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RESISTING CANADIAN COLONIALISM:



THE INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Essays on Indigenous & International Struggles
by Aaron Mercredi



5th Edition
www.firethistime.net

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

By Aaron Mercredi

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

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.

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.

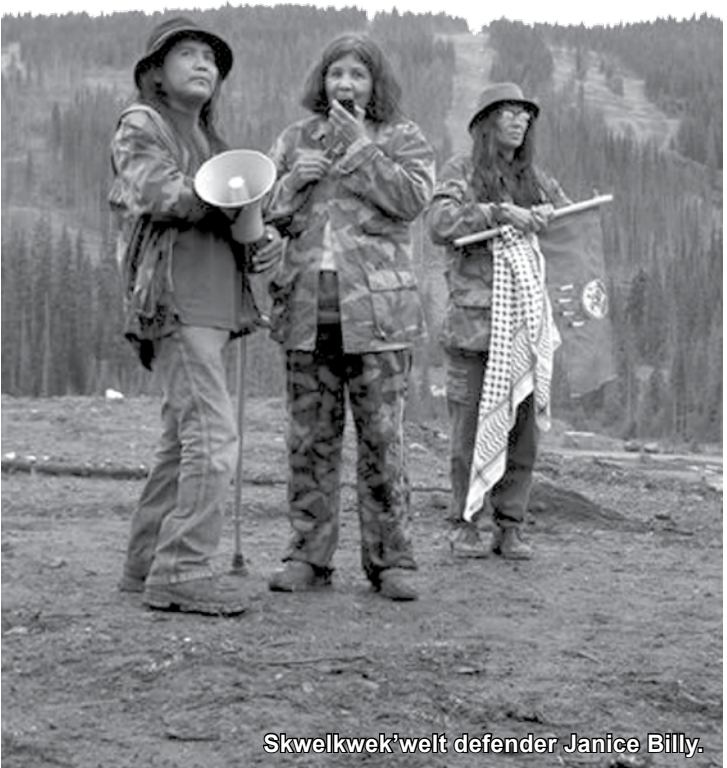
FTT: What do you think the effect of not only this injunction, but also the expansion of Sun Peaks Ski Resort will have on the future of Secwepemc people, the Secwepemc youth?

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?

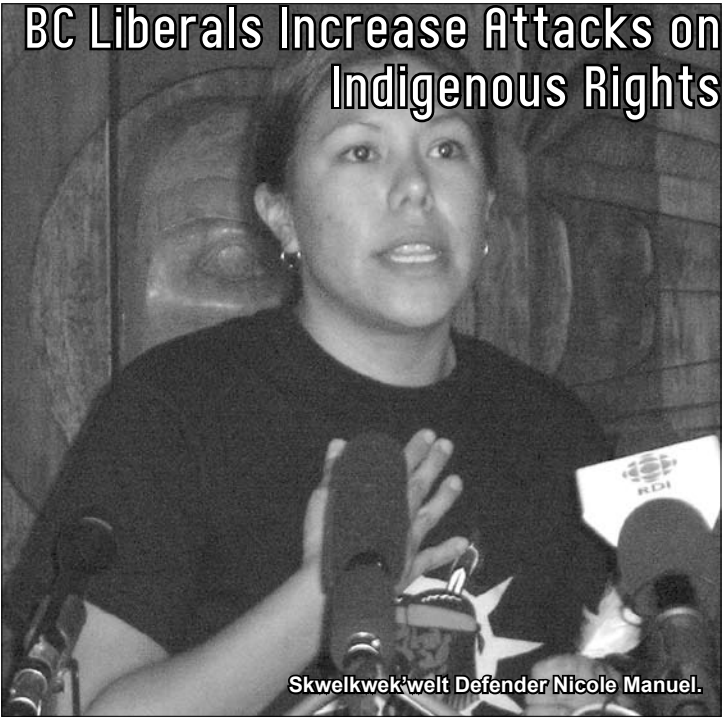
Ska7cis: Well, first of all it’s for the environment. It’s for the water. It’s for the animals. It’s for the oxygen. To have clean water, everyone should have the right to clean water, because in Europe, for every glass of water you have to pay a dollar. You go to a restaurant and you pay a dollar for 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 15th press conference

On July 15th, 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 Skwelkwek'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 it's 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.

Women's Access to Choice and Health Care Under Conditions of War and Occupation: An Indigenous Woman's Perspective

By Rachel Taylor

Originally appeared in Fire This Time # 12 Apr. 2004

The talk below was given by Rachel Taylor at the Rock for Choice Conference on Saturday February 7th, 2004, at the SFU Harbour Centre in Vancouver (www.rockforchoicevancouver.com).

When asked to speak on this panel at Rock for Choice I began exploring access to choice and healthcare from the perspective and understanding that the conditions of war and occupation provide the most explicit and most blatant examples of how women are controlled and oppressed; and of how we must fight in solidarity with women living under war and occupation in order to fight for our own liberty and freedom as women all over the world.

It is from this perspective of fighting for sovereignty and self-determination as the first step in fighting for *real* access to choice and health care that I am going to speak today.

At this gathering in support of women's access to reproductive choices and health care, and in particular, at this discussion of access for women under occupation, it is important that we look at this access in the context of women's access to all social services. Choice, health care, or any one service cannot be isolated. When we look at it in this context we are reminded that the only way women can fully access these services is if women have control over their lives; concretely and directly, this means we support women's and all people's struggles worldwide for liberation and self-determination.

In order to address access to services, we must go to the root of the oppression of women, which is the basis for the denial of women's basic rights. We can explore women's oppression clearly through looking at the most explicit examples of women in struggle today: women living under war and occupation. Therefore, it is necessary to look at what it means, from an Indigenous woman's perspective, to support the self-determination of women and all people under war, occupation and colonization—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and colonized Indigenous territories, including the Americas, and North America in particular.

This means to support the struggles of women and all people who are at the forefront of attacks on oppressed people, and at the forefront of resistance, demanding their right denied by oppressive systems today: the right to control their own lives, and by extension, the right to choice.

Indigenous people in North America have been living under occupation for five centuries. The historic and current attacks on Indigenous people here, like attacks against people of the Third World today, all came from colonial forces, whose goal remains: to gain control of the resources and the present and future market through controlling the land and the people under attack, and therefore to deny the right of self-determination.

The very nature of the relationship between Indigenous people and the Canadian government is a relationship that denies our rights to determine our own forms of government. Despite the fact that Section 35 of Canada's constitution recognizes the inherent right to self-government, in reality all decisions concerning every aspect of our lives and livelihoods, our lands and resources, all these decisions are determined and imposed by the colonial Canadian government. In this way, it is the foundation of the Canadian government, and not its actions alone, that denies our right to self-determination, and therefore, denies our full ability to control and determine all aspects of our own lives. This significantly and disproportionately impacts women, because we already have an oppressed position based on our gender.

It is necessary to look in this context at the current and historic situation of Indigenous women living under occupation, and our access to health and social services. And we will soon find that there is no period in history when Indigenous women under Canada have had access to a form of health care that fully addressed their health needs. Instead, there is a long history of violent atrocities and human rights violations against Indigenous people by the colonial government, a constant denial of our humanity and dignity, and a continuing fundamental inability to meet the health and social needs of Indigenous people.

In 1928 Alberta passed legislation allowing school officials to forcibly sterilize Indigenous girls; BC passed the same law in 1933. In 1995 after police launched

an investigation, the records of this practice were destroyed, so there is no way of knowing how many women and girls in BC and Alberta were forced to undergo this horror. But according to the testimony of a nurse in Alberta, doctors forcibly sterilized entire groups of Indigenous children when they reached puberty. This example paints a background to the completely inhuman approach that the colonial Canadian government has taken historically toward Indigenous people.

Today, one part of our compounded oppression as women and as Indigenous people living under occupation is that we continue to face incredible barriers to our access to health care and social services. As a result of that our health and well-being are disproportionately worse as women, and worse still as Indigenous people. When looking at any standard measurement of health or quality of life and comparing the status of Indigenous women with the status of the general Canadian population, you can plainly see the effects of our oppressed position under Canadian colonialism.

According to Health Canada, Indigenous women are twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to report their overall health as 'fair or poor.' The infant mortality rate for Indigenous mothers is twice as high as that of non-Indigenous mothers. And Indigenous women have shorter life expectancies than non-Indigenous women by an overwhelming seven years. This factor in particular is a major exposure of the devastating gap between the standard of living and health for Indigenous women and that of the general population in Canada.

In terms of chronic conditions, we are considerably more likely to develop conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. And while Indigenous people make up only 2% of the population in Canada, we made up 25% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 1999. As well, while non-Indigenous women represent 7% of all cases of HIV/AIDS in Canada, Indigenous women make up more than twice as many of these cases--almost 16%. And Indigenous people are nearly three times as likely to commit suicide as the general Canadian population, with the highest suicide risk being for young Indigenous women between the ages of 15 and 24, who are devastatingly eight times more likely to commit suicide than the general Canadian population.

These disparities don't stop at our general health and well-being; at virtually every point where we can measure the standard of living of Indigenous people and women living under Canadian occupation, we are at a vastly lower level than the general Canadian population. Again despite our comparatively small numbers in Canada, the rate of imprisonment of Indigenous people means we make up 17% of all prison inmates in the country.

In terms of housing, Indigenous people are more than twice as likely to suffer under crowded living conditions. Also, only 57% of homes in Indigenous communities were considered adequate in 1999. The government conducted a survey in 2001 and found that 73% of all people living in the Nunavik region in Northern Quebec, which is largely an Indigenous population, reported having had their water contaminated at some point during the year. In 1999, 65 First Nations and Inuit communities were under a boil water advisory for, on average, half the year.

In terms of education, in 2001, half of all Indigenous youth in their early 20's had dropped out of high school, and Indigenous youth in that age group were far less likely to graduate from post-secondary education.

In 1996, the unemployment rate for Indigenous women in particular was more than twice as high as that of the general Canadian population, and the unemployment rate for Indigenous people in general was three times as high as the general population.

All of this represents the conditions that Indigenous people, and Indigenous women in particular, live under when they are denied control over our own lives. Throughout all of this and in every other aspect of Indigenous nations' right to decide our own destiny, when Indigenous people need to make any decisions about our governance, our livelihoods, the way we support ourselves and each other, what's best for our communities, the way we even get food, or keep each other healthy; when these decisions need to be made, Indigenous people are forced to answer to the same powers that have been attacking us on all these fronts throughout history, the same Canadian government that has broken every treaty ever signed in Canada and every promise they have ever made.

Under this violent, racist and repressive colonization that began 500 years ago in Canada, women have been denied control of their lives. 'Health care' to many Indigenous women, as we have seen, means a horrific history of forced sterilization, of genocidal European disease, and of the repression of traditional medical practices. For example, according to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, only one third of the urban Indigenous population had access to traditional medical practices, and another third reported not knowing if such health practices were

available in their community. Today Indigenous people, and women in particular, still are denied full and adequate services, and this is a direct continuation of the same colonialist occupation that first stripped Indigenous people of their sovereignty and rights.

Specifically, women, young women, poor women, working women, Indigenous women, are all denied health care and abortion rights to some degree within Canada. Although abortion in Canada was decriminalized in 1988, the legal right to an abortion does not mean that all women have the choice of having an abortion, or the ability to access abortion services, and access throughout the country continues to be severely limited. A 2003 Canadian Abortion Rights Action League report found that only 17.8% of hospitals in Canada provide abortion services, and in Saskatchewan, less than 3%.

In Alberta, there are four hospitals providing abortions, and Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Newfoundland each have only two. All over Canada abortion services are concentrated in major urban centres, while at the same time most reserves are located in more remote rural areas. And for many women, lack of funds for travel prevents them access, particularly in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, where there is also a higher population of Indigenous people, and where women must be flown to Ottawa or Montreal for abortion services. The same is true in Prince Edward Island, where there are no abortion services anywhere in the province, and women are forced to travel to private clinics out of province. The same inaccessibility exists in Ontario and Quebec, although they have the highest percentages of hospitals providing abortion. In Newfoundland, at St. John's General Hospital, a doctor's referral is necessary, which is hard to get in many parts of the province; and in New Brunswick, an abortion must be approved by two doctors and performed by a gynaecologist in a hospital to be paid for by the province. At several BC clinics in particular, women are often subject to waiting periods of two to three weeks, and in some places in Canada waiting lists can be up to six weeks, at which point for many women it is too late.

Women's access to choice and to services they need for survival means, by extension, access to the tools to control their lives. The lack of access, or denial of access, directly undermines women's democratic and human rights and maintains their oppression. Based on the foundations of women's oppression under the class structure in general and under capitalism in particular; based on the fact that this oppression is needed for the system to function, we need to recognize that lack of health care is not a flaw in the system, but rather a foundation for its functioning.

As was outlined, Indigenous people here suffer from disproportionately worse living conditions than the general population, in terms of poverty, lower standards of health, crowded living conditions, higher rates of imprisonment, and unemployment. It's been said we live under 'Third World conditions.' This is no accident, any more than women's oppression under today's oppressive governments is a coincidence. Because of our position under current oppressive governments, women are always disproportionately affected by attacks on working, poor and oppressed people, such as the BC Liberals' attacks we are all facing here. Maintaining the oppression of women and Indigenous people are two sides of the same coin: denying oppressed people control over their own lives, denial of sovereignty. This is one tactic of the overall strategy of imperialist governments, a strategy that requires that all poor, working and oppressed people remain subjugated, divided and under constant attack.

Women's oppression under colonization and occupation can only be addressed if women unite with all oppressed people and demand sovereignty. There is no way that women in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, colonial Canada, or anywhere in the world can have full and fair access to health care without first having control over their lives. This control does not exist for anybody living under war, occupation, and colonization, when all people's living conditions and ability to access any kind of social services, including education, basic survival needs, and health care, is devastated. When you look into the reasons behind the current era of perpetual war and occupation, you find that the same forces are at work that maintain the oppression of all working, poor, and oppressed people all over the world, including Indigenous people here, and including women. As in all situations, women are disproportionately affected because of our already oppressed position.

A movement to demand full choice for all women, and full control over our lives for all oppressed people, directly threatens the foundations of today's system; a system that employs the tactic of oppressing women and Indigenous people within their agenda of attacks on all of us. To effectively challenge and defeat these attacks, Indigenous women and all women everywhere must unite to demand full sovereignty and self-determination for all oppressed people.

Iraqi Youth Under US-UK Military Occupation: Is there a Future?

By Aaron
Mercredi &
Tamara Hansen

*Originally
appeared in Fire
This Time # 17
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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.

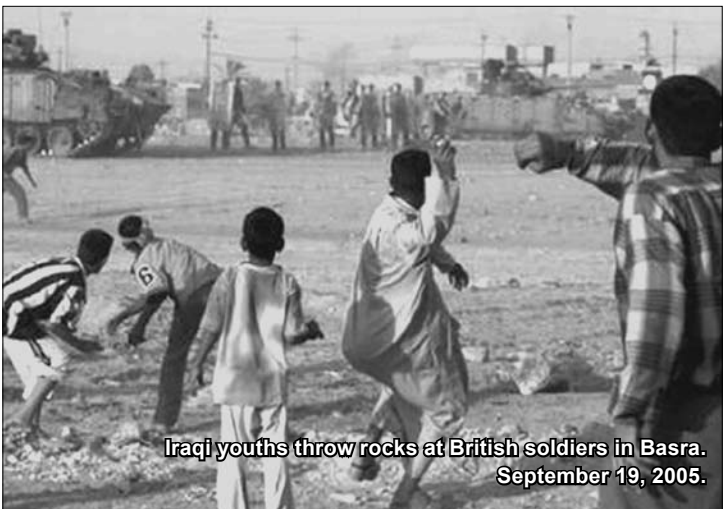
The youth who do make it to school will be learning from new next books made by the US occupiers. The new ministry of Education in Iraq under the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the US-led coalition removed any 'controversial' events from Texts books including the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war, and anything 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 youths 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,

Like every Indigenous nation that has existed within the borders of what is now Canada, the history of the Nuu-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 Nuu-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.

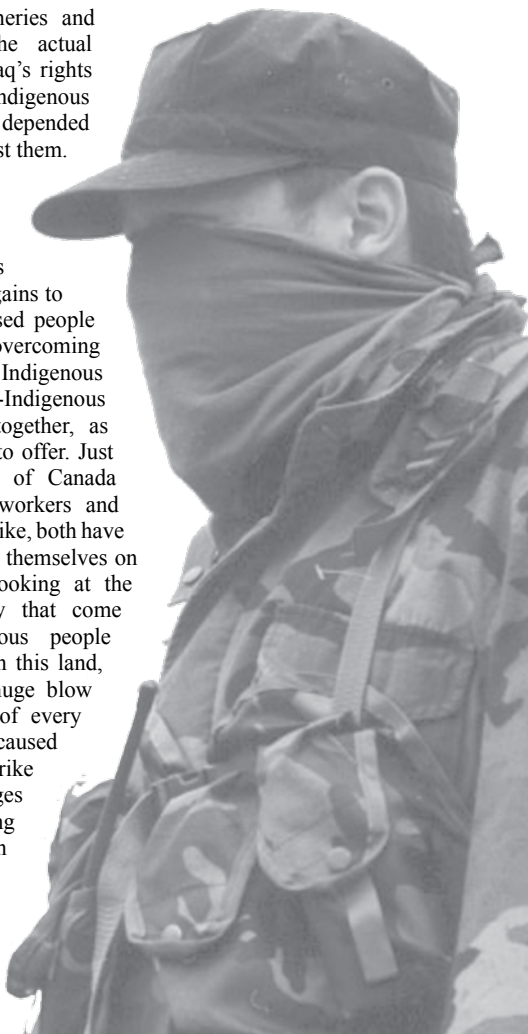
The 'Indigenous Problem:' not just a problem for Indigenous people

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.

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



Innu youth huffing Gas.

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



Innu reserve at Davis Inlet.

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
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“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 31st 2002

On April 27th 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





Extension of Genocide to Afghanistan -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 14th, 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 Kahnasatake. 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 20th, 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 38th 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 6th, 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.



By Aaron Mercredi

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in Fire This Time #
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On August 21st,
June Quipp,
former Chief
of the Cheam
nation and long-
time activist for

FISHING RIGHTS ARE INHERENT RIGHTS...

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 25th 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

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,

Interview with June Quipp of the Cheam Nation



June Quipp of the Cheam Nation .

speed against us. They try to push our boats 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

these are all the charges and this proves that 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.

Fighting the Theft of Indigenous Resources in Northern Canada:

Youth and elders gather for a summit at Radilih Ko.



Arctic Youth Oppose the Mackenzie Gas Project

By Aaron Mercredi

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

From August 12th to 15th, over 40 young Dene, Inuvialuit and other Indigenous people gathered at Radilih 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 appropriate.

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 12th, 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 12th 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 12th-15th. 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, it's 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

"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 24th to 25th 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 3rd 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 23rd 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



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

and many more battles ahead.

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 this 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

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 24th and 25th. 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 25th, 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 24th and 25th 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 Okanagan 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.

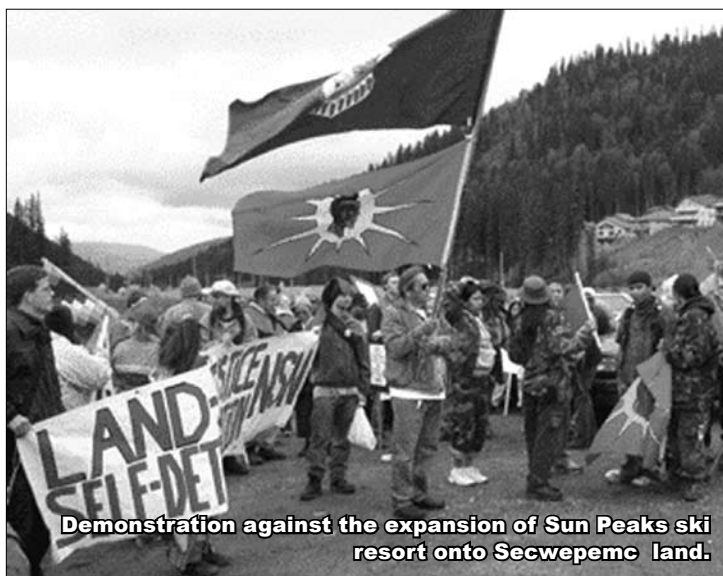
They are going to be co-opted, and they're [the government] still going to wind up with the exclusive jurisdiction at the end of the day. In terms of Indian education, take a look at it. They're not really talking about Indian control of Indian education with a separate resource base. They're looking 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.

Free Leonard Peltier!

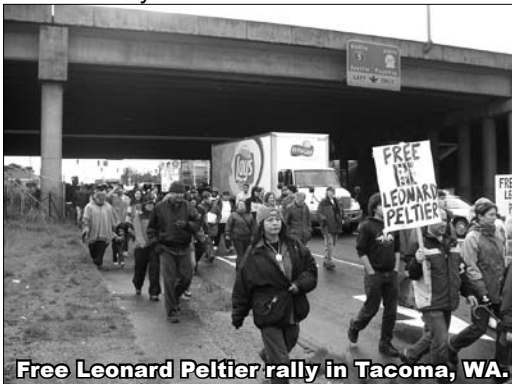
March and Rally in Solidarity with Leonard Peltier in Tacoma, WA

By Aaron Mercredi

Originally appeared in Fire This Time Volume 3 Issue # 1

On February 4th, 2006, over 250 people gathered on the streets of Tacoma, Washington, in solidarity with Leonard Peltier, who was about to begin his 30th year behind bars in a US prison. The Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group brought out protesters from Canada and all parts of the US to its 13th Annual Northwest Regional march for the International Day of Solidarity with Leonard Peltier.

The energetic march began at Portland Ave Park and weaved its way through Tacoma to the rally site at the US Federal Court House in downtown Tacoma. After a traditional dance and drumming by



Free Leonard Peltier rally in Tacoma, WA.

Aztec dancers, Lakota Elder Dorothy Ackerman opened the rally. Long-time Native activists and solidarity groups brought voices of support for Leonard as he sits in a Pennsylvania prison.

Arthur J. Miller, coordinator of the Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group, connected Leonard's case with the ongoing struggle of Indigenous people and its direct link to all social struggles. Miller noted that the US government that is waging wars and occupations in the Middle East and Latin America is the same US government whose very existence is founded on the genocide of Indigenous people, and the theft and occupation of their land in North America.

February 6th, 2006, two days after the rally in Tacoma, was the 30th anniversary of the beginning of Leonard Peltier's incarceration. In 1975, based on manufactured evidence by the FBI, he was extradited to the US for the murder of two FBI agents in a shoot-out on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota that summer. He stood trial in South Dakota on this manufactured evidence, was convicted of their murder and has been in prison ever since.

Why Leonard Peltier?

The shoot-out with two FBI agents took place during the "Reign of Terror" against Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reserve. In the 1970s, the US government worked with the corrupt tribal government and its FBI-backed GOON squads to maintain corrupt rule over traditional Lakota people who opposed the plundering of their land and wanted to see an end to the poverty that they were living under. Between 1973 and 1976, there were over 60 unsolved or unresolved murders of Oglala Lakota men and women and members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) who were asked for protection by the Lakota traditionals.

It was the FBI agents who sped on to the Jumping Bull compound on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in an

unmarked car with guns drawn on June 26th, 1975. In the shoot-out that ensued, one young Indigenous man, Joe Stuntz, was killed, along with the two FBI agents. While the US government considered Joe Stuntz's case closed, it launched the biggest 'man hunt' in US history for the AIM members who had escaped after the fire.

Leonard Peltier escaped into hiding in Canada, while Bob Robideau and Dino Butler were arrested and stood trial for the murder of the two agents in South Dakota. Even in the racist atmosphere of South Dakota, where the governor at



the time, Bill Janklow, said “the only way to deal with AIM leaders is with a bullet to the head,” they were both found not guilty because of lack of evidence and because the jury found that they were acting in self-defense.

Facing a growing movement of Indigenous people in the US who were fighting for their self-determination, the FBI needed to kill the momentum. At the same time as they were instituting their Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to try and destroy AIM from within, they also put all their focus on Leonard Peltier for the murder of the two agents.

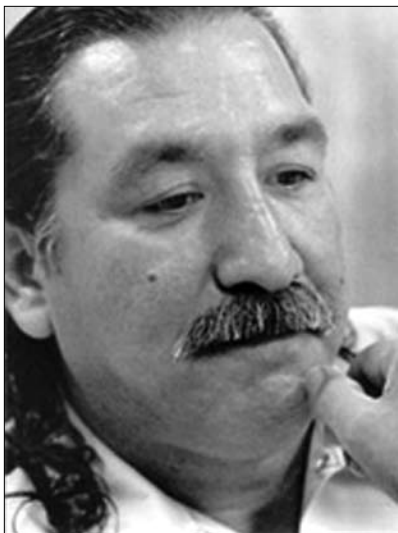
Justice For All

Leonard Peltier—an Anishinabe and Dakota/Lakota warrior, a great-grandfather, and a symbol of Indigenous struggle against the US government for justice. Even inside his prison walls, he remains an activist, linking local struggles with international ones, and putting to the forefront the justice that is being denied to the Indigenous nations who continue to live in third-world conditions while the US government and multinational corporations line their pockets with their resources and blood.

Leonard Peltier's fate is tied in with the fate of all Indigenous people who suffer from the colonial governments of Canada and the USA and all oppressed people in the world. Just as both of those governments collaborated to put him behind bars, they both continue to attack the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous people within their own borders and spread their bloody hands to kill and occupy oppressed people around the world. His freedom will be ours, and ours will be his.

“I thank you for your patience, your time, your support, and your loyalty and for allowing me to share this existence with you. As someone once said, we are all climbing the same mountain, just from different sides.”

-Leonard Peltier, March 6th, 2006



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 15th, 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
April 24, 2006 Vancouver

Six Nations Under Attack

At 4:30am on April 20th 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 28th, 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 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.

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 11th and 12th, support actions took place on the streets of North Battleford, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria. In the early morning of April 21st, 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.

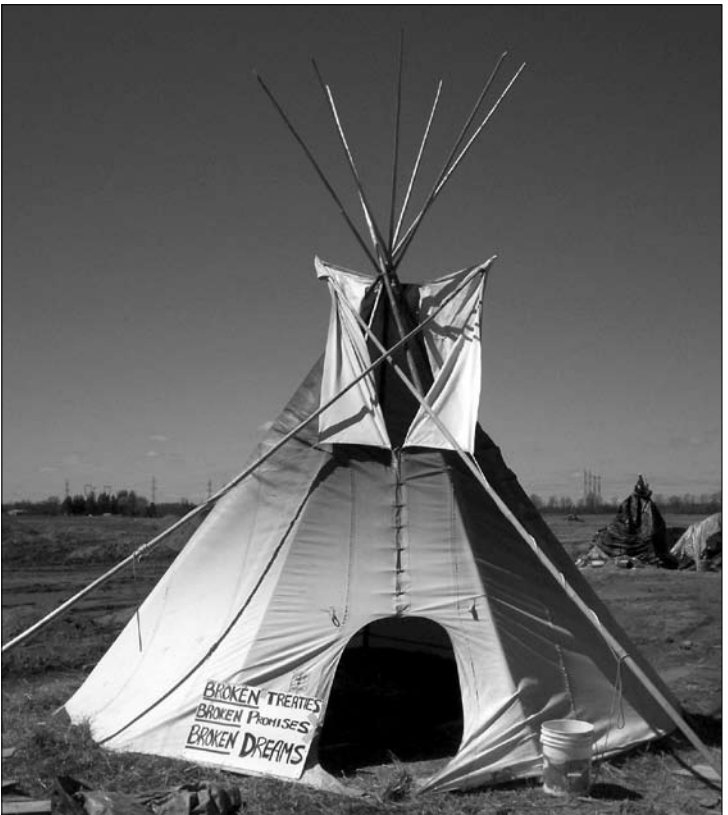
Hands Off Six Nations Land! Self-Determination for Indigenous Nations in Canada!

STATEMENT OF THE CLAN MOTHERS OF THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

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.

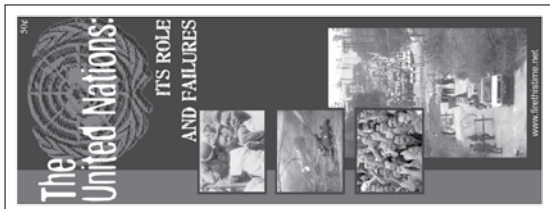
1. The Six Nations are distinct original nations. We are to be dealt with on a nation-to-nation basis by the Crown and all other nations.
2. The Crown must respect our original relationship as set out in the Two Row Wampum, our jurisdiction as provided in our constitution, the Kaiannereh'ko:wa, and as 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 Rotino'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.



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