

Cheam argues Indigenous sovereignty in court



Fraser River 1906

by Oshipeya

CHILLIWACK - Several Indigenous people from the Cheam Reserve of the Pilalt/Sto:lo people appeared in court in Chilliwack March 9 to face charges related to defiance of government fishing regulations and to present evidence of their sovereign Indigenous right to fish.

Several people from Vancouver, Indigenous and supporters, travelled to Chilliwack to show support and build solidarity, which the Cheam people said they appreciated.

One person from Cheam was taken into custody in the court room in the morning on another fishing charge and was to be released on probation and conditional discharge afterwards.

Evidence was presented by a Cheam member, without the presence of a lawyer, of Indigenous traditions, family ties and teachings handed down through the generations regarding fishing in the area. The immensely destructive impact of residential schools on indigenous traditions was also presented.

A solidarity message from people of the Katzie reserve and information on their salmon sovereignty blockade of the Golden Ears Bridge on February 13 as part of the anti-Olympic convergence was also shared with the Cheam people at the courthouse and was well received.

The judge put the trial over to May 25, setting aside three days for evidence to be presented by Cheam members. More support and solidarity then is requested.




BC Budget: The Chopping Block

- Funding for arts, culture, sports - lowest in past 10 years.
- Grants for daycares and preschools - dropped by 50 per cent.
- Cut \$75 per month shelter allowance for adults between 60-64 on welfare or disability.
- Cut \$20 monthly bottled water supplement for people with compromised immune systems.
- Additional barriers to Nutritional Supplement for people with illness on welfare or disability.

Meanwhile, Ottawa splurges on prisons

The federal government has introduced new laws to put more people in jail, and keep them there longer. Ottawa's spending on capital costs (construction, land, buildings and equipment) related to jails is expected jump to \$329.4 million in 2010-11 from \$230.8 million in 2009-10. This represents a 43-per-cent increase.

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EVENTS

Sunday, March 21
11 am at the Braid SkyTrain station in New Westminster. Anti-Racist gathering against white pride/neo nazi parade. Info on NOII contingency: noi-van@resist.ca
2-4 pm Grandview Park, Commercial at Charles, Vancouver. (Day before) World Water Day event with folk/roots band Headwater. Sponsors: CUPE, Council of Canadians

Monday, March 22
World Water Day at 4 pm, 525 Proctor St, Williams Lake. World Water Day Rally to Defend Teztan Biny. Info on transport: hgrewal@canadians.org
Submit your ideas or events to BalACLAVA! vmc@mediacoop.ca

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The remains of Vancouver's First Social Housing Project



Photos by Chris Bevacqua more at flickr.com/photos/nofutureface

By Isaac Oommen

VANCOUVER - Broken pieces of wood and splinters cover the ground where buildings once stood in Little Mountain. What was once a social housing project located by Main and 37th is now just rubble.

Its residents coerced and threatened into moving, the project now lies awaiting condo development after the city sold it off in what city councillor Ellen Woodsworth called a blatant example of public land being taken by private interests.

"Little Mountain was the best of social housing, affordable, family, lots of community space, green and social active," said Woodsworth. "Today it is a muddy decimated 15 acres of public space sold to the highest corporate bidder by the provincial government."

Little Mountain's fate may very well be that of more social housing projects in the coming years as the province looks for ways to recoup a \$1.7 billion deficit. This doesn't bode well for the thousands of people in Vancouver who are homeless, or for the 12,000 people on a provincial housing waitlist.



Federal government ignores rights record, revives Canada-Colombia 'free trade' deal

By Dawn Paley

OTTAWA - The Conservative government tabled the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement in Parliament March 10, reviving a deal many thought better left for dead.

Renewed interest in the deal comes weeks after an Amnesty International report found Indigenous peoples in Colombia are at risk of being exterminated by state forces, right-wing paramilitary groups and guerrilla organizations.

But Canadian officials are ignoring Amnesty's report, focusing instead on

economic aspects of the deal.

News of movement towards an agreement comes together with the newest gruesome figures relating to murders of union members last year. Colombia's National Labour School reports that 45 unionists were killed in 2009.

In February, Amnesty spokesperson Kathy Price said the situation of Indigenous peoples in Colombia is nothing short of an emergency. At least 114 Indigenous people were murdered last year, while thousands more were subjected to threats, abuse, torture and displacement.

Bus Riders' Union calls foul

By Isaac Oommen

VANCOUVER - Members of the Bus Riders' Union have leafleted Canada Line stations to stress the urgent need for buses in Metro Vancouver.

"We are not against transit, but against the way they have gone around the priorities set out," said Aiyanas Ormond of the Union.

"A government study showed that the main priority for Vancouver and BC was more buses, then the Evergreen Line, and finally the Canada Line."

The Canada Line nevertheless was rushed to completion before the 2010 Winter Olympics began to impress tourists arriving at the airport. "75 per cent of transit users are on the bus system at some point of the day," Ormond said.

"We need about 500 more buses added to the fleet before anything else."