or attempted suicide. These problems coupled with the amount of media attention that alcoholism and gas huffing has received paint a very grim picture for young Innu.

### Colonial History

*“The situation is there since a long time and it’s very difficult to cure, and it’s a problem of alcoholism and drugs. It’s a human tragedy and we’re doing our best to help them.”*-Jean Chretien, November 2000

The truth is that alcoholism and drug abuse, just like poverty, are merely limbs of the struggle of the Innu. The root of these problems lies in the colonialism that they have suffered at the hands of the Government of Canada. But, it is much easier for ruling class politicians to redirect the blame away from Canada and place it on individual acts of alcoholism or drug abuse, playing in to racist notions about Indigenous people in this country.

The traditional territory of the Innu, called ‘Nitassinan,’ encompasses much of what is now Labrador and Eastern Quebec. The Innu, a nomadic people, have lived there for over 6,000 years. Like many other Indigenous nations who were kicked out of their traditional territory and moved onto small reservations, the Innu faced expansion of industrial and military bases on to their territory. While logging, mining and hydroelectric projects have moved in to steal resources from the Innu, low-flying bomber jets training at nearby NATO bases scared all of the wild game away and devastated traditional hunting. In an effort to further consolidate Innu land, the government of Canada tried to make their land-grab easier by first removing the Indigenous

people who had a claim to Nitassinan. The Innu were eventually forced to relocate to an island on Davis Inlet in 1967, where the government of Canada promised them decent housing, plumbing, and a decent standard of living.

Not only were the Innu suddenly cut off from their traditional territory and way of life, but living conditions rapidly deteriorated when the government of Canada abandoned its promises of helping them. Living in cramped living spaces without running water, reliable heating, or a sewage system; disease and alcoholism surfaced and spread throughout the community.

### **Genocide Continues**

In 2002, 680 residents moved from Davis Inlet to a new settlement called Natuashish. This was part of a plan that was hatched in the late 1990's after the horrific conditions that the Innu were subjected to were exposed to the world when the media focussed on the prevalence of gas-huffing and suicides among Innu children. Based on the report outlining the problems facing Innu youth since they have been moved to the new settlement, it is only a band-aid solution to the problem.

Is it any wonder why a third of the population does not attend school at all? And of those who do actually attend, why 17% of them less than 20% of the time? Most teachers are non-Innu, and only 2% are certified to teach English as Second language. For most Innu children, English is a foreign language, and so this education is taught with a colonial language and colonial curriculum.

Throughout the establishment of Canada, one of the most vital and brutal tactics the settler state used has been against Indigenous children. Whether it was when young Indigenous children were kidnapped from their homes and shipped off to residential schools to learn colonialist values, to have their language beaten out of them every time they used it, or losing their dignity



from sexual abuse at the hands of their teachers. Or whether it was the legislation that allowed school officials to forcibly sterilize Indigenous girls in Alberta and BC in the 1920s and '30s. These were all part of a strategy of attacking future generations to destroy the culture, dignity and livelihood of Indigenous people whose values come into constant conflict with those of colonialist Canada.

### **Self-determination is the Solution**

Although the Innu are a devastating example of what Canadian colonialism has brought to Indigenous people, it is no exception. Throughout the country, young Indigenous people face much higher rates of poverty than non-Indigenous people, worse levels of access to healthcare and worse standards of living. Looking at education alone, in 2001, the drop-out rate among Indigenous youth in their early 20's was 50%, and those who stayed in school had a far less chance of graduating from post-secondary education. Much like the troubles affecting Innu youth, these are symptoms of colonialism. In order to move forward as people and as nations, we need to recognize that our interests do not lie with the government of Canada or its education system. The interests of Indigenous nations lie with themselves and all other people who are under attack by the same government. Demanding self-determination for Indigenous nations is a fundamental step forward to solve the problems of poverty, alienation and desperation that have been brought against Indigenous people for centuries.

# WESTERN SHOSHONE STRUGGLE AGAINST AMERICAN COLONIALISM

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 24  
July 2005*

*"I was indigenous and in one single evening they made me indigent. If you think the Indian wars are over, then think again."*

- Carrie Dann on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2002

On April 27<sup>th</sup> 2005, over 60 people packed in to the KAYA office in the basement of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre to learn about and discuss the struggle of the Western Shoshone Nation for self-determination. The event, *"Resisting Colonialism in North America: The Western Shoshone Struggle for Sovereignty,"* was organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), to host guests from the Western Shoshone Defense Project (WSDP) and the Western Shoshone Nation.

The evening began with a screening of "Broken Treaty II: To Protect Mother Earth," a documentary outlining the struggle of the Western Shoshone people to gain recognition of rights to Newe Sogobia, which is approximately sixty million acres of land, secured under the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley. The film was followed by a moment of silence to honour the life of Mary Dann, one of the Dann sisters who led the fight of the Western Shoshone people against the colonial attacks by the US government and passed away only days before the event.

Chris Sewall, coordinator of the WSDP's Mining and Environment program, began by giving an update on what has happened since documentary was released, outlining the gains and losses they have experienced. Te-Moak Tribal Chairman Hugh Stevens spoke next and provided a synopsis of the long colonial war that the US has been waging against Western Shoshone people since first contact. Darla Lazona, Elko Band Te-Moak Council member, spoke next and spoke passionately about their rights as Indigenous people and how they will



Mobilization Against War & Occupation forum  
on the struggle of the Western Shoshone.  
April 27/2005.

never give up their struggle for dignity against the US government. Finally, Julie Fishel, coordinator of WSDP's Land Recognition Program, spoke and gave more of a legal perspective to the case. Discussion went well in to the evening, as many participants wanted to learn more about the case and what people can do to support the Western Shoshone. Members of the International Indigenous Youth Conference Secretariat welcomed the Western Shoshone to Coast Salish territory, and Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Advocates gave recognition and solidarity to the guests.

Members of the WSDP and Western Shoshone Nation were in town to protest against the expansion of the Cortez Gold Mines on to more of their traditional territory, which makes up most of Nevada and part of California. Placer Dome, the world's fifth largest gold company whose headquarters is in Vancouver is involved in this project, which aims to steal Western Shoshone resources from right under their feet. The areas currently under threat of development are Mount Tenabo and Horse Canyon, two important places for the Western Shoshone people. It is home to their creation stories, contains ancient burial sites, ceremonial areas, food and medicinal plants. Since the idea of mining exploration was proposed, Western Shoshone people have protested against it. Visiting Vancouver was another step in the battle for their rights to their own land and resources.

The Western Shoshone Defense Project formed in 1991 to affirm Newe (Western Shoshone) jurisdiction over Newe Sogobia, the Western Shoshone homelands in Nevada. Currently, the US claims federal ownership over this territory, despite the fact that it formally recognized Western Shoshone territory under the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley. The US' justification for its theft of this area is that it argues that the Western Shoshone lost their rights to the land in 1872 as a result of encroachment by non-native Americans, despite the fact that Western Shoshone people continue to live on and use the land, and the majority of the area had not settled by anyone except generations of Shoshone people.

Western Shoshone sisters, Carrie and Mary Dann, inspired Indigenous people throughout the world with their leadership in the WSDP and taking on every colonial battle the US hurled at them. For decades, they fought against nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumps on their lands and for their rights to graze cattle on their own lands. Carrie Dann has also linked the struggle of Western Shoshone against American colonialism to the struggles of people who are fighting against American imperialism abroad by speaking out against the war in Iraq and discouraging young Indigenous people in the US from joining the American military.

The visit with the delegates from the Western Shoshone Nation and the WSDP opened up space to learn about the persistence and dedication of Indigenous fighters and the gains they have made in face of a colonial power. It is important for people in Canada, living within a colonialist nation that was built on the backs and with the blood of Indigenous people, to relate to the struggles of Indigenous people across borders. In order to find most effective methods and strategies for moving forward, Indigenous Nations and non-Indigenous people must work together to support Indigenous people in reclaiming their





## Canada's Extension of Genocide

### -An Indigenous Point of View

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 25 Aug. 2005*

*"We are rhetorical peacekeepers, not practical peacekeepers any more."*

- Douglas Bland, head of the Defence Management Studies Program at Queen's University.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Chief of Defence General Rick Hillier announced the deployment of 2000 more Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan by February 2006. Unlike in the past, when leaders in Canada's military have masked Canada's role in Afghanistan as a 'peacekeeping' project, Hillier stripped away the 'heroic' and benevolent Canadian disguise, and told it like it is. He said, "We're not the public service of Canada, we're not just another department. We are the Canadian military and our job is to be able to kill people." It is obvious from Hillier's remarks that Canada is not a peacekeeper, but this has always been an obvious reality for Indigenous people within Canada who have suffered war, genocide and never-ending attacks from all arms of the colonial government of Canada.

#### **Occupation Force At Home**

What the Canadian military is doing, by sending in more trained killers to suppress the people of Afghanistan, needs to be looked at from the perspective of its colonial roots. Killing Indigenous people in order to pave the way for Canadian expansion was the first order of business for the Canadian military once Canada had confederated. It was an 'errand of peace' that sent the Canadian military in to the Red River Valley to suppress the sovereignty of the Metis. Fifteen years later, the military would be sent in once again to suppress the displaced Metis and the Cree of the area. It was this mission that killed many Cree, locked up Chiefs Poundmaker and Big Bear in prison, and hanged Louis Riel, the leader of the Metis. The creation of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), which later became the RCMP, was the creation of a military occupation force to deal with Indigenous people and to expand and enforce on them the colonial sovereignty of Canada. Besides clearing the way for Canadian expansion, the NWMP was used to enforce treaties on different Indigenous nations. Each nation had their own experience with the colonizers, and many experienced from the British and French before Canada was established.

The brutal nature of the Canadian military has been shown to younger generations of Indigenous people. In 1990, the Canadian military laid siege, alongside the Securite Quebec and the RCMP, to a group of Mohawks who were protecting their sacred land against the expansion of a golf course in Khanesatake. In 1995, the RCMP used brute force and government sanctioned para-military operations against no more than 18 sundancers who were occupying their unceded territory at Gustafsen Lake. In 2000, the waters of Burnt Church, Nova Scotia heated to the boiling point as Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) transformed the area into a war zone ramming fishing boats and assaulting Mi'kmaq fishers to suppress their inherent right to fish on their ancestral

territory.

Even closer to home here in BC, this same war over the waters has been waged against the Cheam nation by the DFO intensely over the last few years. The DFO continues to attack and suppress Cheam fishing rights, continues to intimidate, and continues confiscate nets and press charges against Cheam people who do fish. Despite this, members of the Cheam Nation continue to fight back against this by going back out on to their waters and dropping their nets.

These wars, waged by Canada from its very foundation, are wars over the land and resources of Indigenous people. From 'settling the West' in the late 1800s, to 'maintaining law and order in Oka,' behind the modest language that the colonial government of Canada uses to paint a bright and happy history of Canada lies the cruel reality of its actions against Indigenous people to expand and consolidate the Canadian state and to create capitalist profit.

### **Canada Is imperialist, Here and Everywhere**

The drive for profit, for land and resources, that makes Canada attack Indigenous people here at home is the same drive that has intensified the Canadian war drive on Afghan people. The invasion of Afghanistan by the US in 2001 marked the beginning of a new era for oppressed people globally, an era plagued by war and occupation. This era is characterized by imperialist countries, like Canada and the US, directly invading and occupying third-world countries to steal resources, exploit the people who live there, and increase their own hegemony in the area; all to compensate for the economic crisis they are facing at home. In Canada, we see this with the massive cuts to social programs, wage rollbacks for workers, and in the increase of attacks on immigrants and refugees. We are also witnessing Canada taking a stronger role in consolidating Indigenous land within its colonial borders.

The attacks on September 11, 2001 were not the reason for the US invasion of Afghanistan; they were used as a pretext for invasion. Planes crashing in to the twin towers gave the US every excuse it needed for attacking third world countries it accused of harbouring terrorists. Although Canada helped out initially, it stayed relatively quiet, at least for the first little while. In February 2002, the first major wave of soldiers was sent to Kabul, and by February 2003, even more soldiers were sent to 'free up' American troops to fight in Iraq. By February 2004, Canadian General Rick Hillier became the head of the ISAF occupation forces, strengthening Canada's role in the occupation of that country.

We can see the pattern that the Canadian government and ruling class have created of slowly and carefully moving in to make sure a piece of the pie is saved for them. It has been making great leaps forward in the same direction by taking part in the overthrow of the democratically elected leader of Haiti, and taking part in the brutal occupation of that country that is using the RCMP to teach new Haitian death squads their tricks of the trade.

### **All Are Related**

*"These are detestable murderers and scumbags, I'll tell you that right up front. They detest our freedoms, they detest our society, they detest our liberties... we're not going to let those radical murderers and killers rob from others and certainly we're not going to let them rob from Canada."*

-General Rick Hillier, July 2005 -comments about the Afghan people.

*"...and the armed occupation of Gustafsen Lake is the action of a handful of violent extremists..."*

-Ujal Dosanjh, September 1995 - then Attorney General of BC

According to the government of Canada and the ruling class in this country, people who resist the theft of their land and resources, who resist the murder of their people, who resist against attacks on their sovereignty are one and the same. They are 'terrorists,' 'scumbags,' 'extremists,' and whatever other names can be used to demonize them and delegitimize their struggle because they defend themselves against ruling class attacks and because they oppose the interests of the ruling class of this country.

There are more similarities between Indigenous people here and people in Afghanistan than the government of Canada want us to believe. Is it any surprise that according to Statistics Canada, after hundreds of years of colonization and war, Indigenous people have the highest levels of poverty among all Canadians? Is it any coincidence that according to the United Nations, after 3 ½ years of military occupation of Afghanistan is now the poorest country in Asia? When looking at life expectancy, the same similarities exist. The effect that colonization has had on Indigenous peoples' health in Canada has resulted

in higher health problems and a considerably lower life expectancy compared to other Canadians. In Afghanistan between 2003 and 2004, the life expectancy dropped 4 ½ years under the military occupation. Canada is responsible for this low standard of living through military occupation and by denying self-determination.

### **This is a War on Oppressed People Around the World**

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, only six days after General Hillier held the press conference announcing the increased war in Afghanistan, the Supreme Court of Canada passed a judgement on the long-standing war that the government of Canada has been waging against the Mi'kmaq nation, whose territory makes up all of Nova Scotia and part of New Brunswick. The judgement ruled that the Mi'kmaq could not harvest trees on their territory without a permit from the government of Canada, despite the fact that the Mi'kmaq maintained these rights in the treaties of 1760 and 1761 with the British. In spite of this, Canada still refuses to acknowledge Mi'kmaq sovereignty over their territory. As Canada steps up his arsenal abroad, just as throughout history, it is keeping pace at home.

We need to ask ourselves what a victory for Canadian imperialism in Afghanistan would mean for Indigenous people in Canada? What good would it do? A Canadian victory in Afghanistan, if anything, would boost the confidence of Canada to not only spread its military force out to plunder more countries abroad, but to also take more confident steps at home to directly take the land from Indigenous people. A defeat in Afghanistan, having Canadian troops completely exhausted, demoralized and immobilized would weaken Canada's ability to carry out its war against Indigenous people at home and put Indigenous people here in a better position to fight back. This is the connection that exists between Indigenous people and Afghans. When a colonial government whose policy has always been warfare against Indigenous people extends that warfare abroad to Afghanistan, Indigenous people and Afghans are bonded by a struggle against a common enemy. The struggle of Indigenous people here is expanded to wherever the colonial imperialist government attacks abroad. That is why when we see the city of Kandahar burning from rocket shells on the CNN, we have to think about Oka. That is why we need to see Herat as the next Burnt Church. That is why Mazar e Sharif will be the next Gustafsen Lake. That is why we need to see the Mohawk flag in the eyes of all the young people being dragged away to interrogations and detentions. Indigenous people here need to recognize these connections and oppose this war and destruction just as if it was happening at home.



**Afghan children pass through a NATO checkpoint outside Kabul.  
July 29 2005.**

# Korea: A Country Divided

## How the US Divided Korea

By Aaron Mercredi,

Jungmi Yoon,

& Byungjin Na

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 15-16 May 2004*

The U.S. imposed the division of Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in an agreement with the Soviet Union, whose troops had moved in to the Northern part of the country at the end of World War II. This was at a time when level of consciousness in Korea was at its highest. With the defeat of the Japanese imperial military machine and the end of the brutal 50-year Japanese occupation of their country, and after decades of fighting against it, the Korean people were rapidly organizing themselves. Through people's committees, which sprang up throughout Korea to fight for national independence, land reform, labour rights, and women's rights, people in Korea were taking control of their country. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Korean People's Republic was formed. Despite all of this, U.S. forces intervened militarily in Korea and joined with the local landlords and ruling class to repress the liberation movement.

At first, the U.S. was seen as a liberation force. They had defeated Japan, which had waged a brutal occupation on the people of Korea, but eventually it was made very clear that the U.S. intention was in replacing Japan's role in the country. For the next two-and-a-half years, the U.S. military government directly ruled South Korea. The vicious occupation regime outlawed the people's committees, imprisoned, tortured and killed thousands of Korean patriots, and instituted a reign of terror on the whole population. Under the cover of the UN, the U.S. entrenched and legitimized the division of Korea through rigged election in 1948, which brought U.S.-backed politician Syngman Rhee into power. Preventing the spread of communism was not the only objective of U.S. involvement in Korea. The US also hoped that the potential overthrow of communism in Korea and China would place the balance of forces in favour of European and North American imperialists after World War II.

### The Korean War and US Imperial Plan

Very similar to its strategy and tactics today in Iraq, the U.S. masked its invasion of Korea as a 'liberation force.' But, what began with the U.S. forces arriving on Korean soil in 1945 was an U.S. unofficial occupation that still continues today. After four years of U.S. puppet regime rule, throughout 1949 and the beginning of 1950, South Korean forces carried out repeated military raids in the DPRK



Anti US protest Seoul, May 22 2005.

(Democratic People's Republic of Korea). In fact the U.S.-backed dictator, Syngman Rhee, collaborated with his American counterparts to prepare a war to retake the entire country –south and north- back to full capitalist rule and for imperialist plundering. In response to the accelerated provocations, North Korea built up its army, and in June 1950 war broke out between the two sides. The U.S. attempted to legitimize the orchestrated war by engineering a vote in the UN Security Council that authorized it to deploy U.S. armed forces as well as those of 15 U.S. allies under the cover of the UN flag to combat what it called 'North Korean aggression.'

What followed was four years of brutal war that killed roughly 3 million Korean civilians, half a million North Korean soldiers, more than 100,000 combined South Korean and UN soldiers, including 54,000 US troops and tens of thousands of Chinese volunteers. The U.S. orchestrated a bombing campaign that leveled nearly every building in the towns and cities of North Korea. In Pyongyang alone, which is the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and had 400,000 pre-war residents, 428,000 bombs were dropped. As large-scale opposition to the war grew; an armistice was signed between the U.S. and North Korea in 1953. However, in the armistice, the U.S. did not agree to withdraw its troops from South Korea. With the continued presence of U.S. troops in Korea, the division between North and South was entrenched.

### **Brutal Reality of the Presence of the US military in South Korea**

The U.S. intervention in Korea did not end with the division of the country. In order to ensure a presence of a stable pro-American, pro-western government in South Korea, the U.S. needed to continue its presence in South Korea for unlimited time. The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the US and South Korea determined the 'lawful' status of the U.S. military forces in South Korea. This agreement has essentially undermined the sovereignty of South Korea and is a serious threat to the self-determination of North Korean people. SOFA is a danger because it provides the U.S. military with greater rights by allowing the U.S. Armed Forces exclusive rights to the military bases and facilities. As a result, the U.S. now has 96 military bases throughout South Korea. Another aspect of SOFA is the complete undermining and disrespect for Korean law. Under the agreement, the Korean government is supposed to hand its jurisdiction over the U.S. soldiers over to the U.S. Army if it requests. Since 1945, U.S. soldiers in Korea have committed over 100,000 crimes. Of those crimes, the U.S. judged over 90% of the cases, where many of the offenders went unpunished. The crimes have only become more and more brutal, as it is clear that they have a privilege not being held accountable for their crimes. Many incidents, like the barbaric rape and murder of Yoon Kum-ee, as well as the death of two schoolgirls by an American tank, have shown little or no reprimands for the actions of those involved. These events as well as US military presence established a very deep-rooted anti-U.S. sentiment in South Korea.

### **US Out of Korea!**

As has been demonstrated from Korea's history, it is clear that the problems the country is facing today are rooted in the US imperialist intervention. In order for Korean people to sort these problems out, the U.S. must get out of S. Korea. Especially with the situation in the last few years, anti-U.S. sentiment has grown hugely in S. Korea. No wonder that the most dynamic mass based anti-war and anti-U.S. demonstrations in all of South East Asia as well as South and East Asia have taken place in S. Korea. It is clear that as long as the U.S. military is stationed in Korea, the division of the country will be exacerbated. In order for all people in Korea to come to terms with their differences, the U.S. first has to get out. As poor, working and oppressed people, we must demand that the U.S. leave South Korea immediately.

**Burnt Church.**



# FISHING RIGHTS ARE INHERENT RIGHTS...

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 26-27 Sept./Oct. 2005*

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, June Quipp, former Chief of the Cheam nation and long-time activist for

Indigenous rights, sent an appeal to activists and independent media. She was seeking help to get a straight story out about recent events that have been taking place within her territory on the waters of the Fraser River. Throughout the summer, while Cheam fishers dropped their nets, the waters were heating up with conflict between the fishers and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and recreational fishermen over their rights to harvest from the fresh water. In all of the major newspapers, a smear campaign was re-ignited to fuel non-Indigenous people's fear and misconceptions about Native people asserting their rights.

## **History of Colonialism vs. Indigenous Fisheries in BC**

Like the rest of Canada, the battle over the waters in BC is nothing new. It is the same colonial song that has been playing since Indigenous people first encountered European settlers, only sung at a higher key. When British Columbia joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871, settlers initially relied heavily on a trade relationship with Indigenous people and their fishery. The Hudson's Bay Company even purchased fish from Indigenous people for food, as there were not many non-Indigenous people fishing at that time. Contrary to popular belief, the fisheries themselves were not lawless and careless when it came to conservation, but were governed by an intricate web of entitlements, prohibitions and sanctions, allowing certain activities and banning others. Many Indigenous nations used a weir fishery, which ran by a sophisticated harvesting technology, allowing them to select which salmon they would harvest and which salmon would be left to continue on their spawning journey. However, as the settler population grew and colonialism strengthened across the country, colonial laws displaced the complex fishery system that had already existed. Of course, the government of Canada denied the legitimacy, and in some cases, even the existence of these fisheries and of their systems of management and resource allocation in order to justify imposing new laws on Indigenous people. This method of subplanting Indigenous laws and values with colonial rule was not limited to the fisheries. In 1884, the government banned the potlach, strengthening its hegemony over native land by weakening important native legal and trading spaces, thereby allowing more settler access to land governed by Indigenous people. This law, undermining Indigenous peoples way of living, relating to one another, and governing, was meant to crush Indigenous people's

culture and traditional economy, and push them into the new market economy and wage labour created by the Canadian state.

Canneries were established along the West Coast in the late 1800's to export sockeye salmon and with their high demand of raw resources, there was now profit to be made off of fishing. These canneries created competition for salmon, and as a result, the colonial government was dead set on destroying Indigenous fisheries, and laws were brought against Indigenous people's rights to gather fish for food or for profit. In 1884, under the Dominion government, Indigenous people were required to seek permission from the colonial government to fish for their own food, and by 1888, Indigenous people could not sell fish without a license. This first attack by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) of using conservation to restrict Indigenous fisheries began a long legacy of keeping tabs on what Indigenous people were taking out of the waters.

With the enforcement of new colonial laws, some Indigenous people adapted and returned to fishing, while others consciously resisted the new laws. The Saanich people took their reef net fishery outside of DFO jurisdiction, to the San Juan Islands which remained within their traditional territory. The Cowichan and Ned'u'ten people fought against the removal of their fishing weirs, directly resisting and using legal forums to gain support from non-Indigenous people. The new colonial laws set the conflicts in motion between the survival of Indigenous people and their access to their resources, against the economic prosperity of colonial Canada off of these same resources.

### **2005 and Colonialism is Alive and Well in BC...**

The Pilalt of the Cheam First Nation have a reputation of continuing to live their traditional way of life in the face of colonial oppression. This reputation comes from the times they have blockaded the CN Rail line (which illegally runs through their territory) where they set up in response to developments on their mountains and attacks on their people. It also comes from the fact that they are still out on the waters of the Fraser River harvesting fish within their traditional territory, despite the intimidation, unlawful arrests and other oppressive tactics used by the DFO and RCMP to suppress the Cheam fishers. In 1999, DFO's aggression led to support coming in to the community from Indigenous activists throughout the province. The Native Youth Movement security force went to defend the Cheam fishers, and the West Coast Warrior Society was formed out of that struggle. In the years since, tensions over the waters have remained, with different community members arrested, their equipment confiscated; all the while keeping up the intimidation and attempt to suppress Cheam people's right to fish. It has become part of their way of life to spend the summers fishing and dealing with the DFO, and the winters in court, fighting for recognition of their rights to fish. Along with this, smear campaigns were also used to demonize their just fight. In an article in the Globe and Mail on July 25<sup>th</sup> 2003, Bill Otway, who is a former DFO sports fishing advisor and current president of the Sport Fishing Defense Alliance, called on the Canadian government to send the military in to 'maintain the peace' on the Fraser, saying 'these people have an armed camp in there.'

This summer saw the same escalation of tensions as Cheam people harvested fish from the waters. As the DFO opened and closed commercial, recreational and Iative fisheries, frustration was felt and the blame game was being played. The most common victim of these games is Indigenous people who exercise their inherent right to fish on their waters. In the Vancouver Sun and the Province, there were reports on incidents with natives on the Fraser River taking too many fish, while reports from within the community showed increased aggression by the DFO against Cheam people. We had the opportunity to discuss the recent developments in Cheam with June Quipp. Please read the interview in the special box in this page.

By Aaron Mercredi

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**Fire This Time: Can you tell us a little bit about what's been going on in Cheam for the past couple of weeks?**

**June Quipp:** Well, actually, it has been more than a couple of weeks. I think something has to be done about the way the DFO has really been racial profiling our community, our people and you know, getting away with it. One of the things they are doing is putting out all this media hype, while what they are doing is really aggressively going after our people, charging them with their boats. Their boats are about twice the size of our boats. And what they do is they'll go right at high speed against us. They try to push our boats

or going to Burnt Church where they were attacking the Miqmaq. Are these new attacks that they are making any different?

**JQ:** Actually, no they're not. One of the things, and I'm not sure if it happened in Burnt Church, but they've got all this media hype out there about how the Cheam band is the only one that is not complying with rules and regulations, and how Cheam band is the only one not doing this and not doing that. But you know what? Cheam band is the only band that the DFO even monitors. They don't go anywhere else. They don't monitor the sports fishermen. So, how do they know we're the only ones who are not complying? So that really, really upsets me. Because, you know, they can go out there and say 'yeah, these are all the charges and this proves that

# Interview with June Quipp of the Cheam Nation



they're the only ones not in compliance with the rules and regulations,' but that is not the case. The real case is that we're the only ones that they monitor, we're the only ones that they harass, and we're the only ones that they even bother to check up on.

**FTT: Has there been involvement from any other arms of the Canadian government in this recent struggle, like the RCMP?**

**JQ:** There's been a bit, but what's happened though, the one night they did call in the RCMP to make some arrests. They do call for RCMP backup, but I know when I see the cop cars there, we had several meetings and they agreed that they were there to keep the peace.

**FTT: And how has the media attention that Cheam band has received affected things within the community?**

**JQ:** Well, I'm not sure how it's affecting things within the community, but I know how it is going to affect things. You know, if they want to come in and shoot somebody, and they'll have all this media hype already out to the public and have people think, well, 'they've been asking for it and they got it.' So, I think what they're doing is just getting all this media hype out there leading up to some kind of an incident they may be planning. Maybe they're planning on capsizing one of our boats. Maybe they are planning on shooting somebody. Maybe they're planning on, you know, who knows what? But they'll already have all the coverage there to have the public believe that we had it coming.

**FTT: So what's next, for you, for people going out on the waters? Are there plans to continue fishing?**

**JQ:** I think, when our people go out fishing, they do make plans to have somebody there to help them for when the DFO comes along. It's not even just during the closed times that they're doing it. It's during their regular openings that the DFO is acting like that. Amongst the fishers, they are sort of helping one another.

**FTT: Thanks a lot for the interview June.**

and try to ram them. One of the young boys, they tried to pull him out of the boat while he was still operating the boat. I mean, all of this is real, and in my mind really negligent. They're acting in quite a dangerous and negligent manner.

**FTT: Were these attacks made on people while they were trying to fish on the waters?**

**JQ:** Sometimes they're not even fishing. A lot of times they'll watch them fish, or let them finish fishing and then they'll go after them. Sometimes it's during regular opens. It's a real hey-day for the officers. You know, they get to go out and practice being the bullies they are. I think they have to take that kind of job for some reason. It's not a regular job, you know. The type of thing where one holds a bit of power. It has something to do with their egos, I think. But they are being very aggressive. They have always been aggressive and they've always gotten away with it. What they do is get very aggressive, somebody comes to help their partner and they end up getting charged with assault. It doesn't matter that the DFO has been doing the same thing they are accusing our people of doing.

**FTT: There's a long history of DFO aggression against Indigenous people, whether it is just the history in Cheam, with attacking people on the waters there**

# Fighting the Theft of Indigenous Resources in Northern Canada:

Youth and elders gather for a summit at Radlilh Ko.



## Arctic Youth Oppose the Mackenzie Gas Project

By Aaron Mercredi

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From August 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, over 40 young Dene, Inuvialuit and other Indigenous people gathered at Radlilh Ko (Fort Good Hope) in Denendeh (Northwest Territories), for a gathering organized by the Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance. The gathering brought people together around the theme of “*Youth Empowerment through elder’s guidance and connection to the land,*” and focussed on youth and elders discussing challenges in their communities, and specifically ways of fighting the proposed development of the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline.

The Mackenzie Valley Gas Project (MGP) is a project involving Exxon-Mobil, Imperial Oil and other multi-national oil and gas companies to transfer the natural gas from underneath the Mackenzie delta and valley through a pipeline that will link it to the oil sands of Northern Alberta. This natural gas is needed to help steam-heat the oil out of the sands so that it can be sold on the market. The US government estimates that there are approximately 24 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the Mackenzie Valley, a sizeable amount to expropriate.

### Corporations Vs. Indigenous People

When we consider the effects that this development could have, we should take a look at what the MGP would look like if it goes through: 1,900 kilometres of pipeline will be installed, stretching from the tip of the Northern coast all the way down to Northern Alberta. Surrounding this, 1,400km will be cleared as a right of way for this pipeline, creating what will look like a giant highway stretching from North to South. Twenty new barge landings and 16 airstrips will be built to accommodate the shipping in of workers and resources for a rapid construction phase.

Not only will there be devastating environmental impacts from this hyper-development, but the magnitude of this project will bring destruction to the communities of the Northwest Territories as well. The pipeline groups estimate that around 13,000 jobs will be created out of construction phase of this project. For the small communities contained within the project’s scope, this will mean a short-term population boom of primarily non-Indigenous and transient labour from the South. The Northwest Territories Council on the Status of Women predicts that this short-term swelling of communities will create a large number of unwanted children, single parents, increased sex traffic and gender-based violence. The MGP is trying to convince Indigenous people of benefits for their communities through the mass employment this project will provide. Of course, they are not mentioning that these are all short-term positions and will be ended once the construction phase of the project is complete. By that time, only 50 positions will be available, and will most likely come from the South, leaving the local workers who will have become dependent on those jobs out in the cold.

Of course, beyond the issues facing the environment and the effects on communities is the over-arching matter of colonialism. This pipeline is essentially a land grab. It is a highway being cleared on the land of Indigenous people to take their resources. By installing the pipeline, multi-national resource corporations and the government of Canada are trying to dig their heels in to the land and resources of Indigenous people. Like all highways, on-ramps and off-ramps will veer off here and there, and this development opens the gate to further exploration. By holding a firm grip over the land and resources of the immense Northwest Territories, the colonial government

is trying to further consolidate its theft of the resources of indigenous people all over Canada.

**Imperialist Government of Canada: Colonialist Abroad, Colonialist at Home**

The struggle over the rich resources of the Northwest Territories is not a new phenomenon shaking Northern Canada. It is at its very foundation. Much of the consolidation of that area as a territory of Canada was through the discovery of rich mineral deposits. Probably one of the most significant incidents involving destruction of Indigenous life through the theft of resources took place around Great Bear Lake in the 1940s. The world's first uranium mine was built on its Eastern shores in a Dene community called Deline, and the material extracted was the source that was used for the atomic bombs used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not only were the Dene people whose land was being used and whose people were hired to work for the mine never informed about what their resources were being used for, but they were also never warned about the dangers of working in the mine. Men who worked for the mine carried radium in burlap sacks on their backs, they drank the contaminated water from around the area and as a result, generations of men from that community perished creating a 'village of widows.' The government of Canada was involved in a cover-up over the deaths of those men who worked in the mine, and inquiries are still being pursued to hold those responsible accountable for the genocide committed against the community of Deline.

The goals of the colonial government and corporations have not changed since the 1940s. They still rely on the resources of Indigenous people for control and profit. We see this today in BC with the amount of attacks that the BC Liberals have made on Indigenous people throughout the province. Are we to think that the Mackenzie Valley Gas Project is going to be any different than Weyerhaeuser stealing trees from Haida Gwaii? Or that somehow it will not affect the environment in the territory like what has happened through Sun Peaks Ski Resort on Secwepemc mountains? It is no different and is an issue facing all Indigenous people in Canada.

**An Injury to One is Injury to All: Indigenous People Unite Against Colonial Canada**

In response to the huge push by the MGP, grassroots organizing against the MGP began in areas of the Northwest Territories. The Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance, formerly the Dene Youth Alliance, formed in 2002 to raise awareness with Indigenous communities and other people in the Northwest Territories about the effects that a pipeline would have and are building resistance to it. Over the last few years, they have been working with communities all over the Northwest Territories and created dialogues among the Indigenous people of the area, who live very far away from each other. As a result of the gathering that took place on August 12<sup>th</sup>, chapters of AIYA are now springing up in different areas of the Northwest Territories, building a unified voice against colonial development. For poor, working and oppressed people, we need to stand in solidarity with the fight against this colonial development. For further understanding of the issue at stake, please read the two interviews on the following pages.



# Interview with Deh Cho Grand Chief Herb Norwiegan

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 26-27 Sep./Oct. 2005*

*Deh Cho Grand Chief Herb Norwiegan attended the summit in Radilih Ko on August 12<sup>th</sup> and gave words of support to the young people who were coming together to discuss the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline. The Deh Cho have been one of the strongest opponents to the Mackenzie Valley Gas Project and took legal action against it, refusing to be extinguished as a nation.*

**Fire This Time: Can you tell me your name and where you're from?**

**Herb Norwiegan:** Ok, my name is Herb Norwiegan. I'm from Fort Simpson.

**FTT: Ok, and what brings you here today?**

**HN:** Well, it's always been part of my job as Deh Cho Grand Chief to take part in any gatherings that I am invited to. And this one here is the Youth Alliance people that have gotten together. They have been together for the last couple years, and they've invited me to come here and to speak, and so that's basically what I do. I speak and try to give a solid message to young people about the stuff that we're doing with our land and what's in store for us in the future.

**FTT: Why do you think it's important for Indigenous people in the North, the Dene and other Indigenous people, to come together like this?**

**HN:** Well, you know, numbers is probably the most powerful thing. And of course, getting people to work together and try to bring some commonality, trying to bring people together and trying to get them to understand what it is that we are up against. And it's mobilizing and organizing people to get them to deal with some of the big-ticket items that are coming our way.

**FTT: What effects will the Mackenzie Valley Gas Pipeline development have on the Dene and other Indigenous people in the area?**

**HN:** Well, the Mackenzie Gas is a big project. You know, it's totally a colonial-style development. It's something that other countries in the world, you know, when multinational corporations come in to their territory start talking development, the Mackenzie gas pipeline is no different. They are very brutal. They are ruthless, and they have no respect. So, when they talk about building a pipeline down the territory of the Dene, you have to be careful and you have to make sure that you understand what exactly it is they are saying, and the best way to deal with them is to stand up to them with your numbers, and make sure that our people are all united, and that you deal with them collectively. Otherwise, they will just use the old corporate tactic of divide and conquer to get their way. That worked in some cases, but people are just so frustrated that people come back together and say, "To hell with it, let's deal with it once and for all!"

**FTT: What do you think is the next step forward for Dene and other Indigenous people in the area to fight for their rights against this project and for sovereignty over their land and resources?**

**Herb:** Well, I think we should still continue to take the position that we don't really support it. It's not in the best long-term interests of First Nations to actually cater to a multi-national corporation. There are more important things here that need to be dealt with. For instance, the first big issue for us is to make sure that good land and governance agreements are in place. Making sure that our people are able to stand on their two feet, being able to make some good decisions, and that they are able to prosper. Until then, you know, large multinational projects like the gas pipeline, all they do is create a problem. They create a diversion and it's really hard to talk about government and how you want to structure it while in the meantime you've got bulldozers ready to go on the sidelines. It's a terrible way to negotiate.

**FTT: Being Grand Chief, you get to travel around a lot and hear perspectives from different communities. What is the overall perspective and overall position of the Dene people around here about this development and about what these multinational corporations are planning?**



**Deh Cho Grand Chief Herb Norwiegan (Center) Joins drummers in Fort Simpson.**

**Herb:** I think people are hesitant and a lot of them are uncertain about what this project is going to mean to them at the end. But, at the end, people are wanting to say “let’s stand together and act together” and that’s what this whole trip is about for me. To come here, to talk to our people about uniting, standing firm, and just dealing with these guys once and for all.

**FTT:** Ok, thank you very much.

**Herb:** Mahsi Cho (thank you).

# Interview with AIYA activist Michael Francis

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 26-27 Sep./Oct. 2005*

*Michael Francis is one of the young grassroots activists who attended the Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance gathering from August 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>. He is vocal in his community about the effects that the Mackenzie Gas Project will have.*

**Fire This Time:** We can start with you telling me your name and where you’re from

**Michael Francis:** My name is Michael Francis and I’m from Fort McPherson in the Northwest Territories. I’m 19 years old, and I’m Gwichin.

**FTT:** So, what brings you to Fort Good Hope, to Radilih Ko?

**MF:** Well, I went to another conference with the Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance (AIYA) in the middle of June and they told me about this summit. So, I thought I should come and represent the Gwichin people of Fort McPherson and really speak my mind on how serious this pipeline is for the youth of not only Fort McPherson, but throughout the Northwest Territories. It really goes to show how our people can come together and work as one and really have a strong voice and show that our people can also be up there with all of those political business people throughout the world, internationally, really. So, I want to come here and express my feelings on how I feel about the pipeline and how I’m personally scared to see this pipeline come through. Because behind this pipeline, there is going to be so much change that I don’t know how our elders and our young people are going to adapt to this change. Like, there’s going to be so much money, and so much



AIYA activist Michael Francis.

everything that comes with the money. These social problems will really be a problem for our people. Like even now, there's basically drinking problems and drug problems throughout the North. It's something that is hard to speak about, hard for people to really take action on, but it is out there and our young people are starting to realize that drugs and alcohol are starting to take over our young people, our future leaders. It's a hard thing to talk about, but we're really going to have to work on it and show that we do care and we want to make a difference in people's lives throughout the Northwest Territories.

**FTT: Why do you think it's important for young Indigenous people from around the Northwest Territories to come together here with all the elders of the area to discuss these new developments and ways of moving forward?**

**MF:** Well, as the youth, we're really still learning. We're learning our traditions, the values of the people of the North and with these elders here to help us, they guide us and show us ways to work around working with all these developing people. Like Imperial Oil and all these gas companies that want to develop in our land. Our elders aren't used to these companies coming on to our land, and just going in there for oil and gas and taking what we have from our land, and just up and leave once it is done. I think that with the elders here, with the youth, it really shows that elders are here to help. They want to help the youth and want to make a difference in the North. They are really 100 percent standing behind the youth that want to make a difference. This support really inspires more youth to really go further in life and help our people.

**FTT: What do you see as the next step after this summit in the way of fighting for your rights, or reclaiming your rights, against these huge developments that are being planned? What do you see as the next step for Indigenous people in the North?**

**MF:** Well, I think first of all, we'd have to really go forth and educate these business people and show them that we own this land, and really show them what they'll be doing to our land, to our culture, to our tradition, our lives of the Northwest Territories. Like, if this pipeline does go through, it is really going to change the land, the people. It's not going to be the same how some people live out on the land and how people go out on the land in the summertime and go fishing, or in the wintertime to go ice-fishing, or just for a weekend campout. It's not going to be like that. There's going to be too much change for our people and we're not going to be able to adapt to this change so fast. Even with the diamond mines, you really see how much change comes out of it. You see how much drugs and alcohol are coming in to these tiny communities and it really saddens me that all these drugs and alcohol are coming in to our small communities, which is affecting our youth. And then from that, it really makes the youth think that drugs and alcohol are really for everyone in the NWT. But, there are youth out there that want to make a difference and are trying to help, and really show that there is a world out there to explore. There's a world out there that can be anybody's. It can be yours, it can be mine. It can be anybody's in the NWT, as long as they have their education and training to go far in life. But, it just depends on the person and the choices they make. Some people make the right choices and some people don't. It takes longer for others to realize what they are doing. It goes to show that some people in the world really follow others, and for me it really saddens me to see that people are taking that route instead of learning their traditional lifestyle or trying to make a difference to really change and work together as one.

**FTT: What specific problems, or challenges, face young people in your community?**

**Michael:** Well, you can't really focus it on one community because it is throughout the Northwest Territories. You go anywhere in the Northwest Territories, and you know who these bootleggers are and who these drug dealers are. It's something that can't be kept a secret. A small town is a small town. Word gets around really fast anywhere you go in the Northwest Territories. You really can see that there are so many problems not only with drugs and alcohol, but also with other things such as suicide and dropout rates in school. I mean, so many kids drop out of school and they think that there's nothing out there for them. But, there's lots of other things. There are sports you can attend. Like, in McPherson really, hockey is a big thing, and every winter, everyone's always in to hockey and you see that all over the north. Soccer, volleyball, basketball, anything it's just really finding people that want to volunteer and really help and really get people involved. Get the community involved. Get the youth involved. I think once you get the youth involved, I think the adults really come and support our people in any way they possibly can. I think that's a big thing that you see in the North, when people who really want to make a difference, its hard at first that some people don't agree with it, or some people just think, "Oh, they're just trying to make a name for themselves, or they're just doing this because they want to make a name for themselves out there," but really they want to help. They want to help their people. They want to help strengthen our communities. That really goes to show how strong our people are in the North. They really do all that they can and really go all out with themselves to help better their community. I heard a comment yesterday sitting around the fire, "It takes a whole community to raise a child." That's so true. Sure, your parents raise you, but also you really gain a lot of knowledge from elders and from other people in the community. I really believe in that.

**FTT: Thanks Michael.**

**Michael:** Thanks.



## **TRINKETS AND BEADS, SMOKE AND MIRRORS:**

### **The First Ministers and Their 'Quality of Life' Agenda For Indigenous People In Canada**

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue # 1 - March 2006*

*"The First Ministers Meeting could represent the dawn of a new era for all the people of this land."*

- Assembly of First Nations Press Release

*"Keep your programs! We want our land!"*

- From a protest sign in Kelowna

From November 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> 2005, Paul Martin and the first ministers of all 13 provinces and territories met with the major leadership of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other mainstream Indigenous organizations for the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Affairs in Kelowna. On the table was a discussion of \$5.1 Billion for services and programs that were supposed to address the social, economic and health problems of Indigenous people in Canada.

While the leaders in the Grand Okanagan Hotel smudged and talked about the future of Indigenous people who live on and off reserves in Canada, over 200 Indigenous people and supporters from all over the country gathered outside in the snow, drumming, singing and protesting against these talks.

#### **What's wrong with \$5.1 Billion?**

The federal government was offering \$5.1 Billion for programs and services in what it called the "Quality of Life Agenda," which is a 10-year deal to improve health, housing, education and economic development with programs and services for Indigenous people in Canada.



**Protest against First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Affairs in Kelowna, BC**

What they're keeping quiet about is that this agreement is trying to put a cap on the amount of federal funding that is provided for services for Aboriginal people. For over four decades, Canada has been offloading its constitutional responsibility to fund Native programs and services on to the provinces. By now, the funds going to on-reserve services by the federal government are at the bare minimum, and the federal government is trying to offload more of the burden of dealing with Indigenous people on to the backs of the provinces and territories.

More importantly, the talks are only meant to offer a cheap band-aid solution to the poverty Indigenous people in Canada live under every day instead of dealing with its root cause. Recognition of Treaty rights or Aboriginal Title, the ownership of lands and resources by Indigenous nations, and self-determination for the Indigenous nations within Canada



was not part of this agreement.

TV and radio signals across the country claimed Native people in Canada were finally going to be brought out of their poverty and misery. Behind the media hype was a strategy by Canada and its provinces to cover the real issues of why Indigenous people in this country live in 3<sup>rd</sup> world conditions, suffer from more health problems than other Canadians, and have higher dropout and suicide rates. This was a 'smoke and mirrors' campaign to fool people in this country in to believing that the problems Native people face can be solved by throwing a few billion dollars their way, and it created deep divisions among Indigenous people on how to deal with it. What better way to show how the colonial government of Canada has divided Indigenous people than by watching on TV as the leadership sits in warm hotel lobbies, cracking jokes with representatives of Canada while Indigenous people stand out in the wet and snow to protest. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which represents the First Nations band councils in Canada, was one of the biggest pushers of this agreement. But, what was not getting reported is that the Council of the Crees, the Assembly of First Nations of Labrador and Quebec, and altogether over 200 bands, which is one third of the AFN, boycotted this meeting.

### **A Historic Meeting?**

The Kelowna agreement was part of a larger push by the government of Canada to shed itself of its responsibility to the people whose land and resources it has made itself rich with, and whose livelihoods it is destroying. It comes on the

heels of the \$2Billion payout that the Liberal government was trying to push for compensation to the survivors Canada's residential schools. These payouts were being pushed because the government of Canada is incapable of dealing with the real issues of Indigenous people. This is because Canada's survival as a colonial capitalist country depends on the continued theft of Indigenous land and resources. It can throw billions of dollars into programs, into compensation, but it will not change the fact that Indigenous people still have no control over their own affairs and will remain poor at the hands of Canada.

### **Dead in the water? What next?**

*"We're not going to honour that. We will have our own plan that will help natives a lot more than the Liberals."*

- Monte Solberg, Conservative Finance Critic in reference to the Kelowna agreement

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party won a minority government in Ottawa. What does this mean for the Kelowna agreement, or the Residential School deal, or the future of Indigenous people in this country? To start off, the Conservative Party opposed the First Minister's meeting. Not out of solidarity with Indigenous people, but because a more right-wing government will take a more direct approach to the theft of land and resources from Indigenous people. Instead of waving jewellery in front of our eyes, we can expect the cannons of gunships. The conservative government strongly supports the First Nations Governance Act, or Bill C-7, which was introduced in 2003 and would have reduced Indigenous communities to municipalities and entrenched federal domination over Indigenous people. This was dropped because of the massive opposition to the Act but could be introduced again by the Conservative government. Either way, we can expect a hard-line approach and many more battles ahead.



**Protest against First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Affairs in Kelowna, BC**

Whether the Kelowna agreement is adopted by the new Conservative government or not, the resistance by Indigenous people who came out to the streets of Kelowna against the theft that was being signed behind closed doors remains as something that we can learn from. For further analysis on this issue, please read an interview on the next page with Arthur Manuel, who helped found the Grassroots People's Coalition in response to the First Minister's meeting, and which put a call-out for the protests.



**“THIS ADDRESS OF  
POVERTY IS JUST  
REALLY A SCAM”**

## **An Interview with Arthur Manuel**

**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue # 1 - March 2006*

*The Grassroots Peoples Coalition (GPC) put out the call among the Indigenous community across Canada for meetings and protests to counter the First Ministers Meeting in Kelowna on November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the GPC is to raise awareness about Aboriginal and Treaty rights, develop strategies for implementing these rights on the ground, and to keep First Nations leadership accountable to the people. Arthur Manuel, a long-time Secwepemc activist and leader, is the spokesperson for the GPC. After the day's events in Kelowna on November 25<sup>th</sup>, I had the opportunity to discuss the First Ministers Meeting with him.*

**Fire This Time:** To start off, could you tell me who you are and where you're from?

**Art Manuel:** I'm Arthur Manuel, and I'm from the Neskonlith Indian Reserve in the Secwepemc Nation near Chase, BC, Canada. I'm also spokesperson for the Indigenous Network on Economy and Trade, but here I was involved in being the spokesman for the Grassroots People's Coalition. We were organizing in response to the First Minister's conference here in Kelowna during the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2005.

**FTT:** What do you think is the significance of the meeting that was held between the First Ministers, Paul Martin, and some of the major Aboriginal organizations in Canada?

**AM:** I think the main significance of it was that the Canadian government has been able to basically co-opt our national Aboriginal organizations into a strategy to deal with the symptoms of poverty as opposed to trying to deal with the cause of our poverty. Indigenous people at the grassroots level, especially the ones who have gathered here in Kelowna, have always been struggling with the federal and provincial governments with regards to Aboriginal title and Aboriginal fishery rights. And we've always been demanding the government recognize Aboriginal treaty rights, but that is not being done.

And with this agenda that they've sort of adopted across the street, what they've done is they've basically gotten the Indian/Aboriginal organizations to abandon Aboriginal treaty rights too and instead focus on social programs like education, health, and housing, and economic development. And they're going to use that signed-on agenda against the people who are struggling to have rights recognized and dealt with, because what they're going to do is they're going to do how Sun Peaks does by charging people with trespassing, or they are going to charge people for fishing without a permit, or fishing during a closed period or something, what they call 'closed.' The things which in those cases, they are asserting their authority over us and they are trying to say that we are breaking their rules, whether they use the Land Act or the Fishing Act, and when we go to court the government prosecutors use agreements like this ten-year agreement and other agreements, any kind of sweetheart deal that they've got with Indian people.

They use them to say "Ok, the good Indians, the responsible Indians. They signed this real good agreement about housing, education, health and economic development. That's what the good Indians want to do." And they look at the youth, especially a lot of the youth and elders, and they're going to say, "Oh you're bad Indians so we're going to send you to jail for 45 days to smarten you up." And so that's how those agreements actually bite back on people. You sort of somehow think that they are going to help, but they are actually really dangerous, especially the way they use these agreements. And it shows they are basically managing Indian people. But, I have no confidence in them because in the end, 10 years from now, they're probably going to spend another \$5 billion, and its not going to make a hell of a difference to us, simply because poverty is still going to be there because you're not getting to the root.

The root cause is non-recognition of Aboriginal treaty rights. The minute they recognize Aboriginal rights here, that means that the Okanogan own the property underneath this building and are entitled to revenue because it's raised as a consequence, the use of this building for their commercial purposes. So that is not there now. It's just not there. They are not going to provide that kind of dialogue to address poverty from that perspective. You know, the real thing that needs to be fixed isn't Indian people vis a vis health, education and housing. The real thing that needs to be fixed in this country is the Canadian economic system, because the Canadian economic system isn't based on recognizing Aboriginal treaty rights. It means that the entrepreneurs and government can just basically steal the land from us, from underneath our feet. That isn't possible in other countries. The Chinese have been buying and selling land for centuries, the Europeans have been doing it for centuries too, buying and selling land. They have to deal with the real cost of a ski resort. Sun Peaks didn't even steal it from the Shuswap. Get a couple of Shuswap chiefs to agree with it and it's actually a real fraudulent form of capitalism because it is based upon non-recognition of the primary land interests that the industry and government are using.

**FTT:** We read about how good this deal is going to be for Native people in this country in the major media. How do you think Indigenous people are really going to be affected by this new 10-year agreement?

**AM:** Well, the average Native person isn't going to be affected at all by it. What's going to happen is that you're going to wind up with having the band council and the tribal organizations and the provincial and territorial organizations being engaged in a constant set of meetings involving these issues, trying to talk about some common form of dialogue. And there's no illusion on my part that those dialogues will be guided by the federal and provincial governments, and that there's really not going to be any substantial change. What they're basically going to do is get Indian people to agree in to devolution of authorities.

The real problem with Indian programs and services in this country is that Indigenous people ourselves don't have true recognition of Aboriginal title. We have a revenue base for programs and services. Do you know what I mean? If they recognize that we have Aboriginal title and rights then we will get remunerations for them using our property, and the remunerations that we'd use for programs and services. Right now, that's not happening. Right now, that doesn't happen because all remuneration for use of our property either accrues to the provincial government under section 92 or accrues to the federal government under Section 91. That's why we need to make a big public spectacle like here, bumming for \$5 billion from the federal government and \$100 million from the provincial government. And then the tax payers think, "Oh, look at that. We're saving those Indians." You know what I mean. We assume the blame because we say that "we don't have adequate health care, good housing. That's how come we're economically poor, and we need to bum this money from you tax payers so that we can improve it." So we assume the blame. And we're not to blame. Really, it's the economic system that's to blame.

The one that doesn't recognize fundamental rights recognized under the constitution and recognized under the courts. That's the problem and that's the thing that needs fixing. Not us. So, we're going to assume the blame for that. And we're going to run around and try to have programs and that kind of thing, but the problem with that process is that they look at the federal and provincial government as having mutually exclusive jurisdiction on all money and all programs. So, we're outside still, looking at those two governments and that's the dialogue that the meeting is going to be like because the money is going to come from those guys. And through that money, they are going to be manipulated in the direction of an agenda.

They are going to be co-opted, and they're [the government] still going to wind up with the exclusive jurisdiction at the end of the day. In terms of Indian education, take a look at it. They're not really talking about Indian control of Indian education with a separate resource base. They're looking at recognizing the provincial government as having the primary constitutional responsibility. And what the feds want to do is suck the province into it so there is some shared responsibility there, you know, because if you study the background of social programs in this country, the federal government takes the position that they have no obligation to provide any of these services like healthcare, education, and housing. They feel that they don't have any obligation to do that on an Indian reserve. They feel that it is the provincial government's responsibility. They feel that the post secondary education, they are providing that as a humanitarian and moral obligation and not as a legal responsibility.

The provinces on the other hand, say "no, we don't have any legal responsibility for providing those services because they're services provided for Indians and under the constitution they are responsible for Indians, and so you guys will be handling it. So the thing is that both of them deny any responsibility. That's why we're as poor as we are. That's the consequence. When two governments deny any liability or responsibility for something, obviously you're going to suffer the consequences. And that's what's happening right now. And that's how come its stupid for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to sign documents and to involve themselves in dialogue where the responsibility with regard to those programs and services are going to continue to be born by the federal and provincial government. It was no clear dialogue with regards to responsibility in the papers that they've got written over there. There's nothing about that. So, it's silent. In fact, I feel that because of the sort of very uncertain area of who has authority with regards to programs, we need to claim that jurisdiction because it is ours. Reading under Section 35 (1), where we talk about self-government. We have a right; therefore the right is to do the things that we need to do to get money through the use of the land through the federal and provincial governments. When they use any of our land, they owe us. No 'ands,' 'ifs' or 'buts' about it are a part of that. So the thing is that that is what we need to get on our side. That's a direction that I see that we have to take. What's going on over there is a real travesty.

**FTT:** It has been inspiring seeing grassroots people come together. Just the fact that there have been meetings over the past couple days countering what's going on over there and people coming from around

to discuss these issues. What do you think is the next step?

**AM:** Well the next step, like I told these people, is to maintain solidarity amongst ourselves, and build the coalition between our different groups. Because our different groups are really are actually active. You know, we have to pull together here. In these other areas, there are activists who I know from our ongoing work under INET and other things. When I hear action happening out there, I'm always out there trying to meet the people and to talk to them. But after making that contact what we need to do is to get together and start consolidating our own coalition, ongoing coalition that will support what our rights are as Indigenous people, as grassroots people. We can't



depend on those guys. I hate to say this, but they're kind of addicted to federal funding. Like, we've had problems in our communities with drugs and alcoholism. We've attended healing societies, and there are different views. On my reserve, alcoholism is really there, and we've really changed our position, but things like dependency, anyone with a dependency, whether it is on drugs or on federal funding for political purposes, I think we need to seriously question it.

I think the Indian community has to really look at funding that comes in to our community and do a review. Because a lot of people think they're getting that money and its right, but it ain't. And it doesn't necessarily have the consequences that you really think it does have. And we need to review these policies of funding, because, you know, if we don't review it, we really make ourselves vulnerable to the policies and criteria under which such funding is given. For instance, under the Canadian funding for political purposes in this country, only \$5.4 million nationally is given as grants, as core grants. And core grants means that they don't put any line item in the budget. It is just "here's 5.4 million. Do with it what you want." And that's what the Indians hope the government would do, but it's only \$5.4 million for all the other organizations, from coast to coast. And they give out, in addition to that, \$225 million in project funding. Project funding has line items, which means, like financial line items, like you know with a name on it and an amount, which means that it isn't free money. It isn't a grant. It means that you have to spend it according to the bureaucrat who makes those line items, you know? And that's how they direct people. And that's how they manipulate and manoeuvre politics in this country through the difference between the \$225 Million political money and the \$5.4 Million that they call grant funding.

So the thing is that we need to study that and all our ordinary people have to study that. Because I've heard people here say once they start getting into cars and that, you know you got a payment and your payment is \$600/month and you've got a 36-month payment plan. And then you know the grassroots people start demonstrating outside the meeting. You make people over there sweat. You make them sweat because they're thinking about their car payments, their thinking about their mortgage payments, they're thinking about their own personal

needs over and above what they are really responsible for which is the collective rights of all the Indigenous people. And all that happens. You know, I've been there. I was the chief for eight years, and I was chairman for six. I know the dynamics of the mentality of being locked in to those kinds of funding arrangements and what it means to your staff and to your office. So let's not kid ourselves. But with the grassroots, you know, there might be something else suggested. We need to do a full analysis of the funding arrangements of organizations, whether it is from the band all the way to the national, and start laying that out for people so people start realizing. We need to get smart.

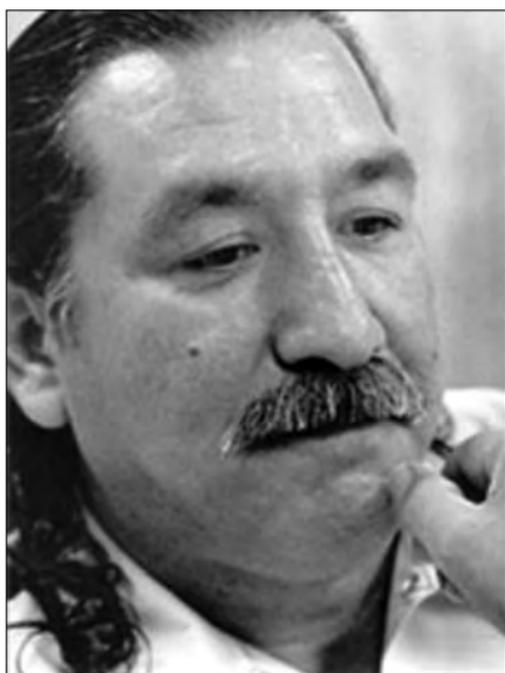
The issues that are so critical now, are the land issues. That conference over there happened because the province and the federal government are scared. That's why it's happening. It's because the legal rights that we have been acquiring and accumulating over the centuries are being heard reporters and media in New York, and people who validate Canada's credit rating. They know that Indian people are a substantially high hidden cost that Canada has been hiding. The other doctrine you need to put in this perspective, and this gets really complicated, is the financial statements of Canada with reference of Aboriginal liabilities with regard to Indian land and treaty rights. And also the province, the same thing, the financial statements. We're actually in page 60 of the BC financial statements under what they call 'contingency modes and liabilities' and they sort of highlight the whole thing about Canada's BC treaty process in there in about four or five paragraphs. They highlight it. They have to highlight it because they need to let the people who lend BC money, the international investment banks, they need to let them know what all their liabilities are, and we are one of them as Indigenous people, and we have to tell them.

In this agreement, we'll end up in their next financial statement saying we got this thing, because what they need to show to the financial investment banks out there is that 'we've got the Indians under control. We're managing them.' I know that in their present statements, they say that 'we're lending them money to negotiate, and two-thirds of them are negotiating, but we don't expect an agreement in the foreseeable future.' They say that right in their financial statements, you know what I mean? The reason they do that is because they are using our land as collateral to borrow the money that they turn around and give us the \$100 million, which is real chump change when you talk about the deficit of some of these companies. General Motors runs a \$4 billion deficit on its GM plant



in Canada. It's nickel and dime when you really nail it down to corporate interests, and here is our leadership thinking it will mean big change. It ain't going to help nobody.

**FTT:** Thanks a lot for the interview.



## **Solidarity Message of Native American and Political Prisoner**

# **Leonard Peltier to Fidel, the People and the Revolution**

Leonard Peltier

#89637-132 U.S. Penitentiary

P.O. Box 1000 Leavenworth, KS 66048-1000

August 2003

My honorable brothers and sisters of Cuba:

During the many years of serving an unjust imprisonment his Excellency President Fidel Castro, the Revolution and the great Cuban people have offered me almost three decades of solidarity, supporting my struggle as I seek justice and my freedom. Freedom that I lost as I was sentenced to two life sentences in a US prison for simply opposing the exploitation and the oppression of my people.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the attacks on Fort Moncada in Santiago de Cuba and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes; attacks carried out by the great revolutionary forces led by His Excellency President Fidel Castro. These attacks carried out on July 26, 1953 signaled one of the most significant acts against imperialism; as well as, being the first step in the overthrow of US backed dictator Batista. My people, the indigenous people of North America, know your struggle, as we have for more than 500 years fought against imperialism. This imperialist aggression has been responsible for the deaths of our ancestors, the rape of our women, and the ransacking of our lands. Now more than ever, we are obliged to fight for our freedom and our autonomy.

I would like this opportunity to once again express my solidarity with His Excellency Fidel Castro, with the Cuban Revolution and with my brothers and sisters in Cuba. I call for an end to all campaigns of foreign subversion and aggression towards the government of Cuba and it's people. The war on terrorism conducted by the US is nothing more than a smoke screen to carry out illegal acts of aggression that break International Law. In light of the acts of aggression and terrorism carried out by the imperialist, the Republic of Cuba has the right to defend and protects it's national sovereignty.

Lastly, I call on the government of the United States to immediately free my five heroic brothers who remain unjustly imprisoned for trying to prevent acts of terrorism from Miami, against their nation and their people. I promise that I will maintain my solidarity with my brothers and sisters in Cuba and ask humbly that you support my struggle for my freedom.

Till victory! In the spirit of Crazy Horse,

Leonard Peltier

# A MESSAGE ABOUT PEACE



Leonard Peltier Statement on  
March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003

Leonard Peltier #89637-132  
US Penitentiary – Leavenworth  
PO Box 1000  
Leavenworth, Kansas 66048-  
1000

Thank you for giving me a chance to share a part of myself on this day of peace.

It is important that you have taken this time out of your day and your busy lives to share with the world your commitment to peace and a vision for change. This may be the most important thing that you will ever do.

This day is no different than that day in 1975, when I stood up to

FBI-assisted violence on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. What is at stake now is not very different from then. The American government strong-armed the people of Pine Ridge, too. Their interest wasn't to protect the Indigenous People living in strife and poverty, who even to this day can't make ends meet, but to support multinational corporations that even now are only after the natural resources from a land rich in uranium. This mentality that "Might Makes Right"... It's nothing new. This administration is turning back the clock and is doing nothing but playing "cowboys and Indians."

Let's be honest. There is much to be gained by taking Iraq by force - for the U.S., for the multinational corporations - and very little, if anything, of the administration's actions is about liberating Iraq's people from a tyrannical regime. Iraqi oil is the key. It means everything in this so-called "War on Terror". But the greed doesn't end there. Reports in the last few weeks show private American corporations - profiteers like Vice President Dick Cheney's former employer - are already in place, ready to take government contracts to rebuild a war-ravaged country blown apart by American bombs and to service military personnel that this administration plans to house there. An occupation force, then. War is good for business. And all of this will be paid for by you, the American taxpayer.

The world is crying out for unity and greater understanding of our Arab brothers and sisters. Without dialogue, how else will we come to understand the conflicts in the Middle East?

The French, who have plenty of experience in the Middle East, avow the Iraqi's will not to succumb to American democracy in our lifetime. In this, the Iraqi people are no different than Indigenous Peoples everywhere. And like with the Indigenous People of this country, an understanding of tribal factions within the Arab world is needed. Respect for their culture and spiritual beliefs is required. Acknowledgement of their sovereignty is fundamental. America may choose to ignore our efforts today, but we - the People - will carry the wounds of killing innocent people in the name of American might.

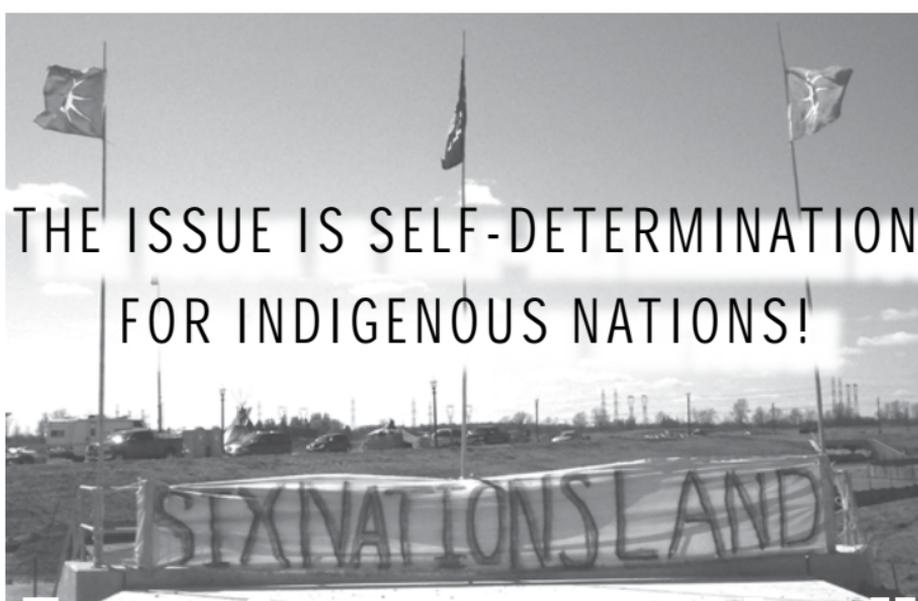
My own case ended in violent action by the U.S. government and the FBI. In whose interest was this done? For the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation? For Native People throughout this land? For Indigenous Peoples throughout the world? In the interest of the American public? This sort of aggression nearly destroyed my People. Let my life serve as a reference point to all of you today. I urge you to consider the knowledge Indian people gained in the face of terrorism. If we had unified early on, worked together rather than as separate nations, we may have prevailed. We must encourage our allies, the world's nations that are opposed to military action, to come together in unity.

These are our brothers and sisters, Aunties and Uncles, we go to bomb. They are us and we are them, together in this great circle of life. I encourage you all to continue together, united. Speak with one voice. Say NO to war!

I leave you with the words of an Iroquois leader, Leon Shenandoah, "I'm working for the Creation. I refuse to take part in destruction."

Aho. Megwetch.

Leonard Peltier



THE ISSUE IS SELF-DETERMINATION  
FOR INDIGENOUS NATIONS!

Hands Off Six Nations Land!

**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue 2 -  
May Day Special Edition*

### **Six Nations Under Attack**

At 4:30am on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2006, over 150 heavily armed Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers launched a violent assault on Indigenous people who were occupying reclaimed Haudenosaunee territory at Caledonia. 16 people were beaten and arrested for defending Rotinoshon'non:we territory against illegal housing developments on their land in a 200 year old outstanding land claim with the government of Canada.

Since February 28<sup>th</sup>, Rotinoshon'non:we people and supporters have been camping out on the Haldimand Tract at the entrance to the Douglas Creek Estates, which is an illegal 71-lot subdivision being built by Henco Industries on Six Nations territory.

### **My Land Is Not Your Land**

The land being developed has never been handed over to Canada. It was recognized by the Crown as Six Nations territory in the Haldimand Declaration of 1784. In this Declaration, the Crown agreed to protect the Six Nations' interests in the land, 6 miles on both sides of the Grand River from its mouth to its source. This agreement has been



violated for over 200 years, as more and more land was stolen by the government of Canada. The Six Nations reserve today sits on only 5% of its original land base. The governments of Canada and Ontario are supporting this colonial construction against the will of the Six Nations people.

Despite the illegality of this development, Indigenous people and their supporters are being criminalized for standing up against the theft of more Six Nations land. Along with the OPP, RCMP officers have set up an operating base at a nearby school.

### **The BC Connection**

Like in Ontario, the rights of Indigenous people all over BC are being trampled. Unlike Ontario, the majority of this province was never surrendered to government of Canada through treaties. This is most clear when looking at the outright theft of Indigenous land and resources and the vicious repression and criminalization of resistance to this theft.

In 1997, the BC government approved a \$70 million expansion of Sun Peaks Ski Resort near Kamloops, inflating the resort from 4,000 beds to 20,000 beds, and developing previously untouched Mt. Morrisey. This expansion now totals \$285 million; an expansion that is going through without the participation, or even the consent, of the Secwepemc people who hold title to all of the territory onto which Sun Peaks is spreading. Since developments began, Secwepemc people have set up the Skwelkwel'welt Protection Centre at the entrance to Sun Peaks and have continued to assert their inherent rights to their land. The wave of repression that the BC Liberal government has brought down on the Secwepemc defenders has resulted in over 54 arrests of Secwepemc people, mainly youth and elders.

Since 2000, St'at'imc people have set up a permanent camp in



their territory near Melvin Creek, located between Mt. Currie and Pemberton. Known as Sutikahl, the camp was set up to assert St'at'imc rights to their land and to stop the BC government and corporate plans to build the \$500 million Cayoosh Ski Resort in the untouched alpine mountain area. For the last 5 years, St'at'imc people have occupied the threatened territory despite government and corporate plans to go ahead with the theft of this St'at'imc land.

In September 2005, 15 Tahltan Elders were arrested at Klappan Mountain in the struggle to protect the Sacred Headwaters of the Stikine, Skeena and Nass Rivers. The Tahltan elders are in serious opposition to industrial development by Shell Oil and Fortune Minerals. This action was to protect their lands and people against Fortune Mineral's open pit coal mine and Shell's coalbed methane proposals. The 15 Tahltan Elders and youth were arrested when an RCMP injunction was granted against the Tahltan blockade.

In the summer of 2005, members of the Sto:lo Nation and Cheam Nation had their fishing nets seized by Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) officers and were threatened with charges for harvesting salmon in their unceded territory. Cheam people have resisted attacks on their waters many times within the last few years and have confronted the DFO directly to defend their sovereignty. This new wave of attacks is a continuation of suppressing Indigenous rights over this area of the Fraser River.

### **Six Nations Heroic Resistance**

In an attempt to intimidate the camp members at Six Nations, in March, Henco Industries obtained a court injunction to have Six Nations camp members forcibly removed by the OPP. A revised court injunction states that those who refuse to vacate the property are guilty of criminal and civil contempt and will be fingerprinted and photographed as part of a probation order. Despite court orders and growing police intimidation, the camp has grown and gathered support across Canada. The Clan Mothers, who are the matrilineal authority in the Iroquois confederacy, have organized actions to block construction.

### **Clan Mothers, Mothers of All Resistance**

The Six Nations struggle has inspired Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Canada. In support of the people who are on the front lines, solidarity has been spreading. Under the direction of the Clan Mothers at the Six Nations Territory, a series of actions were organized in solidarity with the Six Nations. These actions were held in support of the Six Nations demands for an immediate cessation of all construction by Henco industries on Six Nations territory and for resolution to the current standoff to be conducted on a nation-to-nation basis. On April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, support actions took place on the streets of North Battleford, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria. In the early morning of April 21<sup>st</sup>, bonfires were lit and the CN Rail line was blocked on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Reserve on their territory in Eastern Ontario, costing CN millions of dollars in losses and damages.

### **And The Struggle Continues...**

After the initial raid on the camp at Caledonia, hundreds of community members and supporters poured in to the area to reinforce the strength of the resistance. Today, they remain there and are setting an example for Indigenous people all over the country who live with the same conditions as people at Six Nations every day. They continue to face threats of more violence by the enforcement agencies of Canada. From other examples of Indigenous resistance, from Oka to Gustafsen Lake, violence and media manipulation are central tactics of the government in dealing with land disputes, and Six Nations has escalated to a boiling point. We need to demand that force not be used against the people at Six Nations and that the demands of the Clan Mothers be met.

**THE WOMEN, BEING TITLE HOLDERS TO ALL LANDS OF TURTLE ISLAND, ASSERT OUR CONSTITUTIONAL JURISDICTION OVER THE HALDIMAND TRACT. WE HAVE NEVER AND CANNOT EVER GIVE UP OUR LAND OR OUR SOVEREIGNTY.**

The Women, being Title Holders to all lands of Turtle Island, assert our constitutional jurisdiction over the Haldimand Tract. We have never and cannot ever give up our land or our sovereignty.

1. The Six Nations are distinct original nations. We are to be dealt with on a nation-to-nation basis by the Crown and all other nations.
2. The Crown must respect our original relationship as set out in the Two Row Wampum, our jurisdiction as provided in our constitution, the Kaiannereh'ko:wa, and as respected by Sections 109 and 132 of the BNA Act, 1867 and according to international covenants that Canada has signed.
3. We are to be dealt with on a nation-to-nation basis, as was the custom before Canada separated from the British Empire. Respect for the independent international status of the Six Nations by Canada was established before Canada achieved recognition as a state or gained the ability to sign treaties on its own. The independent international identity of the Six Nations identity has never been legally extinguished.
4. The band councils were established with procedures that violated international law. They continue to function as colonizing institutions. We have never consented to their establishment nor their representing us.
5. Canada and all its politicians, bureaucrats, agents, assignees and appointees should cease and desist immediately their attempt to criminalize and apprehend our people for defending what is rightfully ours, the land to which we hold title. Any further action by Canada, Ontario and their agents shall be viewed as being a direct violation of the Two Row Wampum, the constitutional accord between the Ratino'shon:ni and Canada and international law.
6. The claims of Canada and the province of Ontario to have a right to legislate for the Rotino'shon:ni Six Nations and to grant private title to our land has no foundation in law.



*As Long as the Grass Shall Grow,  
We Will Defend Ourselves by Any  
Means Necessary:*

## **SIX NATIONS & THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**



**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in  
Fire This Time Volume 3  
Issue 3 - May 2006*

### **A Colonial and Violent Government**

While government representatives publicly sit at negotiation tables and privately plan how to crush the people of Six Nations, the people inside the reclamation site are planning and waiting for what the government of Canada's next move will be. On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the Ontario Provincial Police raided the Six Nations reclamation site at Caledonia, beating

and arresting 16 people who were peacefully asserting Six Nations sovereignty over the land. If we've learned anything from this and Canada's past actions, it is that the need for Indigenous people to defend themselves has been re-enforced.

Six Nations people and their supporters had occupied the area since February 28<sup>th</sup>, when they prevented a luxury home development from being built on their land. The police raid was taken on at the same time as a slander campaign through ruling class media outlets, telling people in Canada that this was a justified act since they were dealing with a 'lawless' group of Natives who were dangerous to the Canadian population. These tactics are nothing new for Canada.

During Oka, the government sent in the Securite Quebec, and the Canadian military to crush a group of Mohawk people who were standing up against the expansion of an 18-hole golf course on to their sacred burial grounds. Canada's media portrayed them as terrorists and thugs, when any photo of that standoff will actually show you families and young children together on the other side of the barricades. The media blamed the lobster crisis on Miqmaq fishers at Burnt Church and tried to justify the actions of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans whose fully loaded enforcement vessels were ramming unarmed Miqmaq fishermen who were trying to pull up their nets from the water. They tried to justify the huge RCMP presence at Gustafsen Lake. They manipulated events and told the Canadian public that they were being attacked by the angry mob of Natives inside the camp, when it was they who were the ones inflicting the violence. It was revealed later that that was a well-orchestrated slander campaign by the RCMP and the corporate media. But this begs the question, was that the only time that this happened? No, it was the only time they were caught.

### **The Criminalization of the Non-Violent**

When Indigenous people assert their rights as Indigenous people, tensions flare and it is easier for the media to ignite racism against Indigenous people. But, what about when Indigenous people are targeted for exercising rights that an ordinary Canadian citizen is entitled to? On June 27<sup>th</sup> 2005, the anti-terrorist unit of the RCMP, the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) and the Vancouver Police Department blocked off the Burrard bridge, ambushing three

Indigenous men who were transporting legally obtained hunting rifles. Two of the men, Dave Dennis and James Sakej Ward, were well-known for their involvement in the West Coast and East Coast Warrior Societies. They were involved in struggles at Burnt Church, Cheam, Esowista, Saanich as well as other times that communities have asked for their help in defending themselves against attacks by Canada’s colonial ‘law’ enforcement agencies and its suppression of their food harvesting, and theft of their land.

There was no blockade or standoff going on when 30 police officers held them at gunpoint, confiscated fourteen new hunting rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition, camping and survival gear, and held them in a military barracks. No, these guns were being used as part of a cultural, hunting and survival-training program for the Tsawataineuk First Nation, located on the central BC coast, called the Outdoor Indigenous Traditional Training, to teach youth hunting and survival skills. Did any of this matter the RCMP? No. The rifles, the supplies, everything that was taken from these men remains locked up. The RCMP could not get away with pressing any charges against them since there was nothing illegal about what they were doing. What they did though, however, was send a strong message to Indigenous communities and Native activists who would side with the Warrior Societies: “Look what happened to them. This can happen to you too if you are militant in asserting your rights.”

**Self-Defense, a Human Right**

*“We are non-violent with those who are non- violent with us.  
-Malcolm X*

Malcolm X said this in response to the lynching of black people in the US and the government’s refusal to defend them against the racist attacks by the Klu Klux Klan and police agencies. It is a fundamental right of people to defend themselves when they are under attack, by any means necessary. It is also a fundamental right for nations to arm themselves in case of an attack from another nation. For the Indigenous nations who exist within Canada’s colonial borders, is this any different? Nations, who signed agreements with the British Crown or with Canada on a nation-to-nation basis, or Indigenous nations who have no such agreements. We are talking about nations who need to defend themselves against theft by Canada and its provinces. British Columbia is 97% unceded territory, which means that almost all of the land has never been handed

over in a treaty and legally belongs to the many Indigenous nations who make up the area. Then, what legitimacy does a colonial Canadian gun law have for an Indigenous person in



BC when the governance and even the existence of this province is illegitimate?

At Six Nations, Indigenous people peacefully reclaimed their land that was being taken from them. Their struggle is not alone. It is bound up with the Inuit community in Labrador who just lost a young girl to tuberculosis in one of the richest countries in the world. It is bound up with the broken promises and inaction by the government to compensate the survivors of the residential schools. It is Native people taking a stand against injustice. As the Clan mothers, the families, the young and old activists, the Warrior Alliance and all the supporters head in to another day of defending Six Nations land, we need to unconditionally support their demands and their right to defend themselves.



# "ROTINO'SHON:NI SIX NATIONS PEOPLE HAVE NEVER SURRENDERED OUR SOVEREIGNTY"

## ***Introduction to this historical document***

*Alongside the direct physical land reclamation, people at Six Nations have been continuing their appeals to the government of Canada to end its aggression against Six Nations people and to deal with the Rotino'shon:ni on a nation-to-nation basis. The following is a letter written by the Women Title Holders to the Governor General of Canada. This is an important document because it outlines Canada's complete illegitimacy in trying to suppress the ROTINO'SHON:NI people.*

*-Aaron Mercredi*

28 June, 2006 - For immediate release

Following is the text of a letter send to Mme. Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada.

TO: MME. MICHAËLLE JEAN

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

1 RIDEAU DRIVE, OTTAWA, CANADA

FROM: The WOMEN TITLE HOLDERS OF THE ROTINO'SHON:NI

Also known as the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy on Turtle Island.

According to attached instructions from Buckingham Palace regarding the protocol to discuss urgent matters between two allies, the Six Nations and Great Britain, we are requesting a meeting to discuss the following:

OBJECTION TO:

INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF KAIANEREH'KO:WA/GREAT LAW TERRITORY BY THE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND ONTARIO, THEIR CORPORATE AGENTS AND ASSIGNS;

THE ARREST OF ROTINO'SHON:NI PEOPLE FOR DEFENDING OUR LAND; AND

THE REFUSAL OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BRITAIN, OF CANADA AS ITS SUCCESSOR STATE, AND OF ONTARIO, AS A PROVINCE OF CANADA, TO ABIDE BY THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

DATE: June 20, 2006

WHEREAS according to the letter from Her Majesty the Queen you have the duty to deal with this issue of the violations of the agreements between Britain and its ally, the Six Nations. We, the Women Title Holders, support the request for a meeting between the Chiefs and Clan Mothers of the Six Nations and yourself to discuss these matters at your earliest convenience;

WHEREAS the Charter of the United Nations requires respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, requiring its members to ensure that armed force is not used to resolve international differences and to resolve disagreements by peaceful means in conformity with justice and international law;

WHEREAS Canada has ascribed to the internationally recognized

standards for respecting political rights of the People as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal instruments;

WHEREAS General Assembly Resolution 1541 (XV) requires the informed consent of a people before they are included in another state;

WHEREAS the International Court of Justice affirmed Resolution 1541 in the Western Sahara case;

WHEREAS the courts of other colonial states like the Supreme Court of Australia in Mabo have formally repudiated past colonial reasoning and practices;

WHEREAS the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination found on March 6, 2006 that the United States was denying



the Western Shoshone people “their rights to own, develop, control and use their land and resources”; warning the U.S. to respect the Convention; and to “freeze”, “desist” and “stop” their actions immediately and to abide by the Committee’s “Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure”;

WHEREAS international law is firmly committed to affirming the equal and inalienable rights of all peoples and rejecting colonial encroachment on other peoples, including Indigenous nations;

WHEREAS both the U.S. and Canada must abide by the international law principle that there can be no development on Indigenous land without consulting the Title Holders; ignoring the true Indigenous people is now universally recognized as being illegal; Indigenous people must be consulted; and our perspectives on the issues can no longer be ignored;

We the WOMEN TITLE HOLDERS and the PEOPLE of the Rotino’shon:ni also known as the SIX NATIONS IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY ask you, our allies, for support and assistance to help us end the serious breach of the peace that we are suffering from. We would like your support and assistance to encourage Canada to live up to its own laws and solemn commitments. We wish to inform you that:

We, the Rotino’shon:ni people have always been allies, not subjects of Britain, nor citizens of its successor state, Canada. Valid relations between us and the colonial state were founded on the Two Row Wampum and the Covenant Chain which required mutual respect and cooperation in accord with both ancient and modern principles of international law.

Our nations, the Rotino’shon:ni, formed a Confederacy before colonial contact. Our confederation is founded on relations of equality and mutual respect as affirmed by the Kaianereh’ko:wa, our Great Law of Peace.

As affirmed by Wampum 44 of the Kaiahereh’ko:wa, we Women have

a trust obligation to maintain the land for the future generations of our People.

Our current problems with Canada are because of our alliance with Britain. Some of us were forced to leave our traditional settlements in what is now New York State during the revolt of British subjects known as the American Revolutionary war.

On October 25, 1784, General Frederick Haldimand pledged Britain's protection for the Rotino'shon:ni people on a tract of land within our traditional domain extending six miles deep on either side of the Grand River running from its mouth in Lake Erie to its source, "to them and their posterity forever".

Britain and its colonial agents failed to respect and protect the agreements that have been made between the Rotino'shon:ni Six Nations and the British Crown. Today we have only 5% of our original tract. The rest is illegally occupied. Canada allowed most of our resources to be taken by squatters, illegal land transfers and fraud. Scores of cities and towns were established on our land without our consent. Indian Affairs dissipated our trust funds to speculative investments over our objections or through gifts to outside institutions, including the Law Society of Upper Canada [the bar association of Ontario].

The problems experienced by the Rotino'shon:ni with the British Empire and its Canadian colony were first brought to international attention in 1923. At that time the Six Nations Confederacy from Grand River sent Deskaheh to the League of Nations as our representative. He applied for membership of the Six Nations in the League. He was denied a hearing. His mistreatment set a precedent for ignoring the sovereignty of colonized Indigenous nations. Since then we have never been allowed to speak to the other nations of the world as the sovereign nation we are.

In 1924 Canada imposed a puppet government under its illegal Indian Act. It was passed in violation of the constitution of Canada. It denied our traditional Rotino'shon:ni government access to our national treasury which they held in trust. One of the reasons why our government was deposed was because we were trying to get a court hearing so we could demonstrate that Canada's Indian Act was ultra vires the British North America Act 1867. We are not and never were British subjects. We are not Canadians. We are independent.

We have been allies of Great Britain. Should both parties wish to maintain this alliance, we strongly recommend that the Crown honor its side of the agreement. Should you disregard this recommendation and continue to deliberately breach this agreement, then you will force us to take the necessary measures to correct the injustices that have been committed against us.

In 1982 Britain enacted Canada's Constitution Act which includes formal recognition and affirmation of "Existing Aboriginal and treaty rights" in Section 35. However, Canada continues to violate our sovereignty and our right to self-determination, insisting on dealing with us only through its puppet Indian Act government. Canada continues to block all our attempts to rectify these injustices, to obtain the return of all our land and compensation for the assets that were taken fraudulently.

Canada and the province of Ontario have continued to issue permits for the use of our land even though they know they do not have legal title. As a result, a private company called Henco Industries began building a subdivision on the "Haldimand Tract" for sale to non-Indigenous people who may not have been aware that there was no legal root to the title they were given.

On February 28th, 2006, the Rotino'shon:ni decided to stop this new encroachment on our land by blocking the entrance to the housing project known as the "Douglas Creek Estates". Most Canadians do not know anything about our history. We have never surrendered our sovereignty or given Canada jurisdiction over us or our land.

On March 17, 2006, Henco Industries obtained an ex parte order from an Ontario court to evict us from our land. Our people have been protesting these thefts of our land for over 200 years. Our complaints were well-known. Yet, Henco was never required to prove the legality of its title. Ontario was never required to prove its capacity to issue title. No attempt had been made to speak with us.

On April 20th 2006, the people protecting our land, including grandmothers and small children, were attacked by a heavily armed force of the Ontario Provincial Police. None of our people were armed. Many were severely beaten up and assaulted with batons, pepper spray and taser guns. 16 were arrested. However, many reinforcements arrived and the police retreated. We are still occupying our land.

We have reason to believe Canada was planning a much more serious assault. Neighboring jails and hospital wards were cleared before the attack. A convoy of ambulances and paddy wagons appeared. An unknown number of police and military forces were marshaled in support. The procedures being used were a blatant violation of the international covenants and agreements that Canada has signed and are contrary to the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

After the attack the Indian Act band council voted to turn land issues over to the people and the Confederacy chiefs of our traditional government.

Canada has appointed “negotiators” but our land is not negotiable. At least



one of the appointees, Jane Stewart, is in a conflict of interest because she and her husband are involved in another housing project on our land. There has been no

indication that any of Canada’s representatives are interested in respecting our rights or the laws.

At the current talks we’ve been told point blank by a “negotiator” from Ontario that we must leave our land and take down our barricades. Meanwhile a build-up of armed forces around us continues. Our delegates carry our voice to the table following the protocol set out in the Two Row Wampum Agreement/Covenant Chain to which we are both bound. Canada’s representative have met our delegates with ultimatums and threats of war while we send them in Peace.

**FOR THE ABOVE REASONS, WE FEAR THAT WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PROTECT OUR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OR OUR LEGAL RIGHTS WITHOUT YOUR ASSISTANCE.** We call on all peaceful and law abiding nations to come to our support.

We, the Women Title Holders and the People of the Rotino’shon:ni, accordingly request the following;

that Canada withdraw its police and military forces and stop its armed siege at the Six Nations Grand River territory.

that Canada must carry out its pledge to uphold freedom, justice and peace in the world, including the inherent right of all people to self-determination.

that Canada must deal with us on a nation-to-nation basis and uphold its commitment to ensure that all unresolved issues are determined either by consensus or by a neutral third party.

that the Rotino’shon:ni Six Nations people have never surrendered our

sovereignty and Canada must deal with us through our freely chosen representatives and not through the Indian Act machine that it imposed on us in 1924.

that its courts or representatives are not in a position to act as a neutral arbiter in any disputes with the Rotino'shon:ni Six Nations.

that Rotino'shon:ni Six Nations land is inalienable.

that we want to resolve a situation that Canada created when they broke both their law and international law and our agreements with the Crown. Canada unlawfully forced their laws on us without the fully informed consent or consensus of our people.

that Canada has no right whatsoever to charge or criminalize anyone of our people under Canadian laws because we are not Canadian. Our people should not be criminalized for upholding our obligations according to our constitution, the Kaianereh'ko:wa, to preserve our land for our coming generations. Our acts have been totally defensive. The aggression has always been against us by agents of the state.

that everyone should put their documents on the table so that everyone can see who owns what; that the Governor General request the appointment of an independent international mediator who is agreeable to both sides and has no conflict of interest to bring this to a legal resolution. We do not want to wait another 200 years.

Madame Governor General, we, the Women Title Holders, and the People of the Rotino'shon:ni Six Nations insist on an immediate end to Canada's on-going aggression and institute an open and public process of dialogue between our nations so that we can reach solutions by consensus. The Rotino'shon:ni will no longer tolerate the violation of our constitution, ancient customs, traditions and agreements. We will not tolerate Canada's representatives threatening us with guns and violence to squash our inherent rights and steal our possessions. Their attempt to pacify us through time-wasting and meaningless "negotiations" is an insult to our historic relationship with Canada and Great Britain.

For over 200 years Canada has tried to impose its institutions on us. Canada, it is never too late to polish the Covenant Chain. We would like to invite Canada to take part in renewing the spirit of the Two Row Wampum, which has since been affirmed in international law. We would like the settler population to experience the power of our Great Law, the solemn relations that were established and to enter the kind of talks that will make consensus possible, the kind that were used in the beginning the settlers first arrived.

Rotino'shon:ni Women Title Holders

Kahentinetha /s/ \_\_\_\_\_

Katenies /s/ \_\_\_\_\_

% P.O. Box 49, Kanatakon Akwesasne H0M 1A0

<http://sisis.nativeweb.org/actionalert/updates/060628fp.html>



Harper's Conservative Government Shows its True Face:

# Canada's Anti-Native Policies Meet the United Nations

By Aaron Mercredi  
*Originally appeared  
in Fire This Time  
Volume 3 Issue 4 -  
July 2006*

July 1<sup>st</sup> marked Canada's 139<sup>th</sup> birthday. What is a Canadian lie? It's white picket fenced cul-de-sac communities next to a reservation without clean water. It's a country with a booming resource economy taking away all that Indigenous people have left. It's that 139 years later, and Indigenous people still exist here and have a claim to the land Canada is occupying and the resources it is taking. What Canada is hiding is that it doesn't really have legitimacy on this land.



What do Indigenous people within Canada have to celebrate on Canada Day? 139 years of denial. Two days earlier, on June 29<sup>th</sup>, Canada was one of two countries that voted against a draft declaration in the United Nations Human Rights Council to protect the rights of Indigenous people around the world, including their claims to land and resources. By a 30-2 vote, the body approved the declaration that said that Indigenous people should be free from discrimination and that they have a right 'to consider themselves different and to be respected as such.'

By voting against this draft declaration, Canada showed its true colours to the world. The motion was also opposed by the colonial governments of the US, Australia and New Zealand, but they did not have voting privileges. Canada first tried to filibuster the motion, saying they needed a three-month delay on the vote, even though this declaration has been debated for 2 decades already.

## **A Tarnished Image?**

This is not the first time that Canada's true nature has been exposed to the UN. It is a difficult thing for the country and its representatives to keep hidden the war that they are waging on Native people at home and what conditions this has left Indigenous people living in. This year, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights criticized Canada for its failure to live up to its commitments under an international treaty that is supposed to protect people's economic, social and cultural rights. Apparently, Canada's record had actually

gotten worse since it was last scrutinized in 1998 and 1993. The conditions of poverty, homelessness, and discrimination have not gone away. During an investigation in 1999, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that Canada's treatment of Aboriginal people is in violation of international law and the social situation of First Nations "is the most pressing human rights issue facing Canadians."

Canada's racist policy towards Indigenous women was exposed once again in 2005, when the UN Human Rights Committee criticized Canada for its failure to protect Aboriginal women from violence, failure to correct the overt discrimination in laws that affect an Aboriginal woman's ability to pass on her status and reserve membership to her children and grandchildren, and failure to respect matrimonial property rights and basic human rights of Indigenous women.

Of course, there are the touchy land and resource issues that affect Canada's trade and investment relationships with other countries and the multinational corporations who search the world for profits. Cases like the Lubicon Cree, who have been trying to deal with outstanding land and resource issues with Canada for over 6 decades, while their land is plundered for its oil and gas resources, have drawn attention and condemnation from the UN. There are cases like Six Nations, with Indigenous people appealing to the UN body to force Canada to deal with them on a nation-to-nation basis, as their treaty stipulates.

Of course, Canada exposing itself to other countries in the UN is something that we can use against Canada's record on Indigenous people, but it is nothing new to the ears or eyes of Native people in this country. And we don't need the UN to address it to know that it exists. The UN, as a body controlled by colonial and imperialist states, cannot decide what is and what is not a fundamental right. In the case of Indigenous people, we don't need a watered-down UN motion recognizing that we have these rights as if they are being granted to us. We know that. Those rights are inherent.

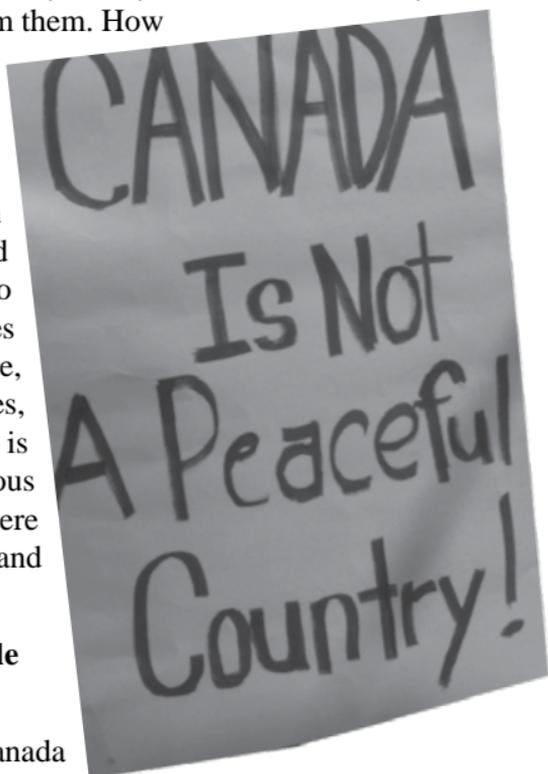
We don't need to hear about Canada's repression of Indigenous people to know what happens in this country. All we have to do is look to Dudley George, who was an unarmed Native activist who was shot and killed by the Ontario Provincial Police at Ipperwash in 1995, or any other time Native people have been brutalized simply for standing up for their rights.

We don't need to read declarations about the discrimination against Indigenous women in this country. Many families have a story about a loved one who was taken from them. How

many degrees of separation are there between us and over 500 Indigenous women who have gone missing in Canada without much investigation? We don't need to see resolutions passed to know that Canada continues to steal from Native people, whether it is land, resources, language, or culture. This is the reality that Indigenous people have always known here because this is the history and relationship to Canada.

### **Canada's Twin in the Middle East**

It is no surprise then, that Canada provides a lot of political support



for apartheid state of Israel. Israel is a colonial-settler state nestled on the land of Palestinians in the Middle East. It is a country that was built on the same bloody foundations of Canada: on the displacement, ethnic cleansing, and murder of the Indigenous population -Palestinians. Today, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are huge Indigenous reservations within colonial Israel, and Palestinians suffer the same abuse and humiliation that Indigenous people in Canada have had to undergo throughout history.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the federal Conservative government took a stronger stand in support of Israel by siding with the US against a non-binding UN motion calling on Israel to allow all Palestinian refugee women and children to return to their homes. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, Canada was the first country besides Israel to cut aid and sever ties with the Palestinian Authority after Hamas was democratically elected by the Palestinian people.

With the recent intensified Israeli aggression in Palestine, along with its military attacks on Lebanon, Canada again was one of the first countries giving the green light to Israel to continue its bloody campaign. In Lebanon and Gaza, hundreds of people have been killed. Infrastructure like bridges, roads, power plants, gas stations, ports, airports and vehicles have been targeted and destroyed by Israeli military strikes. With the enforcement of a sea and air blockade of the country, Israel is trying to strangle the people of Lebanon. In his statement, Stephen Harper framed the attack on Lebanon as a justified act for Israel to defend itself, condemning Hezbollah attacks on Israeli military targets, but saying nothing about the civilian casualties caused by the Israeli military.

One hundred and thirty-nine years later, Canada remains a colonial country, an imperialist power. One hundred and thirty-nine years later, Canada continues its policies of displacement, segregation, and violence against Indigenous people. One hundred and thirty-nine years later, Canada is supporting newer colonial countries, like Israel, in their wars against Indigenous people. Something that can be said about Canada's sick relationship with Israel is the establishment of 'Canada Park,' a so-called nature conservation that was built to cover up the rubble of three destroyed Palestinian villages.

It is not enough that declarations and resolutions be brought against Canada by other countries in the UN, but that people living in Canada join sides with Indigenous people here to put an end to over 139 years of destruction and colonization.



Children protest government of Canada's neglect of poisoned water system on Kashechewan reserve, Ontario.

# Indigenous Action Movement: *Vancouver Rally Exposes Unfairness of the Residential School Process*



By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally Appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue 6 - Nov. 2007*

October 23<sup>rd</sup> marked the final day of the residential school hearings in Vancouver. The Indigenous Action Movement organized a rally about the unfairness of the residential school process, the systemic racism in Canada's justice system, and the continued theft of Indigenous lands and resources. Over 50 people came out, held signs, and listened to speakers who were survivors of the residential schools, as well as community leaders who covered different aspects of Canada's crimes against Indigenous people.

The unfairness inherent in the residential school settlement process was the main spark that ignited the protest. Within the settlement documents, Canada and the Churches are released forever for all the harm that was caused by the residential schools. This allows Canada and the Churches to avoid future claims on behalf Indigenous nations for the loss of their collective rights to language, culture, and traditional governing structures, which resulted in genocide of Indigenous people. For such a supposedly broad settlement process, the notification process missed many survivors, and hereditary chiefs were not notified or consulted. The settlement process does not address the loss of language and culture, which are collective rights of Indigenous nations. Finally, no settlement process will bring justice for those who were murdered, died, or went missing in the residential schools. Along with the residential schools come the historical and daily crimes against Indigenous people in the justice system, which systemically targets and discriminates against them. Whether it is the record high numbers of Indigenous people who are arrested, convicted and sent to jail every year, the high percentage of Indigenous people in the prison populations, or the racial profiling and targeting of Indigenous people by the police, the justice system is built in direct confrontation with Indigenous people. But the systemic abuses against Indigenous children did not end when the last residential school shut down. Examples of continuing abuse include recent cases in Prince George, where members of the RCMP are embroiled in sex crimes against young Indigenous girls, but who manage to escape punishment within the system.

Finally, the theft of land and resources continues today. The goal of the government of Canada and the reason behind the residential schools is to take away Indigenous people's identity, and make it more difficult for them to resist the taking of their land and resources. Indigenous people's territories continue to be taken and used for resource extraction and big business.

The rally to condemn Canada's oppression of Indigenous people covered these three attacks on Indigenous people that are systemic within Canada. People heard stories of daily life and daily abuses at residential schools. Speakers talked about the abuse by the RCMP against Indigenous people, and talked about the daily realities of losing their land to ski resorts and mines. But people also heard about the strength and resolve of Indigenous people facing these battles. From the people who survived the abuse of the residential schools, to the people who continue to stand up against the RCMP and big business, there was a strong feeling of hope in what can be accomplished when Native people come together and fight for our rights.

Fire This Time had the opportunity to speak with Kat Norris, who is a main organizer with the Indigenous Action Movement that organized the rally against the Residential schools. Please read the interview on the following page for her perspective.

# We're Still Fighting for Our Rights:

## Interview with Kat Norris of the Indigenous Action Movement

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue 6  
November 2006*

**Fire This Time:** Kat, Can you tell us where you're from?

**Kat Norris:** I'm Coast Salish from Valdez Island, the Lyackson First Nation.

**FTT:** Can you talk a little bit about why you organized this rally outside the courthouse today?

**Kat Norris:** Yeah, I'm the coordinator for the Indigenous Action Movement and I organized this event to coincide with the last day of the residential school settlement hearing, because a lot of our people are offended by this process. A lot of our people say that we as people weren't notified and that this was done backwards. They should have talked to the people first and then made the decision, but what they did was they went ahead and made the decision, and now they're talking to our people? You know, the thing is already a done deal, and they're making a play at talking to the people, when our people don't truly have a say in this.

What I'm saying is that as a people, I accept that I am a citizen if it means that we can make change, because Canadian citizens can make change and change laws. Because normally I express that I am not a Canadian citizen, but if it works in my favour, I'll use it to that advantage. The residential school process is unfair in a lot of ways. Number one being the fact that a lot of issues are left out, like language and culture. Language and culture are two of the reasons they instituted the residential schools, to beat out the language and our culture and our people's way of life. And the other thing that was left out was our children. Our children are victims of residential



**Kat Norris and Bernie Williams carry a banner at the Oct 23 rally in Vancouver.**

schools as well, and they should be included in this package. There's the opt-in/opt-out clauses that are very confusing and a lot of our elders and people with disabilities, or just your average person who hasn't taken post-secondary, doesn't understand it fully. They didn't give us enough time to go through it and study the process. They didn't put together forums to understand the package to say 'yes' or 'no' on whether we agreed or we don't agree. So, there are too many things that more people can go in to more details about, but those are the basics for me.

What really offended me as well was the fact that not a lot of our people weren't notified about this process even happening or the hearings. They don't give enough time. They don't give two days, like in the Inuit territories, the Yukon Territories, the Northwest Territories, they only had two days for that whole area. And those people walked out, they're very upset. Because

the terrain that they live in, the transportation issues, the communication issues means that they're just going to push it through without notification. How do you do that? How do you treat a people like that? It just really offended me.

The catalyst for this action was the RCMP officer, Justin Harris, from Prince George. Nine other officers were implicated in the abuse of our young native girls because they work in the sex trade. And he was the only one who was identified, or named, and a lot of people had said this, but the RCMP and the police should not police themselves, because that system never works. They have their loop hole, which is called the RCMP statute of limitations, which allows them to get away with any crimes that they commit after a year, because after a year it is too late to bring it to trial. That really offends me, especially in the small communities where they can get away with any type of crime against our people. And what caused us to come and organize this is the fact that these girls spoke up for themselves. Therefore they spoke up for a lot of girls who have gone through the same thing. But it takes a lot for anyone, even in the city, to speak up for themselves, much less young girls, and the fact that they were just stepped on despite that. You know, they weren't heard. And I wanted them to know that they had people on their side and we can make change.

**FTT:** What was offered and what was the result of the proceedings in there today?

**Kat Norris:** They're looking at continuing more court hearings. So, I don't know what the answer to that is, but that was something that the lawyer for the people was addressing the court by saying that there was too much contention amongst the Aboriginal people around this process. But a lot of our people are aware of the legalities around this issue and more so than Canada would have thought. Canada thinks that we're just going to say 'ok' because they are the ultimate power, but we know that they're not. And you know we see a lot of our elders, a lot of our young people, standing up. I think what is going to happen is that they're not going to push it through, because if they do... In a way I hope that they do because our people are really going to stand up then and society has to see that this isn't fair. This is our land, this is our fight. What happens remains to be seen and we have to hear from our lawyer.

**FTT:** The residential schools have been the biggest attacks on Native people through the fact that it was an attack on children, and meant to destroy our culture and our lives. Today, for people fighting for justice, what do you see in the future?

**Kat Norris:** Well, I see more of our people standing up. Because whenever there is a rally or an action, a lot of us bring our kids. My mother was an activist as well, but more on a personal level, at schools, because they were racist to us as kids. And we saw her sit in the middle of the lobby of the administration office because the principal wouldn't talk to her. Again, my brothers were kicked out of school for defending themselves against racist kids. I didn't know that I was going to become an activist. My sister's also an activist. You see our nephew here. But you know, what dismays me is that we have to even do this at all. You know, 30 years ago, I was involved with the American Indian Movement and Leonard Peltier, and he's still in jail today. Our people are still fighting for him. And it's very disheartening to know that we still have to do this 30 years later. We're still fighting for our rights. And it feels like no one is listening, but what I foresee is continued action, continued fighting for our rights. What I foresee is our people getting stronger and stronger because we're learning through post-secondary education, through workshops, through healing, through treatment centres, even programs in jail, (which aren't perfect, but still our people are learning). A lot of our people are getting involved in spirituality. Our spirituality is coming back, our culture is coming back. Everything that they had taken away from us is coming back. Our language is being taught in schools. My mother is an instructor in the elementary school system. Our bands are hiring their own people to teach language. What I foresee is a continuation of our history, our true history coming back. And with Amnesty International and different human rights organizations coming on side, it's a step in the right direction. But even through that, things aren't done. But, as long as our people strengthen themselves within themselves, they build their self-confidence, self-esteem and spiritual strength, then we can live by our own definitions within society.

**FTT:** Thank you Kat.

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## **BC's "New Relationship" with Indigenous People:**

# **Maintaining the Old Colonial Traditions**

**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue 7 - Dec. 2006*

On November 29<sup>th</sup>, the Tse Keh Nay Nation announced that they will shut down a flawed environmental assessment review taking place in Victoria that is supposed to discuss the proposed Kemess North mining project on their land. The Tse Keh Nay Nation is made up of the Takla, Tsay Keh Dene, and Kwadacha First Nations in north-central BC. After appealing to both the federal and provincial governments to deal openly and honestly with First Nations regarding decisions on mining developments, the Tse Keh Nay Nation continues to protest against the potential developments happening on their land.

### **The Lake, the Mine, and Who Wants It**

The mine in question is the proposed Kemess North mine, which Vancouver-based Northgate Minerals is trying to develop in an area 430 kilometres Northwest of Prince George, between Williston Lake reservoir and Smithers. This mine would be an extension of the Kemess South mine whose resources are expected to be tapped out by 2008. In order to continue their investment and pursue gold and copper in the area, they are planning on investing \$190 million in to Kemess North for an expected 11 more years of mining. Northgate plans to use Duncan Lake as a huge tailings pond for the 700 million tons of mining waste that will be left over. This, according to the company, is the only economically, most environmentally sound, and most viable option, though they have not proven it. The Tse Keh Nay disagree.

Duncan Lake, a 6-kilometre long, clear mountain lake, is known to the Tse Keh Nay people as Amazay Lake, which means 'Little Mother,' and comes from the lake's historical use by caribou for calving. There is a lot of concern on what this mine would mean in the area and neither Northgate nor the governments of BC and Canada have convinced members of the Tse Keh Nay that the environment will not be harmed and they will be not be robbed in this project. Concerned community members fear the environmental impacts such a project would have on their land, and that the dams created in this project will leak poisoned water in to their drinking water downstream.

In its environmental-impact assessment, Northgate plans on transplanting the Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, and whitefish into nearby lakes, while it builds a 90-metre-high dam on one end of the lake and two smaller ones on the other side to prevent water from getting in and out of the lake. But throughout the research and assessment process, not only have the Indigenous people not been consulted, but the province has been pushing the development. Initially, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) stated that the company must carry out more fish studies and provide more details about their proposed habitat replacement plan. However, after a secret meeting with company officials this summer, the DFO reversed their position and said that the company's habitat replacement plans were now acceptable.

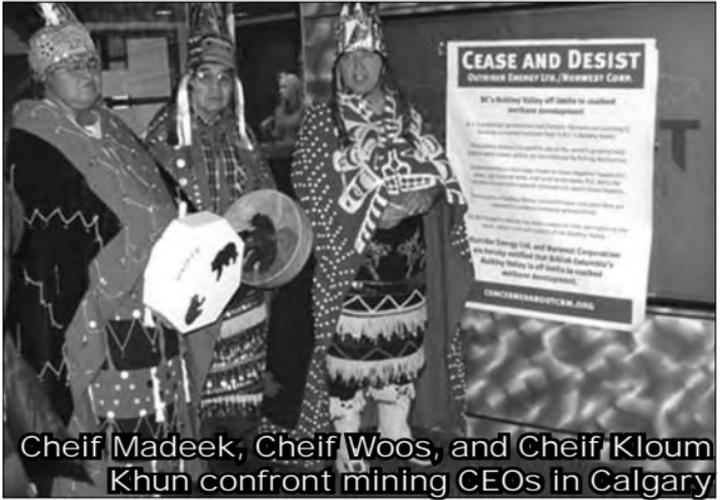
Meanwhile, the Tse Keh Nay people have been left out of this process altogether. In March 2005, The federal and provincial governments announced that they would be conducting an environmental assessment of Northgate's proposal. To this day, the Tse Keh Nay have not been included in this assessment, and public consultations and hearings in Tse Keh Nay communities have been pushed aside. The government has not met its own legal requirements to consult and accommodate First Nations. In a press release sent out on October 30<sup>th</sup>, the Tse Keh Nay announced that they would be participating in the joint Federal-Provincial Environmental Panel

under protest.

### History of Deceit

There is a good reason for the Tse Keh Nay to be skeptical about a mine on their territory and the dams and developments that will come with it. There

is a destructive history of these kinds of developments harming Indigenous people throughout Canada, but specifically in their area of BC. In 1952, the Kemano Power Project flooded the



Chief Madeek, Chief Woos, and Chief Kloum Khun confront mining CEOs in Calgary

traditional Cheslatta homeland in the Cheslatta and Murray lakes area, forcing communities to relocate. When the W.A.C. Bennett Dam on the Peace River was finished in 1967, the Willison Lake reservoir flooded a 200-kilometre stretch of the Rocky Mountain Trench, dislocating Indigenous communities throughout the area. In both of these cases, the floodings took place on short notice, without proper consultation and with no compensation. Everything that people owned, the hunting, trap lines, food gathering and fishing areas, were swept away with the flood.

As a result of this, families were displaced and many were forced to move to non-Native communities away from their traditional living. Families who relied on the resources from their land were now trying to work their way out of poverty, unemployment and welfare, while having to fight off alcoholism and the effects of colonialism.

### Whose Resources Anyway?

*“As a nation we are not opposed to mining or economic development, but we have to remember what is important. Gold does not run through our blood. We are all made of water. We have pushed the boundaries too far if we are willing to destroy life itself, water as a means of getting cheaper gold.”-Chief John Allen French*

Northgate Minerals, Canada, and the province of BC are working together to take resources from Indigenous people in a province where 97% of the land that holds these resources is unceded Indigenous territory. If this project goes through, it sets an ugly precedent for other resource-based companies to go on to Indigenous people’s land and steal from them. The frustration felt by the Tse Keh Nay is a feeling that reverberates around the province as more and more Indigenous land is being put in the scope of big business. On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, the hereditary chiefs of the Wet’suwet’en Nation confronted the BC government, Norwest Corporation and Outrider Energy Ltd. to stop the development of a coalbed methane project on their land.

As a way of trying to make people forget about their record with Indigenous people, in their second term in office, the BC Liberals adopted a ‘New Relationship’ on how they will deal with Indigenous people in the province. It was basically a big public relations campaign that they used to try to make people forget the fact that it was they who brought in the racist referendum on treaties and who have taken an offensive of stealing Indigenous land and resources while at the same time criminalizing those who resist. With the Tse Keh Nay, the government has failed to live up to the three basic principles that they set for this relationship: that Aboriginal rights and title exist; that First Nations have the ability and authority to make decisions with respect to territories; and that there be shared decision-making between government and First Nations. They have shown that the relationship is still colonial, is still based on oppression, and that the only way for Indigenous people to survive is to fight back.

# FRANK PAUL VICTIM OF POLICE BRUTALITY

Indigenous Action Group memorial  
march and rally for Frank Paul



Kat Norris, Indigenous Action Group organizer  
speaks at the rally

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 4 Issue 1  
January 2007*

On December 6, 2006, the Indigenous Action Group organized a memorial march and rally for Frank Paul and other victims of police brutality in Canada. Over 50 people joined in that day as a march wound its way from the Main Street Skytrain station and into a nearby alley, where eight years earlier the Vancouver Police Department left the 47-year old Miqmaq man out to die.

On December 6, 1998, Frank Paul's body was found in an alley behind the Vancouver Detox. Interestingly, his body was found by the same two police officers who had dumped him there only hours earlier after they had dragged his motionless and rain-soaked body out of the police station. Frank Paul was known to the VPD. He had problems, like many people living in the poverty of the Downtown Eastside, and he had been taken into custody twice the night before to spend time in the drunk tank. He was released the first time after he was able to walk on his own, but then was taken in again a few hours later - this time unresponsive - and shown on surveillance tapes being dragged from the entrance into the elevator of the police station, leaving a wet streak on the floor from the freezing rain outside. Even though he was unconscious, the head sergeant decided he was fit enough to be 'breached,' a term used for removing people from the downtown area. The surveillance tapes then



elevator back in to the paddywagon. ‘Breaching’ Frank Paul meant driving to a nearby alley outside of the downtown core, pulling him out of the paddywagon and leaning him against a wall as the cold December rain continued to pour down.

For 8 years, the Vancouver Police Department, which is responsible for his death, has avoided being held accountable for their actions that night. The VPD held internal investigations and imposed a two-day suspension on the jail sergeant for ‘discreditable conduct’ and a one-day suspension on a police officer for ‘neglect of duty.’ After

years of Indigenous groups and grassroots activists demanding a public inquiry into Frank Paul’s death, Solicitor General Rich Coleman rejected these calls in 2004. As those responsible for this crime remain silent, activists continue to keep this issue alive.

The rally was MC’d by Kat Norris, coordinator of the Indigenous Action Group, and a long-time activist in Vancouver. As people held signs with pictures of other Indigenous victims of police brutality, she



Remembering victims of police brutality against Indigenous people

explained how the crime committed against Frank Paul was not an isolated incident, but is continuing a long legacy of abuse and murder of Indigenous people in Canada, and that the denial of an actual inquiry into Frank Paul’s death shows how inherently racist Canada’s police forces are. Kat introduced other speakers from the Indigenous community, including those who have suffered abuse at the hands of the VPD and those who are working against it. The rally concluded with a ceremonial burning at the site where Frank Paul’s body was left, with people offering tobacco and a prayer to an innocent man who was left to die cold and alone.

Frank Paul was one of many Indigenous people who are targeted by the Vancouver Police Department, the RCMP and police forces across the country. This is what Canada does to Indigenous people. In order to build a country on stolen Native land, the colonial entrepreneurs could not just kill all the Indigenous people. Those who were displaced onto apartheid reservations, isolated communities and Metis colonies had to be outcasts from mainstream colonial society and portrayed as savages and animals. This mindset continues today, systemically within Canada. Whether it is the lack of investigation into the over 500 missing Indigenous women in this country or the repeated racial profiling and abuse of Native people by police forces through actions like the Starlight Tours in Saskatchewan (where young native men were also ‘breached’, only this involved being beaten to a pulp and left to die outside of Saskatoon in the freezing winter), racism and colonialism are thriving. Bringing attention to these crimes, like the recent memorial rally, is how we can expose Canada’s true history and actions, and this truth must be told.

# Free Leonard Peltier!



## *Statement for the 14th Annual International Day In Solidarity With Leonard Peltier Regional Tacoma March and Rally: February 10, 2007*

The shadow of totalitarianism is slowly creeping across the land. Our civil liberties are under attack. Our government has our country fighting a war of aggression that is not in the interest of the people of this land. If you take a close look at all that is taking place you will be able to see direct parallels to the case of Leonard Peltier and thus understand why all people who believe in peace, justice and freedom should actively support Leonard.

The first connection can be found in whose interests the government is acting in. There are few today that cannot see that the war in Iraq is about oil and the interests of the multi-national energy corporations. Behind the events that took place on the Pine Ridge Reservation were the interests of the multi-national energy corporations wanting uranium that was found there. In both cases armed force was used to seize control of those resources and to suppress opposition.

In the pursuit of suppressing opposition, constitutional and human rights were denied. Matter of fact, many things that the FBI did against AIM and Leonard Peltier, which at the time were illegal, the government has made legal by acts of congress. Though the government says that such denial of human rights is justifiable for their war against "terrorism", the fact is that the government has also targeted those who oppose its policies who are clearly not terrorists. The case of Leonard Peltier clearly shows why such power should never be given to the FBI and others in power. For it can be seen clearly that Leonard's constitutional rights were denied him. The reasons given by the government for the war in Iraq have been shown to be fabrications to justify the war. Still the war continues. The evidence that the government presented at Leonard's trial has all been disproved as either fabricated evidence or intimidated witnesses, to the point that even the courts have admitted it. Still Leonard is in prison and no new and fair trial is granted.

The government has done all that it can to suppress the documents that it has on both the war in Iraq and the case of Leonard Peltier. In Leonard's case there are over 120,000 pages of documents that are still being withheld for reasons of "national security." Whose national security is being protected? In both cases the national security of the people is being threaten by the withholding of the truth. One year the police contacted us about our march and asked us if there will be any anti-war people in our march. Our answer was, we don't believe that there will be any pro-war people in the march. Even the police worried about the connection between peace and justice. For these reasons we are calling for all people who believe in peace, justice and freedom to join us for the 14th Annual International Day in Solidarity with Leonard Peltier Regional Tacoma March and Rally.

In The Spirit Of Crazy Horse  
Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group  
Susan Morales  
Steve Hapy  
Arthur J. Miller

*As individual fingers we can easily be broken, but all together we make a mighty fist.*

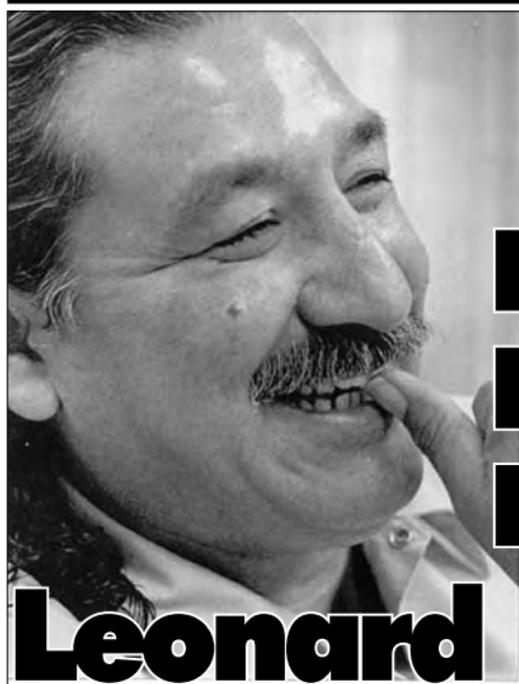
-- Sitting Bull

*"I have no doubt whatsoever that the real motivation behind both Wounded Knee II and the Oglala firefright, and much of the turmoil throughout Indian Country since the early 1970s, was—and is—the mining companies' desire to muffle AIM and all traditional Indian people, who sought—and still seek—to protect the land, water, and air from their thefts and depredations. In this sad and tragic age we live in, to come to the defense of Mother Earth is to be branded a criminal."*

-- Leonard Peltier, Prison Writings --

*"I'M STILL HERE. I am all at once saddened, exhilarated, angry, proud, defiant, and puzzled by that fact. Here in prison, after 28 years (30 years now) of unjust incarceration, I am a living example of the injustice, racism, fear, and inequity that still exists in some parts of the United States of America. This is particularly true when it comes to America's views and actions towards Indian people. Residing in the best hopes of all of us is the dream that America has moved away from the days of hostility towards the Indigenous people of this land. And yet, we are shown with daily regularity, a reality that defies this dream. A reality that American Indians are incarcerated at a disproportionately high rate. A reality that American Indians are denied decent health care, housing, and education. A reality so dire, that the United States Civil Rights Commission has had to address it, calling it "A Quiet Crisis."*

Leonard Peltier



# **Free the Political Prisoner Leonard Peltier**

**Introduction by Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 4 Issue 1 - Jan. 2007*

*This February 6<sup>th</sup> marks 31 years of unjust imprisonment for Leonard Peltier in the United States.*

*Like many young Indigenous people from throughout the US and Canada, Leonard joined activists in the American Indian Movement in the 1970s to defend Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation during the FBI-backed 'reign of terror.'*

*In 1975, Leonard was set up for a crime that he did not commit. The crime was that of two FBI agents who had sped on to the Jumping Bull compound in an unmarked car and who began a shoot-out with the Indigenous people who were there.*

*Today in the US, Canada and around the world, Leonard is a symbol of the injustices committed against Indigenous people. He is the conscience of a colonial settler society, and he is a survivor and inspiration for Indigenous people. Let's not forget that it was the authorities in Canada who collaborated with the FBI to have Leonard extradited from Canada,*

where he was seeking refuge based on fabricated evidence. Let's also not forget the shared colonial history on both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Genocide was committed with the same aim of taking the land and resources from Indigenous people and criminalizing those today who defend themselves and their people from these crimes. Be they Western Shoshone or Secwepemc, the North American colonial governments will work together against them. This is why Leonard is all of us—he was put away because he represented Indigenous self-determination; the resistance to colonialism; capitalist greed that ignites every time Indigenous people stand up for their rights to their land and resources and extermination by the colonial governments of the US and Canada.

The following pages contain the most recent public statement made by Leonard, as well as a statement by the Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group, who is organizing the 14<sup>th</sup> annual march and rally for Leonard's freedom. We encourage everyone to attend this important event.

Venceremos!

Aaron Mercredi.

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**January 9, 2007**

## ***Thirty Years of FBI Harassment and Misconduct When the Truth Doesn't Matter***

**By LEONARD PELTIER**

*“Much of the government's behavior at the Pine Ridge Reservation and in its prosecution of Mr. Peltier is to be condemned. The government withheld evidence. It intimidated witnesses. These facts are not disputed.”*

- U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals

For over 30 years I have sought justice from the United States Courts which have failed to provide me with any relief despite acknowledging numerous acts of Government misconduct. For example, after my trial, my lawyers issued Freedom of Information Act Requests (“FOIA”) and discovered that the Government fabricated the ballistics evidence which it used at trial to argue that I shot the agents in cold blood. Once we revealed this egregious misconduct, the Government has had to admit on several occasions in open Court and before the Parole Commission that it could not prove I shot the agents and that it could not prove who shot the agents.

Despite the Government misconduct recognized by the Courts, I remain in prison. When we exposed the Government misconduct, the Government stopped arguing that I “shot the agents,” and began arguing that my conviction should be upheld on aiding and abetting grounds, even though the only two people I could have aided and abetted, Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, were acquitted on self-defense grounds. In the Robideau and Butler trials, the Court allowed them to present evidence to show that they were shooting in self defense at unknown assailants who were shooting at houses occupied by women and children. In contrast, my case was moved to another Judge, Judge Benson, who prevented me from introducing evidence of self-defense and evidence of the war-like climate that existed on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation because of marauding groups of vigilantes hired by a corrupt tribal government, supported by the United States government.

Just as significant, no Court has ever explained how my conviction could be upheld on aiding and abetting grounds since I could not aid and abet myself, and I could not aid and abet my co-defendants since they were acquitted. So, just who did I aid and abet to warrant two consecutive life sentences? The Courts and the Government cannot answer that question. Yet, I remain in prison.

My case demonstrates the illegal means which our Government will

utilize to ensure that I, a native American, am punished for the death of two FBI agents, without regard to whether I did it, which I did not, and without regard to the deprivation of my rights. All the Government cared about was that someone was punished for an incident provoked by the FBI, the corrupt tribal government, and its private police, known as the GOON squad. And yet, I remain in prison.

The United States Government keeps me imprisoned to justify the continuing abuses against, not only Native American people, but anyone who seeks to fight criminal abuses such as those committed and/or aided by the FBI on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation between 1973-1976. This Country has waged, and continues to wage, war not just against native Americans but against any form of domestic political dissent. Secret domestic intelligence programs, such as the well documented Cointelpro program and the Patriot Act, have eroded and destroy the constitutional rights and liberties of all peoples of this Nation. But, most people would rather ignore injustice, then take a stand against injustice and face the wrath of our Government. What I was not allowed to introduce into evidence was the indisputable evidence that United States Government and a corrupt tribal government committed war crimes against the Oglala people during the so-called "Reign of Terror," from 1973-1976. Yet, these crimes have never been uninvestigated, and, if anything, they have been ignored and certain propagandists have revised history to say they never occurred, similar to those who espouse that the genocide of Native American people never occurred in the Americas. The one exception is the murder of Anna Mae Aquash which the United States Government began pursuing earnestly nearly 30 years after her death, in order to smear me to harm my chances at parole through the use of hearsay testimony and unsubstantiated innuendo. I unequivocally deny that I had anything to do with the murder of Anna Mae, and I condemn those who murdered her and those who seek to smear me and make me a patsy for the crime they committed.

The indisputable Government misconduct which led to my wrongful conviction represents a threat to the liberties of each and every one of us. Perhaps this is what ultimately struck the conscience of Judge Heaney (a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit who despite the glaring evidence of Government misconduct, wrote a strained and legally embarrassing decision to deny my first habeas petition), and compelled him to write a letter supporting my request for presidential clemency.

As recently as the fall of 2003, the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit stated:

Much of the government's behavior at the Pine Ridge Reservation and in its prosecution of Mr. Peltier is to be condemned. The government withheld evidence. It intimidated witnesses. These facts are not disputed.

As my lawyers wrote in a recent brief, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit has repeatedly recognized specific instances of FBI misconduct in my case: The Eighth Circuit found that the FBI withheld critical ballistics evidence which raised questions "regarding the truth and accuracy of [FBI agent Evan] Hodge's testimony." The Eighth Circuit acknowledged that the FBI withheld critical evidence which was "newly discovered evidence indicating [that the government's ballistic's expert] may not have been telling the truth," and that the evidence withheld by the FBI created "inconsistencies casting strong doubts upon the government's case."

The Eighth Circuit also addressed the government's coercing of witnesses and extracting perjurious affidavits including the three fabricated affidavits of Myrtle Poor Bear which were used to extradite me from Canada. The FBI knew that Ms. Poor Bear was mentally incompetent. Yet, they had her sign three fabricated affidavits which falsely stated that she was my girlfriend and that she saw me kill Agents Coler and Williams. Poor Bear

never knew me, and she was never at the Jumping Bull Compound on June 26, 1975, or any other date that I am aware of. The Eighth Circuit described the Myrtle Poor Bear episode as follows:

In February and March, 1976, Myrtle Poor Bear signed three affidavits which related her eyewitness account of the murders of the two agents on June 26, 1975. Two of these affidavits were considered by Canadian officials in the extradition proceedings. In testimony given outside of the presence of the jury at the trial, Poor Bear disclaimed virtually every allegation contained in the affidavits. She testified that she had been forced to sign the affidavits, which were prepared by FBI agents Price and Wood, under threats of physical harm.

The Eighth Circuit court recognized that “[t]he Poor Bear...testimony was certainly consistent with [my] theory [that the FBI framed me by manufacturing evidence and inducing witnesses to testify in accordance with its theory of the murders.]” Even in the face of this fraud, one of the prosecutors, Lynn Crooks, belligerently stated on television in 1990 that, even if he knew the affidavits were false, he still would not have hesitated to provide them to the Canadian prosecutor.

### **THE FBI'S ILLEGAL TACTICS IN ITS WAR ON THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT AND ME**

I was a member of the American Indian Movement who, like many others, was subjected to a number of Counterintelligence (COINTELPRO) type activities by the FBI. “COINTELPRO” is the FBI acronym for a series of covert action programs directed against political domestic groups. This program was investigated and condemned by a Congressional hearing in the 1970s. With this unauthorized program, the FBI engaged in covert actions designed to ‘disrupt’ and ‘neutralize’ target groups and individuals,” engaged in political dissent. One of the COINTELPRO type tactics used by the FBI and, in particular against AIM, was the infiltration of the legal defense by paid informants, violating attorney-client privilege. We have recently discovered evidence that the FBI did this in my case.

### **RECENTLY DISCOVERED EVIDENCE**

In the face of Court expressions acknowledging and condemning the Government misconduct, the Courts continue to allow the FBI to engage in wrongful behavior by allowing them to withhold more than 140,000 documents which are located in FBI Field Offices throughout the country. Despite the passage of over 30 years, the Courts have justified the FBI's behavior by ruling that the Informant Files in my case must be protected because the release of such documents could impact the war on “international terrorism.”

Such a ludicrous and unfathomable reason can only undermine any remaining confidence we could possibly have that our system is based on justice and fairness.

With respect to AIM, and me in particular, we now know that the FBI used confidential informant sources



to compromise attorney/client communications they illegally used to develop strategies for conviction. We recently discovered FOIA documents establishing that the FBI utilized Douglas Durham, a paid FBI confidential source who infiltrated the highest levels of AIM and was exposed on March 7, 1975, in my extradition proceedings from Canada. As one Court recognized, "Mr. Douglass Durham, infiltrated the American Indian Movement under instructions of the FBI, won the confidence of Dennis Banks and other leaders of the movement, occupied a series of high level positions in the organization."

These FOIA documents show that the FBI utilized Durham not only to provide information to William Halprin, the Chief Prosecutor from Canada, against me in connection with the extradition proceedings, but also as an "expert adviser on AIM." Halprin requested Durham's involvement "to enable him to utilize the source [Durham] to refute statements made by Peltier's defense." To purportedly avoid legal liability, Durham was told by the FBI not to execute any affidavits or to travel to Canada. "Durham has been instructed to provide information requested by Crown Attorney [and] .. If recontacted by Halprin, he would cooperate fully and would keep Omaha [FBI] advised of developments."

As my attorneys recently wrote, the Courts have indicated that this type of conduct crosses the line:

The informant, Douglass Durham, had worked in various undercover capacities prior to the Wounded Knee incident. His relationship with the FBI began in March 1973 when he supplied the FBI office in Des Moines, Iowa, with copies of photographs he had taken in a one-day visit to Wounded Knee. He later served in various leadership positions within AIM, including national security director and national administrator. He became a close companion of AIM leader Dennis Banks during the period including the Banks-Means trial in St. Paul. Throughout this period of intimate affiliation with AIM and its leaders, he was supplying information to the FBI.

In analyzing this issue, the Eighth Circuit described the troubling conduct by the FBI:

Were we concerned on this appeal with the question of whether the convictions of Dennis Banks and Russell Means, tried in St. Paul, could be upheld, we would have another case. There is evidence in the record and FBI files to indicate that Durham was privy to numerous conversations between Banks and his lawyers, that he was present in St. Paul during the course of the trial, and that he was in constant communication not only with Banks and the other defendants during the trial, but with the FBI. As the record here is devoid of that type of close proximity to the defense of these appellants and as no prejudice has been shown, we refuse to set aside the convictions of the appellants because of the activities of the informants.

The FBI permitted informants to attend both my trial and that of my co-defendants. In an FBI internal memo, the FBI discussed the circumstances under which informant sources could be approved to go to our trials:

"If approved by FBIHQ, sources should be specifically instructed to refrain from being parties to Defense Litigation strategies. Furthermore, they should be instructed that in the event they are unexpectedly placed in the position of being parties to such discussions, they should, where their informant status will not be compromised, leave such discussions immediately."

Durham himself acknowledged that this caution was little more than a wink and a smile. In the Wounded Knee Trials, Douglas Durham was similarly advised by the FBI not to engage in any activity that would violate confidences of the defense, nor to engage in any activities or relate to the FBI any information that had to do with defense tactics, or any legal aspect of the operations of AIM or the defense at that point. In spite of the advice he allegedly received from the FBI, Mr. Durham testified in the

United States Senate about the 1974 trial of AIM leader Dennis Banks: "If Dennis and I were sitting in a room and an attorney would walk in and start talking, I couldn't jump up and say, 'I can't be here, the FBI won't allow it.'"

In a Teletype dated July 7, 1975 from the Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of the FBI to the FBI Director and Mr. Richard Held, Special Agent in Charge, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, The FBI indicated that a confidential source, much like Durham was allegedly advised by the FBI not to engage in any activity that would violate any confidences of my defense. The FBI however refuses to produce the name(s) of their informants and has been given unfettered discretion by the courts to keep this information from my legal team.

Despite our discovering this information, the Courts have let the Government be the arbiter of what documents to produce and what they can withhold. As such, the FBI has unfettered discretion to withhold documents from which it can be determined whether it engaged in misconduct, because it will not acknowledge it. As it is, the FBI deliberately failed to produce any documents from the time period of my trial in the exemplar of documents which it recently produced to the Court to allow it to determine whether the informant documents should be produced to me in an unredacted form. It is clear that it did so to prevent me from finding information they have hid that could affect my due process rights.

Indeed, a document recently produced by the FBI and recently introduced by my lawyers to a Magistrate Judge established that the FBI intentionally took actions to try to avoid producing documents in discovery in my case. But again, this seems to have had no impact on the Court. The United States Federal Courts have recognized overwhelming evidence of FBI misconduct in my case which has already been revealed, yet it has continued to allow the FBI to use exemptions under FOIA to shield its illegal tactics in this case, depriving me of my rights to a fair trial. I urge all of you who believe in justice to join my fight and cry out for the production of all documents related to my case. Why is the FBI still withholding documents? Why won't they produce all documents to me? To me the answer is obvious. I believe the answer is obvious to you also.

**Leonard Peltier**

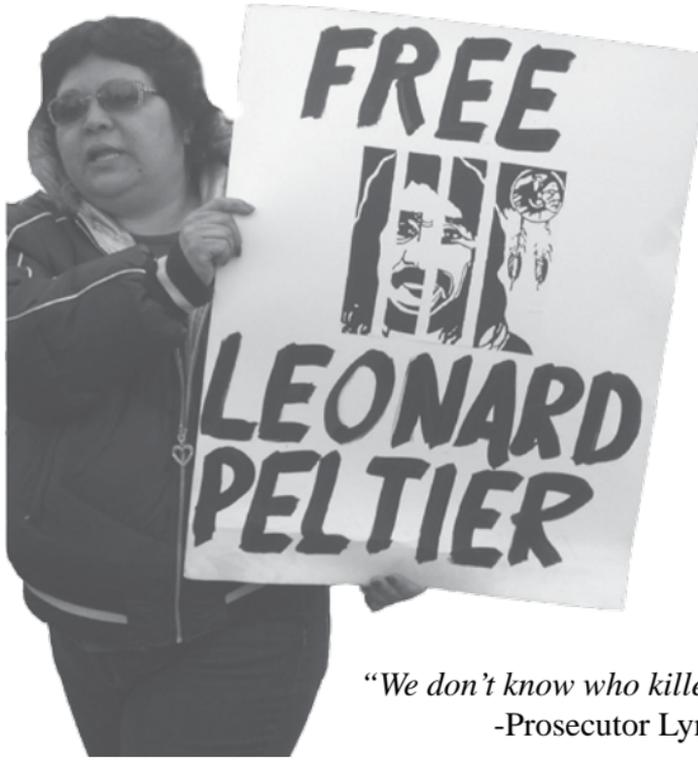
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Leonard Peltier Defense Committee



Tacoma, WA -

# Over 300 People Rally for Leonard Peltier's Freedom



*"We don't know who killed those agents"*  
-Prosecutor Lynn Crooks, 1985

These words came out of a federal prosecutor's mouth during the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals for Leonard Peltier's case over twenty-two years ago. It was this circuit court that found that the original judge in Peltier's trial in 1976 had made mistakes, that witnesses had been coerced, evidence fabricated, and favourable evidence had been suppressed. But, it was in this same circuit court that denied the request for an appeal for Leonard's case.

This February will make it 31 years that Leonard Peltier has been behind bars for the deaths of two FBI agents; an Indigenous warrior framed up for a crime that he did not commit, and sentenced to twice his natural life in the US prison system. A political prisoner, Leonard was thrown in jail as part of the US government's attempts to kill the rising militant movement of Indigenous people in 60s and 70s who were fighting for their rights; a movement that had reclaimed Alcatraz Island in 1969, fought off US Marshalls and the US military in the 79-day occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. It was a movement which radicalized and instilled pride in young and angry Native people all over the continent and brought the realities of American colonialism to front pages and headlines all over the country. Because of this, it was a movement that threatened the American colonial establishment that had consolidated itself over hundreds of years of theft of Native land and resources, and the mass murder of Indigenous populations. Leonard's extradition to the US from Canada in 1976 based on fabricated evidence, and the guilty verdict that relied on that same fabricated evidence in a North Dakota courtroom was part of the US government's strategy of putting down Indigenous resistance in the US.

For 14 years, demonstrations have been taking place in Tacoma, Washington, on the anniversary of Leonard's imprisonment. Organized by the Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group, this annual action for Leonard has grown over the years and brings people from all over the US and Canada to show their solidarity with him while

he endures his unjust imprisonment. On February 10th, over 300 people marched from Portland Avenue Park to federal courthouse in downtown Tacoma demanding an end to Leonard's incarceration.

The rally began with the Turtle Mountain Drummers, who drove all the way from Leonard's community in North Dakota to honour Leonard's struggle. Rob Robideau, who was a co-defendant and is a relative of Leonard, spoke next. Rob is the co-director of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee and spoke about Leonard's case in the global context of imperialist wars, relating the struggle of Indigenous people in North America to the struggle of Iraqis and Palestinians against occupation. He went on to say:

*People are dying around you because of police brutality, because of the ... hunger for oil by the Bush administration. We have to wake up and we have to teach each other how to communicate to wake others up. This is our responsibility to each other as human beings. Leonard Peltier represents the injustice this country has done against Native people. And has continued to do. We need to teach each other the reality of these injustices... Leonard Peltier, who has served 31 years in prison for an alleged offense of killing two FBI agents. The United States government has admitted in open court they do not know who killed these agents. That is not the reality of what this is all about. This is about the need for the United States government to cover up their own actions against Native people during that period of time which we call the reign of terror.*

Rally to free Leonard Peltier. Feb 10 2007



*[It was a time] when the United States government, a colonial police force, entered our lands and were responsible for over 60 homicides and 300 assaults. And were responsible again [for] the... taking away of more land. One eighth of the Pine Ridge reservation was handled over to the government during this same time.*

*We have a right to defend our land. We have a right to defend our freedoms, whatever they may be. Do not allow them [the United States government] to criminalize your rights.*

Indigenous activists and solidarity groups spoke, tying Leonard's struggle against the US colonial justice system to the struggle for immigrant rights, the struggle for worker's rights, the ongoing battle between the ruling class and Indigenous people in Oaxaca, Mexico, and to the anti-war movement. It is proof, indeed, that more people understand the broadness of the attack on Leonard's freedom, and see his fight for justice as their fight also. The annual rallies that take place in Tacoma set an example for people around the US and Canada in that the only way we can make change is by coming out to the streets.

**Freedom for Leonard Peltier NOW!**

# Why There is No Reason to Celebrate Canada Day:

## UPHOLDING GENOCIDE & APARTHEID

By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 4 Issue 5/6  
May/June 2007*

While Ottawa prepares this year's celebrations for Canada's 140th anniversary, for Indigenous people in this country July 1st marks another year of being denied their rights to their land and resources, to their way of life, and to their right to sovereignty. While the government of Canada and the ruling class engineer their nationalist propaganda for working people in this country, the people whose land was taken and whose livelihoods were attacked in order to build Canada have no reason to celebrate.

### **Rampant Poverty Among Indigenous People in Canada**

One good look at the differences of basic living conditions



between Indigenous people and Canadians is enough to see the contradictions that exist in this country and the results of an apartheid rule. Applying the United Nations Human Development Index, First Nations communities in Canada would rank 68th among 174 countries. At one time, Canada was ranked first, but dropped to eighth place due in part to the housing and health conditions of First Nations communities. According to a recent report by the Assembly of First Nations which looked at the rampant poverty among First Nations communities, 80% of First Nations people have personal incomes below \$30,000 per year, while half of all households have a total household income below that level. More than half of First Nations people are not employed. The long-term effects of colonization and abuse have left Indigenous people with a much higher rate of health problems than other people in Canada. Diabetes among First Nations people is at least three times higher than the national average. Tuberculosis among First Nations people is 8 to 10 times more

common than in the general Canadian population. These are only some of the examples that have brought the life expectancy of First Nations men to 7.4 years less than the general male population in Canada, and the life expectancy of First Nations women to 5.2 years less than the general female population in Canada. Indigenous children fare the worst of all in these conditions. One in four First Nations children live in poverty, while one third of First Nations households with children are overcrowded. The graduation rate is half the Canadian rate, making Indigenous youth a big target for Canadian Forces recruitment. The rate of disabilities among First Nations children is almost double the rate of Canadian children. Suicide accounts for 38% of all deaths of First Nations youth between the ages of 10 and 19.

While overcrowding in First Nations homes is almost double the Canadian rate, nearly 3.7% live in homes without running hot water and nearly 3.5% do not have cold running water or flushing toilets. More than 6% of houses on-reserve are without sewage services. While mould contaminates almost half of all First Nations households, about one third of First Nations communities consider their main drinking water supply unsafe to drink. 12% of First Nations communities have to boil their drinking water.

### **Knowing the Roots...**

The reasons for these substandard living conditions are rooted in Canada's history of war against Indigenous people. For the Indigenous nations on this land, European colonialism was an invasion force, and the so-called 'founding' of Canada was just a way to legitimize the occupation of their land, theft of their resources and control over their lives. Today, much the same scenario is played out by the imperialist media that applauds elections in Iraq and its 'new road,' despite the fact that it is a country occupied by over 160,000 officially declared occupation forces. Once Indigenous populations had been decimated through murder, starvation and disease, a more established Canada went to the task of continuing the war through different acts and legislation. This is when the Indian Act was born, which imposed government control over Natives. Through the treaties that were set up with blatant lies by the colonial agents, to the establishment of the reservation system that divided Indigenous nations, Indigenous people were uprooted from their traditional territories, economies, and ways of life. The legacy of the residential schools, whose purpose was to destroy Indigenous identity and make it more difficult for them to collectively stand up for their rights, still sends shockwaves through the generations of survivors who went through those schools.

### **...And into the Present**

A common misconception among people who learn about Canada's shameful history is that although Canada has made many mistakes throughout history in its relationship with Indigenous people, together, Indigenous people and the government of Canada need to get over the past. This is part of the Canadian ruling class attempt to cover up Canada's true past. Canada Day used to be called Dominion Day, but in 1982 was given the new name in an effort to cover up the holiday's colonial origins. Its important to note that first, the genocide committed against

Indigenous people was no accident, and second, that Canada's objective in dealing with Indigenous people remains the same today, and is carried out by its continued war against Native people. The goal is still to take land and resources from Indigenous people, and to deny them their right to govern their own affairs. For the record, Canada was one of only two countries who voted against the proposed UN declaration to uphold the rights of Indigenous people last June. How can someone honestly say that Canada is somehow trying to improve the situation at all when on the international stage, it boldly shows that it will not respect the inherent rights of the Indigenous people within its borders?

Because of this, the situation for Indigenous people has not changed, and has progressively gotten worse. From the refusal to deal with the people of Six Nations on a nation-to-nation basis, to the ongoing assault on Native land in BC in the build-up to the 2010 Olympics, the government of Canada and corporations continue to take and plunder more territory and resources from Indigenous people.

### **Indigenous People Fight Back!**

Throughout all the years that Canada has been waging this war, Native people have been fighting back, and this resistance continues today. Despite Canada's criminalization of Native people who stand up for their rights, Native people continue to make a stand. Recently, the Canadian Armed Forces counter-insurgency task force included Native resistance in its list of terrorist organizations, but later removed it out of the controversy it spread around the country. This was nothing but a written confirmation of the way that Canada portrays Indigenous people as terrorists for standing up for their rights. June 29th was called as a national day of action by the Assembly of First Nations, who encouraged Native people throughout the country to organize a show of force to the government of Native people coming together. The actions are varying from marches and rallies like one that is happening in Vancouver, BC, to direct land confrontations like the Mohawks have done by blocking the CN rail tracks near Deseronto, Ontario, which is Canada's busiest highway and rail line. What is needed is continued action to demand that the inherent rights that Indigenous people have to their land and resources be upheld, and that Indigenous people have the right to govern their



# RCMP PEPPER SPRAY NATIVE CHILDREN



By Aaron Mercredi

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 4 Issue 7  
July 2007*

It was supposed to be a celebration for two victorious sports teams returning from a tournament in Vancouver. But, the grand entrance of the Sechelt's First Nations soccer teams on to their reservation on the Sunshine Coast, which has become a community tradition, was interrupted by RCMP violence and pepper spray.

Fourteen people were hospitalized after police unloaded cans of pepper spray on the procession of 20 vehicles that were involved in the celebration. The coach, the players and the families were all targeted in this attack, but most disturbing was the fact that many of those sprayed were children, including a 6-month-old baby who suffered burns to his face and scalp.

Footage of the attack made it on to news channels across Canada. Immediately after this incident took place, the RCMP issued statements saying they were only trying to stop a pick-up truck that was honking its horn and carrying young people around and that the pepper spray was used when the driver resisted arrest. Interesting that this then led to a full-on onslaught of pepper spray against a whole crowd of people.

## **Native People Respond**

Within days of the brutal attack, posters started appearing on telephone poles around Vancouver announcing a rally against RCMP brutality. Organized by the Indigenous Action Movement, this emergency gathering brought out over 100 people to Canada Place in Downtown Vancouver to protest the abuse inflicted on the Sechelt community members by the RCMP. After opening the rally with songs and a prayer, speakers from the Indigenous community in Vancouver sent words of support to the Sechelt community and related this recent attack to the other cases of systemic abuse against Native people by Canada's enforcement agents.

When members of the Sechelt community found out about the rally, they made their way over to Vancouver to take part in it. Family members spoke about their experience and the anger that is rising in their community, especially because their young children were targeted with the pepper spray. The day was a strong show of support and solidarity for the people in Sechelt, letting them know that they were not alone

and that people will mobilize when a community is under attack.

### **The Situation Grows...**

Within the week, the Sechelt community was once again responding to the moves by the RCMP. About 50 band members barricaded the band offices in an attempt to force the resignation of their Chief after he accepted an apology from the Sechelt RCMP for the pepper-spraying incident and also accepted an internal investigation in to the matter. The frustration and anger felt by members of the community has brought them not to accept these small token gestures by the RCMP and its weak attempts to save face. You don't have to look to far to see that this apology doesn't count for anything, and that an internal investigation is just the police investigating themselves, which leads to nothing. Do Canada's police forces have a history of being accountable for their misconduct, abuse, and even murder of Indigenous people? From Dudley George, an unarmed Indigenous activist who died from a gunshot wound from an Ontario Police Officer's semi-automatic rifle, to Neil Stonechild, who froze to death on a cold winter night on the outskirts of Saskatoon after being beaten, stripped of his warm clothes and left out in the cold, the abuse at the hands of Canada's enforcement agents has not just shown out of the blue. It is systemic and well established in this country. These are only two other examples of the countless cases of police misconduct against Native people. There are also cases where the police have investigated themselves, either found nothing wrong or held some minor disciplinary action and then moved on, case closed.

The fundamental problem is that government of Canada and the RCMP are trying to maintain their control over Native communities in the same way they did back in the day when there was the pass system and Native peoples' movements were restricted by white Indian agents. Yes, time has passed and gains have been won, but the incident in Sechelt shows the extremes that the RCMP will still go to in order to assert their arbitrary power over Native people. This needs to be reversed and the police must be held fully responsible for their heartless attack against a peaceful Native celebration.



Child victim of police pepper spraying.  
Sechelt, BC, June 30 2007.

# You Cannot Sell What is not Yours: Indigenous People and the Question of Privatizing Water in BC

*Only after the last tree has been cut down,  
Only after the last river has been poisoned,  
Only after the last fish has been caught,  
Only then will you find money cannot be eaten.*  
-Cree Prophecy

**By Aaron Mercredi**

*Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 4 Issue 7  
July 2007*

*“If you want a piece of the river, you better get running  
'cuz it's moving fast”*

These words were spoken by an Anishnabe woman at a forum I attended a few weeks ago on the privatization of BC Hydro and its effect on Indigenous communities and citizens in this province. At this event, speakers from different backgrounds presented on what is happening with the process of selling off of the rivers and waterways in British Columbia (BC) and what kind of economic, social and cultural impact this will have on people in the area. BC Hydro, a provincial crown corporation, is being gutted by the BC Liberal government and gradually sold off to what are called Independent Power Producers (IPP), who will be able to dam the rivers and sell power to the highest bidder. 535 rivers across the province have already been sold off and more are planned. 28 rivers are already making power for private owners, 30 rivers have been dynamited as of April and 200 more have been given the green light. Chief Stewart Phillip from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs attended



**Kashechewan Reserve, 2006.**

the event and spoke specifically about what the privatization of water will do to the many First Nations communities spread around the province. We live in a province where the majority of land has never been surrendered by Indigenous people through treaties or a war. 97% of the land has no written agreement between the federal government and the Indigenous nations whose territory BC claims as its own. This means that, according to the Royal Proclamation signed in 1763, the land legally belongs to Indigenous people. So, in dealing with any issue around land or resources, there is an unspoken and cruel contradiction that exists in this province. They are selling what is not theirs to sell. Chief Stewart Phillip touched on this issue, when explaining what kind of changes will come about with the acceleration of privately owned rivers. The most important issue is the effect that this sale has on Indigenous sovereignty. First Nations in BC have been engaged in a long battle with the provincial and federal governments for recognition of their inherent rights to their land and resources. Indigenous people have been going to jail repeatedly for simply exercising their rights to fish, to hunt, and to use their land. Selling off a portion of a river to a private company is an attack on Indigenous people's sovereignty because it is privatizing their river and, in many cases, their livelihood. The fine print in these agreements notes that the sale of rivers includes the land that the riverbed sits on. This is a very big deal when Indigenous people are fighting to retain what little they have left and will deeply impact the land claims that are filed with the provincial and federal governments. When they began their second term in office, the BC Liberal government adopted a 'New Relationship' with Aboriginal people in BC, which was a big public relations campaign they used to cover their sordid record of dealing with Indigenous people by announcing a 'fresh start.' This new relationship is still based on colonial foundations of stealing from Native people, and throwing activists and people who resist in jail. But hey, they can throw a few parties, and put on some moccasins to show that at least they're trying. Their plan for privatizing the rivers in BC violates the three basic principles that they set as the foundation for this new relationship. First, that Aboriginal rights and title exist. Second, that First Nations have the ability and authority to make decisions with respect to territories. And third, that there be shared decision-making between government and First Nations. Not only has the government denied Indigenous people's inherent right to their rivers and are making their claim over the land more difficult by selling it to a private company, but they have not consulted or really involved Indigenous people in the process.

### **Not Just a BC Problem**

The issue of clean running water goes beyond the sell-off of rivers currently happening in BC. Look at any statistic related to water in Indigenous communities all across Canada and you'll see the problem. In 2002, a study by the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) found serious concerns among Indigenous communities of low water quality and found 21 communities to be at high risk. It also found that about one third of First Nations adults consider their household water unsafe to drink and that 7 out of 10 resorted to alternate sources for drinking water. Bottled water was the most common alternative. The crisis of water in Indigenous communities was brought to

TV screens all around the world when the Cree community of Kashechewan in Northern Ontario was evacuated in October 2005 because they were being poisoned by the water they were drinking. Over 800 people crammed into dorm rooms and friends houses throughout the province because the conditions in their own community were so bad. The water problem there began when E. Coli was discovered in the water system, as a result of the Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) building a water treatment plant just downstream from a sewage treatment plant. When this was discovered, the community was put on a boil-water advisory and encouraged to add more chlorine to the water. This resulted in not only E. Coli poisoning, but also severe burns and lacerations from chlorine poisoning and a medical emergency in the community. The example of Kashechewan is important because it shows what happens to a community when their water, their resources, are not in their own hands. It was Canada who poisoned their water and didn't bother to fix the problem because the government of Canada's interests do not include the well-being of Indigenous people. Another study by the Assembly of First Nations has found that over 100 Indigenous communities in Canada are on a permanent boil-water advisory.

### **Water is Life**

“From the teachings of the Elders we learn that: Water is life; and Water is sacred; Water is the life breath of the Creator. Water is no ordinary element—water is power. Water is important to us emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally. Water connects all living things. Understanding the meaning of water helps us to understand our interconnectedness.”

-Darlene Sanderson, Cree

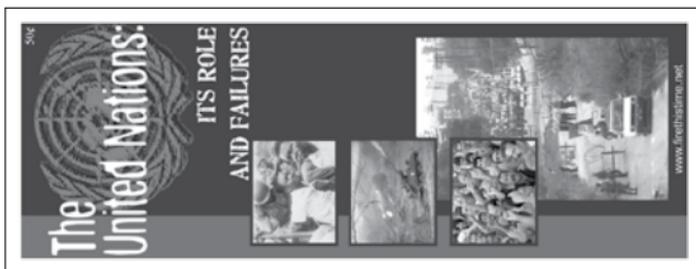
Fresh water is a source of life. It flows through the veins and enriches every square inch of the land we live on. For the environment, for humans, it is a necessity. There is no question about this. It is inconceivable a resource that should be available to everyone be held and controlled privately for profit. Unfortunately it is the nature of capitalism to turn everything into a commodity to be bought and sold, even those necessities of life. The private ventures on the rivers around the province will undoubtedly leave a huge mark on the environment as these



companies only have their revenue in mind, and it is an issue that affects not only Indigenous people, but all people in BC. This is why it is important to stand together to demand that the government not only stop the privatization of water in the province, but acknowledge and respect the inherent rights that Indigenous people have to their land and resources in order for us all to maintain this land for future generations.

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