



BALACLAVA!

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Greenest Games Ever? Frontline Voices Confront Olympic Spin

by: Sakura Saunders

The Vancouver Olympics were billed by governments, sponsors and promoters as the “greenest games ever.” But the resistance movement against the Games has decimated these claims, by bringing voices from people on the front lines of environmental destruction to the fore.

The 2010 Olympics has managed its

“green” image by using shallow reporting and flawed accountability, says Clayton Thomas Muller of the Indigenous Environmental Network. He spoke out against the environmental impacts of the 2010 Games and its corporate sponsors along with representatives from impacted communities and major environmental justice organizations on the eve of the Olympic Opening Ceremonies.

“When we look at the assessment of the carbon footprint of the Games, the reality of it is that they only looked at very surface issues; they only looked at the flights,” Muller said during a press confer-

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PHOTO: MURRAY BUSH

Trout Lake Torch Relay

by Paul Kitz

The Olympic torch was carried down Victoria Drive Thursday afternoon, past the Trout Lake Community Centre and the \$15 million ice skating rink next door constructed as an Olympic training facility.

“It’s amazing how many people came out to watch,” observed local resident Ms. Staff. She said that while she recognizes that “there’s going to be an impact, the fact is they’re coming, so we might as well enjoy them.” Other local residents present were not satisfied waving miniature Canadian flags and dancing to the beats emanating from the Coca-Cola truck leading the procession.

“I feel absolutely nauseous at the amount of money that is wasted, and that all these kids are all losing money for their education.” said Jenn Barker. “I’m glad to see they’re excited about this event, but you know they’re going to pay for it - and it breaks my heart.”

Ilana Labow, the daughter of a former Olympic fencer, said she is “intimately connected to friends who are training for the Olympics” who come from poverty stricken communities. “I have empathy and sympathy for those Olympian people, but I’m shocked and astounded by the impacts the Olympics are having” on Vancouver. Labow noted that with 20 community centres shut down for the Cultural Olympiad, lots of her friends have been left without needed daycare. Because of the rink construction for the Olympics, the much needed redevelopment of Vancouver’s oldest community centre was pushed back and the centre is now expected to be closed until at least May.

Lining the sidewalks, the children who lost their community centre and daycare were handed little flags pushing Coca Cola products, which, Labow pointed out, “destroy land and resources for thousands of people far away and make people in this land super unhealthy and reliant on paying for water that ought to be free for all.”

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PHOTO: INSURGENT PHOTO

Cops get hands-on early in the game

by Moira Peters

One protester was arrested, according to reports, and witnesses claim police used excessive force just prior to the Olympic torch’s arrival on UBC’s campus this evening, where a group of 100 to 200 people gathered to protest the torch relay.

Morghain Gibbons, a UBC engineering student from Edmonton, held a sign in the rain that said, “UBC Students Do Not Approve.” She said she was protesting the torch relay because the torch represents the “whole package” of the Olympics.

“Vancouverites are being misled about the benefits of Olympics,” she said. “Our education is suffering; there’s environmental damage; there’s more homelessness; our civil liberties are being compromised.”

The protest grew in volume and energy as the torch approached the intersection. Demonstrators chanted, “Homes, not Games,” “No Olympics on stolen Native land,” and “VANOC off our campus.”

“We observed some strong police reactions that came out of nowhere,” said Ste-

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Stand Beside Us in Defense of the Land: Wet’suwet’en

by Dawn Paley

Toghestiy (Warner Naziel) traveled from the heart of Wet’suwet’en territory in central BC to Vancouver Thursday to add his voice to the chorus of Olympics resistance. His visit is infused with a sense of urgency, and his message is that Wet’suwet’en people will protect their land, even if they are faced with increased corporate and government pressure after the Games.



PHOTO: DAWN PALEY

Werner Naziel brings a message of resistance to from the Wet’suwet’en people.

Wet’suwet’en territory, which encompasses 22,000 square kilometers, was never ceded through treaty. It is crisscrossed with proposed oil pipelines, and Toghestiy thinks pressure to develop will increase when the BC government has to start paying down the deficit accrued because of the 2010 Games.

“When the time comes for them to actually pay off that bill, we know they’re going to start making their way into our territories, as well as other First Nations’ peoples territories that aren’t ceded yet, and they plan on paying off that bill by extracting resources from our lands, and doing it as quickly and as efficiently as possible,” he said.

There are two proposed oil pipelines that would cut through Wet’suwet’en territory: the Enbridge Northern Gateway

Pipeline, and a separate Kinder Morgan pipeline, both of which to carry tar sands bitumen from Alberta to the BC Coast. The Wet’suwet’en have expressed their absolute and unconditional rejection of pipelines in their lands.

“The Wet’suwet’en want to protect our land; we want to protect it from any type of pollution, any type of industrial development, because we need to make sure the lands are available for our children and our unborn children,” Toghestiy told the Vancouver Media Co-op.

In the context of building post-Olympics movements in Vancouver, Toghestiy said the Wet’suwet’en request the support of people in the city as part of the struggle to defend their lands. “We’re looking at developing a larger network of people who can and will stand beside us,” he said.

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Trout Lake cont.

Metta Paterson was critical of parents and schools who brought their children to the relay. Instead of a community coming together on its own, said Paterson, “It’s RBC and Coca Cola and no one even knows the destruction those companies are causing...” Caleb Vallevand echoed Patterson’s views. He said he is concerned about a lack of “critical analysis of what’s happening with the folks that are promoting the Olympics...especially the impacts RBC is having in parts of Canada with their investment in the Tar Sands.”

Noting the problematic nature of corporate domination of the Olympics, Labow offered an alternative: “I’d be fascinated to see what would happen to the Olympics if they had to work on a smaller budget and rely more on the infrastructure of communities within the city to embrace and host, as opposed to outside money pushing products that really impact our health and vitality.”



Street medics hope for the best, prepare for the worst

by Andy Crosby

Rusty, a medic with 25 years of experience, spent Thursday prepping with his comrades to support the anti-Olympics demonstrations planned over the upcoming days. He expressed that they were not looking for conflict and sincerely hoped that they would not have to treat any injuries. However, like others, he does expect that if violence does occur, it will be initiated by the police.

If VISU officers behave anything like the police at the recent G20 summit in London, medics and demonstrators will need protective headgear (there were multiple instances of blunt force trauma from police truncheons and one police-related death). Medics will be supplied with gloves and should wear knee pads as treating multiple people on the ground throughout the day can do damage to the knees. Medics are also required to constantly evolve their tactics as the use of police “skip rounds”, foam pellets designed to bounce off the ground and hit protesters in the legs, are becoming more commonplace. They are dangerous for medics who are often kneeling with their faces close to the ground while treating people.

When asked how demonstrators can identify medics, Rusty explained that, “the medics will be wearing arm bands and patches on the back of their jackets, usually carrying medic kits, and a lot will have tuques with a medic cross on it.”

Anti-Olympics activists and their supporters will be hitting the streets today in what will be the first of many street convergences. The medics won’t be far behind and must be ready for the worst. As Rusty proclaims, “team up with other people and look out for each other. The state doesn’t seem to care about us but we need to care about each other.”

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UBC Protest cont.

fanie Ratjen, Program Director for the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) Legal Observers, after her team had debriefed the events of the evening.

“I have yet to review all the tapes and write the report, but there were a few cases where people said they were pushed, and one woman said she was thrown by police,” she said.

Vancouverite and UBC student Aylom Kone said he was protesting because the torch is symbolic of the displacement of people, gentrification and surveillance in Vancouver because of the Games. These, he said, will last long after the Games have left.

“It’s a question of economics. It’ll cost more for the city to take the cameras down, so they’re not going to,” he said. “In the case of the Downtown Eastside, this means an increased surveillance of people’s private lives, where a lot of people live in public, on the street.”

Camille Barth, a UBC arts student from Los Angeles, said she was there to cheer on the torch, but she heard from friends that the Olympics was diverting money from women’s shelters, and her dad told her the LA Times reported money being taken from homeless

shelters because of the Olympics.

But, she said, “The Olympics is the Olympics.” For her, the torch represents hope, and attaining the unattainable through perseverance.

Miranda Mann, a field hockey player and UBC human kinetics student from Vancouver Island, said the torch is inspirational because athletes dedicate their lives to the love of sport.

Kone said he believed the reason so many people support the torch relay is because the whole story is not getting out to people.

“First, criticism is shut down. Public media is not exposing people to the things that would probably make them question the Olympics. Second, there is a large population of Vancouverites working for VANOC – people who, for economic reasons, even though they are opposed to the Olympics, can’t not work when they get the opportunity. So it’s a conflict.”

Organizers of the demonstration were pleased with the turnout, especially, they said, given the challenges of organizing on such a large campus where students tend to be disengaged with movements such as resistance to the Olympics.

PROTEST TIP:

It is rumoured that the police being deployed to confront the convergence over the next few days will be armed with tear-gas.

Frontline Voices cont.

ence on Olympic greenwashing. “They did not look at the forest loss, the tree loss, the impact on wetlands.”

“When we calculate all of that,” Muller concludes, “the games represent a much larger carbon and ecological imprint than what has been publicly stated by VANOC.” This ecological imprint is most clearly seen in Whistler, the Olympic site 125 km north of Vancouver, according to Pina Belperio of Whistlerwatch.org and the Council of Canadians. This area has seen their last urban forest cut down, 70 per cent of their wetlands lost, and thousands of trees cut down in preparation for the games.

“Probably the biggest impact has been at the Callaghan Valley, which is known to most of the outside world as the Whistler Olympic Park,” said Belperio. “That area used to be primarily old growth and second growth forest and to date the estimates that we’ve seen are a loss of totalling 100,000 trees or more. The area has been opened to development and there is talk that the area will become a four-season report following the Games.”

This sort of periphery development promoted by the 2010 Olympics is a major concern for Kanahus Pelki of the Secwepemc First Nation, who delivered a message from her

people about the threats posed by the industrial boom sought by the BC government.

“Gordon Campbell has been quoted as saying that the spinoffs of the Olympics are something that BC can’t even imagine,” said Pelki. “These investors and industries are creating major negative impacts on our territories. The territories that we continue to depend on for our traditional food and medicine harvesting. We depend on these glacier areas for our water.”

Kanahus explained how the world’s largest sockeye salmon run in the Adam’s River is threatened by lead and zinc mining as part of this investment boom. All seasons resorts have also threatened sensitive ecosystems on which her community relies for fresh water.

“The Canadian Government is using the Olympics as a big advertisement that our lands are open for business,” Kanahus charged. “But we want the world to know that our lands are not for sale here in BC. Our lands here are unsundered, unceded indigenous territories - we have never given up our land.”

Eriel Deranger of the Fort Chipewyan First Nation and a campaigner for the Rainforest Action Network, highlighted the role of Olympic Sponsors in destroying Native lands and disrespecting Indigenous rights.

“RBC (Royal Bank of Canada), the leading financier of Tar Sands and a top Olympic sponsor, continues to profit from the erosion of First Nations and human rights. They are saying that they will not implement a policy that respects the model of free prior and informed consent.”

Foregoing Indigenous people’s right to say ‘no’ to development that threatens their way of life, the Olympics sponsors and Tar Sands developers favor a system of carbon offsets to ‘green’ their activities. Muller explains the dangers this false solution presents:

“The reality is that you cannot offset or mitigate the horrific impacts on human and ecological health that are attached to the massive development that the 2010 Olympic Games represent and, even more insidious, you cannot offset or mitigate the massive destruction to human health and ecological harm that is represented by the dozens of corporate sponsors of the Olympics.”

Olympic sponsors have invested millions of dollars on a green smokescreen to hide their destructive projects - but those who travelled here to speak about the real impacts of the Games proved that they can’t hide the massive devastation of the Tar Sands and other projects any more than they can hide resistance to the Olympics.

Corporate Spotlight:

2008 profits: Unknown

\$100 million sponsorship, Official Department Store Partner.



The Hudson’s Bay Company is the oldest corporation in North America. It was active in the British colonization of Canada, building forts and claiming land on behalf of Great Britain. HBC boss George Simpson built Fort Vancouver in present day Washington State in 1825 “... to identify our claim to the soil and the trade with [George Vancouver’s] discovery of the river and coast on behalf of Great Britain.” Today HBC operates Zellers, The Bay, Home Outfitters, Lord & Taylor and Fields. It is a private company owned by US businessman Richard Baker. Historical Slogan: “Pro pelle cutem: a skin for a skin.”