

Lower Island NEWS

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NDP federal leader speaks in Victoria



Photo by Heather Tufts

NDP leader Jack Layton speaks at a nomination meeting held by Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca New Democrats the evening of January 23. Randall Garrison was acclaimed. Earlier, Layton addressed a crowd of more than 200 members and supporters at a fundraising luncheon held at the Ambrosia Conference and Event Centre in Victoria.



Photo by Heather Tufts

Also speaking at the event were (l-r) Randall Garrison, NDP candidate for MP Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca; Jean Crowder, MP for Cowichan-Nanaimo; Edith Loring-Kuhanga, candidate for MP for MP in Saanich-Gulf Islands; and Denise Savoie, MP for Victoria. Savoie, Crowder and Loring-Kuhanga were also at the evening meeting at which Garrison was nominated.

For more photos, see page 2

NDP Leader Jack Layton was met by a full house and a standing ovation from over 200 New Democrats and supporters when he arrived at Victoria's Ambrosia Conference and Event Centre Sunday, January 23, to attend a fund-raising luncheon sponsored by all the lower Island NDP riding associations.

Following a buffet luncheon, Victoria MP Denise Savoie took the microphone to explain that Layton had been delayed by the morning fog, and instead of flying over from Vancouver, was taking the ferry to Nanaimo and would arrive shortly.

She introduced all the politicians present, including Jean Crowder, MP for Cowichan-Nanaimo; Edith Loring-Kuhanga, NDP candidate for election in Saanich-Gulf Islands; and Randall Garrison, who was acclaimed as NDP candidate for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca at a separate meeting Sunday evening, also attended by Layton.

Savoie talked briefly about her work and successes in Parliament, and mentioned that January was the fifth anniversary of her election as a Member of Parliament.

"I have challenged the government to act on a range of issues," she said, "and have worked hard for the people of Victoria."

Asked to speak, Loring-Kuhanga first recognized the Songees Nation, on whose sacred territory the meeting was being held. She then explained why she had got involved in politics, and spoke of the values she was raised with

"I am looking forward to joining the NDP caucus in Ottawa after the next election, as they are the hardest working.

Garrison then spoke about the need for a living wage policy, and told the audience that as a City of Esquimalt councillor, he had brought the concept forward. As a result, a living wage is now a principle for that community.

He also mentioned the diversity of candidates being nominated by the NDP in Greater Victoria, pointing out that one is a francophone woman, one a First Nations woman, and one a gay man.

On his arrival, Layton immediately took the microphone to laud Savoie for her work in Parliament, and for her constituency work, including leading opposition to the mega marina in Victoria harbour.

He also recognized former MP, now BC MLA, Dawn Black for stepping forward to fill the position of interim Opposition Leader in BC, and for helping to bring the party together again.

Talking about federal politics, he commented that attack ads are offensive. "We are ready for the election," he said, pointing out that people feel that Ottawa is broke, and out of touch.

"Millions of people are living in poverty," he said. "We could lift them out of poverty for the cost of the tax cut to the corporations."

His comments brought the audience to their feet several times, with prolonged applause.

At the end, Layton was asked to act as auctioneer for a number of donated goods, including a night at a bed and breakfast on Salt Spring Island. A lively bidding session then took place under his direction

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More photos from NDP leader Layton’s visit



Left, Randall Garrison makes his acceptance speech.

Photo by Heather Tufts



Above, Layton chats with Saanich-Gulf Islands candidate Edith Loring-Kuhanga.

Photo by Doreen Marion Gee



Left, NDP members anxiously await Layton’s arrival.

Photo by Doreen Marion Gee

It’s time to put the public interest first.

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AUTHORIZED BY KATHY PALMER, FINANCIAL AGENT



NDP leadership debate tour to take place in March and April

BURNABY -- BC NDP leadership candidates will head out on an eight-stop leadership debate tour in March and April as part of the BC NDP leadership election.

“We’re very excited to be heading out on the road with the candidates for leader of our party,” said Jan O’Brien, BC NDP Provincial Secretary. “We’ll be stopping in major centres across BC so that every New Democrat, and every British Columbia voter will have a chance to meet our candidates.”

The tour stops include:

- Kelowna - March 21
- Kamloops - March 22
- Nelson - March 24

- Qualicum - March 28
- Prince George - April 4
- Terrace - April 6

Events in Victoria and Metro Vancouver, as well as the issue theme for each event, will be announced in the coming days. One of the leadership debates will also be broadcast via internet video to allow members who are unable to attend to participate.

The BC New Democratic Party will be electing their next leader through a province-wide, one-member one-vote election on April 17. A leadership assembly will take place at the Vancouver Convention Centre on that day.

Leadership election date set by BC NDP for April 17

BURNABY -- The BC NDP Provincial Council has voted to hold a leadership election on April 17, 2011. A leadership assembly will take place at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

“British Columbians are ready for a change from the reckless policies of the BC Liberals, and New Democrats are moving forward with our leadership election,” said Jan O’Brien, provincial secretary of the BC NDP. “It’s an exciting time to be a New Democrat in British Columbia, and we’re looking forward to a competitive leadership election.”

The leadership election will take place through a one-member, one-vote election process where each member of the NDP will have an opportunity to vote. Members of the BC NDP will be able to vote via telephone or internet during the leadership assembly, or via advance voting.

Individuals must be members of the BC NDP for 90 days prior to the Election Day in order to be eligible to vote in the leadership race.

“Setting the date and location for the leadership election is a key step in the leadership election process,” said O’Brien. “Over the coming weeks we will continue to develop a comprehensive set of rules to govern the election, and we will ensure that this leadership election is run in a fair, transparent, and accessible manner.”

The Provincial Council ratified the appointment of a five-member leadership rules committee. The committee is comprised of:

Brian Gardiner, former BC NDP provincial secretary and former Member of Parliament

Colin Gabelmann, former BC Attorney General

Lorraine Shore, BC NDP vice president and lawyer

Marianne Alto, BC NDP vice president and Victoria City councillor (ex-officio)

Jan O’Brien, provincial secretary (ex-officio)

MLA Dawn Black was ratified as interim leader by the BC NDP Provincial Council on the recommendation of the BC NDP caucus in early 2011.

Leadership nomination rules will ensure fair, transparent election

BURNABY -- The BC NDP Provincial Executive approved January 13 rules for leadership nominations that will help ensure a fair, modern, and competitive leadership election.

“The Leadership Rules Committee produced a set of thoughtful, fair, and transparent Candidate Nominations Rules that will help set the stage for an exciting Leadership Election,” said Jan O’Brien, BC NDP Provincial Secretary.

The Leadership Election rules set a number of financial rules for leadership candidates, including a \$175,000 spending limit, a \$2,500 donation limit, and a requirement that a list of campaign donors be made public prior to voting on April 17.

Candidates will be required to collect 250 nominating signatures from party members throughout BC, and to remit a \$15,000 entrance fee.

“New Democrats have long fought for electoral fairness in British Columbia, and our ideals are reflected in our candidate nomination rules,” said O’Brien.

The deadline for candidates to submit their nomination to the party is February 28. All candidates will be subject to the same approval process as MLAs, which requires final signoff by the party’s Provincial Executive.

A committee of five senior party members, including a former BC Attorney General and former BC NDP Provincial Secretary, developed the candidate nomination rules.

The leadership election will take place on April 17 using a modern one-member one-vote election system that will take place online and by telephone. Detailed voting rules will be developed in the coming weeks.

To see the leadership campaign rules, go to www.bcndp.com, and click on Leadership 2011, then Nomination Rules.

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Authorized by Lila Wing, Financial Agent

My questions to leadership hopefuls

By Claire Trevana

The leadership elections in both of our leading political parties are gearing up with the BC Liberals voting in February and the BC NDP on April 17. It will be a brave New Year with the distinct prospect of change and renewal to the political landscape.

Leadership contenders, past and present, say that one of the joys of running is that it enables a politician to say what they really believe in, and to have it widely heard. As a member of a political party, you subscribe to overarching common values. In the NDP, a fundamental basic value is equity – traditionally in terms of social and economic issues but increasingly this has been embracing environmental values too.

I will be challenging those running for leader on their interpretation of this fundamental principle. I am a firm believer that equity is achieved through redistribution. I believe in a progressive tax system in which those who earn more, pay more.

Equity can be achieved through social tools: through a strong social safety net through which no one is allowed to slip. I will ask candidates whether they are willing to ensure our welfare system works in the realities of the 21st century, that benefits reflect the cost of living and are not designed, as now, to force people into poverty. And I will challenge them to assess a massive investment in public and co-op housing across the province which would provide an economic boost and address a dire social need.

Public education is a great way of assisting people in all societies. BC has a great school system, but I would ask candidates whether they are prepared to look at three key factors: a comprehensive early learning and care program for families with children too young for school; changing the funding formula to ensure rural schools can provide equality in education; and, that post secondary education be provided free to BC residents on the proviso that a graduate commits to working in the province for five years.

Healthcare is always the bogeyman when it comes to public costs and I will ask how the candidates will address the cost issue logically to ensure the integrity of our public system is maintained and that it benefits everyone in the province. That may mean looking at the introduction of more health centres with all medical staff on salary; it could mean using new technologies to reduce people's need to travel for care; and, it could mean expanding the use of nurse practitioners.

BC is a resource rich province – we traditionally have made money from the wealth of our environment. But I would hope that everyone is aware that we cannot treat our environment simply as a commodity. Without securing and safeguarding our environment we have no future. I will challenge the candidates on how they intend to address climate change, food security and environmental practices. I will ask them how they will work with communities to make the necessary shift to new ways of living and doing business which makes a smaller carbon footprint.

Likewise I will want to hear whether the candidates agree that public resources should be held in public hands and used for the public good. For me that means our forests, our ferries, our rivers, our hydro production and distribution. It means assessing what we hold in crown lands and what those crown lands contain both above and below ground. It means acknowledging that benefits from the exploitation of our resources accrue to the people of BC not just to the shareholders of large corporations and income trusts.

There are many problems facing our communities, worker' rights have been eroded, seniors are struggling, families daily face difficulties, businesses are dealing with a myriad of concerns. A leader of a political party who may become premier needs to have ideas on how to rectify these issues. But a leader also needs a vision and the courage to act on that vision. It is a huge responsibility – but an exciting time.

Claire Trevana is MLA for North Island.

Dawn Black named as interim leader

The New Democrat caucus unanimously recommended January 19 that New Westminster MLA Dawn Black as their candidate for the position of interim Leader of BC's Official Opposition.

And in an electron vote the same night, the Provincial Council of the BC NDP voted unanimously to ratify Black as interim leader.

"Dawn is a respected leader in our party, and brings her tenacity and experience to everything she does," said Moe Sihota, president of the BC NDP. "With Dawn's record of service as an elected official and her deep roots within the party, she's the right choice to lead the party and the caucus before the new leader takes on."

Black was elected as MLA for New Westminster on May 12, 2009. Since her election she has served as opposition critic for Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, fighting for affordable, accessible education and quality skills and apprenticeship opportunities for British Columbians.

Black also served three terms as a Member of Parliament, where she advocated on behalf of her constituents for federal funding for seismic upgrades in BC schools, flood assistance for residents living near the Fraser River and improvements to Employment Insurance.

Black lives with her husband Peter in New Westminster. They have three sons and seven grandchildren.

Why they want to be leader of the NDP...

The *Lower Island News* asked all the candidates why they want to be elected leader of the BC New Democratic Party. Five replied.

Turn to pages 18-19 to see their answers.

Another way to choose a leader for the NDP

BC's two principal political parties are in the throws of selecting new leaders. Both campaigns are launched and we have two months of witnessing the interminable jockeying for advantage and approval. These personality contests don't serve us well, and we desperately need another way to select a leader.

We believe the NDP can do politics differently in BC. We could expect a ground swell of approval from regular types who want to escape the scourge of cynicism that is so pervasive. Into this challenge steps the *Lower Island News*.

Here is one way to begin a process of renewal – vote on the desired characteristics you want to see in a NDP leader and future premier of the province. Simple, but it could influence the process between now and April 17, the date when a new leader will be chosen.

We are providing you with a survey, which we ask you to send back to the paper by March 15, in time to get it into our next edition. We promise to publish the results as well as send them to each candidate prior to the vote. Not only will this offer each candidate a candid appraisal of the leadership qualities we expect in a new leader and potential premier, but it also will establish another way to select a leader which could appeal to the general public, and a vivid example of how the NDP is different than the BC Liberals.

Please fill out the survey below which we've prepared. Once completed, please:

1) Mail it to us at Box 311, 2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8,

2) Fax it to us at 250-360-1970

3) Scan it and email it to us at dale_young@telus.net

Whatever way you send it to us, we will do the work of tabulating and reporting the results in the April issue, which will be mailed to readers before the leadership election takes place. Simple but effective. – Dale Perkins

SURVEY

Chose the characteristics needed by a NDP leader and future premier:

Respondents can check 'Yes', 'No' or 'Undecided', then rate the item from –
1 (not important) 2 (less important) 3 (important) 4 (very important)

1. Someone who is a good speaker.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
- 2 Someone whose social/democratic principles 'trump' political expediency.

Yes ____, No ____, Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
3. Someone who is egalitarian in their values.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
4. Someone who is a good manager.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
5. Someone who can unite the Party.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
6. Someone who will take responsibility for their actions.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
7. Someone who is physically attractive.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
8. Someone who is a good listener.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
9. Someone who has a long history with the NDP.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____
10. Someone who will respect the policy initiatives of the Party and implement them as expeditiously as possible.

Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Rating (1 - 4) ____

Layton meets with Aboriginal and environmental community

SAANICH – While on his way to attend a fundraising luncheon in Victoria Sunday, January 23, NDP leader Jack Layton had a coffee meeting with local leaders from the Aboriginal and environmental community of the Saanich Peninsula.

The meeting, hosted by Saanich-Gulf Islands NDP MP candidate Edith Loring-Kuhanga, focused on the importance of strong collaborative effort to protect the BC coast from oil-related disasters.

While Layton was unable to attend

the morning meeting in person due to fog-related flight complications, he was able to join in on the discussion via his cell phone.

"I am very encouraged that there is a willingness for all of us to work together on this important issue," said Loring-Kuhanga. "I believe that our collective efforts will help protect our waters and our coastal communities from an aggressive industry."

The local leaders were pleased with the inaugural meeting, and said that they are looking forward to meeting as a group again. – Michele Murphy

Mike Farnworth is committed to ending child poverty in BC, and to holding the first Commission on education in more than 20 years.

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“Despots themselves do not deny that freedom is excellent; only they desire it for themselves alone, and they maintain that everybody else is altogether unworthy of it.”
--Alexis de Tocqueville - French historian and politician 1805-59

Our view:

As we go to press, it is impossible to forecast the outcome of events in Egypt but they promise the most momentous change in Middle East politics for 60 years. The outstanding feature of the protests and demands for change in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan, is that they are home-grown grass roots movements driven by courageous people.

Although, sadly, there has been loss of life, it is so far small, compared to the outcome of imposed regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan. As one Egyptian protestor said to the BBC, “We don’t care what America wants – it’s what we want.” The US, having propped up Mubarak for years, supplying him with billions of dollars’ worth of armaments, is now in the bizarre position of publicly admitting that they backed the wrong man.

Who did successive US Presidents think the armaments supplied to Egypt would, or should be used against? Egypt’s neighbour Israel is also armed to the teeth with US weaponry and, as we noted recently, the US plans to sell \$60 billion of armaments to Saudi Arabia. The billions pumped into the Mubarak regime to support US interests, were used to suppress Egyptian freedom and democracy.

The US and its allies must stop meddling in other peoples’ affairs and supporting dictators as an instrument of foreign policy and provide real help to people, such as poverty elimination, health, education and agriculture. A healthy, well educated population is the best defence against extremism in any country.

On January 31, Stephen Harper said that in Egypt, “Canada is seeking a transition towards the basic values of freedom, democracy and human rights.” His pontifications will be largely ignored by Egyptians who have been seeking that for the last 50 years with no help from Canada or anyone else and, like the protesters said, they don’t care what we want, it’s what they want that counts!

Not to be outdone, Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon said, “It’s not Canada’s job to meddle in internal politics.” Really? Then what precisely are we doing in Afghanistan and what was his colleague, Conservative MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands Gary Lunn thinking of, when he called for Canada to join the US and UK in the invasion of Iraq a few years ago?

Unfortunately it comes back to unrestrained capitalism and Dwight D. Eisenhower’s warning of the “military-industrial complex”. War is very good business for big corporations and in its absence, the cultivation of dictators is the next best thing, especially if they control strategic resources such as oil. If the dictator has no money, that’s no problem – the US, British, French or Chinese taxpayer will foot the bill in the guise of “military aid”. Even if the donor state doesn’t have the money (like the US with its trillion dollar deficit), it can be borrowed, and the donor nation goes (further) into debt. The winners are still the arms manufacturers and associated financial “fixers” and this has a parallel in Canada.

The issue of why the Lockheed F-35 fighter is actually needed, for what role, and how effective it will be compared to other aircraft, has long since been forgotten -- if it was ever seriously considered. It is now all about what the F-35 can do for the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada.

For totally different reasons, Canada was also front page news here and abroad -- on the issue of cruelty to animals, for which Canada in general and BC in particular, have a dismal record compared to other developed nations. The brutal slaughter of 100 sled dogs, no longer considered useful after Gordon Campbell’s Winter Olympics circus, shocked people here and worldwide -- BBC World carried the story globally.

It highlights the deeper issue -- that many people and politicians don’t care about other sentient creatures and our ambivalent attitude to animal cruelty. Slaughtering 100 dogs is (rightly) greeted with horror and revulsion, yet bludgeoning thousands of seal pups to death each year is presented by government as a part of traditional “Canadian culture” and the legitimate “harvesting of the resource” – albeit one that feels pain and suffering.

Similarly, it is wrong to shoot dogs or domestic cats but it is acceptable for trophy hunters on Vancouver Island to chase cougars up trees with packs of dogs and shoot them out of the trees. It is time for us and politicians to be consistent and stop putting things out of mind because they are not convenient.

Although Gordon Campbell immediately set up a task force to look at cruelty to dogs, underprivileged children continue to get short shrift. Despite another damning report from Children’s Representative, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Children’s Minister Mary Polak responded with the bizarre statement that “BC doesn’t need a plan to reduce poverty”!!

Meanwhile, given the Liberal Party contenders for the premier’s job, we cannot expect things to improve any time soon. George Abbott prattles on about helping seniors, yet failed miserably to do anything while he was Health Minister. Christy Clark’s only real policy is “to stop the NDP getting power”. In other words, to ensure the minimum wage is not increased, continue privatizing health care and do nothing about unaffordable education and child poverty.

Finally we have the astonishing news that despite the \$349 million price tag for the new Jubilee Hospital Patient Care Centre (now incessantly referred to by VIHA as a “facility”) the government and VIHA appear to have forgotten (deliberately?) that they need things like beds for the patients! The announcement of the imminent opening was accompanied by a campaign to raise \$25 million in donations to equip the building so that it can actually be used for patient care!! The failure of VIHA and the Health Ministry to budget for this, is unforgivable and a dereliction of duty. --DJO

We welcome your letters to the editor, as well as articles and reviews, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to our progressive readers.

Please mail them to the Editor, at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, email them to dale_young@telus.net, or phone 250-384-7621.

The DEADLINE to submit material for the next issue is Friday, March 25.

The Lower Island NEWS

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As others see it

Why it is necessary to take back control over money creation – and why you should care!

Lack of sufficient funds is the fundamental problem facing all community efforts to reduce poverty and, in general, raise living standards for all

By Richard Priestman

In 2009 Canadians paid \$160 million a day on public debt interest – every day, all year long, which amounts to about \$5 per day for every man, woman and child, or \$20 a day for a family of four. Some people find it hard to believe these numbers. They can’t see where we are spending \$160 million a day, but the figures are correct and easily verified through the *Canadian Economic Observer: Historical Statistical Supplement* (1). It means that this money is not available for other uses. It means that our taxes are higher than necessary.

Our governments use these huge costs to justify cutbacks and wage freezes. Prime Minister Harper wants to reduce the federal deficit, but doing that would make the recession worse according to Jim Stanford. (2) We need to **increase** the deficit, NOT with private interest-bearing dollars but dollars borrowed from our public bank, the Bank of Canada, at zero cost to the federal government. This money would be injected into the economy through investments in infrastructure, hospitals, schools, universities, recreation facilities, social support programs, the environment, industrial research and more. The wages received by those working in these areas would be spent in the community; local businesses and farmers would be strengthened; but **most** importantly, the **influence** of large corporations, banks and other wealthy financiers on government policy decisions would be **reduced**.

The knee-jerk reaction to the suggestion that government borrow from its own Bank is that it would cause run-away inflation. Since for over 30 years our government has *not* borrowed significantly from its own bank, but primarily from private sources at interest, we might assume that there has been little inflation. We know, of course, that is not true. Just think for a moment what a house cost 30 years ago and what a similar one costs today.

“While borrowing *too much* money can lead to inflation, once the decision to borrow has been made it is no more inflationary for the government to borrow from the Bank of Canada than it is for it to borrow from private financial markets. *In fact, it is less inflationary by exactly the amount of the interest that the government saves by using its own bank.*” (3)

Could government borrowing from the Bank of Canada to finance public debt be done? **Yes**, but only by electing people to parliament who support the concept of **financing public debt with public money for investment in public infrastructure and public services**. Unfortunately, **none** of the parties in parliament will discuss these ideas publicly. None has shown a willingness to provide leadership on this issue.

So, how do we elect these people?
We ask every candidate if he or she will make a public commitment to support and promote use of the Bank of Canada to finance public debt for investment in public infrastructure and services, making it very clear to the candidates that we will only vote for those who do make this commitment.

If none of the party representatives agree to make such a commitment then we find someone to run as an independent candidate, and rally the community to support that person. Some will argue that an independent candidate has no power. But what good is it to have party representatives in Parliament who do not use their position to change the fundamental flaw in our financial system?

REFERENCES

- (1) *Canadian Economic Observer: Historical Statistical Supplement* 2009/2010 *National Accounts* Table 1.3-1 Government revenue and expenditure - Total government
Table 1.3-1 shows that interest on the public debt in 2009 amounted to \$58,669 millions or \$160.7 millions per day.
- (2) Jim Stanford: “Economic ‘recovery’ fuelled by household debt is shaky”, CCPA Monitor, July/August 2010, p.20/21: “...the efforts by Canadian governments to slash their deficits in coming years would make a bad situation far worse, if in fact private debt slows, stops or (God help us) reverses.”
- (3) Don Findlay: “There Is a Way to Reduce Taxes Without Increasing the Deficit, Causing Inflation, or Destroying Canada’s Social Programs!” 1997.

Richard Priestman is a member of the Kingston Chapter, Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform (COMER), which can be reached at 604 Aylmer Crescent, Kingston, K7M 6H1, phone 613-634-0237.

Ron reviews:

EVERYTHING WAS GOOD-BYE, by G. Basran, MOTHER TONGUE PUBLISHERS
I can’t get over how good the current crop of Indo-Canadian writers are.
This novel is an engrossing diary of a young Indo-Canadian girl recounting her steps to acceptance by her Indian families and her Anglo school friends. It’s a love and marriage story with some unique twists.
--Ron MacIsaac

Shameful behaviour by BC politician cannot be allowed

Kevin Krueger cannot be allowed to remain in politics in Canada after suggesting that Adrian Dix keep his head down lest someone take a potshot at him.

We do not allow this kind of shameful behaviour in Canadian politics and we need to stand up and say so: there have to be consequences. Apologies are nice, but the damage has already been done. Something stronger is now required.

Krueger has mouthed off one too many times. Add to this the fact that he did it the week after the appalling assassination attack in Tuscon, Arizona, and you've got to believe he knew exactly what he was doing and intended harm to Dix.

Anyone who could cast a vote for Krueger after this should be as ashamed as Krueger himself should be.

Sue Stroud, Brentwood Bay

Getting a discussion going on restoring democracy

There is something fundamentally wrong in our democratic society when something as important as the Basi-Virk scandal can be swept under the rug and "forgotten".

There is a need for some process which, if serious enough, ensures that a public inquiry is held.

The evidence of government corruption is so evident (due to the work of BC Mary, Robin Mathews and others) that not taking action to expose and correct this situation is totally unacceptable. The importance of the Basi-Virk case is the degree of corruption involved which, if exposed, would lead on to other instances -- the evidence available in the Basi-Virk case to force out the facts of government corruption.

In our democratic society in BC, in the absence of a formal process, we have to have the official opposition ensure that an inquiry be appointed. Each NDP leadership hopeful should publically announce that they will ensure that a public inquiry is held should they become leader.

In the meantime, does anyone have any ideas on how new procedure (or old established procedures) could be developed to ensure that situations such as the Basi-Virk scandal cannot be covered up?

I am interested in getting a discussion going of how We the People can counter and effectively reverse government legislation, and other actions such as the government's influence over the judiciary branch in the Basi-Virk case.

It appears that all our leaders of political

parties have been compromised and thus controlled by the Elites Behind the Throne. I am interested in putting some controls over governments to counter this.

I am interested in restoring democracy. I sense that there is a lot of support within the public to do this but no one seems to have any method of doing so.

I keep reminding myself about how citizens took over the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In BC, workers make up an overwhelmingly percentage of voters. We the People can also take over the government of BC. We cannot rely on the opposition parties to look after our interests. We must do so directly.

Gerry Masuda, Duncan

Readers interested in joining in the discussion can reach Gerry Masuda at gerry.masuda@gmail.com

The evils of unchecked power

In December I wrote about my dismal experience at the *Times Colonist* and the indignity of dealing with their not-so-professional staff. The problems persist. I have now been black-listed from our venerable daily. After 20 years of my Letters to the Editor always being published in the *Times Colonist*, my five monthly submissions have not graced their pages since last June. This happened right after I legitimately complained to the publisher and the BC Press Council Board president about the publish-

Open letter about coalitions to all Canadian MPs

I find it extraordinarily annoying to hear the constant use of the word "coalition" being used so derogatorily by the Conservative members of the House of Commons.

The House of Commons is made up at this time by four parties. There are two sides, the government and the opposition and, by the very nature of that, the opposition is an *amalgamation* of three parties. IF they were a *coalition* the government would have been *defeated* -- long ago. Even though we are stuck with this dysfunctional party system of government, we do not have to be stuck with dysfunctional speech in Parliament.

On the other hand the present government *is* a coalition of the Reform and Alliance parties masquerading under the name of Conservatives, thanks to the treachery of Peter Mackay who sold the "Conservative" name to Harper in exchange for a cabinet

position. If you doubt what I am saying, talk to Mr David Orchard who is still trying to get restitution for the deliberate breaking of the agreement made when he stood down from the leadership of the Conservative party, for the good of that party -- he thought. The agreement was that the name would not be given or sold to Harper or the Reform / Alliance "coalition".

As you on the government side cannot respect the fact that you are supposed to represent the Canadian people, which you do not, please, at least maintain an element of truth in your derogatory remarks. The Opposition is the opposition, not at this time a coalition. You are the coalition.

Consider your hands slapped by an old man, and smarten up, eh?

Jeremy Arney
Victoria

NDP is leaning too much to the Liberal side, says writer

I am p--d off with the NDP. Coming from a Social Democratic background, I find the party is leaning too much towards the Liberal side, and the Liberals right bang on the Fascist version of politics.

We are having a problem in this country because the voters are no longer interested in what is on the plate. When my father came out of the concentration camp in Germany, he made my brother and myself swear never to stop voting and to work hard to convince fellow citizens to do the same, this should keep the Fascists off the door steps.

Your *Lower Island News* is a brave attempt to steer the right course; however, I am now reading *Truth Out*, *The Tyee* and other left leaning bits of information [on the Internet]. It keeps me up to date, though when I view callous population streaming to Walmart, screaming like animals and ignoring their civil duty, I want to cry.

Five years, five lost years and many wounds made up my mind to come to this peaceful country. I am now wondering...how peaceful is it really?

Helmut Godau, Nanaimo

Friends of the Lower Island News

Thank you! Thank you! Thank You!...

...To the Friends of the Lower Island News who responded to our plea for a special donation at the end of 2010.

As you'll see below, over 19 people responded with donations, large and small, and all equally appreciated, and they saved the day for us. But we hope that more of our 3,000+ readers around Victoria and Vancouver Island will also respond and donate to help keep the paper comng and to expand our service by going online as well. Every dollar you send will be appreciated and will be well spent in the coming year.

Just so you know, everyone who writes or works for the LIN is a volunteer, and receives no pay. Our two major expenses are for printing and mailing the paper to you.

Donors during the past two months include:

John Heaney	\$100
Anonymous (Victoria)	\$ 35
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Bill Doherty	\$100
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Elizabeth Woods	\$ 15
Nina Sakamoto	\$ 50
Mark Stanley	\$100
Anonymous (Victoria)	\$ 50
Red Hens (one meeting)	\$ 30

Donations may be sent to the Lower Island News Society at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, and will be acknowledged in the paper. Please indicate if you prefer to be "anonymous". Unfortunately we can't give tax receipts.

And thank you again.

--Dale Young, Editor, for the Editorial Board

ing of derogatory comments towards me in the *Times Colonist* by another letter writer. No intelligent rational person could conclude that this was anything but a deliberate manoeuvre by TC brass to silence me and to make me go away.

This is what happens when the monstrous corporate power of this media source goes unchecked by anyone and there is never any accountability. My phone calls and emails are still dismissed and my letters ignored. Now the management of the *Times Colonist* has punished me for speaking out by banning me from their corporate rag. There are no adequate words to describe the utter inhumanity and callousness of their actions.

The problem with this scenario is that other innocent people get burned as well. Les Leyne wrote a column recently that unfairly skewered an exceptional company called WCG International, who run Triumph Vocational Services here in Victoria for people with disabilities. I wrote a Letter to the Editor to the *Times Colonist* defending the fantastic staff and services at Triumph. In my letter I praised the high quality profes-

sional staff who have been like angels in my life, keeping me going in a hellish job search. Their incredible support has helped me stay in the game -- and finally things are turning around for me.

Dave Obee refused to publish my letter. When I tried to contact him, he ignored me. Even when I contacted the publisher and Postmedia, nobody would give me any reasons as to why my letter never got in their paper. The result is that a wonderful local company that actually helps people never got the recognition that it deserves.

The only way that things will change is if the *Times Colonist* gets enough public complaints that they can no longer afford to dismiss people. I strongly encourage anyone with a legitimate beef with the *Times Colonist* to contact Mr. Paul V. Godfrey, president and CEO of Postmedia at his address: Postmedia Network Inc., 1450 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada, M3B 3R5. Also you can email the Postmedia editor-in-chief, Scott Anderson at sanderson@postmedia.com.

Good luck !

Doreen Marion Gee,Victoria

His immune system just fine after years of sun tan beds

According to the entire alarmist, dogmatic and misleading statements I heard Wednesday, January 12, in Victoria at the CRD tanning bed ban hearing, from both Dr. Stanwick and his supporters including the Cancer Society and young people from Oak Bay High school, I am a freak who should be dead.

When I was a young boy I had red hair, blue eyes, freckles, a mole or two on fair skin and a birthmark. I tended to burn in the early summer sun. I never have shied away from the sun and for the last 30 years or so I have been a regular user of the tanning beds to help with SADS and to give myself an ample supply of Vitamin D, a very powerful immune system builder.

Result:

Far from being dead from melanoma or looking like a prune or crocodile -- an unavoidable result, I learned on Wednesday -- I do not get coughs, colds, flu or such viruses, and I am told often that I do not look 70 years ancient and my eyes are still blue. My immune system is just fine, thank

you, as Vitamin D and sun tan beds are my winter friends.

I noticed that Stanwick announced after the meeting that he could now move on to other things, to the consternation of real practicing doctors perhaps.

He has successfully removed an excellent doctor controlled option to treat such skin conditions as psoriasis, eczema or maybe even rosacea in people under 18, so maybe he has found another treatment he wants to ban.

Maybe he should consider the Gardasil or H1N1 vaccinations or shots for tiny new born babies which do cause side effects and death without any provable benefits... ooops, no of course not, they make his sponsors money.

As a result of this ban of his we can expect home sun beds to become very popular with unregulated and uncontrolled use a real result.

So to those all over Canada with similar political doctors on health boards -- beware.

Jeremy Arney, Victoria

“BC Water Muddle” result of lack of effective, enforceable regulations -- Brandes

By Eileen Wttewaalle

Oliver Brandes, associate director of the University of Victoria’s Polis Project on Ecological Governance, was guest speaker at the annual general meeting of the Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society in Ganges January 21.

Brandes, who has a degree in economics from Queens University and a law degree from the University of Victoria, spoke on the topic of “Water law and governance reform: Think like a watershed”, using a power point presentation.

He started by explaining that “polis” is the Greek word meaning a collective gathering together for better decision-making, and that the Polis Project on Ecological Governance works on policy through UVic (and other universities), developing directions for practice as it intersects with sustainability -- a two-way dialogue between policy theory and practice.

Governance is different from government, he pointed out. The core governance belief is that there are biophysical limits and the economy is a subset of the ecosystem.

The ecosystem has no waste, as nature recycles. We must take its complexity seriously by cultivating its feedback processes with decentralized power and institutions, developing societal resilience and comprehension as we help reconnect humans with nature and our place within it.

Brandes said that there is a fresh water crisis through the growing, concentrated demands of urbanization, energy needs and agriculture. There is persistent pollution and over-allocation resulting in crucial shortages such as “fish in the mud”. Disrupting natural flows has often resulted in unforeseen consequences, especially with the changing climate.

Brandes listed five fulcrums for change:

1) The assumption that water is “free” in the environment, it is a “commodity” by economic systems, and is also seen as more important than the social value of water’s necessity for a healthy quality of life; as well as being crucial to our spiritual life.

2) The “climate chaos danger” is now becoming more focused. We are beginning to realize that water is about adaptation and mitigation and that we must move beyond “decarbonizing”.

3) Governance: the process of societal decision-making is the “who, what and how”, relating to accountability. Current power is focused in management and doing the perceived economic thing. Governance focuses on doing the right thing.

4) Governance matters in order to promote societal resilience to adapt to change, including more innovation, accountability, and increase of public participation. Poor governance prevents effective management of: watersheds, catchments, basins, etc. It also tends to ignore the complexity and “whole system thinking” which are the foundations of functioning ecosystems, with enforceable regulations out of collaborative engagement focused on watersheds.

5) This requires a new conception of infrastructure – beyond pipes and dams to increase supply, to the increase of knowledge and expertise through conservation programs which engage people, eg. rainwater harvesting, low flush toilets, etc.

Many of these five trends are happening in various places, globally. But where are we in BC? Do we have a model?

Brandes calls it the “BC Water Muddle” because BC lacks effective, enforceable regulations. Decisions are highly discretionary and uncoordinated and not related to their ecological function. He calls those who make the decisions “the lords of yesterday”, from about 100 years ago when the *Water Act* was written.

So how can we get past the muddle? What are the province’s constitutional responsibilities? What are the limits of its power? What are the public’s property and civil rights and what are the actual practices? The BC government’s recent initiative, called *Living Water Smart* (booklet, website, etc.) has a lot of potential, but its words can only be effectively activated when there are enough resources given to carry through, Brandes commented.

He pointed out that water law is a process (see www.polisproject.org). The UVic Polis study has made reform recommendations, and the government has been involved in some discussions. But BC needs to develop “hydro-citizenship”.

Brandes suggested that a modern *Water Act* needs to protect water as a priority, make watershed protection and other

rules enforceable. First Nation communities must be involved in the governance, with time and resources shared through collaboration. Decisions need to be made on the basis of recognizing that the water cycle is one integrated global system with what might be pictured as three concentric circles, with human needs as a small centre circle, surrounded by a large “sustainable buffer” circle, with the largest outer circle indicating the needs of the total ecosystem. This entails whole system thinking; water is not free, but a public trust, now and into the future. There needs to be a new water Infrastructure based on *conservation, stewardship and reuse*, with accountability through independent oversight.

Brandes emphasized that we need to recognize that politics matters; see water for human use as only a fraction of the ecological needs; encourage the current slow movement of going beyond water as a resource and commodity; recognize that the West’s historical approach of the human as “over” nature and instead, we/the West must accept the biophysical limits of water.

Brandes ended his presentation by pointing out that in a healthy society, economy always follows ecology and education precedes them both. We need to engage all in governance and ecology for we are just beginning to understand both. Beyond the 3 R’s, schools needs to teach and experience ecology.”

200,000 helped out of homelessness by global street paper network

The organization behind a network of over 100 street papers and magazines has revealed new figures which show more than 200,000 people have been helped out of homelessness by selling the titles.

The figures show:

- Over 200,000 vendors earned a living through street paper sales since 1994
- 71 percent of papers helped vendors get out of homelessness
- 84 percent say selling the papers improved vendors’ wellbeing
- A quarter of papers are involved in creating policy change on housing and homelessness in their home city or region
- 114 street papers and magazines now spread across 40 countries

But providing an income is only the first tool street papers use to tackle homelessness and exclusion. As Maclean explains: “Being a vendor means they can also access a range of other services provided and arranged by INSP street papers, such as sales training, drug and alcohol counselling and housing support.”

Several street paper projects also run savings programs and art and literacy classes or organize rehabilitative sports activities.

Maclean says that INSP’s role is to “unite and support” street papers in some of the world’s biggest cities like London, Cape Town, Chicago and Tokyo.

In addition, the organization just launched its Street News Service (SNS) to the public. A multilingual online news agency, the SNS (www.streetnewsservice.org) brings together content from titles around the world. Some 75 volunteer translators help translate articles in any of the network’s 24 languages.

The findings were released by the Glasgow-based International Network of Street Papers (INSP) to coincide with the UN’s annual International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October), when people around the globe were asked to remind themselves of the need to promote awareness of poverty and destitution, particularly in developing countries.

“The street papers have been such a vital route to a more positive existence for so many of those 200,000 sellers, and we will continue to build on that progress,” says Lisa Maclean, INSN executive director.

INSP’s research shows that up to last year, 71 percent of street papers helped their vendors get off the streets.

Some 84 percent of those polled said selling the papers improved their wellbeing; and almost 90 percent said they increased their confidence. And a quarter of the papers are now being credited with being involved in creating policy change on housing and homelessness in their home city or region.

Maclean says the findings underline what an impact the street paper network has had on homeless communities involved, describing hitting the 200,000 mark as “a huge milestone” for the organization launched in 1994 with just a handful of papers sold by a few hundred vendors.

There are now 114 street papers spread across 40 countries, and expansion plans will continue, she says, especially in Africa, where there has been a particular growth in vendors and titles.

“The street papers have been such a vital route to a more positive existence for so many of those 200,000 sellers, and we will continue to build on that progress,” says Maclean.

The concept behind the INSP street paper movement is a simple one. Vendors buy a paper at cost price and sell it for the cover price, keeping the proceeds.

“The street paper concept is a hand-up, not a hand-out,” says Maclean. “Vendors work hard for their money. Every day, they hit the streets with the latest edition of their paper or magazine.

“Vendors sell from their designated pitch in busy shopping streets, outside malls or in front of office buildings, hospitals, universities, sports grounds or train stations. They’re there, come rain or shine, working to earn their own living in an increasingly challenging media climate.”

“Through our huge network of street papers, we can provide an international audience with an on-the-ground perspective on a variety of global and local issues. We give a voice to the voiceless through actual vendor stories and first-hand accounts of people affected by poverty and social injustice.

“At the same time we recognize the need for ‘lighter’ stories, like inspirational interviews with celebrities,” says Batist. “But at all times, we aim to trigger something inside our readers, making them question the world around them and change their mindset towards poverty and homelessness.”

Steven Robert is a vendor in Cape Town, South Africa, and he says that like so many people who now sell one of the many street titles, he moved to the city as a teenager with big dreams.

“But without money or a job, I roamed the streets, struggling to meet my basic needs. It was through the street paper that I brought back purpose in my life.

“My dream is to have place of my own. I’d like to set up a small home-based business as I am now a good salesman. I tell other vendors to keep pushing forward with the skills that they have and to never give up.”

For more information, contact International Network of Street Papers (INSP), Floor 3, Centrum Building, 38 Queen Street, Glasgow, G1 3DX, SCOTLAND, Tel: +44 (0)141 225 8036, Skype: maree.aldam, Web: www.street-papers.org, Twitter: twitter.com/streetpapers, Facebook: www.facebook.com/inspstreetpapers

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Join us for our February pub night!

Drop in between 5:30 and 8:30 pm, Tuesday, February 22,
at Brown's Social House, 809 Douglas Street
We will not have a pub night in March

To contact VBH, write to PO Box 8523, Victoria, BC V8W 3S1 or phone 250-386-8497

It's time to bring our Canadian troops home now

By Jean Crowder

Conservatives are extending Canada's military mission in Afghanistan until 2014 -- without one minute of public consultation or debate.

New Democrats have been clear: our troops have done their part and it's time to bring them home now. After all, a majority of Canadians say they want the troops brought home -- *as promised*.

Our soldiers have served with honour in Afghanistan. To date, more than 150 have died there, and hundreds more are coming back wounded and traumatized.

After nine years, it's time for a new direction. It's time for that civilian deployment to support Afghan institution-building.

Next year was supposed to mark the start of a major civilian deployment to support Afghan institution-building. We have an opportunity here to play a leadership role in building a safer and more stable Afghanistan. Canadians excel at this kind of work, and it's what we should be doing going forward—but that's in jeopardy now.

Newly released reports show the depths of corruption in Afghanistan and are further proof that it's time to bring our troops home.

Documents released by Wikileaks detail an elaborate cash transfer system used for bribery, drug trafficking and support for the

very insurgents who attack Canadian troops.

They also detail a level of "patronage and control" that reaches the highest levels of government -- including the president's own half-brother, who is allegedly involved in racketeering, drug trafficking and assassinations.

It's no wonder Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan has said that the Afghan government makes his "blood boil".

This is the backdrop of our newly extended Afghan mission, which the Conservatives and Liberals secretly agreed to behind closed doors.

What's needed now is civilian institution-building and support for democracy—what Afghanistan clearly lacks

-- not more military boots on the ground.

And for the returning veterans, we need to live up to the promises made.

Modern vets' needs are different than the traditional vets. Most retire after 20 years of service with no injuries but need help finding a job in the mainstream work world. Others have suffered incredible injuries while on active duty and want rehabilitation to remain an active and valued member of the service.

It is unknown what kind of impact mul-



Jean Crowder



MP Jean Crowder speaks with Wally Misura, general manager of Holdfast Metalworks Ltd., in Nanaimo, January 25. Misura determined there was a need for specialized metalwork in Nanaimo and has hired a lot of younger employees for his 18-month-old operation.

multiple deployments will have on our modern vets who may have spent, cumulatively, many years away from Canada. Or what health complications exposure to the chemicals and materials used in modern warfare may cause.

Here in Cowichan, I've heard many stories from Afghan vets of troubles accessing long-term care, lack of job re-training to stay in the military and problems with compensation for major injuries.

Our armed forces have been planning the withdrawal from Afghanistan for the last two years. And many of those soldiers looked forward to a break from deployments.

The Conservative government has made the wrong decision and Canadians and our soldiers deserve better.

Jean Crowder is Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-Cowichan.

Saanich Gulf-Islands NDP

AGM with Libby Davies

Join us for a
New Democrat
Afternoon
featuring
MP Libby Davies
& SGI Candidate
for MP, Edith Loring-Kuhanga



Sunday March 13th, 2011
12:30 pm SGI registration
1:00 pm SGI AGM starts
2:00 pm Edith
2:15 pm Libby
3:00 pm Refreshments

Arbutus Queenswood Room in the
Cadboro Commons at UVic.

ndpsaanichgulfislands@gmail.com

Saanich Gulf-Islands



Potential virus may be killing Fraser sockeye

Sointula, BC -- A study published in the prestigious journal, *SCIENCE*, by lead author Dr. Kristina Miller of Fisheries and Oceans Canada reports on genetic evidence that a virus may be killing up to 95% of some Fraser sockeye stocks just before spawning.

"Our hypothesis is that the genomic signal associated with elevated mortality is in response to a virus infecting fish before river entry and that persists to the spawning areas."

Dr. Alexandra Morton of Raincoast Research says, "It is evident from this paper that DFO has known about this potential virus since 2006, but after four years they are still not certain what it is. The evolution of new viral strains is often associated with abnormal concentrations of animals or birds, like avian flu. We need to know if this is indeed a virus, if it is related to the farm salmon disease, salmon leukemia and if there is something we can do about it."

DFO studies in the 1990s documented salmon leukemia in Chinook salmon farms and found it could infect Atlantic and sockeye salmon. At the same time

the number of Fraser sockeye dying just before spawning began increasing, called "prespawn mortality". In 2006, Dr. Miller found the genomic signature of these dying sockeye had a distinctive "unhealthy" profile that may be a form of leukemia. Salmon Leukemia is a retrovirus. Retroviruses are known to exhibit a high mutation rate.

"Did this virus start in the wild, become amplified in the farm Chinook and mutate to infect the millions of nearby introduced Atlantic salmon altering it to become unidentifiable?" asks Morton. "DFO has significantly delayed this critical research by keeping this secret."

There is one stock of Fraser sockeye that has not been on the rollercoaster of decline and boom. The Harrison sockeye, which have been steadily increasing over the past 18 years, are not found migrating to sea through the salmon feedlots of eastern Vancouver Island. Researchers believe they go to sea via southern Vancouver Island.

In a *Vancouver Sun* article one of the co-authors, Dr. Scott Hinch of the University of BC, notes there have been insufficient funds to tackle this issue.

In November, the *Globe and Mail*

published a leaked memo to the Minister of Fisheries that suggested disease as a leading possibility for the 2009 Fraser sockeye decline, but DFO did not make this information public. Morton's attempt to cross-examine on that document at the Cohen Commission was refused at the time. "We hope that Commissioner Cohen will now look into what else DFO knows about this situation and the possibility that DFO has been protecting the salmon farming industry, at the expense of the \$1 billion Fraser sockeye fishery," says Morton.

"I will also raise questions at the Cohen Commission whether DFO has fully supported Dr. Miller in her pursuit of this critical work and whether Miller has been given full access to the farm salmon populations for testing?" Last month Morton's lawyers asked for the Cohen Commission to hold a special portion of the hearing to look into whether this potential virus is impacting wild sockeye and whether this is a mutated form of salmon leukemia.

Morton has started a petition to urge Minister Shea to allow Dr. Miller to test the salmon feedlots for this disease:

Sign up to volunteer
with the campaign at
www.ElectEdith.ca



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CAFE SIMPATICO: A space for activism

For 25 years, volunteers of the Central America Support Committee (CASC) have been presenting a monthly coffee house (the last Friday of the month) to the public of Victoria.

CASC offers guest speakers, films, panels, art shows, live music, refreshments, discussion and social events. Although the main emphasis is on Central America, in solidarity CASC also hosts events about other Latin America countries and international issues such as the World Social Forum, Fair Trade, and election and peace monitoring.

Cafe Simpatico is a friendly space for people to get involved, to network and share information. CASC sells Fair Trade organic coffee from an island community of Lake Omotepe, Nicaragua, and books and crafts from Latin America.

New volunteers are always welcome to help out at Cafe and other CASC activities.

All are welcome at the next CAFE: Friday, February 25, at 8 pm, at Fernwood Community Association, 1923 Fernwood Road. The topic is POLITICAL PRISONERS: WEAPONS OF WAR, a forum on detention, imprisonment, torture used as weapons of war -- world-

wide. Speakers will be Peter Golden, human rights lawyer; Larry Hannant, academic and author; Deirdre Kelly, Central America activist; Kevin Neish, Colombia political prisoner activist; Theresa Wolfwood, activist and writer.

There will be information, analysis, discussion and action.

Admission is by donation and refreshments are available.

For more information contact bbcf@bbcf.ca and see www.victoriacasc.org If there is anywhere in the world we can look to for inspiration for political and social change, it is Latin America!

— Theresa Wolfwood



In November, 2010 Cafe Simpatico hosted a successful Central American dinner and dance to benefit mud slide victims in Guatemala.

Five years as MP, still working for a better Victoria and Canada

By Denise Savoie

Election fever is heating up the frigid Ottawa winter, with the games of political brinkmanship in full display for a weary Canadian electorate.

Every party says they don't want to force an election, but right now as I write this, it seems as though it's a distinct possibility. The answer will be in the federal budget coming in March – will the Conservative government finally compromise and listen to the majority opposition? Or will they push forth stubbornly with their plans to expand their record deficit with more



Denise Savoie

corporate tax cuts and more prisons, without any new investment in health care, seniors, children or education?

In the New Democrat caucus, our goal is to convince the government to adopt some of our proposals that would reduce growing inequality in Canada – addressing seniors' poverty, affordable housing, and access to postsecondary education, for example. Any minority government sincere about taking the interests of all Canadians into account would work with the opposition parties instead of posturing and wedging. But if that's all we get from the Conservatives in this year's budget, I'm afraid an election is our only option.

Meanwhile, I am hard at work, moving forward proposals to:

- encourage and reward green commuters;
- to improve the Canada Pension Plan;
- to restore the eco-retrofit program that lowers energy bills and creates good, green, local jobs;
- to implement a federal housing strategy;
- to remove the unfair cap on postsecondary education funding for First Nations students;
- and above all to work with my colleagues in Ottawa to develop a political climate under which these issues can be debated more thoughtfully

I recently marked the fifth anniversary of my election to the House of Commons as Victoria's MP by meeting with leaders from First Nations communities and the environmental movement, as well as New Democrat leader Jack Layton, our candidates in Saanich-Gulf Islands Edith Loring Kuhang and in Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca Randall Garrison, and our aboriginal affairs critic Jean Crowder. It was an inspiring meeting of strong voices united in the goal of protecting our waters and our coastal communities, but the frustration over unsettled issues that the government continues to ignore was clear. We resolved to step up the collaboration between these communities and New Democrats to advocate workable solutions.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my five years as the NDP MP for Victoria. I'm proud of my team -- my staff, my riding association, and the larger team of community groups and



Victoria MP Denise Savoie meets with municipal politicians, environmental groups and policy experts who were holding an event at University of Victoria. She was campaigning on behalf of Bill C-466, her “Commuter Choices” private member’s bill that would allow Canadian employers to offer green commuter benefits to their employees, free of tax at the federal level. It has garnered support from Canadian mayors, municipalities, transit authorities and transportation experts from Halifax to Vancouver.

leaders who work hard every day to make Victoria such a great place to live.

I think we've shown that it's a good idea to elect a New Democrat. When you elect a New Democrat, you get a constructive, meaningful, principled voice for your community. You get someone who vigorously opposes the government when it's necessary, and works collaboratively with government ministers when it's possible. You get an office that challenges the government to act instead of make excuses for why it does not.

For example, in Victoria if we didn't have a New Democrat we might have a mega-yacht marina in our treasured harbour already. We might already have oil tankers trucking gas out of Kitimat through our fragile coastal waters. A lot of people having problems with the government – on immigration, veterans' benefits, student loan problems, seniors or disability benefits, or

EI – may not have received the support they needed. Without New Democrats standing up in the House of Commons in defence of our natural resources facing foreign take-over, the people of Saskatchewan would have had no voice in Ottawa during the latest attempt to turn over control of their potash reserves.

Of course, we are just some of many partners involved in the larger coalitions within our communities who fought these battles successfully and continue to fight. But I do believe that these coalitions are best off with an NDP MP who is a voice for our community to the government, and not for the government to our community.

I am proud to remain a part of this team and this community, and I thank all of you who are a part of it, too.

Denise Savoie is Member of Parliament for Victoria.

Stock market pension plan is a Tory scam to rip off workers

By Barry Weisleder

The latest brutal assault on the social wage is Ottawa's reversal on the Canada Pension Plan. Instead of enhancing the CPP, which federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty promised to do when he met with his provincial counterparts in Prince Edward Island last summer, the Tories are pushing a private sector scheme.

Leaning heavily on the capitalist economic crisis as a convenient crutch, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said “Now is not the time for CPP premium increases.” Does Harper appreciate the cruel irony of asking impecunious pensioners to invest in the stock market which had three meltdowns in 15 years (1997, 2002 and 2008)?

The CPP, which provides a guaranteed benefit to all seniors, should be increased immediately. Why? Because...

- 1) It is impossible to live on a basic pension of \$11,200 a year.
- 2) Sixty per cent of workers have no workplace pension.
- 3) One-third of Canadians between the ages of 24 and 64 have no personal retirement savings.
- 4) Only one in four taxpayers put any money into a Registered Retirement Savings Plan in 2008. After 25 years of stagnant or declining wages, it is hardly surprising how difficult it is for people to save on their own.
- 5) 1.6 million Canadian seniors today live in poverty, with incomes below \$16,000 a year.

Presently, the Canadian Labour Congress is campaigning for a doubling of Canada and Quebec Pension Plan benefits, to be phased in by small premium increases over seven years. The resulting \$22,400 annual pension income would be an improvement, *but still woefully inadequate, especially seven years from now, and beyond.*

The CPP, which hasn't been expanded since its inception 45 years ago, should be tripled, and the main burden of the contribution increase should be borne by big business and the rich. Yes, the class that has gained the most from two decades of corporate tax cuts, and that appropriated more than 30 percent of the extra income

generated during the so-called boom years (according to Linda McQuaig and Neil Brook's recent book *The Trouble with Billionaires*), should pay for this and other pressing social needs.

Naturally, any increase in CPP benefits is opposed by the banks, financial institutions and insurance companies which have profited enormously by selling RRSPs.

Enter the Conservative federal government, and their political cousins in the province of Alberta. They propose a new Pooled Registered Pension Plan – a voluntary scheme to be administered by the financial industry. Small and large firms could use this to offer private pensions to their employees, who would pay into it, but get a pension based only on market performance. It would spread the growing disease, the focus of a bitter labour struggle at Vale Inco, and now at Stelco, in which management seeks to replace “defined benefits” with “defined contributions” that embody the possibility of little or no pension for the entrapped workers.

Ontario Federation of Labour president Sid Ryan, who was among two dozen protesters who occupied Finance Minister Flaherty's office in Whitby, Ontario on December 19, was all too kind to call the Tory scheme “a gimmick to get the issue of pensions off the front pages”.

Actually, it is a wretched scam designed to rip off the working class and further subsidize financial Capital. It is a case of kicking workers while we're down.

The appropriate answer to the conniving Tories, and to the more subtle but equally venal Liberals, is for workers to stand up and fight back. General strikes from Portugal to Greece, powerful and unifying actions scarcely reported in the North American media, show the way to defend pensions and other threatened social gains.

Barry Weisleder is chair of the NDP Socialist Caucus.

Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca NDP is proud to announce the nomination of

Randall Garrison as our candidate for MP

Watch for a notice of our Delegate Selection and Resolutions meeting for the 2011 federal convention (Vancouver, June 17-19)



Randall Garrison
Esquimalt - Juan de Fuca





Denise Savoie
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Your voice in Ottawa

District of Central Saanich concedes in court battle over water line

District of Central Saanich repeals bylaw, pays court costs for neighbourhood group

CENTRAL SAANICH -- The Mount Newton Neighbourhood Association (MNNA) has won its battle against a water main which would have extended water service unnecessarily to the Northwest of Central Saanich which is outside the Urban Containment boundary.

In response to a court challenge brought by the MNNA, the District of Central Saanich has initiated a repeal of the bylaw that would have enabled the controversial water line to proceed and the parties to the case have agreed to halt the case, with the District paying MNNA's court costs.

MNNA's case sought to quash a District Local Service Area Bylaw to install a municipal water distribution system along Mount Newton Crossroad to Senanus Drive. MNNA's suit alleged a number of legal problems with how the bylaw was enacted, including the use of false and misleading information in collecting signatures for a petition calling for the Bylaw. A pressing need for the urban servicing was never proven by the District.

"The Mount Newton neighbourhood is rural and outside the Urban Containment Boundary," says MNNA board member, Chris Paynter. "Water issues in this community should and can be resolved without piping in water where the Official Community Plan discourages extension of such services. The preservation of the rural character of Mt Newton valley is of vital concern to

the MNNA."

The District of Central Saanich in enacting the bylaw had ignored the advice of municipal staff and the municipal solicitor, who had earlier stated that there was a high risk of a judicial review court challenging the bylaw.

The MNNA is pleased with this victory but dismayed over the District's waste of tax dollars on an unnecessary court case. MNNA board member Bob Bocking notes, "It shouldn't be necessary for citizens to take their municipality to court in order to ensure that laws are followed, and citizens are treated fairly."

The environmental organization West Coast Environmental Law provided some of the funding for MNNA's legal challenge.

Andrew Gage, West Coast's acting executive director, explained: "Decisions about municipal infrastructure have a huge impact on how communities develop. To avoid legal challenges, local governments need to make these important decisions in ways that follow the law and are transparent and accountable."

The case brought by the Mount Newton Neighbourhood Association was made possible by MNNA's lawyer, Irene Faulkner, and the numerous individuals and organizations that provided support, including West Coast Environmental Law and the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria.

Co-op concedes to award

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the last issue of the Lower Island News we reported the Peninsula Co-op had a 360 degree shift in thinking and had decided not to build a big box store on Central Saanich farmland.

Well, it was too good to be true. The press release sent to all local media outlets was a spoof to draw attention to the Co-op's wrong-headed development plans.

Here is the real latest news on Peninsula Co-op issues:

More than seven months after arbitrator Jakop de Villers, QC, handed down his award nullifying the Peninsula Co-op's June 2009 elections, the Co-op's board of directors has finally conceded to the decision.

De Villers' May 26, 2010 award found several serious election irregularities and "bad faith", attributed [rather than contributed?] to the board of directors and General Manager Pat Fafard.

In June, 2010, the Co-op filed two applications in court to challenge the arbitrator's decision. In July, Randy Pearson (the complainant) and the Co-op agreed to a stay of proceedings until November 1. Just prior to the November 1 deadline, the Co-op verbally indicated they wouldn't proceed with the challenge, but indicated it was their view that Pearson couldn't enforce the award in court. The three 3 individuals, Gaudet, Ounsted and Fecteau, removed from the director positions, were returned to the board.

After more than two months of negotiations, a Consent Order agreement was recently registered with the BC Supreme Court between Randy Pearson and the Peninsula Co-op.

Pearson says, "The agreement reached will prevent the Co-op from using the resources of the Co-op, including paid staff, to influence and help elect incumbents over challengers as they did in 2009 and again at the June, 2010 election of directors."

An independent auditing firm will manage the next election of directors and provide election security. Voting for directors

will be held at various business locations of the Co-op over a reasonable period of time.

The replacement election for the three director positions and the annual election of directors will coincide at a time set by the Co-op this coming spring, not later than mid June.

As a trade-off for election improvements, Pearson agreed to allow the three directors removed by the arbitration award to hold office until the replacement election is held.

Pearson says, "The agreement provides a basis for greater convenience and member participation in the democratic process, however the onus is on the Co-op board and management to ensure every effort is made to bring the ballot box to each and every community in the south Island area, from Duncan to Sidney.

"It's been a frustrating and sometimes tedious process," states Pearson. "However I feel this is a partial victory, bringing better governance to the Peninsula Co-op, but there is still lots to do, including changing the Co-op's plans to build a very large grocery store on prime farmland in Central Saanich."

The Friends of Peninsula Co-op believe there is lots of commercial property in the Keating X Road area to accommodate a new or renovated grocery store. They indicate there is no good reason to build a big box grocery store on farmland.

Peninsula Co-op members can join the Friends as a supporter for democratic change by emailing info@friendsofpeninsulacoop.com

Remembering Eileen Dailly, 1927-2011

The best Minister of Education BC has ever seen

By Carol Pickup

The province and the NDP have lost a very special lady and stateswoman with the death of Eileen Dailly in January.

As Minister of Education, between 1972-1975, Dailly provided leadership in all areas of progressive education policy, including the banning of corporal punishment from the classrooms of BC.

Banning the use of the strap was a very courageous move in the 70s which was not welcomed by some including members of the teaching community. As a parent representative, I strongly supported this move to redefine the form of discipline that was both effective and humane. An effective teacher does not need to use physical punishment to handle discipline problems. Because of her encouragement, I decided to run for the Greater Victoria School Board and was elected and served from 1977-1985, serving three years as chair.

Eliminating the use of the strap was only one issue that Dailly addressed. She was a strong supporter of parent involvement, community schools and community colleges. She collaborated with people like David Suzuki to strengthen the science curriculum in BC schools.

As a member of the Dave Barrett government, she supported the concept of integrating health, education and social services by establishing Community Resource Boards (James Bay being the local initiative). She also introduced legislation that made kindergarten mandatory which helped many children get a better start to their education experience. And it is interesting to note that she halted provincial exams (something the Liberal government has reintroduced in spite of all research that show these exams are



Eileen Dailly

a poor way to evaluate students progress).

All members of the Legislature, regardless of political stripe, respected and liked Dailly. She was a lady in every respect and could disagree with her opponents without being disagreeable.

More than any other attribute, Dailly was a great friend and mentor to many including myself and she shared the social democratic values that I cherish and she lived those values. She held a strong belief in serving as an MLA to promote the common good.

Eileen Dailly will most certainly be missed by many, but her outstanding record of public service will long be remembered. In my opinion, she was indeed the best Minister of Education that BC has ever seen.

“No condos until there’s no homelessness”

Downtown Eastside residents and their groups reject the City’s heights review citing the threat of increased homelessness and gentrification

VANCOUVER -- An ad-hoc coalition of Downtown Eastside residents and organizations held a press conference January 17 opposing what they call the city's Condo Towers Plan for the DTES.

A statement signed by more than a dozen DTES organizations calls on Vancouver city council to "vote against adding any new density for condos within the Downtown Eastside until the assets and tenure of low-income residents are secured" by buying "10 sites for low income resident-controlled social housing within the Downtown Eastside before the next municipal election" this fall.

Jean Swanson, the coordinator of the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), explained that the Heights Review is will allow 15 story condo buildings on at least seven sites in the Downtown Eastside. She said, "Condo towers have very bad ripple effects on the low income community. They cause property values, hotel rents, and store rents to escalate." Swanson explained that this means condo towers will increase homelessness because the hotels that will be hit with rent increase ripple effects are "the last stop before homelessness".

Some speakers spoke about the difference between the importance of City Hall working to safeguard the community assets of the low-income community. Sid Tan from the ACCESS Association of Chinese Canadians accused Chinatown business owners of "maliciously misleading people because the city has no comprehensive plan for the Downtown Eastside".

Caitlin Williams from Spartacus Books, a local small business, challenged the city's story that the heights review has the unanimous support of local businesses. She said, "The Downtown Eastside needs shops that serve the low-income community, it does not need more cheese shops and boutiques."

Speakers from the Power of Women Group of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, and the sex worker support organization PACE explained that more condos

would endanger the lives of women in the Downtown Eastside, especially Indigenous women, because they would destabilize the limited housing resources low-income women currently access. Stacy Bonefant, a DTES resident and mother explained that women and families could feel the ripple effects of condo towers even in the stability of their families. She explained that gentrification separates children from their parents because, "families are threatened with losing their children if they don't have housing".

Speakers also pointed out the cultural impact of the city's condo tower plan. Karen Ward from Gallery Gachet said, "We can't have art within a condo monoculture." Jim Baxter from the St. James Anglican Church warned, "The rich are determining what is happening in the city," and Paul Martin, the vice-president of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users said that the priorities of the city are backwards. "Once we end homelessness," he said, "then we can think of condos."

The Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council (DNC), who initiated the ad hoc coalition, equates community opposition to City Hall's Condo Tower Plan to the community movement against the City's inner-city freeway plan of the late-1960s. Tami Starlight, a representative of the DNC said that the community has learned the positive lessons of the 1960s and 70s freeways fight; that the low-income community has to fight to defend its assets. She said, "If City Council will not listen to us with our letters and resolutions and statements at City Hall this Thursday, we will see their bulldozers in our streets and we will stop them in our streets."

"You can either be complicit in your own enslavement or you can lead a life that has some kind of integrity and meaning."

-- Chris Hedges, author

Oak Bay-Gordon Head New Democrats

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Vancouve Island Health Authority’s new \$349 million Patient Care Centre at Jubilee Hospital in Victoria will open in March.

Follow the money

By David Olsen

The new state-of-the art, Patient Care Centre at the Jubilee Hospital will start receiving patients in March.

However, despite the cost of \$349 million, the planners appear to have forgotten to include what the *Times Colonist* described on January 20 as “everything from high-tech beds to vital signs monitors, patient lifts, slings and even comfy chairs for the sunroom”.

In other words, you may get into the hospital but you may not have a bed or a vital signs monitor to confirm you are still alive! Apparently these costs are to be met by a public fund-raising drive rather than the Ministry of Health or VIHA.

The Patient Care Centre nominally belongs to VIHA but was financed, constructed, and will be maintained and managed by Accionara Infrastructure, as a concession. Accionara is a large Spanish company and much of the financing came

from Belgian bank Dexia and the German owned, ex-Irish-based Depfa bank. Depfa was taken over in 2007 by Munich-based Hypo AG which crashed spectacularly in 2008 and was nationalized by the German government in 2009.

Dexia, a large lender to municipalities in France and Belgium, received a 6.4 billion euro bailout from France, Belgium, Luxembourg and key shareholders in September 2008 and later won state guarantees for its new borrowing. In return for state aid, the European Commission said Dexia must cut its balance sheet by 35 percent by 2014 -- much of it by selling its bond portfolio -- and divest activities in Italy, Slovakia and Spain, and its insurance business in Turkey. Reuters reported on February 4 that the Slovakian business had been sold.

So, despite the protestations of Partnerships BC, it may be anyone's guess as to who will really own the patient care centre in a few years' time

BC Bus Pass Program should be extended to recipients of CPP-D

By Kelly Newhook

In the province of British Columbia a person with a disability who is receiving provincial benefits (PWD), is eligible to receive a bus pass for the discounted price of \$45 per calendar year or portion thereof. This is a much valued program offered by the province of British Columbia.

However, if you are receiving federal benefits, Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D), you are not eligible to receive the discounted bus pass.

Both groups are living on extremely low incomes, both are living with disabilities, but only one is eligible for this vital assistance that increases their mobility and potential for community engagement. For many of us, \$2.50--the cost of a single bus ticket--is an amount we wouldn't give a second thought to, it's a simple cup of coffee in the morning. But for those on a fixed income, who are visiting food banks and stretching every last dollar, it is very significant. And let's not forget...\$2.50 is only a one-way ticket.

This policy must change. So, as our two main provincial parties engage in a leadership race, now is the perfect time to ask those leadership candidates if they would support changing the eligibility requirements

for a discounted provincial bus pass to include people receiving CPP-D. For those who say it's a federal responsibility, it is simply not true. Eligibility for the bus pass program is tied to seniors' federal pensions, so there is no reason why it can't be tied to CPP-D as well.

Remember, a person with disabilities has no choice regarding which level of government they receive benefits from; in fact the provincial government requires all potential PWD recipients to apply for CPP-D first. This makes it even more imperative that the bus pass program be delivered equally to all persons with disabilities.

Kelly Newhook is executive director of Together Against Poverty Society, which is located at 302-895 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H7; phone: 250-361-3521, fax: 250-361-3541.

Ron reviews:

Victoria BENCH BY BENCH, by Rebecca Kennel

Creating this book was a clever idea. It is a pleasure to read her commentaries on the many marked benches that are so well located for the weary walker in the fair city of Victoria. -- **Ron MacIsaac**

Cowichan Green Community bike raffle winner is thrilled!

Spring feels one pedal closer for Kendra Stiwich, winner of the Cowichan Green Community's Norco LRT 1 bike raffle.

In December, in order to raise funds for food security programs such as FruitSave, Farm to School, and the Alexander Elementary School Community Garden, CGC raffled off a brand new Norco LRT 1 bicycle with a retail value of over \$500. The sleek black bike, a 24-speed city and path bike which is part of Norco's Urban Commuting Series, was generously donated by CGC members Bob and Helen Nation.

In return, a portion of the proceeds are being sent to the Nation's Kikombwe Water Project that they are currently working on in Tanzania. The rest of the proceeds will go directly back into sustainability and food security projects CGC is working on for 2011.

Drawn just before Christmas, Stiwich was thrilled to find out she had won. "I was so excited when I got home and heard that I had won the bike raffle. I mean, 'who *actually* wins these things?'" said Stiwich, adding, "My husband and I both recently had our bikes stolen and were hoping that

2011 would see decent replacements for them." She can't wait to hook her new bike up to a chariot and cruise around town with her kids getting groceries, checking out the market or going to the park.

CGC appreciates the support of the community and the interest in the bike. "Having a valuable prize like a new bike certainly helps to sell tickets," explains Amanda Reimer, manager of the CGC's Sustainable Living Centre. "We are grateful for the generous support of the community and would like to thank all those who bought tickets."

Stiwich has already been putting her new wheels to good use. "My long term vision is me on the bike with the trailer bike *and* the chariot. Yup, that'll be me: the very lucky, super grateful, biking mama! Thanks so much to CGC and all the awesome folks who are doing so many fantastic things in our community."

For more information on upcoming events or ongoing sustainability initiatives, contact Heather at the Cowichan Green Community 250-748-8506 or info@cowichangreengreencommunity.org.

Fresh from the Cowichan! New food map coming

The ground may be frozen outside but Cowichan Green Community is already busy warming up for the April launch of its second edition of the *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* Cowichan food map, to the delight of the Valley's food producers and those searching for healthier, more environmentally sound groceries.

Building on the success of the 2010 map, which saw close to 10,000 copies distributed Valley wide, this year's edition will continue to represent the most comprehensive directory available for local food in the Cowichan Valley to date. The map is also one of many signature initiatives of the Green Community that helps promote their broader sustainability mandate.

"Promoting locally produced food is just one way in which we can help strengthen our region's community food system," explains Judy Stafford, executive director at CGC. "A regional diet is a healthier, more sustainable way to eat and helps secure the livelihood of our Valley's food producers."

CGC is currently accepting registration for its 78 coveted food producer listings. Many of last year's farms are signing up again as are farms new to the map includ-

ing those new to the agricultural community here in the Valley.

Evelyn Pereira of Terra Nossa Family Farm, who is listing her certified organic poultry, pork and berry operation on the map for the second year, says the *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* Cowichan food map has enabled her to reach new customers. She also feels the map is an excellent resource for referrals. "Many of my customers are looking for other locally grown products and I found that, with the map, I was able to send them on to different farms."

With the *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* Cowichan food map, local consumers and tourists can find produce, meat, seafood and wine, all grown and raised in the Cowichan Valley or caught off its shores. The map also directs people to interesting agri-tourism events and unique value-added food products not found anywhere else.

If you are a local food producer and would like to be listed on the map, or a business interested in advertising opportunities, contact the Cowichan Green Community at 250-748-8506 or visit their website www.cowichangreengreencommunity.org for more information.

Juan de Fuca New Democrats

Keep in touch!

You can reach President Heather Gropp by email at goliard86@shaw.ca

Saanich North and the Islands New Democrats

Stay in touch!

You can reach your president Gary Holman by phone at 250-653-2042 or by email at gholman653@gmail.com

If public education is a keystone to a democratic society, this implies publicly funded schools are a critical element of that structure

One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. The bamboozle has captured us. Once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back
- Carl Sagan

By Eden Haythornthwaite

Something wonderful happened at last night's board meeting – really, it just made me feel proud and glad to be alive.
First – a clear motion on the agenda requesting the Transportation Safety Review Committee continue working to further the recommendations it has constructed and address the results of a DPAC survey regarding walk route safety was honoured due to the merit of the request.

As follows:
Due to the extremely short time allotted for the work of this committee.

Due to the tight timeline for the completion, return and analysis of the DPAC walk route safety survey

Due to the confusion over the mandate of the committee in attempting to deal with efficiency and cost issues instead of focusing on the safety of the students, their families and our employees

It is moved:
The work of the Ad Hoc Transportation Safety Review is extended to:
Formulate suggestions for fulfilling the recommendations made in the interim report;
Continue to collect and analyse responses to the survey through the district website;
Allow further recommendations addressing the safety of students on walk routes and at pick up and drop off points which will originate from the findings of the survey.
Build a final report.

Further -- a poorly thought out, "dropped from the sky at the last minute" motion to embroil the board in crying off to the community for more rental fees for school facilities as well as cultivating private funding sources was torn to shreds and voted down, as it so richly deserved.
I feel completely secure in making this report – colossally inaccurate as it is – because reality will truck into view in no time and the fantasy will be over.

But I can dream, can't I?

Even asking for a safety review of the new bussing model was fraught with danger because it was entirely probable it would simply allow the appearance of due diligence even if diligence -- due or otherwise -- was unlikely. Obviously most of the committee members, bus drivers, transportation managers, parents, really wished to have the intended discussion: "How has the 20% cut in transportation funding with the attendant changes to service delivery impacted our kids' safety?"

However, for the most part, we were guided towards papering over the concerns and debating the inevitable and ongoing reductions to the bussing service. After all, as some observed, perhaps we can no longer provide this service in light of our fiscal dilemma.

Our little venture in placing our new bussing model under the safety microscope came into the world by unanimous board motion on June 2, 2010, but spent the first five months of its life in a stasis chamber. The committee was marched headlong through three perfunctory meetings over the space of a month, produced recommendations few of which actually had anything to do with safety and was then concluded on the rather peculiar basis two of the participants had no further wish to attend any more meetings regarding this matter.

The final recommendations do not include any provision for actually doing anything to fulfill them in a timely way and, based on the stalling already demonstrated towards convening any meetings of this committee, I am less than hopeful.

After all, we are much more concerned with the glamorous possibility of gun play in the schools than whether our kids are actually struggling down dark shoulderless roads to a bus stop as cars whiz by every single flaming day right now.

In the words of the Qualitative Breakdown derived from the DPAC Transportation Survey issued November 30, 2010:

"The Cowichan Valley School District encompasses a largely rural area where roads are not built for pedestrians and vehicles travel at fast speeds on single lane windy roads with poor visibility. Changes to the District Bus Transportation System have enforced many of the walk limits and have sometimes necessitated longer walks to get to and from bus stops. Feedback from survey respondents indicates many more families are driving



Eden Haythornthwaite

their children to school or bus stops because of these changes. Walk routes in many areas are deemed hazardous for children, even if accompanied by an adult."

But it is all about the kids. Never forget that. Now we just have to figure out who the kids are because years of experience has convinced me they can't be those diminutive, vulnerable creatures who seem to inhabit our schools.

Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons.
- Woody Allen

The board has chosen a woolly headed project to replace the efforts of the committee meant to work for increased public funding. To meet some of our funding shortfalls which we are told will total at least \$1.2 million, we will crusade to empty community pockets for using their own school facilities. We are also to enter the creepy world of begging from private sources to advance our government's bid to dodge its express responsibilities to fund our schools. How can this be a worthy activity for our board or any other? It has to be admitted – there was much more enthusiasm for this undertaking than there ever was for the work of the committee which sought increased public funding. So there!!

We are the white mice in Victoria's little social experiment to see who will fold and start poking around for other revenue. We blinked and now some trustees who talk of "not saying no to money" think we can tap into some rich vein of cash if only we approach the right people and make the right supplications.

What were we thinking? How could any of us assume the work of a trustee involved turning over every stone on behalf of our communities to compel the government to do its duty by them -- shoulder to shoulder with our partners – who have by the way been rock solid in their will to do just that? Why bother when you can start crisscrossing the valley looking for alms like a refugee trying to round up cardboard boxes to move?

Whatever effort is involved in striving together to seek what we deserve from the ministry, fighting collectively with creativity and tenacity for the revenue our kids deserve--that effort has to be far more rewarding. A few dollars doled out here and there from the well heeled will not provide the consistent, reliable resources we need and this quick fix which is neither quick nor much of fix will distract the board as well as the community from what it must really do to support public services equally for all of us. Revenue through taxation is intended to ensure equal learning opportunities for every child.

If public education is keystone to a democratic society, this implies publicly funded schools are a critical element of this implies publicly funded schools are a critical element of that structure. Private ventures will never guarantee our system -- they will only provide self interested, fly by night support as well as an "out" for a provincial government which has consistently underfunded our schools.

It is reasonable to observe, if businesses and other powerful interest groups want to genuinely support our public schools they should pay their fair whack in taxes and withdraw their agenda for destroying government involvement in our lives. Then our children will not need their tawdry handouts.

Private ventures, just like school closures and public land sales, are a short sighted response which can only damage the prospects for fully funded public services. This path may provide a few individuals with a cosy chance to hobnob with the highborn or cultivate a bit of profile wheedling dosh out of businesses. It will intensify the crushing burden of fundraising among our parent volunteers while establishing the rubric private individuals must carry the weight of paying for our kids' education while we continue to fork over vast sums of taxation to the province for god knows what.

The real solution for school trustees is to demand full, stable funding by submitting needs budgets to the province. Our families and employees will stand with us if we do.

Not so long ago our board in Cowichan made newspapers all over the country for taking a position against public funding for private schools. Now we have succumbed to resignation, to a sorry sense we can't buck the trajectory of the funding protocols. This now translates into surrendering to private solutions to shape our classrooms. This sad futile tactic provides the highest guarantee that more and more of our families will migrate to the private schools. And even more public revenue will travel with them.

Of course, the jape may really be on us. According to a detailed article in the US on the topic of private incursions into funding public schools, published last year in the *Wall Street Journal*:

"Some educators and parents worry that schools in affluent areas have an advantage in finding private donors, exacerbating inequities in the classroom. They also fret that if schools are too successful at raising donations, lawmakers will cut their public funding even more deeply."

"Legislators will begin to factor in outside donations when setting school budgets," says Arnold Fege of the Public Education Network, which represents school-advocacy groups."

I suppose our board is not being offered a very good example by our overseers in Victoria – we have a provincial government which evidently does not believe in government. Further, we are the victims of a gargantuan hoax, the one which maintains we cannot actually pay for our kids' education out of the public treasury because we can't afford it.

But I expect my colleagues to see through all this and lead with principle rather than submit to what can only be described as a classic fiddle

"Those who profess to favour freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never has and it never will."

-- Frederick Douglass

Eden Haythornthwaite is a member of the Cowichan Board of Education.

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Healing road paralysis by rail

By G.E. Mortimore

What can you do for fun when you are stuck in clogged traffic?

Losing yourself in thought is one option. During 30 minutes trapped in a stationary automobile, I tried to make sense of the politicians’ travel-improvement brainwaves while staring at the back of a flagperson’s safety vest.

A mixed lot of projects were hastily contrived to qualify for federal “stimulus” money. I remember them for the frustration and mess they caused.

Stimulus-widened roads quickly fill and overflow as municipal councils encourage more and more traffic jams through the construction of condos with large parking lots and houses with three-car garages.

Stimulus projects aim to put people and money to work. Wouldn’t it be more effective to hire people for the traditional make-work task of digging holes and filling them in again? We would save millions in gasoline, tailpipe fumes and time wasted.

I pondered such fantasies while I waited in a lineup half-a-mile from the Four-Mile Hill on the Island Highway in View Royal. I had rashly decided to try that route once again.

As cars coming from the opposite direction trickled through two or three at a time, it occurred to me that the waste that arises from the “shovel-ready” road projects probably exceeds their benefits.

A bus squeezed along. It had traversed an underpass below a railway which could carry passengers to Langford comfortably in 15 minutes.

As I continued to stare at the flagperson, I reflected on three traffic-clearing, shovel-ready projects: strengthen the railway track Langford-Victoria, Langford-Duncan and Parksville-Port Alberni.

I remembered from the Internet that more than a century ago, a crew working in Utah laid 10 miles of Central Pacific Railroad track in 12 hours. That’s about the distance from downtown to Langford.

Our track is already laid; it needs only to be beefed up for commuter service; and the record-breaking Central Pacific performance scores low on job creation, but the Island rail update could create many long-term jobs.

As our line of automobiles crawled forward about 36 inches, after a disgusted waiting driver had retreated into a side street, I remembered how Siemens, Inc. had offered to lend a modern rail vehicle for a trial Langford-Victoria service, until a few fusspots in Esquimalt opposed and derailed the project.

The manufacture of rail vehicles, wind and tidal turbines from Kitimat, BC, aluminum for export to Asia and Australasia through Port Alberni would be a neat fit for one of the trackside light-industrial and research parks that could be set up on the Island railway.

Railway-meshed industry or Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) was the factor missing from the current BC government’s muddle-headed decision not to invest in the Island railway. A competent new administration will make development happen, rather than waiting for it to happen by accident and good luck.

Governments developed airplanes and nuclear power to win wars. Smartened-up peacetime governments might go one better, it seemed to me as I scanned the unchanging roadside scene.

Freight is the traditional lifeblood of the railway; it pays for the losses incurred by passenger service. But as I nudged the car forward another 30 inches, I noted that roads also cost taxpayers a bundle; and rail as a people-moving system gives them better value for money.

Pulling expandable trains on an unobstructed route with gentle grades, railways are far more energy-efficient than roads.

Today’s BC government, being uninspired and unable to invent and coordinate, puts railway and road budgets in separate boxes, and says we can’t afford rail.

But road and rail together are one people-moving system. Rerouting the crowded, dangerous Malahat and Alberni roads might cost \$3 billion plus destruction of forest. For 10 percent of that sum, we could revitalize the whole Island railway

and chop big money off road costs as some drivers switched to rail.

After I had threaded my way through that obstacle course, I stayed awake part of the night wondering what an intelligent and caring future government might do to modify the prevailing public mindset and build a serviceable people-moving system.

The task is to focus creative leadership on the traffic-congestion and air-pollution problem. It arises from the automobile culture and from the natural wish of young parents to buy cheap land at a distance from the workplace, so as to have ample space for their children to grow and play safely.

What would persuade Duncan-Victoria and Langford-downtown automobile commuters to ride transit?

Smooth, fast, reliable low-fare rail service would be a good start. Then we must bridge the gaps between mainline transit and home, workplace, stores, theatres and sports arenas.

The smart political leaders of Portland, Oregon, showed us the way when they placed the city’s convention centre and the arena home of Portland Trail-Blazers basketball team on the Max rail line, with reduced car-parking space. That’s Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

Boulder, Colorado invented another part of a practicable people-moving strategy. The city fathers of that university town researched travel patterns and citizens’ wishes by enquiry in depth -- not flimsy pretend-consultations.

They offered communities and large employers a low-priced package pass and more frequent service with buses that ran full instead of half-empty. The scheme worked quite well. But it did not receive the investment of time and money it needed.

Demand-Responsive Transit (DRT) is a process that, when sharpened to high efficiency, can bring taxi-buses to almost every door, track their progress on home screens and on electronic boards at transit exchanges, and enable a dial-a-bus system.

This is another enterprise that a problem-solving government (when B.C. elects one) can encourage and reward in its rail-side research-industrial parks.

DRT is already established in sketchy form in Italy and Scotland. But it needs more work.

Those modest success stories can be widened and strengthened by a competent future BC government. Telecommuting -- working for an employer from a home office -- another part-success that needs further work, can also be added to the mix.

One failure story points the way to change.

In the mid-1990s a social-campaign committee offered a bus at giveaway token fare to relieve Cowichan-to-Victoria commuters of the dangerous job of driving the whole distance.

So I hear from an informant who watched the enterprise.

The commuters rode the bus from Lake Cowichan for a short time, then went back to their cars.

The rejection of cheap bus transport was predictable. Experience in the Lower Mainland shows that cost has a only a minor effect on most automobile-versus-transit decisions.

It does have some effect, so it is worth including in the package. Some people see cost as important (you can save \$10,000 a year by not owning a car) but most drivers feel that cars are necessary freedom machines.

The key incentives are speed, comfort, convenience and reliability.

Without these factors, nothing happens. Experience also shows that automobile commuters are more likely to switch to rail than to buses.

In light of these facts, BC Transit’s planners arguably should return to their computers and draw up a practicable people-moving design to replace their current capital-region “rapid-transit” plan, which looks like a guaranteed failure.

A commonsense plan will coordinate people-moving systems within the true planning region, which is Victoria plus Cowichan.

The design will include devices for encouraging car-drivers to switch to transit

-- each device being integrated with the others and testable by action research.

A real-world plan will use dedicated rights-of-way, free from traffic signals and clutter. Toronto dug tunnels for its urban rail system and linked rail with secondary and feeder bus lines.

We already have two clear rights-of-way, the Island railway and part of the Galloping Goose, the former Canadian National Railway track.

Because the inept BC Liberals starved Transit of money and the coordinative brainpower that only senior governments can provide, Transit’s “rapid-transit” plan is excessively road-entangled. Arguably its journeys would be too slow to convert car-drivers into transit-riders.

Liberals are a lame-duck regime. Transit can begin shaking off their influence and preparing for a new government.

An intelligent Vancouver Island people-moving structure will have two main sinews: diversion of part of the road budget to rail (which Portland achieved) and strengthening of the Island railway to make freight profitable for the operating company.

Revitalized rail can carry Island lumber to be shipped through Port Alberni to China. The proposed Raven mine at Buckley Bay, which would export steelmaking coal to China, is likely to be blocked by environmental opposition. But it might squeak through if the Compliance Coal Co. decides to go green and send the coal by rail to Port Alberni, instead of by truck on an already-congested road, as Compliance now proposes.

That competent future government might offer rewards for clean mining and shipping technology that would make metallurgical coal -- not heating coal -- more environmentally acceptable.

The remedy for road gridlock suggested by Andrew Coyne in the January 17 *Maclean’s* -- charging drivers a fee determined by the number of kilometres driven -- could

be a useful component of a strategy for switching drivers to transit, but it needs to be accompanied by other mutually reinforcing measures.

Gridlock continues despite gasoline taxes, which already put a price per kilometre on driving. Immediate imposition in BC of per-kilometre pricing through ICBC would be political poison for the government that did it. Road-pricing would need to be tested in a crafty way -- say on a Gulf Island where it actually lowered the cost of driving per year.

Later it could be introduced as an option province-wide, and, later still, built into the vehicle-insurance system, with differentiation between urban and rural areas, and the proceeds conspicuously earmarked for transport improvement.

Pay-per-kilometre (PPK) could be useful when it is added to the two other acronyms, transit-oriented development (TOD) and demand responsive transit (DRT) plus tax and zoning measures that encourage and reward transit travel.

If you want to solve a complicated social/technical problem, you must take several actions at the same time, and weave them together.

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A witness at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

By Eileen Wttewaalle

I couldn't sleep last night. I had returned to my home on Salt Spring Island after the December 3-5 weekend at the University of Victoria and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gathering, in the architecturally fascinating First Peoples House at the centre of the campus.

We were reminded that there were over 130 Indian Residential schools operating in Canada over the period between 1867 and 1996 when the last one closed. The TRC was a requirement of the 2007 *Indian Residential School (IRS) Settlement Agreement*, the largest Canadian class action settlement of its kind, negotiated on behalf of former students, churches, the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and other Aboriginal organizations. Its purpose was to educate Canadians about the history and the impact of the schools, and to guide a process of reconciliation between and within all those involved, including the wider society.

Speakers included Chief Robert Joseph, affectionately called "Bobby Joe", and Alvin Dixon, both residential school survivors, who were the senior advisors to this event. "Aboriginal Neighbours", an ecumenical group involving the Anglican diocese of Vancouver Island, the Victoria Presbytery of the United Church, and the Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), with chairperson, Lynne Crashaw, along with her team which included First Nations representatives, did the competent organizing. Leadership at the event was by residential school survivors.

There were three MCs: Alex Nelson, Evelyn Voyageur and Frazer Smith; great story tellers, informative, sad and funny. Each part of the program from Friday at 7 pm., to the closing on Sunday at 4 pm. began and ended with drumming, songs and prayers. We heard many languages including Haida, Nisga'a, Cree, Mohawk and Hul'qumi'num. All acknowledged and thanked the Coast Salish for being on their sacred land.

Of all three federal commissioners for the TRC, the chair, Justice Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge, had to be with his wife who had taken ill, and Commissioner Marie Wilson, who has worked for 40 years with Aboriginal, church and political organizations, had to return to her ill mother in Montreal; so only Commissioner Chief Wilton (Willy) Littlechild was able to attend.

In 1988 Littlechild was the first Treaty Indian elected to Parliament and was there

for five years. He has degrees in Physical Education as well as Law from the University of Alberta. He has won many athletic championships, provincially, nationally and internationally. He was one of the Torchbearers for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Justice Sinclair's parents and Marie Wilson's husband attended residential schools but Littlechild attended for 14 years. His was Indian Residential School (IRS) # 64. Learning did not come as easily for him as some of his classmates and he told how when the days were long in Alberta, he'd get up at 4 am. and study until just before the morning bell at 7, when he'd arise from his bed, yawning and stretching as if he'd just woken up. He also studied under his blankets with a flashlight. He was one of only five Aboriginal students to enter law school in the early 70s, acquiring his degree in 1976.

Littlechild related some stories with happy endings. In one, an unnamed Calgary church, situated near a reserve, with its 500 members had determined to apologize to their Aboriginal neighbours. The church now has a "Book of Apology", signed by the members of the congregation and many others.

Littlechild told of the "Back to Batoche" event, when the descendents of the North West Mounted Police who fought at Batoche, and the Métis families who resisted, including descendents of Louis Riel, came together. A song of reconciliation was sung by a 10-year-old boy.

He described a recent graduation ceremony held near Wetaskiwin, Alberta. When the residential school was closed in 1980, the Aboriginal community decided to support their young people, not only through public school but also through post secondary education, but without government money that had so many strings attached. At this graduation they learned that in the past 30 years a total of 1800 of their students have graduated from a post secondary institution.

He noted that at the 1967 Montreal Summer Olympics, some people were painted brown for the opening parade in the Canadian line-up as no First Nations people were allowed to participate. In the 2010 Winter Olympics, the opening ceremony was led by many First Nations peoples with their beautiful dancing. He acknowledged one of the young women, who was with us at this event.

When Justice Sinclair and Commissioners Littlechild and Wilson began their cross-country work on the TRC, they felt



Photo by Lynne Phillips

Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Chief Wilton (Willy) Littlechild relates some of the stories, sad and happy, he and fellow commissioners, Justice Murray Sinclair and Marie Wilson, have been told during their hearings around Canada.

embarrassed to speak to Canadians about reconciliation when Canada had refused to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); when all but the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, had signed in 2007. Littlechild had worked on the Declaration since 1977. This Declaration took well over 25 years to fruition -- the longest of any Declaration at the UN. So November 12, 2010, was a very important day when the Canadian government finally signed. Willy was at a world conference in Berlin at the time. On November 13, he said at the conference: "I want to be the first to thank the Canadian government for changing its position." Because of the eight-hour time difference, he probably was.

Many of the subsequent speakers reiterated the title given to our conference: "Open Hearts and Clear Minds: a Road to Reconciliation." An Aboriginal saying is: "Go where there is no path and leave a trail for someone else."

The TRC conferences are seen as trail blazing events, with the TRC officially recording those survivors who have felt able to speak the truth of their experiences, and concurrently to bring hope and some reconciliation. Acknowledging the complex kinds of cooperation and change required on this journey makes us all trail blazers.

In one open session, Barney Williams told of being taken, at the age of six, from his home in Tofino to the residential school in Kamloops where he spent seven years, "for 365 days a year" as he never managed to get home. He remembered at the age of six, how scared he was, how hungry for west coast food, and of feeling very hurt and angry as he and all the children were treated, in his words, as "useless people". They were told that when they spoke in their own language, those were the "devil's words"; with a continual shaming of anything relating to their traditional culture.

Barney said he and many others only survived their homesickness because there was someone who helped them in those first few weeks. Sometimes it was a sympathetic teacher. For him it was another boy his age who knew English and helped him learn the new language. He remembers those years of losing many he had made friends with, to disease, death and suicide. Running away from a school was often a type of suicide.

However, there was a story told by a girl student, who had been sent to the Kamloops residential school with a number of other girls from several places on Vancouver Island. As they grew, they were often in trouble as they resisted harsh treatment from unjust rules. (Government money to run the schools was always very limited and students were required during afternoons, to labour at maintenance jobs both inside and outside.) When these girls could get together, maybe cleaning toilets or scrubbing floors -- one punishment was to scrub a long hallway with a toothbrush -- they plotted how they might escape. They tried once, were caught and severely punished. That only confirmed their determination. They planned well, escaped into Kamloops city and got back to the coast. She told us the school then made the decision they would no longer accept any students from Vancouver Island.

My inability to sleep was connected to remembering Barney's seven years, unable to go home as a growing child. But the saddest stories told were by former students who, in their 50s and 60s were only recently able to tell of their experiences to their own children and grandchildren. They said there were many who still could not.

They were unable for a number of reasons: the profound sense of shame connected with those experiences of being treated as less than human; the still raw pain of emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse which no amount of compensation money could erase. Also, the feeling of total isolation on the return to their home reserve. After the long absences, they now had only hazy remembrances of a language and culture, drilled into them as shameful. As many of them had been separated for years from their siblings within the same school or having been sent to different schools, they felt like complete failures with their inability to reconnect with them. For them, healing from that profound alienation would mean being able to phone and say, "Hi, sis, or brother, how are you?"

Sometimes one or more of the grandparents were able to help them, but many parents, being unable to prevent the loss of their children, had turned to alcohol to dull the pain. Occasionally the returning student would join them in the stupor of alcohol and/or drugs, especially when the parents who also had been to residential school still could not talk about it. Neither could they ask forgiveness for their poor parenting of this, now teenage son or daughter, so the sense of abandonment affected them all.

Girl survivors remarked that while they had peeled potatoes and worked in the huge laundries, they were not taught to cook or care for themselves beyond the institutional requirements of regimented control. However, sports were one area where they could excel if they had some ability. One man said he was a good basketball player because he could go to the gym where he would forget, by spending hours shooting baskets.

But many Aboriginal people continued to ask "What is reconciliation?" They understood truth, as that has always been a major teaching in all Aboriginal societies. It is so ingrained in their culture that many non-Aboriginals take advantage of them. They know, but do not really understand why truth is not a high value in non-Aboriginal societies. They signed treaties believing a treaty is to be honoured in good faith; not made to be broken at will.

Four church leaders had been invited to speak: Bishop James Cowan, Anglican; Rev. Dr. Ian Victor, Presbyterian; Rev. Dr. Murray Groom, United Church, and Bishop Richard Gagnon, Roman Catholic. Each offered their apologies and asked for forgiveness.

Murray Groom, chair of Victoria Presbytery of the United Church, offered apologies similar to the others: for the churches' naiveté, arrogance, and lack of being clear-eyed about justice. Also, their need to recognize the legacy of imperialism and colonialism that aligned the western churches with those in power.

Retired Anglican Bishop John Hannon was there for the whole conference. He was

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Truth and Reconciliation,
from page 14

raised in the Nass Valley, being adopted by the uncle of Frank Calder, and speaks the Nisga'a language. He believes the balance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal must be restored, not through punishment, but by restorative justice, where responsibility is owned, and there is a willingness to repent and change so that the roots of racism are broken.

As individuals, these church leaders were welcomed by the survivors, but there was an obvious disconnect with the institutional churches and their turning a blind eye to the plight of children. Children were not believed, when they had the courage to speak; nor was the occasional teacher who questioned -- even writing to church headquarters to protest some of the extreme discipline of children and youth. Some parents and community people questioned the poor conditions of schools and the lack of an adequate diet as well as crowded conditions leading to the easy spread of disease, especially TB. Many unmarked graves are being currently researched. Both government and church leaders were not unaware, but as Prime Minister Harper said in his apology on behalf of Canada in 2008, the IRS students were there in order to "kill the Indian in the child".

One non-Aboriginal woman said she was born and brought up in England. When she came to Canada in the 1970s she couldn't believe the amount of racism she witnessed here. But she acknowledged that coming from a former colonizing country she had to work on her own sense of privilege that she learned from childhood, with its advantages to which she was entitled as a white person.

For this she had to ask forgiveness, as do I, as a daughter of immigrant settlers who came many years ago to occupy "stolen" land.

One speaker said he was criticized by both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals for calling himself an Indian. He said he always replied: "I'm an ordinary Indian and I will always be an Indian so long as there is an *Indian Act*."

Some First Nations people fear getting rid of the current *Indian Act* and some of its guarantees which would be even further eroded by government if there was a re-writing of the Act without it being done in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and healing on all sides. Actually we do have a very good re-working of the *Indian Act* -- completed after 10 years of careful study, in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), with its analysis of the 150 years of relations between governments at all levels, and the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Successive governments have tinkered with the Commission's reports but its central recommendations have mostly sat, gathering dust. Will that be the fate of the UNDRIP?

This group of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, survivors and resisters, having listened and heard some of the truths, asked for forgiveness as it relates to their situation, and are resolved to work on reconciliation, believing the small changes that have occurred will grow as more events like this are being planned in various communities.

Several spoke of a dream they had of a very large black book. It was opened to a page, tightly packed with the names of the 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children who were taken from their homes and forced to attend residential schools. In the dream the person tries to turn the page, but can't even raise one corner. The many ancestors stand waiting in the shadows, also looking for the release of their children. But there is no freedom from the grief and heartache. As the dreamer begins to waken, s/he invites the live people who have been standing by, to listen and learn, to forgive, to repent and to seek reconciliation; giving and accepting healing as a mutual responsibility. Then all, working together, are able to lift the page and turn it over.

Or to use another analogy that was given, we must build bridges between our cultures, one respectful dialogue plank at a time; for strong bridges, not fences, will keep our children and all of us safe and able to sleep well.

The Grand Canyon; curse of the yellow dust

By Heather Tufts

An old Navajo legend tells of their peoples' origin in this world, as they passed from the spirit world onto earth:

They are told to choose between two yellow powders. One is yellow dust from the rocks and the other is corn pollen. The Diné (Navajo) choose corn pollen and the gods nod in assent. They also issue a warning. Having chosen the yellow pollen they are to leave the yellow dust in the ground. If it is ever removed it will bring evil.

Some people believe that this ominous warning refers to yellowcake which is a kind of uranium concentrate powder obtained from leach solutions, during the processing of uranium ores.

Decades of unabated uranium mining brought an elevated risk of mortality to hundreds of Navajo miners due to uranium-linked diseases such as lung cancer, pneumoconiosis, and other respiratory diseases as well as irreparable damage to land and water. The legacy of uranium mining in the regions has been so harmful that the Diné (Navajo), Hualapai and Havasupai Nations have all banned uranium mining on their lands.

Enter...Denison Mines Corporation, a Canadian corporation which has submitted water and air quality permit applications to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) in an attempt to open three more uranium mines near the Grand Canyon.

These mines include the currently operating Arizona 1 Mine and the proposed Pinenut and EZ mines north of the Grand Canyon and the proposed Canyon Mine on the south rim near Red Butte, a historic and sacred site of the Havasupai Nation. Not only do these mines directly threaten the eco-region of the Grand Canyon, they advance corporate attacks on community health, environment and cultural practices.

Although environmental groups have successfully lobbied the US Secretary of Interior to suspend new uranium claims in a five-mile buffer zone near the Grand Canyon, the suspension does not include pre-existing claims such as those of Canada's Denison Corporation. Some claims date back to the 1980s.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has documented well water as undrinkable in at least 22 communities on the Diné Nation. The EPA states that, "Approximately 30 percent of the Navajo population does not have access to a public drinking water system and may be using unregulated water sources with uranium contamination." The Colorado river, which flows through the Grand Canyon, supplies water for drinking and agricultural use for up to 27 million people.

If all the permits are allowed, up to 12 trucks per day would haul uranium ore from each of the mines to a processing mill in Blanding, Utah. The haul routes would take uranium ore from the various mines through the communities of Fredonia, Kanab, Williams, Flagstaff, Cameron, Tuba City, and Kayenta.

"Uranium has already seriously harmed our communities, and you're considering allowing three more mines to open," protested Klee Benally, Navajo activist with Indigenous Action. Environmentalists, local residents and indigenous community members gathered to tell the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) not to issue the mining permits at a crowded town-hall meeting in early January.

The ADEQ air quality permits and Department of Transportation regulations would merely require Denison to "cover the haul truck loads with a tarp and maintain the truck beds to ensure that ore does not fall out."

A 2010 US Geological Survey damaging report on mines north of the Grand Canyon found that "elevated radioactivity is evident at all sites, dust had contaminated soils everywhere mining occurred, and, in some locations, flood-scattered uranium ore lay in washes and streams."

In January 2010 the Obama administration approved a \$54 billion dollar taxpayer loan for new nuclear reactor construction



Photo courtesy of Indigenous Action Media

Canyon Mine near Red Butte, Arizona, is owned by Canadian mining company, Denison Mines Corporation, which wants to open it as a uranium mine.

which is incidentally three times what Bush had promised in 2005. Currently there are 104 nuclear reactors in the United States which supply 20% of the country's electricity. But at what cost?

"We have celebrated every victory, but with the renewed interest in nuclear power and the price of uranium rising, we may be running out of time for our community," said Rita Capitan, Navajo elder.

Nuclear power as a clean, green energy solution remains controversial especially with the egregious legacy of uranium mining, but Canadian mining companies are the unstoppable vanguard as soaring uranium prices increase profitability. Profits inevitably trump community-based concerns about health and safety, eco-justice and the preservation of sacred places.

"Leave the yellow dust in the ground!" is Navajo legend, yet ominous warning! Today

there is estimated to be more than 8,000 applications for uranium mining operations in the Grand Canyon region and many of these involve unregulated Canadian companies.

If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all.

-- Noam Chomsky



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A delegate selection meeting for Convention will take place in April. Contact us at president@victoriandp.ca or at 250-382-4370 if you would like to run for a delegate position or for more information.

The Kestrel paves the way for sustainable personal transportation by using hemp as a construction material

By Diane Walsh

Environmentalists speak often, and prophetically, about the need for more industry impetus for cars with low or -- even better yet --zero emissions. What's not centre-stage, and should be, is the fact that hemp fibre can be used effectively as a construction material for a vehicle's shell. Move over Hybrid. The Kestrel is now the trend setter. (See picture)

Not only is this vehicle fully electric, answering the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) demand, it sports the all green-to-manufacture hemp based body panels to boot!

Groundbreaking? Indeed it is. Motive Industries Inc., out of Calgary, Alberta, is changing the face of car manufacturing by simultaneously employing hemp and electric for the vision for the industry's future in Canada.

The Kestrel was showcased for the first time in Vancouver at last September's Electric Vehicle (EV) Conference and Trade show. We've caught up with Nathan Armstrong, president of Motive Industries, who says,: "It went very well. Huge response and the internet visits went viral. We did get some flack internally for aligning with hemp, but they got over it."

That's music to our ears. Clearly seeing enthusiasm all around him, especially among fibre hemp promoters, Armstrong wants to educate people about what we can hope to see developing into a mainstay trend.

"We're hoping it will demonstrate Canada's abilities in technology and vehicle development, something that hasn't been highlighted internationally -- ever. If successful it will generate a whole bunch of jobs and general industry activity," says Armstrong.

"We had the scale model there [at the trade show] with the first body panel, but

not a finished vehicle. We are still in the manufacturing stage and hope to have a finished vehicle by March 2011."

But even in these early days there's no question the Kestrel answers a number of needs. It is a major shift in thinking that will add more green jobs, creative innovation, and most importantly the key use of our Canadian advantage -- the fact that by the year 1998 the Feds declared the legal use of mature hemp stalks for manufacturing,



This prototype shows what the new all-electric Kestral will look like when the first 20 are released for sale in 2012. Its body panels willbe made using hemp.

construction, textiles and products, etc. Interestingly, the US is more backward, in not allowing the use of industrial hemp. This lack of vision is good for Canada. The Kestrel demonstrates a new message coming from the auto industry in Canada both economically and environmentally.

"This project was largely started by a group in Ottawa that was calling for the start of a Canadian OEM [original equipment manufacturer]," explains Armstrong. "They were looking to go the traditional route and were looking to raise \$500MM to start the project. I came along and said, 'If Canada is going to do this, why not do something advanced to demonstrate our abilities?' They all agreed, hence the direction this program took."

The Kestrel is part of Project Eve, created by MII and Toronto Electric, with the purpose of enhancing electric vehicle production across the country. With the first 20 Kestrels being built by polytechnic schools in three provinces it's clear the Kestrel is switching it up -- moving the auto-industry in a new bold and creative direction.

"We decided to use the schools for two reasons. They've been getting amazing investments from government to expand on applied research facilities, which are essentially the best workshops we could ever hope to find. We're better off using them than anything else. The second reason is student outreach and education. This is a very important part for us and we hope to inspire many students to go build their own stuff," says Armstrong.

But let's get right into the facts about hemp as a structural material. It's thought to have more than twice the strength of other plant fibres. But in addition to not requiring much water, little pesticide, and the crop being high-yielding, is it not part of the green economy by offering ideal sustainability at its best? Armstrong gives a resounding "Yes!"

Hemp is a fibre that has many advantages over other materials. There are numerous merits to processing and then employing a hemp bio-composite.

"Compared to fibreglass, for the same performance, it's 10 percent lighter and 20 percent less expensive (in the current market) which will swing further in the coming year. It's also nice and healthy to work with.

"It comes in mat form (kind of like) stiff cardboard. This is processed by the Alberta

competitive. Their advantage then will be low cost of entry and the ability to make advanced forms."

It's interesting to know from, for example, a business start-up standpoint, that Alberta Innovates Technology Futures (AITF), under licence from the Canadian government, is behind this move in a more forward-thinking direction. "The government supports many programs that get a technology to a prototype phase. Any industry group can access these technologies given maturity and cash."

Most people don't know this, but the hemp that is turned into a composite material is grown "all over Alberta, BC and Manitoba", Armstrong explains. Motive Industries, however, chooses to source from Vegreville, Alberta (near Edmonton).

According to Armstrong, the reason that hemp for auto manufacture hasn't taken off in a bigger way, considering it has been legal since 1996, is "lack of industry interest and vision".

The reason this innovation hasn't formed the baseline for next year's electric car body shells is because, as Armstrong puts it, the "supply chain isn't really in place -- yet."

That's where we, the consumers, come in. It's up to the people to make the demand for the supply chain. It's obvious that the Kestrel will be influencing the future of electric-car building, but are there still stumbling blocks and wrongly-placed stigmas operating (a resistance to hemp use) preventing more companies from following suit? That stigma must be busted wide-open through education.

Motive Industries Inc. is still working with the original scientists from the project in the testing procedures, so there is a good degree of follow-through and safety consistency. The timeline for delivery of the 20 Kestrels is fast-approachin -- said to be Q2-3 next year. When asked which Calgary-based energy distribution company is to be the lucky inventory holder, Armstrong answered, "I can't say directly, but they're the only deregulated utility."

The car will be available "in Canada initially, then other countries. We're working on distribution models with a few groups."

The burning question for many is: *Is it possible to be added to a wait-list?* "Not yet," says Armstrong. "We hope to put out a survey to generate public interest next year. You can fill out and help promote our existing survey though." You got it.

For more information about the history of the industrial hemp campaign in Canada, start with the creative online booklet published by the CAW (Canadian Auto Workers) in collaboration with the former leader of the Ontario Green Party at www.caw.ca/assets/pdf/hemp.pdf. For Ontario sources, try www.ontariohempalliance.org/home/index.html

Darren McKeage is the designer behind the car and you can read his vision for the car on the MII blog <http://autodesign-blog.com/?p=5>. It carries four passengers including driver, can speed up to 90 km/hr, and boasts a range is 40 to 160 kilometres before recharge is required. Depending on the type of battery, the better the battery the further the range. Battery technology hence is key to EV technology.

This article was originally published in *Canabis Digest*, Issue Number 27.

THE LACEY LAND SAGA...THE VINDICATION OF REMI DE ROO, by P. Jamieson, SAMARHAMAR PRESS

This is a fascinating book that goes over the struggles of the left vs the right in the battle over land investment in the US by the Victoria bishop. **Ron MacIsaac**

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The VLC, representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meeting the third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street.

All delegates are invited to come out and meet the Executive: Mike Eso, President; Stan Dzbik, Treasurer; Kim Manton, Secretary

Vietnam at the crossroads: resistance and resilience

Story and photos by Heather Tufts

“Tell the Vietnamese they’ve got to draw in their horns or we’re going to bomb them back into the Stone Age.” -- Gen. Curtis Lemay, 1964

A constant stream of motorbikes with continuously honking horns and fuming vehicles move their way in disordered urgency through the streets of Saigon. Pedestrians challenge the roads by crossing at daring intervals in the relentless maze of traffic. Otherwise known as Ho Chi Minh City, this bustling town in South Vietnam symbolizes the essence of post-war reunification while asserting a modicum of social defiance in its *anything goes*, big city attitude.

More than a thousand miles away, in the highlands north of Hanoi, a cheerful fire crackles in the kitchen of a remote indigenous village while a solid meal of spring rolls, mixed vegetables and pork with plenty of rice is being prepared on a damp, cool evening. The trek through the hills is muddy and wet, but eager children sell solid bamboo walking sticks to offer stability on the slippery paths. The trekking is marked by a variety of cottage industries such as weaving and dying and each house stores enormous sacks of rice that are harvested from nearby terraced rice fields.

The paths are bordered by community gardens with animals such as chickens, ducks, pigs and buffalo. Several groups of H’mong women appear as ardent vendors of their local crafts and many accompany their visitors for several miles along the winding trails. The sights and sounds of the villages are hauntingly beautiful in the misty hills where innovative land use practices provide local food security. The villagers are easily identifiable by their colourful traditional dress which differs in each village, and houses range from stilted wooden structures to more solid adobe homes where extended families live and work.

The long journey through this fascinating land of contrasts is the backdrop to a haunting legacy of brutal history. The spectacular beauty and the graciousness of its people are remarkable qualities given the punishing long war with the United States, as well as the subsequent 20-year embargo which lasted until 1995. While exploring scenic treasures like Halong Bay, absorbing the calming spirituality inside a decorative Buddhist temple or interacting with community at a vibrant market, the penetrating eyes of the elders reveal the vulnerable wisdom of wounded experience.

“We forgive but we don’t forget,” is repeated often since many live with vivid memories of unspeakable atrocities. The history is kept alive by viscerally-emotive museum displays, complete with a replica US designed torture chamber and graphic photographs. Nearby the claustrophobic Cu Chi tunnels encourage visitors to test their skill by shooting an AK47 and to slide through the deep and dark underground network that housed the Viet Cong for years.

A monument to victory evokes national pride at the reunification palace in Saigon and eco-tourism has revitalized the lush Mekong Delta where US troops were no match for the cunning Viet Cong freedom-fighters in the jungles of the south.

“It’s silly talking about how many years we will have to spend in the jungles of Vietnam when we could pave the whole country, put parking strips on it and still be home for Christmas.” -- Ronald Reagan, October 1965.



The changing of the guards outside the memorial tomb of Ho Chi Minh.

The Vietnamese have been shaped by their long, difficult history of battles and conflict. Today China casts an ominous shadow over Vietnam which strives to maintain small nation self-determination while neighbouring a powerful giant. Within a 2000-year context that includes Chinese rule, French occupation, and unprecedented American bombing attacks, the fear of interference from China is now an enduring reality. But Vietnam is a fiercely independent nation with a well-proven capacity to overcome hostile skirmishes with super-powers.

Traditional life in Vietnam revolves around family, faith and fields although during the war northern peasants were taken from the fields to participate in national defence. After the war all large-scale landowners of the pre-war south were expelled and peasants were herded on to government-sponsored agrarian cooperatives. Today the land is efficiently tilled by families who resisted the cooperative ventures with a preference to tend smaller parcels of land.

Village markets are vibrant and colourful where a variety of fruits, vegetables and meats are displayed next to squawking chickens and ducks with pulsating fresh fish kept alive in buckets. Don’t be surprised to see some jars of pickled snake or even living reptiles that are a popular delicacy in some regions! Meanwhile the fortune teller appears to predict success and abundance and local elders chew on bitter nut to blacken their teeth in traditional beauty while achieving a pleasant high. Rural communities in Vietnam seem timeless and distant from the rapidly developing market-economy that has been fast tracked by tourism and other capitalist ventures.

Nestled on the coast of the East China Sea is the bustling fishing village of Mui Ne, where the fishing folks work from dawn to dusk netting and sorting fish of all shapes and sizes. Unwanted jelly fish are discarded on the beach and covered with thin lairs of sand, but without any size limit to fish everything else is kept. At sunset the beach transforms to silhouetted groups of men and women pulling in large nets while small, round boats ride the waves to shore. A motorbike pulls along shore to assist with transportation while a small herd of cows ambles by.

The pristine white sand beach is lined with small resorts and guest houses but the relationship between locals and tourists seems

reasonably compatible. The more fortunate fishermen sell their extra catch to hotels and restaurants while providing their families with a nutritious meal. However this symbiotic relationship is vulnerable to the threat of unsustainable over-fishing practices induced by tourism. Although the government limits development by requiring international developers to partner with a Vietnamese company this policy has licensing variables.

In other regions of the county it is impossible to ignore the haunting ghosts from the Vietnam War. American bunkers, forts and bullet holes remain visible reminders at the front line regions of Hue and Danang where American bombers took off to initiate one of the worst bombing campaigns in military history. During the war close to three million Vietnamese were killed including two million civilians. The Vietnam War cost the United States 58,139



H’mong villagers welcome trekkers into their home.

lives and 303,635 wounded plus a lifetime of post traumatic stress for returning veterans.

These days children born with birth defects caused by the spraying of Agent Orange end up in orphanages or special schools created by international NGOs. Some adults participate in government-sponsored artisan workshops where they produce stunning arts, crafts and sculptures. However no compensation by a US government has ever been offered to Vietnam for the damage done to its land and people. In neighbouring Cambodia and Laos active American land mines remain embedded in the ground and kill and disfigure randomly.

The Pentagon Papers were leaked to the press in 1971 by former Pentagon employee Daniel Ellsworth. They document years of US covert operations in Vietnam and prove that Lyndon Johnson lied about Vietnamese torpedo attacks on American marines in order to sell the war at home. Nixon sacrificed thousands of lives by escalating an unwinnable war to *save face*. The anti-war movement was strengthened and many American soldiers began to question the legitimacy of their military commanders. On August 30, 1975 Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese and American troops scrambled to leave before the Communist take-over. They left their southern *allies* on the ground to face punitive consequences or life-threatening exit attempts in leaky boats.

Amerasian children became some of the most tragic victims of war as they were shunned by society and became statistics of infanticide, neglect or abandonment. Although orphanages made provisions to care for them, the children were isolated by national hostility. Vietnam adopted the spirit of perestroika in 1986, launching economic reforms and reaching out to the west. The US congress endorsed an agreement with Vietnam to have the children of American servicemen repatriated to the United States for adoption.

Today the blue skies shine over spectacular Halong Bay where hundreds of rocky pinnacles form majestic islands creating a natural skyline of unparalleled beauty. Kayaks weave their way serenely through the rocky crevices in the hope of seeing a monkey or two on the nearby shores. The sunset reflects in the water where the cruising junk boats drop anchor for a peaceful night in the bay and softly illuminate the clear, dark night. This wonder of the world attracts thousands of visitors and is the pride of Vietnam.

At the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi a long line of spectators forms to view the embalmed body of their national hero. Guards regaled in white military uniforms are posted at intervals and the visitors, who are mostly Vietnamese, show their respect for the man known as the great liberator. Every year Ho’s embalmed body is transported to Russia for maintenance but in the style of Lenin and Mao the body is available for public viewing at all other times.

Behind the mausoleum is a simple stilt house where Ho lived from 1958 to 1969, a tempting target for US bombers had they known of his whereabouts. Ho’s accomplishments are taught in schools where his communist ideology and anti-colonialism are vehemently reinforced.

Please turn to Vietnam at the crossroads, page 18

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Why do they want to become the next NDP leader?

Adrian Dix, MLA Vancouver-Kingsway



Why do I want to be not just leader of the New Democratic Party but premier of British Columbia after the next election? My most fundamental reason is very simple – I believe in equality. I believe inequality is not only morally wrong, it is expensive for our society. The polarization of wealth and power and the growth of poverty have very significant financial and social costs for the entire community - not just the poor - but the rich too. And BC Liberal leadership candidates Kevin Falcon or Christy Clark or George Abbott would fuel the growing divide in our society that Gordon Campbell created. Just check their record.

It's my experiences and achievements as an opposition MLA under Carole James' leadership that convinced me to run. As an MLA, I fought for the safety of women who use public transit and got real improvements in security as a result.

I forced the BC Liberals to admit its heartless cuts were hurting our most vulnerable children - kids in government care -- and to do something about it. And I organized the fight to save schools from being closed due to provincial funding cuts. I am also proud to have supported efforts to keep public health care public. What do these efforts have in common? They involved the whole community: women's groups, parents, multicultural communities, social workers, foster parents, unions and business groups.

They led to real, tangible improvements in people's lives. They involved listening and learning, not just talking and opposing. There are three compelling reasons that convinced me to run and make a difference for middle-income and working families.

First, the economy -- the BC Liberals have the worst economic record of any government in this province since the Great Depression! Let me be clear: I will put the record of the BC NDP governments up against that of the BC Liberals without a moment's hesitation anywhere, anytime. Here are the facts, not the spin -- the average economic growth under the NDP governments of the 1990s was 3% -- significantly higher than the BC Liberals 2%. Economic growth in the Liberals' 10 years has been much lower than it was in the 10 years of NDP government, which had both higher economic and job growth.

Facts beat spin every time. I want to lead a government that works respectfully with business and maintains the NDP's historic relationship with unions and working people, while protecting the public interest overall. But we are not going to be a government like the BC Liberals that cuts taxes for big banks while forcing ordinary British Columbians to pay hundreds of millions dollars more in Medical Services Premiums to make up for it. And I will scrap the HST that has devastated restaurants, small businesses and new home builders.

A second key reason -- social justice. Why does British Columbia, with all its natural resources and obvious wealth, have the worst record in Canada for child poverty for seven straight years? It's simple -- because the BC Liberal government just doesn't care. BC doesn't even have a poverty reduction plan. The BC Liberals have made life worse for people receiving social assistance and disability benefits. They cut child care and their Bill 29 led to the largest layoff of female workers in BC history.

The BC Liberals have refused to give even one tiny raise in eight years to workers who survive on the \$8 minimum wage. It's a shameful record that must be stopped. I want to build on the work of past New Democrat premiers, all of whom gave priority to public health care, social services and education to reduce inequality.

A third major reason that I want to lead BC is our environment and natural resources. I want real action on climate change that includes the investment of carbon tax revenues in ongoing transit expansion and in innovative green infrastructure, matched with tough emissions standards. I want to see natural resource use linked to economic justice and sustainable development through restrictions on raw log exports, and end the runaway privatization of our rivers.

I want to see a future for British Columbia where fairness triumphs over inequality, where prosperity replaces poverty and where hope defeats fear. We can build that brighter future -- if we all pull together as a party and reach out to British Columbians. Please join with me, Joy MacPhail, NDP MLAs and MPs, and many other New Democrats in supporting my leadership campaign.

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Mike Farnworth, MLA Port Coquitlam



Ready to lead, unite the BC NDP, and win the next election British Columbians want change and a real choice in the next election. They want BC's New Democrats to show them that we, as a party, are ready to govern. I am running for leader to end the internal struggles that have distracted the BC NDP from doing our job. My first priority is to reunite our party and engage all New Democrats in a respectful and collaborative manner. Together, we can move forward with a progressive vision for BC and win, whenever the next election is called.

To be a viable alternative, the BC NDP needs to be just as comfortable talking about the economy and public safety as it is talking about social justice, health care, the environment, and education. Our challenge, as New Democrats, is not about moving the party to the left or to the middle. Instead, we must focus on being relevant to people in every corner of this province. We must be grounded in the day-to-day reality of their lives and communities.

On Vancouver Island, that means looking at a range of investments in people to make our communities and our province stronger, and more equitable. It means finding ways to support families to better afford housing and be able to raise a family, utilizing and enhancing our skills to pursue opportunities in the knowledge-based economy, and revitalizing transportation infrastructure -- including light rail, commuter and freight rail -- and improving our coastal highway link to the mainland by making BC Ferries more accountable and affordable for island residents and businesses.

New Democrats must put forward a positive, progressive platform that promotes a strong economy, invests in green jobs, supports the province's resource industries recover on a more sustainable basis, and makes public safety a top priority. As a province, we need to do more than pay lip service to the environment. We need to make sustainability a key lens for every public policy decision we make in government. That's why I believe the carbon tax should be used to improve transit infrastructure.

We also need to do more to support the families in BC struggling to make ends meet. The BC Liberals have failed to put forward a child poverty reduction strategy and as a result we have the worst child poverty record in Canada. As leader, I will make fixing this problem a priority. As part of my campaign, I have already outlined my comprehensive plan to address the growing inequality and poverty that is hurting BC families and children. My plan will see a single cabinet minister champion this poverty reduction strategy with legislated targets and timelines.

The rest of my poverty reduction plan includes:

- Raising the minimum wage to \$10.00 an hour and index it to cost of living increases and eliminating the \$6 an hour training wage.
- Expanding child care and early learning programs so all children get the same advantages to succeed in school.
- Reducing homelessness with firm action targets for new units of social housing and better supports of short-term shelters, funded by the province's housing trust.
- Reviewing categories of Income Assistance rates within the context of the poverty reduction plan and immediately linking current rates to inflation.
- Lowering barriers to post-secondary education, apprenticeships, and training programs for families living in poverty.
- Restoring supports to single parent families, increasing Income Assistance-to-Work supports and earning exemption allowances to help transition people from welfare to work.
- Protecting children-at-risk through immediate investments in child protection services and enhancing support for the transition to First Nations' aboriginal child welfare.
- Reducing Community Living waitlists, to help some of BC's most vulnerable adults and their families get adequate care.

British Columbia also needs a comprehensive approach to education, one that encompasses the entire system from early learning to high school. The K-12 education system must be able to connect our young graduates to a broad range of university, apprenticeships, and training programs. The world has changed since 1987 when BC last had a commission on education. Students, teachers, jobs, and technology have changed. We need a 21st century provincial commission on education for 21st century learners.

It's time to heal the internal wounds in the BC NDP and refocus on what is important to British Columbians. With you, I will work to ensure that each and every citizen, regardless of where they live, can look forward to a prosperous, safe, and sustainable future for not only them, but their children and grandchildren.

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Vietnam at the crossroads, continued from page 17

"The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of United States aggression they have risen up, united as one man." -- Ho Chi Minh, 1965 Vietnam has suffered a lot already but today this small nation is increasingly impacted by the relentless effects of climate change. Low lying areas are threatened by rising tides, floods and hurricanes and it has been determined that a sea level rise of only one metre would flood more than 6% of the country and displace 10 million people.

At the same time the destructive eco-legacy of the war remains in 16% of South Vietnam where the Americans sprayed 72 million litres of herbicide (Agent Orange) in an attempt to destroy the cover of the Viet Cong. The government estimates that 20,000 sq kms of forest and farmland were lost as a result of American atrocities during the war.

Vietnam is one of the world's fastest growing economies and the population of about 86 million is



The fishing nets are pulled in Mui Ne in the early evening.

expected to double by 2050. The communist government paradoxically embraces *socially-responsible* capitalism as a partial solution and joined the World Trade Organization in 2007.

Traveling in reunified Vietnam is an intricate labyrinth that spans history, weaves through diverse cultural communities, and explores alternative paths to an uncertain future. Industrious peasants till the land and fishermen harvest the seas as if time had stood still, while on the horizon indigenous voices and social movements are poised to be heard. Urban families cluster precariously on motorbikes to roar down overcrowded streets towards modernity.



Elder chews the culturally-treasured bitter nut in rural Vietnam.

Vietnam, driven into top speed by international investors, is at the crossroads of hope and recovery but is bracing for difficult times ahead.

Heather Tufts, an activist during the Vietnam war, recently travelled to Vietnam

Five candidates answer the question for readers

Dana Larsen, community organizer and activist



I am running for the leadership of the BC NDP because I offer a fresh vision for my party and our province. My campaign will engage those who feel disenfranchised and cynical about the state of politics in BC.

I have been a community organizer and activist for all of my adult life. Over my career I have worked as a journalist, editor, and small business owner. For the past two years I have served as director and senior manager of the Vancouver Medicinal Cannabis Dispensary Society, which serves over 2,500 patients across the Lower Mainland from two locations. I am honoured to assist so many suffering patients to access the benefits of this amazing medicinal herb.

My leadership campaign is based on four principles: Democracy, Sustainability, Social Justice, and being Smart on Crime.

In terms of Democracy, I believe that the people of BC should be able to vote directly on the issues of the day, through referendums and ballot initiatives.

The NDP brought in our current ballot initiative system in 1995, but since then the only issue ever to come forward for a vote will be the HST. As premier I would halve the threshold from 10% to 5% to make it easier for a referendum item to be put on the ballot.

A common complaint is that our political process is “bought and paid for” by the wealthy elite. I would change this by banning corporations and unions from making donations to political parties in British Columbia.

As party leader, I would bring more democracy back into the BC NDP. I’d empower our membership to get directly involved in policy, using the Internet and other tools to ensure that we remain a truly grassroots party where every member has a real voice. (I have already begun this project with a website called www.OpenNDP.ca, which I encourage you to visit.)

An example of the bottom-up way I believe the BC NDP should be run, I strongly support *Sustainable BC* which was passed unanimously at convention but sadly never made it onto our election platform. We must recognize that a sustainable economy is one where growth is limited and maximum local benefit is derived from resource use.

I also see sustainability as meaning we should preserve our public institutions for the common good. As premier, I would stop and reverse the corporate giveaways, to ensure that BC Ferries, BC Hydro, and BC Rail are maintained for the benefit of all British Columbians.

Sustainable transportation means moving away from building more roads and towards rail-based transport wherever possible, including bringing light rail to the Fraser Valley.

For the sake of both sustainability and social justice, I am calling for the Skytrain to be designated as part of our provincial highway system, and for fares to be eliminated. As premier, I would also study the benefits of making the entire BC Transit system fare-free, so that poverty is never a barrier to public transit access.

Social justice means ensuring that our poorest and most vulnerable citizens are not left behind. I advocate for a \$10 minimum wage, indexed to inflation. I also support reforming our welfare system so that everyone is guaranteed an adequate minimum income.

Finally, I call for BC to get smart on crime. We need to accept the overwhelming evidence that more prisons and more police do not always lead to a safe and civil society. As premier I would implement current BC NDP policy to remove marijuana users from the criminal justice system, so that we could tax and regulate adult use. This would free police resources to focus on actual criminals and not pot smokers.

Taxed and regulated marijuana would also be a financial windfall that provided benefits to all British Columbians. This would allow us to pay down the Liberals’ debt and maintain social programs without raising taxes.

Being smart on crime also entails recognizing that prison is not a solution for homelessness, drug addiction, or mental health issues. As premier, I would tell Stephen Harper that enough is enough, and that the people of British Columbia prefer to spend our tax dollars on programs that help keep nonviolent and vulnerable people out of prison. BC should not foot the bill for Stephen Harper’s prison spending spree.

If you support the principles of Democracy, Sustainability, Social Justice, and being Smart on Crime, then please support my leadership bid. You can visit my campaign online at www.VoteDana.ca.

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Nicholas Simons, MLA Powell River-Sunshine Coast



I am offering my service as leader of the New Democratic Party of BC.

For nine years, I administered the Health and Social Services Department of the Sechelt Nation. There I was responsible for over 20 employees in program areas that included health, social assistance, alcohol and drugs, justice, and child welfare. I successfully managed a multi-million dollar annual budget.

As the executive director, I oversaw the implementation of numerous progressive programs. In Child and Family Services I instituted universal day-care for Band members, a nutritionist, the first sexual health program on reserve, and a food-garden program. I promoted independence for elders, the first crack-pipe exchange program in the province, and kept families together through innovative family support programs. Under my direction, our Health and Social Services Centre was built to LEED standards, and included space for art therapy, family conferencing, nurses consultation, and a community kitchen. At its heart is the elders’ boardroom where the language of the shíshálh (Sechelt) people is recorded, documented and passed on. Restorative justice, and wilderness alcohol and drug programs for entire families were at the forefront of addictions treatment. In over a decade in Child Welfare, I had only one contested court case.

My Master’s degree is in criminology. I’ve worked inside federal and provincial prisons, I was the crime prevention coordinator for the Northwest Territories, and I’ve worked for Arctic Public Legal Education and travelled around the Arctic. I have worked for the Northwest Territories government in the Departments of Justice and Child and Family Services, where I wrote a report on Customary Adoption, and designed a child abuse awareness campaign. I have taught criminology at Simon Fraser University.

I have also been a musician throughout my career, teaching, performing and recording with various local and national artists. I served as the president of the Sunshine Coast Arts Council.

Most of my working life has been spent outside of politics. I joined the NDP in 2003 after being asked to run in the federal riding of West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast. In that election, the NDP vote went to 22% from the previous 6%. At the encouragement of former Premier Dave Barrett and others, I put my hat in the ring for the provincial nomination. In 2005 running against the incumbent Liberals and the leader of the Green Party, the party won with 43% of the vote. In the 2009 election my vote increased to 57%.

My interest in seeking political office was prompted by my involvement in the investigation into the death of a young toddler from a remote First Nations community, who, because of turmoil, bad planning and confused practice, had been placed in her uncle’s home without adequate oversight. My report, materially unchanged from a 2003 draft, was ultimately released after the 2005 election. Issues surrounding the report including both its contents, the secrecy, and the timing of its release, led to hard questions in the Legislature and the establishment of the Hughes Inquiry into the child welfare system.

Liberal bad management, combined with zeal to cut corners was typical of not just child welfare policy, but other sectors of the province’s jurisdiction as well. Environmental protections were eliminated, local communities were disempowered, social programs were slashed, and public assets were liquidated. The government subscribed to a philosophy of short-term gain for long-term pain – which is illustrated regularly through reports on infant deaths, the increase in poverty, the degradation of our environment and the sell-off of our resources.

I bring my own approach to leadership. Restoring confidence in the political process will be a priority. A good leader is one who surrounds themselves with intelligent people who have integrity. One who understands that their primary role is to make decisions based on meaningful consultation, good research and sound science. One who believes that even the most difficult decisions can be made in a transparent and open manner without needing to resort to stealth or spin, which have no place in public policy debate. A good leader is one who can make difficult decisions with a complete awareness of the benefits and costs they will entail.

Throughout my career I have made difficult decisions in hostile environments with confidence and sensitivity. This comes from being fully aware of the problem, cognizant of the challenges, but focused on a specific outcome.

All of the policies I propose (see www.nicholassimons2011.ca) reflect the principles of Sustainable BC, a framework which requires that public policy be based on sound environmental stewardship, the importance of a diversified economy, equity in the sharing of our wealth, and the promotion of individual and community well-being.

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John Horgan, MLA Juan de Fuca



For the past six years, I’ve spent my days meeting with people in my community, listening to their concerns, working to find solutions, and speaking out on their behalf. It’s the best job I’ve ever had. Whether it’s my constituents or the people I meet from every corner of this province, they all tell me the same thing, they want political leaders who take their concerns seriously and tell them the truth.

The want leaders who tell them what issues they’re examining, who they’re talking to and how they will reach the decisions that affect British Columbian’s lives. They don’t want flashy gimmicks, fake slogans or high-priced ad campaigns. They want honest, hard-working government that puts people first. That’s not what they have today and I don’t expect it’s going to change when the BC Liberals choose a new leader.

It’s left to New Democrats to answer the call. That’s why I’m seeking the leadership of the BC New Democratic Party. I believe that New Democrats want to revitalize a political movement that not only elects a NDP government, but an NDP government with a purpose, with a mandate for change and a plan for delivering change.

British Columbians want a government that protects their natural resources and ensures they are used in a way that benefit the public interest and provides jobs for local people. They don’t want their natural heritage auctioned off to speculators or a handful of well-connected private interests.

They want real environmental protection that based on balanced, scientific principles. To be sure, they want development and investment, but they want to ensure that projects are honestly examined and judged on their economic, environmental and social merits.

They want a government that makes investments in our young people to ensure that they have the skills needed to survive in our modern open economy and to help attract the kind of investment that will allow our economy to flourish.

They want a government that is committed to providing viable, accessible quality health care for all its citizens.

They want government to develop a credible, workable strategy for ensuring that as BC prospers, our most vulnerable citizens are not left by the wayside. The want real solutions to child poverty and homelessness and they want a minimum wage that reflects the costs of living in our province.

They want a government that listens to the people and engages its citizenry. They want politics to move beyond the backrooms and boardrooms to our community halls and kitchen tables.

The past six years has taught me that MLAs can do more. We must stay connected with our communities and do our best to listen to their views—even when we disagree with them. I know that despite my initial disagreement, I often found myself brought around to a new and better point of view simply because I was determined to listen.

As New Democrats we have our differences to be sure. We debate policy, we argue about issues and as we’ve seen in the past couple of months, sometimes we even punch the walls and break some furniture to make point. But we share the same important values. We all believe that the public interest must prevail.

I want to be leader of the NDP because I know how to connect with British Columbians, how to work hard to find solutions to the problems facing our communities and how to speak out for those who can’t buy access to the back rooms of the BC Liberal Party. NDP values are British Columbians’ values. Simply put, I believe that the job of leader of the NDP is to convince British Columbians that they’ve been new Democrats all their lives, they just didn’t know it.

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Island municipalities need a fair share

By James Fletcher and Doug McArthur

Small towns and cities on Vancouver Island are in trouble.

The present model of local government financing simply doesn't work, and indeed, it can't work.

Over the past 32 years, successive provincial governments have chipped away at transfer payments, leaving local governments with little choice but to cut services and increase taxes. It also ended the provincial role of ensuring less well off communities can provide services comparable to the rest.

Compounding the problem is the massive economic transition underway in our province – one marked by the decline of high-value industries such as forestry. Only 10 years ago forestry contributed directly and indirectly to over 35 percent of the annual income and wealth generation in BC. It is now well below 10 percent. Likewise, 10 years ago forestry contributed close to \$3 billion in revenues to the province. Today, the figure is less than \$500 million.

For many towns the result has been a shrinking tax base as businesses close and workers leave. Small, resource-based towns are hit especially hard.

The results have been predictable – large corporations and small businesses alike are demanding tax breaks, well aware that their competitors benefit from more favourable tax regimes elsewhere.

Residents in Port Alberni saw their tax bills jump by 23.6 percent last year when Catalyst Paper refused to pay its taxes. The story in Campbell River, Crofton and Powell River is similar with residents paying higher taxes and receiving fewer services in order to make up for the tax revenue withheld by Catalyst Paper.

Shifting the tax burden from business to residents and driving up user charges increases the burden on residential property owners, takes money out of consumers' pockets, and ultimately, does not solve the real problem.

The need for a new model of local government financing is becoming more urgent with each passing year.

For the past year we have studied this issue, and have recently released a paper titled *Local Prosperity: Options for Municipal Revenue Growth in British Columbia*.

We argue that local governments in BC are far too dependent on property taxes and property-related user charges. In the past 10 years, municipalities have imposed a more

rapidly-growing burden of taxes and goods and service charges on local taxpayers than the provincial government placed on provincial taxpayers – a burden that is 52 percent higher.

The solution? BC's municipalities need access to a much broader range of revenue sources.

In our report, we propose dozens of new revenue generating ideas and promising economic development concepts.

The Capital Regional District's Hartland Landfill gas utilization project is an example of how local government can upgrade its existing infrastructure to generate new revenue. By capturing and burning the methane gas generated by the landfill, the \$2.8 million project generates 1.6 MW of electricity, enough to power 1,600 homes. This project also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and earns royalties for the CRD.

Nanaimo's sewage treatment plant has also been recently upgraded. Instead of flaring excess methane gas the regional district has installed a new cogeneration system that will be used to create electricity to be sold to BC Hydro.

Elsewhere in the province, Revelstoke provides a great example of how waste wood from the local mill can be used to fuel a district heating system and generate revenue for the city. In another example, Dawson Creek played an important role in helping to establish the Peace Energy Cooperative. This producer co-op helps small-scale electricity producers sell their power to larger distributors.

Local procurement policies and import substitution strategies can help to create markets for locally produced goods and services and reduce the need for more expensive imports.

But in order to take advantage of opportunities for economic diversification, small towns need a fair share of the tax revenues that are already generated in their communities.

This will require the provincial government to increase transfers, as well as broaden the revenue tools available to local governments.

Change is needed if smaller communities on Vancouver Island are to continue to offer a high quality of life and economic opportunities for the next generation.

To read our discussion paper visit: www.thinkcity.ca/localprosperity

James Fletcher is a researcher with Think City. Doug McArthur is a professor with the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University.

and their grave markers are in photos in the book.

A piece of Canadian history that did not make it into our Canadian schools' curriculum!.

PEOPLE OF THE LAKES, Translated Stories of the Elders, Shirleen Smith, Editor, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA PRESS.

This is a giant of a book. It encompasses maps, photos, and stories of the peoples who occupy Northern Yukon to the shores of the Beaufort Sea. It is indeed the land of lakes (Canada has more lakes than the rest of the planet's countries). The sketches of tribal dress date back to 1848.

This book is a wonderful study of the people who had to put up with the arrival of white migrants from Europe!

WILD HORSES, by R. McLennan, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA PRESS

Some years ago I joined the Wild Horse Society and canoed up the Spirit River, north of Jasper, and viewed the wild bands. Later I visited the roundup results of the Nevada roundup. They took in 5,000, put 50 in each corral, put up a mound for the stallions. They dutifully took turns to stand on it.

With this back ground I welcome the chance to review *WILD HORSES*. It's a lively bit of romance, savoury but sans equines!

--Ron MacIsaac

Update:

Say “No!” to Female Genital Mutilation

By Diane Walsh

VICTORIA -- Female Genital Mutilation is a heinous crime still perpetrated against girls. On February 6 throughout the day, the entire world community was asked to chant a resounding “No!” in unison with all activists against female genital mutilation.

As this was the date marking the 8th International Day on Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, collectively, it was a time when we could honour the global concerted efforts which rarely get media attention, but which represent both practical and existential struggles against FGM tradition practice.

Since February 6 fell on a Sunday, the UN-sponsored meeting, backed by the World Health Organization, took place in Geneva on Monday, February 7, at 9 am at “Le Centre International de Conférences” (CICG).

It has been a long wait, from many activists' point of view. But it is encouraging news as the proud two-pronged theme for 2011 has finally emerged: “Building Bridges between Europe and Africa”, with emphasis on “engaging media” and “engaging governments”, which is an indispensable factor to being able to reach zero tolerance to FGM.

The Inter-African Committee, which was scheduled to take the floor at Monday's Geneva meeting, issuing this statement, in advance, from IAC Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:

“The objective of celebrating February 6 is to call International, Regional, National and Community attention to the efforts needed to free women and girls from the adverse tradition of female genital mutilation and to accelerate action towards its total elimination.

“Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a violation of basic human rights principles, as stipulated in Article 24.3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), other International and Regional instruments, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Relating to the Rights of Women in Africa, (Article 5) and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, 2004.”

The main actors on the anti-FGM front have traditionally been The Inter-African Committee, UNFPA, The UN Refugee Agency and UNICEF, and so it makes sense that these organizations/“branches” of the UN were designated hosts for the meeting. Formal media were represented as well, including Afromedianet. Equally, and European Network-FGM.

This signals to the whole world that concrete genuine steps are being taken to solidify the resources for anti-FGM initiative, within, government.

For far too long FGM has been pushed under the carpet. That's been the sentiment of many activists who have struggled to raise awareness over more than 40 years. Things are different now. For the first time in history chief world actors alongside prominent activists have agreed to band together. The work of all anti-FGM organizations has also been emboldened by the enthusiasm of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stating unequivocally a UN-commitment to gender equality in September 2010 in New York.

Coupled with that, we've seen the emergence of UN Women on the scene, with its new website out in January 2011. Of course the work of impressive former president of Chile Michelle Bachelet, who Ban Ki-moon appointed Executive Director/ Under-Secretary General of UN Women, allows for a different climate to flourish. This year's International Day is significant in that the overall strategy is being upped in part as a result of UN Women putting weight behind the anti-FGM cause.

The formidable contribution of The AHA Foundation; No Peace without Justice, Ban FGM and FGM NETWORK are obvious central keys as well to the current and overall political fervour galvanizing support behind ending the practice around the world.

Furthermore, TOSTAN out of Senegal; The Orchid Project [Davos winner] with ongoing endorsement from Nick Kristof of the NYT; and The Waris Dirie Foundation are core developing partnerships with the same common goal of eradication. Equally UNICEF operates in tandem with the mandate

of Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, whose personnel then work with several NGOs on the ground in Africa e.g. New Vision and Reach. By no means is this above list exhaustive.

Moreover, the commitment to eradicate FGM is exemplified by current initiatives taken place at a high-governmental level, both nationally and internationally. These include a global Appeal to Ban FGM world-wide, underscoring efforts to bring forth an actual UN Resolution into the UN General Assembly at some point in the near future. This would seek a ban on the practice of female genital mutilation world-wide and would carry the weight of international law against torture behind it and along with it the lofty goal to make the UN Resolution— ultimately—the 9th of the 8 Millennium Goals.

There is reason to have hope. A draft copy resolution is in the works, spearheaded by the Inter-African Committee, a giant in the anti-FGM movement. As currently endorsed by UN headquarters in Geneva, Donor Working Group and Global Alliance against FGM, a German-Canadian group now operational out of Geneva, we're seeing several federating efforts.

Using knowledge-sharing, a global portal is being developed with the aim to centralize all FGM-based resources, in addition to providing a vehicle for monitoring situations on the ground and immediate media-outreach. It will be a one-stop click to enable readers to view all resources pooled around FGM in one website.

In addition, with the ability to add to it, it will be possible to mobilize and communicate strategies between Europe, Africa [and the Middle East in due course] and allow for new partnerships, evolving every day, to be posted.

There is neither danger, nor contradiction, in the varying approaches to eradicating FGM which include legal, political and cultural. These can include but are not limited to strategies helping communities with unlearning harmful-to-girl cultural theory methodologies; sensitization and education; alternative employment measures for excisors—many different ways to fight FGM—but always complementary.

There are reports of successful law enforcement and arrest of excisors—making the criminalization of FGM an accepted paradigm and an integral part of an overall sensitization strategy. In Geneva, ambassadors from Burkina Faso, Egypt, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Kenya, Ethiopia will be heard speaking at session.

Those African delegations to the UN who opposed this movement going forward at the UN September 2010 New York conference have been successfully marginalized, in part on account of the tremendous unification of mobilization efforts agreed upon by the aforementioned plethora of organizations working on the front-line.

Importantly 2011 is a synchronization of strategies between Europe and Africa. It is only through world-wide awareness of the ongoing existence of FGM that true eradication can begin to take place.

If you know something, get in touch. It only takes a tweet or email or a FB post to get involved. Know that excisors practising FGM or those condoning or lending credence and supporting babies, little girls and women's genitals being sliced amidst societies of fear, coercion, and confusion are under watchful eye. The future can and will be better. If you see FGM happening, speak out. Don't be a witness and do nothing.

Diane Walsh, MA, is an investigative journalist based in the Pacific Northwest. She contributes to new media outlets, newspapers which by some miracle haven't gone under, and magazines in the US, Canada and Europe.

Ron reviews:

INUVALUIT NAUTCHIANGIT, Relationships between People and Plants, by R. Badringa & Inuit Elders, contact email ICRC@IRC.INUVALUIT.COM

This outstanding book (10 years in the making) with its marvellous photos, brings the Arctic into brilliant perspective. It displays how the resident Inuit lived, and explodes the common perspectives of barren lands and inhospitable terrain.

The study *Election Chill Effect* is [available at www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).
CCPA BC Office is located at 1400-207 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7; telephone: 604-801-5121, fax:604-801-5122.

Wrongful Conviction in Canadian Law, by Dr. Gary Botting, Butterworths LexisNexis

Wrongfully convicted, a cry from the heart from a victim of our Canadian Justice system, David Milgaard’s unique account of his years in prison is an essay giving voice to the nightmares that haunt so many innocent people in today’s Canadian prisons

By Tim Pheotist

David Milgaard, who spent 23 years in jail for a murder he did not commit, has written a compelling forward to a recently published book detailing nightmare cases of wrongful conviction in Canada.

“In prison, every horrible second seems to stretch forever,” he wrote. “A third of my expected life [has been] stolen from me forever.”

The essay kicks off Dr. Gary Botting’s *Wrongful Conviction in Canadian Law*, published by Butterworths LexisNexis, which reviews and cross-references every inquiry into wrongful conviction ever held in Canada. Botting’s legal practice, originally founded in Victoria in 1991, is now based in Vancouver.

Milgaard says he is only one of the many voices of the wrongfully convicted. “Of the hundreds if not thousands of convicted Canadians who have claimed to be innocent over the past half century, only eight of us have ever had our cases reviewed by Commissions of Inquiry,” he said. Six such inquiries have been held so far, all within the last 20 years, in half of the 10 provinces: Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan.

“Do not believe for a minute that the other five provinces lag far behind. For starters, there’s Ivan Henry in British Columbia – 26 years in jail for multiple crimes he did not commit. His 55 appeals and protests that he had been wrongfully convicted were ignored by the BC Court of Appeal for 20-plus years until the Pickton investigation revealed that the real rapist had gone on raping in the same way for years after Henry was put away. What went wrong there, where the police deliberately sat on evidence proving that the crimes were committed by a different person altogether? Surely British Columbians will want to find out?”

Milgaard pointed to cases in the other provinces as well. “Alberta has its wrongful prosecutions of Wilson Nepoose, Jason Dix and Daniel Wood, Quebec has Simon Marshal, New Brunswick has Felix Michaud, and Prince Edward Island has John Cooper. They all sued or negotiated settlements for wrongful conviction. But it was an uphill battle.

“That about covers the whole country!” Milgaard points out the limitations of the inquiries into wrongful conviction, which so far have been limited to convictions for murder. “All eight of us received life sentences. If we had been wrongfully convicted of crimes with shorter sentences, it would have been much easier to do the time than to fight the system for years and years hoping to be exonerated.

“Which makes me wonder how many thousands of Canadians have been wrongfully convicted of crimes less serious than murder, but finished their sentences in sadness and silence because they knew their cases would never be heard? How many are forced to lick their wounds in private, and get on with their lives in shame, never again believing that justice exists in this country? Would they want to expose themselves to scorn and prejudice for years and years, like the eight of us have had to?”

Canada’s system of justice, says Milgaard, relies on lies. “That’s the advocacy

system. Both sides can’t be true, so someone has to be lying. With wrongful convictions, the judge and jury have picked the lies over the truth. As long as the lies stand, the system feels good about itself. So Canada’s system of justice does not let the wrongfully convicted expose the lies.”

He says the Minister of Justice never of his own initiative applies the laws that Parliament has passed – laws designed to protect the innocent. “[The Minister’s] staff is concerned only with setting up roadblocks for years and years in the hope that those claiming that they were wrongfully convicted will get lost – in all senses of the word.”

He said the Minister seems to think that those who claim to be wrongfully convicted will give up their efforts to get exonerated once their sentences end and they have a chance to go home at last to what’s left of their “shattered and probably scattered families.”

The system is set up so that innocent people, once they are convicted, simply cannot get a fair hearing, he said. Every day, inmates who have been wrongfully convicted see “guilty” men and women get out of prison because they have admitted their crimes and come to grips with their criminogenic factors. Meanwhile, inmates who have been wrongfully convicted cannot even get parole, because before the Parole Board will let them out of jail they have to “admit” to a crime they haven’t committed.

“Many innocent prisoners feel they are forced to lie to bring the torment of prison time to an end,” he said. Furthermore, sometimes lawyers advise their wrongfully convicted clients to lie and admit to the crimes they have been charged with to avoid further torment.

“Of course, the lawyers don’t ‘know’ that their clients are innocent, even though they may ‘believe’ it. Some lawyers may characterize that kind of ‘white lie’ as ‘coming clean’.

“What they forget is, a lie is never clean!” Keeping a person in prison until he is forced to tell a lie by incriminating himself is a form of torture, said Milgaard. With no end in sight, the torment goes on forever: the person never knows when he can expect to be released.

“But when the lie ‘Yes, I did it!’ has been uttered, the whole system of justice, from police to judges, can give a big sigh of relief and say, ‘We knew it!’

“The reward held out to me if I chose to lie? Freedom! The punishment for my being innocent and honest and sticking to my principles and not lying? Almost 23 years of prison time!”

Some innocent prisoners cave in to the system and say they did the crime so that they can get out a few years earlier. But once they have admitted to doing the crime, there’s no turning back “This situation is very, very wrong,” he said. “But that’s the kind of justice and penal system we have in Canada.”

The cases to which Millgard alluded in the foreword to Botting’s book are now well known. In Ontario, Romeo Phillion confessed to a murder in 1972, then within 24 hours tried to retract his false confession – given because he wanted to show the police that he was willing to be cooperative. But

nobody would listen. Thirty-five years later, it became clear that he had an iron-clad alibi all along, and was innocent of murder.

More than half a century ago, when he was 14, Steven Truscott received the death penalty for the rape and murder of 12-year-old Lynn Harper. “You shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead,” he was told in 1959. Authorities commuted his death sentence to a life sentence, and let him out on parole after 10 years, but as far is Milgaard is concerned, this was simply “a cheap way to ease their guilt. As in Millgard’s case, nobody would listen to him, not the Court of Appeal, not even the Supreme Court of Canada.”

Told by a judge looking into the matter in 2007 that Steven Truscott had likely suffered a miscarriage of justice, the Minister of Justice referred the Truscott case back to the Ontario Court of Appeal, who, while not going so far as to finding him factually innocent, left the Crown without enough evidence to proceed to a new trial.

“But justice delayed is justice denied,” said Milgaard. “To my mind, it was wrong of the Ontario Court of Appeal to say they couldn’t find Steven ‘factually innocent’. Put it all together and do the math, with the blow-fly and flesh fly evidence and everything, all multiplied out with the help of someone who knows statistics, and the chances of Steve being guilty are way less than one tenth of one percent – not much different from DNA evidence.

“Seems to me the Ontario Court of Appeal didn’t do the math!”

He said the government and the justice system never admit they are wrong even when they know they can’t be right. Only when the injustice becomes obvious do commissions of inquiry get set up – in his case, 35 years after his conviction for a rape-murder that he had nothing at all to do with. The DNA evidence eventually showed that the murder was committed by a serial rapist, Larry Fisher.

“Fisher sat on his hands for 23 years, nowing that I sat in prison all that time for his crime.”

In Canada, anyone charged with a crime is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. But as David Milgaard soon found out, once a person is convicted, that’s the end of it: he is considered guilty, period. In order to get out of prison without lying to the Parole Board, as the system requires, he said, the person has to prove his innocence beyond a reasonable doubt – which is next to impossible to do from prison.

“I was lucky enough to have a mother who believed in me. She worked hard for more than 20 years to convince people of the truth: that I was innocent. But it didn’t help that the Crown Counsel on my case was so blinded by his own tunnel vision that he spent the first 10 of those years, at government expense, trying to undermine everything my mother did at her own expense. He told the Parole Board time and again that I was dangerous, at risk to ‘reoffend’ – even though I had never offended in the first place!

“If that isn’t offensive I don’t know what is!

“How could the Parole Board let that Crown counsel say the same old thing over

and over and over, year after year, like a parrot? Worse, how could it listen, and give his recycled opinions any stock?”

The law needs to be changed, he said, so that prosecutors can’t continue to prosecute their cases years after the trial with the same old wrong evidence. “Allowing that to happen brings the whole system of justice into disrepute.”

Milgaard said that he wanted to impress upon readers these four central points, drawn from personal experience:

1. It is horrible to spend time in prison for a crime you did not commit. Think of it: prison sentences are the worst punishment Canada has been able to come up with for the worst criminals committing the worst crimes. In the case of someone serving time in prison for something he or she did not do, the “punishment” is torture.

2. Fighting the Canadian government for compensation long after being released from prison after exoneration feels like being in prison all over again. I was fighting for myself and for my family for years all over again. How would you feel? It was a long, long struggle, and it was degrading. I strongly recommend the government to make monies available to any man or woman struggling to prove they are innocent.

3. Seeking justice in cases of wrongful conviction and bringing cases such as mine to everyone’s attention is costly in terms of time and money, especially since Justice Canada, along with prosecutors and the police, drag their feet and dig in.

4. Justice delayed is justice denied. Canada’s system of investigating and reviewing miscarriages of justice is way too slow. We need a system where an independent Board that is not part of the criminal justice system or the government looks at all cases where anyone claims he has been wrongful convicted. When this Board finds that the person is innocent, the government should quickly free them and give them compensation.

David Milgaard concludes his essay by singing the praises of *Wrongful Conviction in Canadian Law* and its author. In the book, Dr. Botting looks at the seven different commissions of inquiry that have been held in Canada so far, to determine what they recommended and whether their recommendations have been followed or ignored. One inquiry in Newfoundland heard three cases at once, and the Gouge Inquiry uncovered several more cases of wrongful conviction in Ontario.

“For years Gary Botting has tirelessly devoted his time and his personal resources to the cause of the wrongfully convicted,” Milgaard said.

“Hopefully this book will allow the police and pathologists and prosecutors and lawyers and judges and governments to cross-reference the recommendations easily so they don’t repeat their mistakes of the past. And maybe it will help other wrongfully convicted people like me to see that they are not alone, and should continue fighting to be heard.”

Ron reviews:

150 YEARS OF CATHOLIC HISTORY ON VANCOUVER ISLAND, by P. Jamison, ICN PUBLISHING

Aside from the religious aspects of the book, it is most informative about the situation between the Native and the White people. Missionary activities had a profound effect on the Island and its tribes.

It is a unique way of assessing the roles of the people who shaped much of the Island.

RETURNING TO THE TEACHINGS, Exploring Aboriginal Justice, by R. Ross, PENGUIN BOOKS

Although published some time ago this book answers the question: “Can traditional justice heal native society?” It sets out the roots of the healing circle, the bringing together of victim and wrongdoer.

The highlights are the demonstrations that aboriginal approaches to justice are applicable to all society.

--Ron MacIsaac

The ‘Vindication’ of Remi De Roo, the political sea change in the Catholic Church, by Patrick Jamieson, Samarhanor Press

Reviewed by Rev. Dale Perkins

It is very unusual that a religious figure within the Roman Catholic Church, not implicated in a sexual scandal, would attract national attention the way it has around retired bishop, Remi De Roo. He left office in 1999 after 37 years as a well-known Canadian Catholic theologian. His reputation was recognized beyond the RC Church, and he was seen as a popular champion of human rights and a more progressive Catholic Church. But his fall from Episcopal grace was dramatic and swift, and the aftershocks continue to this day.

Patrick Jamieson is a life-long Catholic with impeccable journalistic credentials. He came to realize that Remi De Roo’s descent was orchestrated by officials high up in

the Catholic hierarchy, and the purported scandal surrounding investment portfolios held by the diocese under De Roo’s tenure again were convenient but mostly fabricated props used to taint the legacy of the bishop’s time in office.

Jamieson chronicles the many twists and turns of prominent Catholic leaders and their understudies over the intervening dozen years, and he shows no hesitation to reveal the soiled laundry and soft “underbelly” of the Roman Catholic Church. The evidence shows that even powerful, non religious figures, such as the irrepressible, born-again Roman Catholic, Conrad Black, may have had a hand in the denigration of Bishop De Roo.

Nevertheless, this is not a vindictive

book that Jamieson uses to accuse particular people of underhanded scheming. He is meticulous in his research and wades through endless documents and official statements to piece together a thorough review. The end result is a testimonial to Bishop De Roo’s integrity and honour.

For the non-Catholic reader this may be heavy reading requiring extraordinary attention to the particulars surrounding the complicated affairs of Catholic Church life. But for any who can appreciate a member of an important religious community leading by word and action based on high-minded principles of social justice and human rights, this is an important historical documentary.

Two books that offer very different but equally inspiring examples of the good that we can do, and be

Reviewed by Caspar Davis

I have been reading two books by two great Americans whose books and lives are as different as you could imagine. However, each of them encountered a critical situation about which nothing was being done, and each felt an irresistible calling to take it on themselves.

One is a man who grew up in Africa, the son of a missionary doctor, and became a globetrotting mountain climber before finding his calling. The other is a down home Texas shrimper and mother of five whose only apparent distinction was a love of reading, before she stumbled into hers.

The books are as different as the people who wrote them. One is a simple, straightforward, at times almost statistical (but very well written) account of the extraordinary people and wild adventures the author encountered in trying to bring basic education to girls in some of the most forgotten and inaccessible parts of the planet.

The other is a wildly imaginative journey through the mind of a woman driven by things she barely comprehends to confront a major industry, the intransigent politicians who support it, and even her friends and family, in trying to stop the poisoning of the bays and bayous she loves, and the air her children breathe.

The books are *Stones into Schools* by Greg Mortenson, and *An Unreasonable Woman* by Diane Wilson. You probably know about the former, you may even have read it and its precursor, *Three Cups of Tea*. But you have probably never heard of *An Unreasonable Woman*. However, Diane Wilson's adventure on the Gulf Coast is at least as gripping as Mortenson's single-minded crusade to educate the girls buried in the crevasses of the Earth's highest mountains, and further marginalized by endless wars and a profoundly misogynist culture.

Diane Wilson's story would be interesting enough if she merely recounted events as Mortenson does, but her book is far more. It is a remarkable literary adventure that lays bare a passionate and intelligent -- and refreshingly disorganized -- mind. She often seems to be blown along by forces beyond her ken to do something that defies everything that hems the rest of us in -- advice, social pressure, even agreed-upon reality...You have almost certainly never read anything like it, and I think you will find it irresistible. Rather than trying to describe it, I include an almost randomly selected passage below.

Wilson and Mortenson offer very different but equally inspiring examples of the good that we can do, and be.

Happily, both books are available at the Victoria Library, and presumably most others.

Excerpt from *An Unreasonable Woman* by Diane Wilson (starting at page 83)

Once during the fall after a fog had shut down the bay and the salt grass and the horizon had become a single fluid thing, a lone goose sailed into the house through the open second-story door. And that as how me and the kids and Baby [Baby was Diane's husband] came not to be strangers to the bay and salt grass, but strangers only to what lay outside and bordered our world.

[Start of new chapter]

I don't know why I listened and watched. He was suited and vested, his white finger crooked, and I said nothing and did nothing, and a whole wasteland of words blew over me. Then he finished, and I watched him walk back to his silver car. I was thinking it was past noon when he first came through the fish-house doors, but now I'm not so sure. He had worn a suit and his hand was white against the dark material.

He wanted to know what was going on. With shrimpers? You want to see one of my shrimpers, I said. No, no, no, he said. Just you. Wouldn't be a real banker if I wasn't checking on what's going on down here at the bay, now, would I? So. Now. Did or did you not send out that press release? And did or did you not set up a meeting at city hail?

I said I had sent out a press release for sure. Didn't know I needed one until I found out I needed one. Newspapers want press releases. First time for everything.

So I talked, and Howdy never looked up from his shiny black shoes. I could smell new leather from where I stood. I had never talked to Howdy Doody before and would've been desperate if I had, because Howdy Doody wasn't his real name, but it was what he was called by every shrimper who ever had to get a loan from him at the bank, and worse by shrimpers who didn't. Talking to Howdy for the first time wasn't just talking to Howdy. It was talking to someone else who had more money than he did and more power than he did, and it wasn't just the bank; it was some other allegiance more powerful than that, and Howdy was with that allegiance even while he worked at the bank

in Seadrift.

So Howdy was with somebody important and he knew it, and when he looked up from his shoes, he pranced like a preacher in a tent, who had the only exit. "So," he said. "Are you inviting me to that meeting? You and your friends. Not thinking about making it a private little affair? Just a few select people?"

"What?" I said. "That meeting at city hail? Is that what you're down here for?"

"Just need to know, is all. On a need-to-know basis. A banker's prerogative. I just need to go back and tell a few folks that you aren't fixing to have some little vindictive meeting to roast industry alive. Not some renegade environmental group forming in our midst? Hmm?"

I laughed, or think I laughed. I felt my face stretch wide and my lips curl away from my teeth. Then I glanced over his well-padded shoulder and pretended I was counting boats or something. Something else besides getting nervous.

"So what am I to tell them?" He said. "Well, tell them they're invited. Just come along. Heck, I don't care. It's just a meeting." "A meeting," he said. Well, yeah. "Well, good. That's good. I'll pass that on, then."

He left in his silver car, and for the next two days (there isn't nothing like a banker to put a little fire underneath you) I talked on the phone. The brownie shrimp run had almost stopped, except for the shrimpers who had taken their boats and nets and headed for the river, so nothing was going on. I didn't envy those river-bound shrimpers. River shrimping was the worst kind of shrimping, next to catching Hoppers.

I sat at the fish house and made phone calls, and while I did that Donna Sue opened the fish-house doors and made salty coffee out of Seadrift's nasty drinking water. Then we watched nothing happen. Old men that didn't fish anymore because they were either too sick or too cranky, or else their kids had sold their boats outright to keep them off the bay and from drowning, came down to the fish house and drank all our coffee. They wouldn't keep quiet even while I was on the phone, and they yelled at Donna Sue the whole time.

"Who's she talkin' to? What's she sayin'? Does Froggie know she's on that phone? You seen Froggie lately? He quit shrimpin', or what?"

I didn't say nothing, but shook my head

at a particularly loud fisherman. Donna Sue yelled at him. "Can't you see she's on the phone!"

"Who's she talkin' to? Who is it?" "It's the plants, Walt. The plants!" "The what? The plants? Tomato plants?" "No, no, no! Carbide, down there. You know...Alcoa. The chemical plants. Hell, Walt, you've worked there before. You oughta know what I'm talkin' about. Good Lord a'mighty!"

"Hell! Chemical plants! I can tell you a thing or two about them. Seen more stuff dumped...Ooh, she's gonna get her tail in a bind. Seen it happen for a lot less than that. Better off just not askin' questions."

Walt was a semi-Yankee that retired from one of the local chemical plants on his own, but was forced into retirement from the bay by his grown son, and wore nothing but an old pair of coveralls with long straps and open sides, and on his feet a worn-Out pair of thick rubber sandals he'd bought on a Mexico vacation years ago. Walt claimed he hadn't cooled off since he came to Texas 30 years ago.

Walt was an irritable talker arid wasn't always right about things, but this time he was, 'cause while my rear end wasn't exactly in a bind the plant employee I called was furious, and his words were like razor blades coming down a cow chute. "No!" He yelled. "Call somebody else. We are not in the information business, lady. We make chemicals. We build jobs and make better lives for people in this county!"

The third chemical plant I called said they were required by law to provide information to local authorities, but not to every Tom, Dick, and Harry on the telephone. I figured local authorities might be more obliging, so I called the Calhoun County emergency coordinator in Port Lavaca, the next town over and the county seat where Sanchez, my oldest brother, had been spending so much time.

"It's lies!" The coordinator yelled. "That article's nothing but a twisted pack of lies instigated by people wanting to make something out of nothing! It's their job to rile up people. That's how they make their money!"

"The Toxic Release Inventory is a national report," I said. "A government report."

"Get your facts straight, lady. What do you know about it anyhow? Do you know what's on a plant's wastewater permit? Know anything at all about a permit? Noooh? Well, I didn't think so. I don't have time for this bunch of crap. I've got stuff to do. We do real work around here..."

OATH BETRAYED: America's Torture Doctors, by Steven H.Miles, 2009, University of California Press, USA

Reviewed by Theresa Wolfwood

"Many people are only dimly aware of the United States' disastrous complicity with torturing regimes in El Salvador, Batista's Cuba, Chile, Iran, South Vietnam, Guatemala, Argentina, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, or Shah Reza Pahlavi's Iran.

Some people are so deeply estranged from the reality of torture that they simply denied that any torture could have occurred in Iraq, in Afghanistan or at Guantanamo Bay."

Denial that our citizens could be torturing others or abetting in torture is common in Canada as well as the US. Medical involvement in torture and cruelty is something we think of as history -- as in the Nazi Germany era. But Miles, a physician and professor at the University of Minnesota, studied 60,000 pages of documents to make his case; US doctors and other medical personnel are complicit and cooperative in torture by the US government and military. The main evidence comes from Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and Kandahar (where Canadian personnel have been implicated).

The Geneva Convention on Torture states in Part I, Article 1:

For the purposes of this Convention, torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punish-

ing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity...

It is clear that the details and photographs in *Oath Betrayed* are of torture as defined by international agreement. They are horrific -- this is not a pleasant book to read.

It is hard to comprehend how people could do such terrible things to other people and hard to believe that those in the "healing professions" could condone torture.

But Miles' intensive investigation shows, as he said in a speech in Victoria in late 2010, that the torture was not random or just the initiative of a few workers in the prisons but it is a policy and directive from the highest levels of government, the US presidential cabinet.

His research is carefully documented in appendices; as well he documents the official position of profession groups in the US and the Nuremburg Code for conduct of scientific procedures.

Torture, he writes, is not a popular cause in civil society; perhaps the dehumanization of the enemy, the "other", helps to justify

tacit acceptance by citizens in whose name this cruelty is inflicted. Politicians avoid the issue. Some countries have banned torture -- political power changes as in El Salvador and torture is no longer government policy. But many countries still practice this form of barbarism.

Canada's maybe next prime minister openly favours it; our present prime minister refuses to be honest about Canada's role in torture in Afghanistan. Canada supports countries like Israel that routinely tortures Palestinian prisoners.

Miles calls on medical societies to take action on torture and their professionals who are complicit in this betrayal of their Hippocratic Oath.

He also directs citizens to investigate and act through the many respected international human rights organizations that document torture.

-And we can all pressure our own governments to end their part in perpetuating and supporting barbaric treatment that should be stopped everywhere it is committed by anyone or any government.

If treatment of the helpless and powerless is the measure of a society, then most, including our own, fail that measure miserably.

Too much sentiment, not enough story

Review by Barry Weisleder

The surprise winner of the 2010 Giller Prize for best English-Canadian fiction, *The Sentimentalists* by Johanna Skibsrud (Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver/Toronto, 2010, 218 pages) is both an artistic and political disappointment.

The judges went a little overboard with their laudable encouragement of the young poet-turned-novelist. They are apparently willing to overlook tortuous sentence structure, a painful over-indulgence in bracketed subordinate clauses, and dense lyricism that suffocates an interesting storyline. Frequent bursts of creative metaphoric prose do not rescue Skibsrud's stumbling transition to the novel form.

The Sentimentalists could easily channel the intense public interest in war crimes, post-traumatic stress disorder and wikileaks. It is a tale told by the daughter of a Vietnam war veteran. Her dad, haunted by the horror of an actual massacre by US Marines of a village of Vietnamese peasants in 1967, leaves his North Dakota trailer and moves to a small Ontario town. There the vet lives with the father of his soldier buddy, who died mysteriously, possibly the victim of an attempted cover-up. The daughter has issues too -- a failed romantic relationship, estrangement from her frequently-absent, alcoholic father -- but the more she learns about the horrors that contorted their lives, the more she concludes that the past is irretrievably subjective and ultimately unknowable.

This novel is a missed opportunity. It could have dramatized a compelling history that has contemporary resonance. It could have situated it in today's big picture of power, profit and the system's multi-million victims. Connecting past and present wars of imperial intervention, linking the toxic fogs that they propagate, alas, is a job for another writer.

Calendar of coming events

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT Board Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month, at 1:30 p.m., at the CRD offices at 625 Fisgard street in Victoria.

CENTRAL SAANICH RESIDENTS ARE invited to attend regular neighbourhood gatherings, held every Friday night at 7 pm at Spelt’s Coffee Shop, 7586 East Saanich Road, in Saanichton. Share stories, books, talk politics and enjoy hot coffee. Nothing is taboo... No pretentiousness, no meeting agenda... just a chance to chat with neighbours and build community. Call 250-652-8228 for further information. Everyone is welcome.

THE VICTORIA LABOUR COUNCIL, representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria Area, holds its regular monthly meeting at 7 pm, on the third Wednesday each month, at the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street, Victoria. All delegates are welcome to come to meet your executive, president Mike Eso, treasurer Stan Dzbik, and secretary Kim Manton.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FILM NIGHT is held on the 3rd Thursday of every month, at 7:00 pm, at the BCGEU Building, 2994 Douglas Street. On February 17, the featured film will be “THE WAR YOU DON’T SEE”, from the BAFTA and Emmy Award-Winning

journalist and film maker John Pilger. The film contains shocking never-seen-before footage from Iraq and Afghanistan and revealing interviews with former BBC reporter Rageh Omaar, former CBS anchor Dan Rather and the founder of Wikileaks, Julian Assange. Sponsored by Friends of Cuba and endorsed by the Peace Action Initiative and the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA). A mission by donation.

VICTORIA-BEACON HILL NEW DEMOCRATS invite you to join them at their February pub night on Tuesday, February 22, between 5:30 and 8:30 pm, at Brown’s Social House, 809 Douglas Street. [There will be no pub night in March.] For further information, phone 250-386-9497.

LESSONS FROM THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE will be explored at a forum to be held at Simon Fraser University’s Segal Graduate School of Business, 500 Granville Street, in Vancouver, on Tuesday, February 22, from 7-9:30 pm. Admission: \$15 students; \$25 regular. Registration in advance is recommended due to limited space. To register go to www.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?i=f39ff105-3c59-4962-9514-df6e5e-9bc896. It’s been a year since Vancouver hosted the Winter Games and the public is still asking what went wrong (and right) with the Olympic Village project? What could

have been done differently? Pannelists will try to address questions such as what are the housing, planning and other policy lessons?

PLANT KNOWLEDGE FOR ORGANIC Gardeners--An Introductory Session--will be held on Thursday, February 24, from 6:30-7:30, at Royal Roads University, 3005 Sooke Road, in Lanford. Whether you are interested in pursuing the Diploma in Organic Land Care, or simply want to gain deeper knowledge about the plants you see in our urban environment you will be intrigued by this course. Come and bring your questions! For more information about the course please visit the Gaia College website at <http://www.gaiacollege.ca>. For more information: email: info@gaiacollege.ca. Free.

VICTORIA FEDERAL NEW DEMOCRATS will hold a resolutions meeting on Saturday, March 12, from 2-4 pm, at the Burnside-Gorge Community Centre, 471 Cecilia Road, Victoria. All members are invited to debate and vote on resolutions for the 50th Anniversary NDP Convention to be held in Vancouver June 17-19. Send resolutions in advance to president@victoriandp.ca or bring hard copies on March 12. A delegate selection meeting for Convention will take place in April. Contact us at [\[toriandp.ca\]\(mailto:toriandp.ca\) or at 250-382-4370 if you would like to run for a delegate position.](mailto:president@vic-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS NDP will hold its Annual General Meeting on Sunday, March 13, at the Arbutus Queenswood Room in the Cadboro Commons, at the University of Victoria. Registration will commence at 12:30 pm, with the meeting starting at 1:00 pm. Guest speakers will be MP Libby Davies and SGI candidate for MP Edith Loring-Kuhanga. For further information, email ndpsaanichgulflislands@gmail.com.

A LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLY will be held by the BC NDP at the Vancouver Convention Centre, on Sunday, April 17. Election of the new leader will take place through a one-member, one-vote election process where each member of the NDP will have an opportunity to vote. Members of the BC NDP will be able to vote via telephone or internet during the leadership assembly, or via advance voting.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA will hold its 50th Anniversary convention at 1055 Canada Place, in Vancouver, on June 17-19. “Everything you want in a birthday party. Balloons, appetizers, free drinks, gifts, music, performers, cake. And thousands of New Democrats.” For more information on Convention 2011 visit www.vancon2011.com/

The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values, by Sam Harris, 2010, Free Press, NY

Reviewed by Jim Hackler

Author Sam Harris argues that values translate into facts that can be scientifically understood. The well-being of many people can be assessed and knowledge can lead to choices that influence that well being.

For example, in 21 US states corporal punishment is allowed in schools, almost exclusively in the South where the rationale is religious. God said “spare the rod and spoil the child” (Proverbs 13:24, 20:30, 23:13). However, if we were concerned about human well-being, we would question the wisdom of beating little boys and girls to increase their learning. We have evidence that beating children leads to violent adults.

(Incidentally, criminology text books point out that higher violent crime rates exist in the US South. Many explanations are offered, but I know of no textbook that suggests that religion might be the cause of violence and social pathology in the South. I suspect no publisher would publish such a book.)

In Albania, if there has been a murder, the victim’s family can kill any male relative in reprisal. If a boy is a son or brother of a murderer, he spends days in hiding, foregoing education, health care, and a normal life. Many males live as prisoners in their own home. Are Albanians morally wrong? Is the blood feud a form of evil? Are these values inferior to ours? If factual evidence shows that blood feuds diminish the quality of life, isn’t this evidence relevant to moral choices?

Scientists study the evolution of morality and its underlying neurobiology. (Harris is a neuroscientist.) They describe how people think and behave. But there is the assumption by many scientists that science cannot provide guidelines on how we ought to behave.

Many scientists argue that science and religion are not in conflict because they constitute different domains of expertise. Science is the best authority on the workings of the physical universe. “Science is about facts, not norms; it might tell us how we are, but it couldn’t tell us what is wrong with how we are.”

These scientists might argue that religion is the best authority on meaning, values, morality, and the good life. Harris disagrees with both views. On almost every measure of social health, the least religious are better off than the most religious. Scandinavians and Holland have the most atheists but rate high on social health, lower crime, lack of corruption, political stability and charity to poorer nations. There is a

similar link between religious conviction and societal insecurity. And related to societal insecurity: religious commitment in the US is highly correlated with racism. How can one argue that religion is the most important guarantor of societal health? The good life relates to facts about well being, which depends on events in the real world.

There are disagreements about moral truth. Those who draw their worldview from religion tend to believe that God has woven moral truths into the very fabric of reality. Those who lack such faith tend to believe that “good” and “evil” are products of evolution or cultural invention.

Harris argues that both these arguments are wrong. He believes there are objective truths. If kindness is more conducive to happiness than cruelty, science should show which behaviours are good, which promote happiness, and which ones should be abandoned. Harris also believes we should abandon the notion of cultural and moral relativism. Some values are better than others.

Science could argue objectively that humanity will not be improved by demonizing homosexuals, stoning adulterers, veiling women, soliciting the murder of artists and intellectuals, and celebrating the exploits of suicide bombers.

The Danish cartoonist who drew an objectionable cartoon survived an attack by a man with an axe because of a specially designed “safe room”.

Should we respect a culture that has created communities in almost every country on earth that grow so unhinged that they regularly riot, burn embassies, and seek to kill people over cartoons?

Some scientists have argued that our evolution as a violent ape, makes it difficult for us to be “good”. But one shouldn’t confuse the evolution of the biological brain with its modern uses. The human mind is like a ship that has been built and rebuilt, plank by plank, on the open sea. Changes have been made to her sails, keel, and rudder even as the waves battered her hull. No aspect of brain function evolved to hold democratic elections, to run financial institutions, or to teach our children to read. *Evolution could not have foreseen the wisdom of mitigating climate change, saving other species from extinction, or containing the spread of nuclear weapons.*

If the only goal of a species is reproduction, a man could just make daily contributions to a sperm bank. One could spawn thousands of children and pass genes without the bother of marriage, etc.

And there is the myth of the noble savage. Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Franz Boas systematically exaggerated the harmony of folk societies and ignored their barbarism or attributed it to the malign influence of colonies, traders, and missionaries. This romantic image gave rise to cultural relativism – all cultures are equally valuable. *(We liberal thinkers all fear being called ethnocentric.)*

Some anthropologists assume that all human practices must be evolutionarily adaptive: how else could they persist? Thus, female genital excision, blood feuds, the torture of animals, foot binding, ceremonial rape, slavery, etc. have been rationalized, even idealized, in the “fire-lit scribbings of some dazzled anthropologists”.

The endurance of a custom does not suggest it is adaptive, much less wise. It simply hasn’t led directly to the society’s collapse. *(The Easter Islanders still exist, despite destroying their forests to leave large stone idols lying about.)*

Should all views count equally? Consider the Catholic Church which advertises itself as a great force for good. Even among non-Catholics it is associated with “morality”. However, the Vatican excommunicates women for attempting to become priests but does not excommunicate priests for raping children. It excommunicates doctors who perform abortions to save a mother’s life --- even if the mother is a nine-year old girl raped by her stepfather and pregnant with twins. It did not excommunicate a single member of the Third Reich for committing genocide.

Should this pattern question the “morality” of such an organization? Is the Church confused on moral issues?

(Before someone gets upset with Harris or others for attacking sacred cows, we should not overlook “good” actions. The Globe and Mail printed a letter from a woman who was on a bus in Turkey. The bus was delayed. People in a nearby village fed them, took them to their houses, put mattresses on the floor, and fed them again in the morning when they returned to their bus. If this characterizes the majority of Moslems, then I am optimistic that they will eventually come to the conclusion that many of the actions supported by Moslem radicals are bad and should be abandoned.)

Imagine two people on earth, Adam and Eve. How could they maximize well-being. Both of these people may be blind to the possibilities of cooperation: each might attempt to kill and eat the other. Would they be “wrong” to behave this way? Yes, if “wrong”

meant they would forsake far deeper and more durable sources of satisfaction. It would be better if they cooperated to get food and build shelter. Scientists can present facts that relate to “bad” and “good” behaviour.

If only one person held down a terrified, struggling little girl, cut off her genitals with a dull razor, and sewed her back up, leaving only a tiny hole for urine and menstrual flow, shouldn’t that person be punished? But when millions of people do this, instead of being a horrible crime magnified millions-fold, it suddenly becomes “culture”.

As Jared Diamond argued in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, some cultures are “better” than others. Ruth Benedict studied the Dobu islanders. Life there fosters extreme forms of animosity and malignancy. Such behaviour has been minimized by most societies. The Dobuan sees life as a cutthroat struggle against deadly antagonists. The Dobu seem blind to cooperation. They were preoccupied with malicious sorcery, casting spells on others to sicken or kill them.

If one man succeeded in growing more yams than his neighbour, his surplus crop must have been pilfered from others through sorcery. A good harvest was tantamount to “a confession of theft”.

There are moral paradoxes. It is difficult to determine if effects of an action will be bad or good, the “Three Mile Island Effect”. Was the meltdown good or bad? At first glance it seems bad, but it might have led to greater nuclear safety. Or it might have made us more dependent on fossil fuels. If we cannot determine the results of such events, how can we judge the consequences of countless decisions we must make?

How does one compare the mild headache of five million against the broken legs of two? Or the needs of one’s own two children with the needs of a hundred brain-damaged children in Serbia?

Would commitment to maximizing a society’s welfare lead us to sacrifice the rights of the few wherever those losses are offset by the greater gains of the many? Why not have a society where a few slaves are continually worked to death for the pleasure of the rest?

These are some of the issues that are raised in this thoughtful book.

Jim Hackler is adjunct professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Victoria.

Directory of locations, organizations, publications of interest

MLA COMMUNITY OFFICES

Cowichan Valley Community Office, Bill Routley, MLA: 273 Trunk Road, Duncan, BC or PO Box 599, Duncan, BC, V9L 3X9, phone 250-715-0127, toll free 1-877-715-0127, fax 250-715-0139, MLA email bill.routley.mla@leg.bc.ca

Esquimalt-Royal Roads Community Office, Maurine Karagianis, MLA: A5-100 Aldersmith Place, View Royal, BC V9A 7M8, phone 250-479-8326, email maurine.karagianis.mla@leg.bc.ca or visit her website at www.maurinekaragianis.ca

Juan de Fuca Community Office, John Horgan, MLA: 800 Goldstream Avenue, Victoria, BC, V9B 2X7, phone 250-391-2801, email john.horgan.-mla@leg.bc.ca

Saanich South Community Office, Lana Popham, MLA: 4085 Quadra Street, Victoria BC V8X 1K5, email lana.popham.mla@leg.bc.ca, www.saanichsouth.ca

Victoria-Beacon Hill Community Office, Carole James, MLA: 1084 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 3K4, phone 250-952-4211, fax 250-952-4586, email carole.james.mla@leg.bc.ca

Victoria-Swan Lake Community Office, Rob Fleming, MLA: 1020 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2A2, email rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca

MPs and COMMUNITY OFFICES

Denise Savoie, MP, House of Commons, Room 518, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, A1A 0A6.

Victoria Community Office, Denise Savoie, MP, 970 Blanshard Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2H3, phone 250-363-8421, fax 250-363-8422, open Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; visit www.denis Savoie.ca or email her at savoie.d@parl.gc.ca

Jean Crowder, MP, House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, A1A 0A6. Email her at crowdj1A@parl.gc.ca

Nanaimo-Cowichan Community Office: Jean Crowder, MP: 101- 126 Ingram Street, Duncan, BC V9L 1P1, www.jeancrowder.ca or email her at jean@jeancrowder.ca

PROVINCIAL NDP CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATIONS

Cowichan Valley New Democrats: Write PO Box 102, Duncan, BC V9L 1P0; or contact president Ellen Oxman at 250-466-0303 or email her at CowichanValley.NDP@shaw.ca.

Esquimalt-Royal Roads New Democrats: Write Box 231 110-174 Wilson Street Victoria, BC V9A 7N7 or email esquimaltroyalroads@gmail.com..

Juan de Fuca New Democrats: Email president Heather Gropp at goliard86@shaw.ca.

Oak Bay-Gordon Head New Democrats: Write PO Box 5539, LCD 9, Victoria, BC, V8R 6S4,or contact president Keith Todd at 250-598-8039 or by email at president@obghnewdemocrats.ca

Saanich North and the Islands New Democrats: Email president Gary Holman at gholman653@gmail.com or phone him at 250-653-2042.

Saanich South New Democrats: Write PO Box 30041, Saanich Centre Postal Outlet, Victoria, BC, V8X 5E1, phone 250-479-1100, or email samuelgodfrey@gmail.com.

Victoria-Beacon Hill New Democrats: Write PO Box 8523, Victoria, BC, V8W 3S1, phone 250-386-8497or email president Chris Gainor at cgainor@shaw.ca or at 250-380-6358

Victoria-Swan Lake New Democrats: Contact president Edward May at edwardomay@gmail.com, or write to PO Box 282, 1681 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2C1.

FEDERAL NDP RIDING ASSOCIATIONS

Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca New Democrats: Contact president Jock Bates at wanzbates@shaw.ca or write to PO Box 622, 105-1497 Admirals Road, Victoria, BC, V9A 2P8.

Nanaimo-Cowichan New Democrats:Contact president Sue Creba at 250-753-3371or email her at suecreba@aquariusd.com.

Saanich-Gulf Islands New Democrats: Contact president Starla Anderson by email at starlaanderson@shaw.ca or Irene Wright (Gulf Islands), by phone/fax 1-250-537-5347, or email at aiwright@telus.net.

Victoria New Democrats: Contact president Erik Kaye, at president@victoriandp or at 250-382-4370, write to Box 5380, LCD9, Victoria, BC, V8R 6S4,or visit their website:www.victoriandp.ca.

PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL NDP OFFICES

BC New Democrats: 5367 Kingsway, Burnaby BC, V5H 2G1, phone 604-430-8600, fax 604-432-9517, toll free 1-888-868-3637.

Canada's New Democrats: 300 - 279 Laurier West, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5J9, phone 613-236-3613, toll free: 1-866-525-2555, fax 613-230-9950, TTY: 1-866-776-7742.

OTHER GROUPS YOU MAY WANT TO REACH

Amnesty International--Canadian Section: www.amnesty.org.

BC Council of Senior Citizens Organization: phone 604-438-3221.

BC Latin American Congress: 4184 Brant Street, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5B4, phone 604-879-3246, fax 604-872-6776, email bclac@vcn.bc.ca.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: 410-75 Albert Street, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5E7, phone 613-563-1341, fax 613-233-1458, email ccpa@policyalternatives.ca, website: www.policyalternatives.ca.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives--BC Office: 1400-207 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 1H7, phone 604-801-5121, fax 604-801-5122, website: www.policyalternatives.ca.

Canadian Health Coalition: phone 613-233-1018.

Canadian Labour Congress (Pacific Region): 201-5118 Joyce Street, Vancouver, BC, V5R 4H1, Regional Representative Iris Taylor, phone 604-430-6766, extension 267, fax 604-430-6762.

Council of Canadians, Victoria Chapter: PO Box 5515, 1625 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, phone 250-360-8448, email victoriacouncilofcanadians@shaw.ca or visit www.victoriacouncilofcanadians.ca

Canadian Wildlife Federation: 350 Michael Cowpland Drive, Kanata, ON, K2M 2W1, phone 1-800-563-9453, or visit www.cwf-fcf.org.

Canada Without Poverty (formerly National Anti-Poverty Organization) advocates for the poor in communities, courts and political areas, www.cwp-csp.ca.

CubaTours: for information about nonprofit educational tours of Cuba and books, phone 604-874-9048 or go to www.cubatours.ca.

Ecojustice (formerly Sierra Legal): 214-131 Water Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 4M3, phone 1-800-926-7444

Government of Canada: www.gc.ca.

Government of BC: www.gov.bc.ca.

Greater Victoria Water Watch Coalition: visit www.greatervictoriawaterwatchcoalition.ca or phone 250-595-1701 or 250- 380-1197.

Human Rights Internet: www.hri.ca.

Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria: phone 250-388-4728, fax 250-386-4395.

NDP Socialist Caucus: www.ndpsocialists.ca. "Our aim and ongoing struggle as New Democrats must be to establish a Socialist Canada."

Parliamentary website lists all federal cabinet ministers, parliamentary secretaries and opposition spokespersons. Visit www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/critic.asp?language=E

Seniors' Advocacy Services, sponsored by the Greater Victoria Seniors (OAPO) organization, are available on Mondays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m., at the Blanshard Community Centre, 901 Kings Road (King and Dowler Streets), close to the #4 and #6 buses on Quadra Street. Service is free, and provided by trained volunteers. For further information phone 250-388-7696.

Seniors Serving Seniors: 109-1022 Pandora Avenue, Victoria, BC V8V 3P5, phone 250-382-4331.

South Island Health Coalition, an affiliate of the BC Health Coalition. If you're concerned about access, affordability and quality of health care in our community, get involved by calling co-chairs Dale Perkins at 250-592-5487 or Wendy Strong at 250-592-1222.

Together Against Poverty Society: 415-620 View Street, Victoria, BC, phone 250-361-3521.

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society: Third floor, 535 Yates Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Z6, phone 250-361-9433, fax 250-361-1914, website www.vircs.bc.ca.

Victoria Labour Council: 219-275 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, phone 250-384-8331, fax: 250-384-8381, email vlcbc@telus.net; Mike Eso, president; Mary Ehl, secretary; Mike Ferguson, treasurer.

Victoria Peace Centre: Box 8307, Victoria, BC, V8W 3R9, phone/fax 250-592-8307, email centre@vicpeace.ca or website www.vicpeace.ca.

World Wildlife Federation: 410-245 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto, ON, M4P 3J1, phone 1-800-26-PANDA, fax 416-489-8055, website: www.wwf.ca

United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC) - Victoria Branch: 202-3293 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC, V8Z 3K9, phone 250-475-2868, fax 250-475-5898, email unavic@coastnet.com or website www.unac.org.

ALTERNATIVE PUBLICATIONS

Briarpatch Magazine: a progressive Canadian magazine, published 10 times a year, subscriptions \$24.61, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2R7, email briarpatchmag@sasktel.com.

Canadian Dimension Magazine: an independent socialist magazine, begun in 1963, and run by a cooperative, published 6 times a year, subscription \$24.50, students and unemployed \$18.50, 2B-91 Albert Street, Winnipeg, MN, R3B 1G5, subscription hotline 1-800-737-7051.

COMER (Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform): reform-minded focus on monetary issues and how they affect our society, email comerpub@comer.org, website www.comer.org.

Global Outlook: Ian Woods, editor; \$25 Canadian, PO Box 222, Oro, ON L0L 2X0.

The CCPA Monitor: published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 410-75 Albert Street, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5E7, \$110 supporting membership with \$75 tax0 receipt, or \$25 low income membership receives the Monitor monthly.

The Straight: a weekly publication with features, articles, news and reviews from Vancouver, subscription \$117/52 issues in Canada, 2nd floor, 1770 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC, V6J 3G7, phone 604-730-7000, email info@straight.com.

New Internationalist: a communications co-operative based in Oxford, it exists to report on issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and the powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary f the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met, subscriptions, \$38.50 including GST ,PO Box 706, Markham, ON, L6B 1A7, phone 905-946-0407, fax: 905-946-0410, email: magazines@indas.on.ca.

Our Times: Canada's independent labour magazine and read by mostl abour organizations and other supporters of working pwople. Check its website at www.ourtimes.ca.

The **Left Coast Events** listserve and webpage provides a forum for sharing information about upcoming events committed to uncovering the various dimensions of social and environmental justice. Anyone can add an event and doing so is free for not-for-profit organizing and actions. Visit leftcoastevents.org to add an event, for more information, or to subscribe.

The Dominion: a monthly paper published by an incipient network of independent journalists in Canada since May 2003. It aims to provide accurate, critical coverage that is accountable to its readers and the subjects it tackles. The Dominion can be read online, or delivered to your doorstep as a print subscription. See www.dominionpaper.ca/

The Republic: Vancouver-based socialist paper, subscriptions, two issues per month, \$25 per year; free at local news stands, PO Bo 56072, Vancouver, BC, V5L 5E2; email mag pie@lynx.bc.ca.

Victoria Street Newz: a montly independent newspaper focussed on understanding the root causes and consequences of poverty. It's sold by vendors on Victoria's streets, or by subscription. Archives and more information available at relativenewz.ca.

ALTERNATIVE WEBSITES

www.alternet.org --A US website featuring alternative articles on US and world politics, an online magazine and information source.

www.counterpunch.org--an American website with a left-wing viewpoint.

http://dominionpaper.ca--a Canadian ezine covering national and international stores that mainstream sources may not cover. Updated daily.

www.globalproblematique.net/bcpolicyprobe -- Run by BC Policy Probe, this website features information and research about suh things as privatization of BC Hydro.

www.avaaz.org/en/global --Global warming is a global threat. By confronting it together, we can build a more just, tolerant, and vibrant world.

www.indymedia.org -- A collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage of events as they happen around the world.

www.informationclearinghouse.info --World news daily--news you won't find on CNN or Foxnews.

http://Newsdaily.ca--CanadaNewsdaily.ca is a good (and bad) news service with a refreshingly non-corporate view of the news, from local to global stories, with features, opinion, analysis -- all for free, including free classified ads. Newsdaily covers Canadian and world news, plus a focused look at British Columbia, Victoria and the Islands.

mai-not@globalproblematique.net-- Originally set up to discuss the implications of the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investments, this website and related email list now discuss world-wide developments of concern to left-wing readers.

http://ndp.4webs.ca -- A new NDP list serve and bulletin board. Check it out.

www.pacificfreepress.com--with a mission to dig out nuggets of truth from the slag-heap of lies, ignorance and witless diversion that has buried public discourse today. Pacific Free Press provides a new venue for disseminating hard news and insightful, fact-based analysis of the harsh realities too often ignored or distorted by the mainstream press.

http://pej.org--PEJ News, a free service, serves up daily news, opinion and analysis of peace, environment and justice issues. Stay informed with web and email stories often days, weeks and months ahead of the mainstream media. The Peace, Earth & Justice News is produced entirely by volunteers and is a probject of the non-profit Prometheus Institute based in Victoria, BC.

www.policyalternatives.ca -- The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' web page offers research reports, books and opinion pieces done on issues of social and economic justice.

www.rabble.ca -- A cheeky site offering original stories, feature articles and columns from some of the progressive voices in Canada.

www.strategicthoughts.ca --You'll find David Schreck's columns and more here.

www.straightgoods.com -- A watchdog working for Canadian consumers and citizens.

www.thetyee.ca--BC news and views from a non-corporate perspective.

www.truthout.org--US website with Real news.

www.vancouverislandwaterwatchcoalition.ca/

www.victoriacarshare.ca--If you don't want to own a car but still need to drive one sometimes, this welbsite may be for you.

www.vivelecanada.ca--website by noted activist Mel Hurtig about the corporate threat to Canadian sovereignty, includes a whole range of features from online polls and petitions to editorials and information updates.

www.wsws.org --The World Socialist Web Site is the Internet centre of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It provides analysis of majorworld events, comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues, and valuable documents and studies from the heritage of the socialistmovement.

COMMUNITY RADIO

Commercial free communjnity radio, CFUV is located at 101.9 FM and 104.3 Cable, or visit http://www.cfuv.uvic.ca