

CURRENT CONFLICT WITH DFO!

Very few treaties were ever signed in British Columbia, *a state self imposed precursor to legislative power over an area of original people*. Despite historic resistance by the Pilalts to interference in their internal affairs, the Government of Canada launched a program of social control and cultural extinguishment through the imposition of the Band Council System. The Pilalt's are still in conflict with the Canadian State, and it's coastal indigenous policing tool: the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

Recently, Denise Douglas of Cheam appeared in Chilliwack Court defending herself and the six remaining members of Cheam all charged with illegal fishing. Their charges stem back to 2000. This is the small number that remains in the case, despite numerous individuals being charged. Most people settled out of court for a measly \$150 fine preferring to avoid the long, intimidatating court case, financial hardship, and the cultural alienation of dealing with the Government of Canada. But Denise is fighting the State and asserting that;

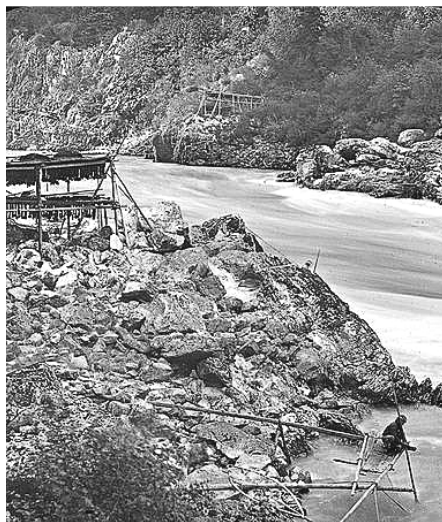
- ~ DFO cannot close the river
- ~They have inherent right to the fish,
- ~**And, their title and land has never been ceded.**

THEY ARE SOVEREIGN!

The trial has been recessed until March 9th, 2010 at the Chilliwack Courts.

Supporters are encouraged to come witness the trial, and learn more about the struggle in Cheam.

Contact Denise Douglas
iyeselwet@gmail.com



Supporting Land Defenders in court is not advocating one tactic over another. We need to spread the struggle out of the reserves and the courts, until it permeates every aspect of our lives, until we all are truly free.

Defending The Land

Report Back From Cheam vs. DFO

*Information about the Current Attack of
the Canadian State against the Pilalt People
of Cheam, Sto:lo; Coast Salish Territory*



December 2009

A Little Background to the Mountain Goat People

Pilalt indigenous people from the village at Cheam are called "the mountain goat people" because of an ancestral teaching and the right to hunt the animal is passed down in certain families. One of the most prominent mountains along the Fraser River is Mount Cheam, which marks the Pilalt Territory of the Cheam people. This small community has a long history of protest actions against the encroachment of their Aboriginal Title and Rights by fishing, logging and development. The Cheam Indian Band is one of 30 First Nations communities in the lower Fraser watershed many of which are represented by the Stó:lo Nation.

The traditional way of life of the Stó:lo came under seige when gold was discovered in 1858 and the Fraser River was invaded by miners. One of the earliest representations of its First Nations inhabitants was painted in 1868 and depicts two dugout canoes made from cedar trees, one with a sail. The idyllic scene does not reflect the horrific war of extermination waged by the miners on the Stó:lo and their neighbours further up the Fraser Canyon, the Nlaka'pamux. Nor does it show the mercury poisoning and blasting from mining that destroyed riparian salmon habitat and diminished the aboriginal fishing resources.

The first settlers arrived by steampowered paddlewheelers. In 1864 the colonial authorities began to impose the reserve system on the Stó:lo which allowed settlers to preempt unceded untreated Stó:lo land and take over Stó:lo fisheries. Stó:lo territories were bisected by a road in 1873, followed by the Canadian Pacific Railroad which was completed in 1888. (This railroad runs directly through the Cheam reserve, at times as close as 25 feet from people's houses).

The lower Fraser Canyon beginning at Yale was the most densely populated place on the Northwest Coast due to the extraordinary fecundity of its aboriginal fishery. The ancient and complex system of fishing rights that had evolved here was violated in 1858 when tens of thousands of gold seeking Europeans invaded and provoked the infamous Fraser Canyon War.

In 1878 the federal government imposed its restrictive Fisheries Act; in 1884 it banned the potlatch ceremony by which fishing rights were decided; and in 1888 it criminalized fishing without a license. More oppressive rules accompanied the opening up of BC to mass immigration that occurred in 1885 with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Its passage through the Fraser Canyon resulted in the destruction of aboriginal burial grounds, fisheries and villages.

Til this day, the Pilalt people have never signed a treaty with Canada.

THIS LAND WAS NEVER CEDED!!



HISTORY OF RESISTANCE

In the summer of 2000, the Cheam blockaded provincial roads that cross their land demanding that the government stop encroaching on their territory and act to resolve the Cheam land claims. The dispute concerned a 25 square mile area that has been encroached upon by the Canadian National railway, British Columbia Hydro power lines, highway construction, and a gas pipe line. Ferry Island is still contested Cheam land.

In 2003, several Pilalt were arrested after blockading the railroad through the Cheam Reserve to protest against the logging taking place on Mount Cheam in preparation for a massive Resorts West project, slated as a 2010 venue. Due to the resistance this plan was not completed.

Also in 2003, the DFO came onto reserve [despite an agreement to announce their arrival and abide by a certain protocol] and proceeded to assault then Chief Sidney Douglas. They have pressed numerous charges against the people of Cheam for 'illegal fishing'. People are often harassed on the river, during open fishing time and closed, with DFO officers performing high speed chases on the water and ramming native fisher's boats, pulling weapons, and physically assaulting people.

~if you eat foods that are processed and controlled, then you are easy to be controlled, when you eat wild, you remain wild and free~

Secwepemc Warrior

