



photo: Sandra Cuffe

Rain can't stop solidarity rally

by Sandra Cuffe

VANCOUVER - A diverse crowd gathered outside the central branch of the Vancouver Public Library Jan. 29 to express support for people's movements in Egypt, Tunisia, and throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Local organizers and residents from the Egyptian and other communities, as well as anti-war activists, addressed the rally. Many children were in attendance, and many of the messages centred on struggles today for the future of the children.

Passionate chants kept spirits high despite heavy rain. Rally speakers emphasized that "the new awakening in the Arab world has been noticed," and that the inspiration for the uprising of people in the streets throughout the region was the movement and victory in Tunisia. Others noted that the movements demanding change are not happening through political parties, but in the streets.

The Vancouver rally was one of hundreds of solidarity actions around the world.

'Silence deafening'

BC's Missing Women Commission of Inquiry



Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside speak out at inquiry public forum.

photo: Tami Starlight

by Sandra Cuffe

Passionate criticism and painful stories rang out at two "Community Engagement Forums" held in Vancouver and Prince George, leading up to this year's Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Outspoken Indigenous women spoke up to demand justice for beloved family members and friends who have been disappeared or murdered.

More than 100 people gathered at the Japanese Hall in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) on Jan. 19. The Commission's process, content, and the naming of Wally Oppal as commissioner were subject to passionate criticism and scrutiny by those who have been demanding justice for relatives, friends, and colleagues for decades.

The terms of reference of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry were repeatedly called into question. The inquiry into the way investigations of disappearances of women in the DTES were handled by police deals with investigations between January 23, 1997 and February 5, 2002. Furthermore, the infamous Highway of Tears - Highway 16 running east-west in northern BC - is not even mentioned by name in the terms of reference, despite the fact that young women, almost all of them First Nations, have been going missing along that highway for decades.

One reality that has continued for decades, with the exception of the sensationalist coverage of the Pickton case, was an almost complete failure of the police, media, or government to take reports of missing and murdered women seriously, or to do anything about it.

Many women denounced that the institutional racism of police forces and other institutions resulted in abuse and derision of family members who reported their daughters, mothers, sisters, and others missing.

"The silence was definitely deafening. We could hear it," said Dianne George.

"We understand the dissatisfaction that has been shown here today," said Commissioner Wally Oppal. "We want to see constructive changes made."

As the Community Engagement Forum came to a close, it was clear that relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours of the missing and murdered women in the DTES have been proposing constructive changes for years. Beyond their critiques and proposals for the Commission of Inquiry, which is set to begin within a few months, they continue to organize and mobilize in the Downtown Eastside, in northern BC, and across the country.

The 20th annual Women's Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Women will be held on February 14th - Valentine's Day - again this year in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Relatives, supporters, and others from all over the country will joining the Walk4Justice again this summer, walking across the country to honour the missing and murdered Indigenous women from coast to coast, to raise awareness, and to demand justice. The Walk4Justice will reach Ottawa on Sept. 19.

SUPPORT

local, independent news!



**For as little as \$5 a month,
you can own your media!**

Become a sustainer now: www.mediacoop.ca/join

Vancouver Media Co-op vancouver.mediacoop.ca

For the complete versions of these stories and much more visit vancouver.mediacoop.ca



SFU students and supporters on their way to confronting the Board of Governors.

photo: murray bush

SFU Board nailed on dirty money

by Murray Bush

VANCOUVER - More than 100 activists and students showed up outside a Simon Fraser University Board of Governors meeting in downtown Vancouver Jan. 27 to protest the university's involvement with notorious human rights abuser Goldcorp.

The Canadian mining company donated millions of dollars to SFU in exchange for the name 'Goldcorp Centre for The Arts.' Students against the donation called on the BoG to hear the community's concerns about Goldcorp. SFU Against Goldcorp and Gentrification has repeatedly asked for Board accountability on taking Goldcorp's 'dirty money' but the Board insists the issue is closed for discussion.

Protesters passed signed leaflets on Goldcorp's human rights record through the locked doors of the Board's meeting room. The members of the Board broke up their meeting and left the building amid calls from the crowd to listen to their concerns.

EVENTS

Thursday, Feb 3 7:30pm: John Zerzan speaking at 12th & Clark (1284 East 12th)

Tuesday, Feb 8 7pm: The EcoVillage Show - VcommunityTV office (#305B - 1067 Granville St)

Wednesday, Feb 9 6pm: Premiere of Strength, Survival, Sisterhood -Vivo Media Arts Centre (1965 Main St)

Monday, Feb 14 FEB 1-14: 20th Annual Womens Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Women (Various locations and times)

10 Sites campaign hits the street

by Tami Starlight

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE - members of the Downtown Eastside Neighborhood Council (DNC) took their fight to the Pantages Theatre recently, at 152 E. Hastings.

"We are in front of the Pantages Theatre because this is the front line in the fight against gentrification," said Ivan Drury of the DNC.

Approximately 10 DNC members were in attendance and DTES community members signed petitions, signed up as council members and enjoyed the coffee and cookies.

The DNC is asking owner Mark Williams to reduce his asking price on the Pantages theatre and the four adjacent buildings so the City of Vancouver can purchase the whole lot (all the sites he owns next to the Pantages) and turn it into 100% social housing.

Dr. Margo Leigh Butler, who works in the DTES with UBC's Humanities 101, agreed with the petition for the 10 sites.

"The 10 Sites for Social Housing campaign reads as a 'to do' list for the City of Vancouver to make good on its promises," she said. "When the 10 sites campaign succeeds, many people living on very low incomes will have the housing they need in the downtown eastside, their neighborhood."



Outside Pantages Theatre.

photo: Tami Starlight

BIG

lies about

TALL

buildings

by Joseph Jones

VANCOUVER - Unnecessary new tall buildings threaten Vancouver's livability and sustainability.

Despite a snowy evening, a forum on Jan. 11 brought a capacity crowd of more than 100 to the Vancouver Central Library. During the evening several people remarked that the charged atmosphere recalled the 1970s grassroots uprising against politicians' love of freeways.

Event sponsor CityHallWatch has already issued a brief report on the meeting. Randy Helten, a mainstay of West End Neighbours, used his opening remarks to stress the on-

the-fly nature of the rough-edged event. For two to three hours, people hungry for perspective on backroom stealth planning paid close attention. Attendance continued to grow.

Three brief talks rounded out the formal presentation. Jean Swanson called attention to the Downtown Eastside's own community vision, and that area's ability to accommodate an additional 9,000 persons under current allowed density. Proposed height measures would destroy that vision. Residents are now fighting both for the life of their community and for their own lives...

Read this article in full online at vancouver.mediacoop.ca mediacoop.ca