

Lands and People

JULY 2005, VOL.3, NUMBER 1



Tahltan-Shell standoff, February 2005

DOGWOOD INITIATIVE was founded by First Nations, environmentalists, community advocates and labour leadership.

Our mission is to help people in BC change the balance of power to create healthy, prosperous communities by promoting dialogue, facilitating collaborative action and creating leverage.

www.dogwoodinitiative.org

Tahltan force Shell to back down again in Sacred Headwaters

By Will Horter

Modern society is bereft of heroes. The rise of 24 hour saturation news and tabloid journalism means we know way too much about the sex lives of celebrities like Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes and too little about inspirational people in our own backyard.

In mid June I visited the Cassiar region in north-western BC and got to know some modern day heroes—a group of people who are accomplishing epic feats against formidable

odds.

Oscar Dennis and Lillian Moyer are just two of these everyday heroes who have effectively shut down Shell Canada's plans to drill for coalbed methane in the Klah-ah-tine Sacred Headwaters. There are many others among the Tahltan Elders and families. Through sheer persistence they are fighting to protect an area which has served as a kitchen, classroom and spiritual centre for generations of Tahltan people.

Shell, one the world's largest fossil fuel companies, paid the BC government \$9.5 million last August for the rights to drill up to 6,000 wells in the Mount Klappan coalfield at the headwaters of four great salmon-bearing river systems. Hiding behind vague promises of "best practices," Shell has been assuring locals that they can drill for coalbed methane without affecting salmon. What Shell hasn't disclosed is that there is no place in the world where commercial coalbed methane production and salmon coexist. So what Shell and the BC government propose for the Sacred Headwaters is a grand experiment. And the future of the magnificent Skeena, Klappan, Spatsizi and Nass watersheds hangs in the balance.

In their arrogant pursuit of profit, neither Shell nor the BC government bothered to consult with the affected First Nations or local community before building roads and drilling

...Tahltan continued on page 6

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Dogwood Initiative renews itself online

By Michael Begg

On July 20, Dogwood Initiative is re-launching itself online, using new software tools to invigorate our website and increase our interaction with British Columbians. Not only will the new site improve our communications with you, the supporters of land reform, but it will enable you to share your stories and perspectives with each other. The result will both broaden and deepen the sense of community among people who believe local people should have more control of local lands.

As you'll know if you are a regular visitor to our current site or a subscriber to our online newsletters, Dogwood Initiative has been posting hundreds of news stories about land reform in BC. We have also been publishing the Dogwood Bulletin, our own stories and commentary on the efforts of local people to take control.

The new website will highlight these stories more clearly on the home page, so you can see the latest news and commentary at a glance.

The stories will continue to be archived in the Newsroom, but the new site will offer you the ability to search the full text of the stories for people, places, and events of particular interest to you.

The home page will also feature regularly updated news flashes and actions you can take, linking to a revitalised action centre on the website.

Another feature of the new site that will help you provide your local perspective on issues is the comments feature. You will be able to add your ideas and knowledge to any story at the click of a button. Those comments will be appended to the bulletin or news item, there for all to read and respond to.

We made these changes with the help of One/Northwest (www.onenw.org) to better communicate with people who dream of a better world, a better province, a better community. In the coming months we plan to add new features to enhance two-way dialogue, including local "discussion boards" on specific issues, guest editorials from contributors, and syndication of bulletins to other websites.

Over the summer and early fall, we will hold some events to promote the new website. One of those is this issue's word puzzle contest, below.

We hope you'll visit the site often, adding your comments to stories, letting us know what you think, and suggesting new features. ☘

Word scramble contest

To celebrate our new website, we are making this issue's puzzle a word scramble, using the titles of the Dogwood Bulletins from June 2005 as the source. The goal: fill in the following words to create an alternative headline for the article about our website, above. The first to call, e-mail or fax us the correct solution wins the new Dogwood Initiative t-shirt (*see page 8*).

_____ , _____ : _____

The letters for each word are found in the headlines of the June bulletins on our website (*click on Newsroom on our website to find the bulletins, sorted by date, or click the link we'll provide at the top of the home page*). Find the letters, then rearrange them to form words. Spaces and punctuation are not counted. *Hint: one of the word pairings appears in the first sentence of a June bulletin.*

1. *First word:* 12th & 14th letters in the title of the June 28 bulletin; 11th, 13th & 16th in June 23 bulletin; and 15th & 24th in June 21.
2. *Second word:* 5th & 10th letters in June 28; 6th in June 23; 6th and 17th in June 21; and 8th and 16th in June 13.
3. *Third word:* 3rd, 5th & 18th letters in June 23; 10th & 19th in June 21; and 10th and 11th in June 13.
4. *Fourth word:* 3rd & 4th letters in June 29; 3rd & 22nd in June 28; 10th & 12th in June 23; and 11th in June 21.

Example: a word using the 6th, 13th, and 16th letters in the June 28 article ("Descendants of Douglas ...") has the letters u, n, f. Rearranged, the letters form "fun". ☘

Advertise in Lands & People

You can now support our work by advertising in our newsletter, *Lands & People*.

**Rate: \$10 a line, or
1" by 2.5" box ad = \$40 (5 lines)
2" by 2.5" box ad = \$90 (11 lines).**

The newsletter is distributed quarterly by mail to 1,200 of our progressive donors and supporters in British Columbia and seen by hundreds more people who download it from our website. To book space in our October edition call Zach Robertson at 250 370 9930 local 21.

Executive Director's Report

By Will Horter

These past few months have been a time for renewal. In the natural world, frozen rivers and glaciers began to melt, flowers started to bud, and the next generation of British Columbia's magnificent wildlife was born.

In the political world important transformations took place. The May election loosened the BC Liberals' stranglehold on the legislature, the New Democratic Party was re-invigorated, and the Green Party broke into the mainstream. While the environment and Aboriginal issues were embarrassingly absent from the election dialogue, a new organization that may change that was born. *Conservation Voters of BC*, an environmentally-focused political machine, started up and was able to help elect four of the five candidates it endorsed. The election of two of the candidates, David Cubberley and Gregor Robertson, owes a great deal to the 5,000 doors knocked on and the 5,000 brochures handed out by Conservation Voters' volunteers.

Important political trends are converging. Events on Haida Gwaii and in Tahltan territory illustrate that communities and First Nations can unite with allies to defend their interests and stop destructive proposals. Demands for a more accountable government have sparked support for electoral reform and for getting big money out of politics through campaign finance reform.

I am relieved by signs that the "New Era" may be ending, as the BC government starts to explore, in its words, a "new relationship" with First Nations to enable a "Golden Decade" for the province. The jargon—and the new cabinet structure—are positive, but we shouldn't relax our vigilance. History demonstrates that the government will have to be pressured into walking its talk.

Based on the relationships Dogwood Initiative has developed with unusual allies throughout the province, we are uniquely positioned to take advantage of these developing trends and catalyze fundamental change. But to take advantage we must continue to evolve.

Through our work we have encountered

dozens of unknown heroes. Over the coming months we will be launching new initiatives to better communicate the inspirational stories of these amazing people who are confronting power and promoting change.

We have already begun this transformation. Our first annual *Lands and People Festival* was a big success. We launched the *Strength in Community Awards* to celebrate heroic stories of people working for a better British Columbia.

In July we will launch our new website, which will feature the inspiring stories of people coming together to do great things. We will also add interactive features to allow you to share your views and breaking news about land reform in BC. To satisfy increasing demand for independent, credible information we will now send out four issues of *Lands and People* each year, along with two mini-issues focused on hot-button topics.

Celebrating success, recognizing heroes, analyzing threats and bringing people together to transform how they relate to each other, their communities and the earth—that is what Dogwood Initiative is about. We will need the support of each and every one of you—and your friends, family, colleagues and neighbours, to succeed. ☘



Dogwood Bulletins: visit dogwoodinitiative.org and click Newsroom for our news, commentary and analysis.



Conservation Voters of BC – Our first time

By Matt Price

As with all first times, we were nervous. Would we be good at it? Would people respect us in the morning?

This past year several members of the BC conservation community came together to start the *Conservation Voters of BC* in order to hold BC politicians more accountable to the strong environmental values of BC voters. Nearly all non-profit groups stay officially neutral during elections, leaving the political sandbox to corporations and unions. We felt that we had to get in there.

With limited resources, we started small. For the May 17 election we offered endorsements to five candidates. We knew that we would not need to work in all five races, since a couple of those candidates had strong leads.

We offered endorsements to candidates in all three main parties. We drew criticism for not simply endorsing all Green candidates, but stuck to our viability criterion—that candidates must stand a chance of winning.

We drew even stronger criticism for offering an endorsement to a Liberal. This was based partly on hostility to the Liber-

als due to many bad environmental decisions. We also ran into criticism regarding singling out candidates when party discipline dominates our parliamentary system, negating individuals' personal views.

But our results speak for themselves. We were able to run two systematic door-to-door campaigns in Saanich South and Vancouver-Fairview and were received very well by voters. People liked the third-party nature of our effort at a time when political parties are not much in favour. Focusing on the individual and endorsing across parties was the key to our credibility with voters.

We knocked on about 5,000 doors and dropped another 5,000 flyers. We received a barrage of “earned media”—that is, news stories about our efforts.

Our endorsee David Cubberley won

in Saanich South with only 429 votes and partly credits us with his win. Our endorsee Gregor Robertson won in Vancouver-Fairview with only 895 votes and also believes we had a major impact on his race.

We did this mostly with volunteer labour – we had great people step forward to get involved.

So, now we have more environmentally-minded MLA's than we would have had without our efforts. We have also shown elected officials what we are capable of—and that we will be capable of much more as we build.

For that we need your help. We are seeking to change BC's political culture towards sustainability but can only do that with support. If you feel you need a powerful outlet for your environmental politics but don't feel comfortable with the political parties, then drop us a line. You can find us at www.conservation-voters.ca. ☘



Visit the Conservation Voters of BC homepage to learn more

Get great produce delivered and support land reform!

The friendly folks at Small Potatoes Urban Delivery (SPUD) have made us an offer we can't refuse. If you sign up at www.spud.ca to get organic food delivered to your home and use promo code NFP5-210442, they'll knock 20% off your first four deliveries and donate the equivalent to Dogwood Initiative. If you live in an area where SPUD delivers, you'll find a SPUD brochure in your newsletter. Thank you SPUD!

"... what we eat has a tremendous influence on our ecosystem and environment, our culture and society—as well as its contribution (or lack thereof) to the health of the planet. We vote with our dollars, and we spend a lot of our dollars on food. Yet people don't often see their diet as a political statement. But it is. When you vote for McDonald's, that's one kind of vote. When you vote for organic food, that's another kind of vote. What you support with your dollars is what will exist in the future. Every time you spend a dollar, you are saying to the people who produce that product, 'Do it again.' That's how it will be read, that's how it will be interpreted and that's how it will be manifested."

— John Robbins, author of *The Food Revolution* ☘

Lands and People Festival

By *Moira Campbell*



From *Being Caribou*: a caribou mom and baby

The first Lands & People Festival was a great success. With the support of partner Vancity, on June 2 we launched what we hope will become an annual event with music and film that informs and inspires all of you who want to decide how the land you live on should be used.

A crowd gathered at the University of Victoria to enjoy a First Nations welcome from Ginette St Amant, singer and Aboriginal Education Advisor and Coordinator at the Faculty of Education.

Will Horter, Dogwood Initiative's Executive Director, spoke passionately about how the civil rights movement had inspired him, and how we can also be inspired by the stories of courage and community in British Columbia.

"Tonight, together, you and I begin a process to celebrate untold stories of courage, perseverance, & unity from our own home—British Columbia," Will said. "There are too many examples to do justice

Next year's event is planned for Victoria Day, May 22, to be held at St Ann's Academy.

to tonight, but it is important that we begin the process of sharing these stories,

learning lessons from the successes and the well-intentioned failures. But most of all celebrating ourselves and the colleagues that share our dreams of a Promised Land in BC."

The crowd was captivated by a short film about the Tahltan's struggle with Shell Canada, shot by Michael Bourquin and edited by Dogwood Initiative volunteer Charles Campbell.

Dr Briony Penn spoke movingly about her recent visit to the Peace Region and the need to show Aboriginal youth that we support them in their struggle against unsustainable development.

The award-winning documentary *Being Caribou* enthralled everyone. The film depicts the epic journey of BC couple Karsten Heuer and Leanne

Allison, who followed the migration of the Porcupine Caribou herd from the Yukon to Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Reserve. They travelled 1,500 kilometres on foot across snow and tundra.

After a snack of fresh organic fruit and veggies donated by SPUD and handmade lemon sorbet donated by Shady Creek, we finished off our evening tapping our feet to local award winning folk-country musicians Barley Wik.

There were a lot of happy winners of our prize draws. Jessica Boquist, won the grand prize of a \$1,200 weekend for two at the exclusive Cliffs at Kispiox River—including wine, food and a river float—and gave it to her parents. (What a great daughter!) We also gave away \$320 worth of books from Raincoast Books.

Throughout the evening we learned about the importance of working together for sustainable

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Barley Wik

Strength in Community Awards

Heroes, inspirational stories, the extraordinary achievements of people living in BC—these stories are not being told. Dogwood Initiative is trying to change that by launching our Strength in Community Awards.

We originally intended to launch them at the Lands and People festival in June, but decided to wait until next year. Our judging panel of Jo-ann Roberts (CBC Radio), Noba Anderson (Cortez Eco-Forestry Society), Murray Dobbin (author and political commentator), John Gould (writer and teacher) and Jacob Beaton (CopperMoon Multimedia) will be overseeing the awards.

If you are aware of inspirational people coming together to promote the interests of their communities, let us know. And watch for our announcement of the rules for next year's Strength in Communities Awards. ✂

Thanks to:

Partners: Vancity

Arbutus Sponsors: Greater Victoria Savings Credit Union

Musicians: Barley Wik

Technical Support: Kirk Shwartz, Medianet, Grady

Volunteers: Joeline Clarke, Denise Stocco, Charles Campbell

The staff at the PT Young Recital Hall

Our Events Committee: Analise Blake (Urban

Agriculture Committee, VIPIRG), Lindsay Cole (BuildGreen Developments), Maia Gibb (Dusting Divas), Mandy Leith (Open Cinema), Michael McNames (The Fairmont Empress), and Stephen Whipp (Victoria's Values-Based Business Network)

The businesses that donated prizes and food:

The Cliffs at Kispiox River, Raincoast Books, Ocean River Sports, Nancy the Blacksmith, Hemp & Co, Fibre Options, Silk Road Aromatherapy & Tea Co, Dusting Divas, SPUD and Shady Creek Ice Cream Company ☒



A shovel and coal – this is how Fortune Minerals sees the Klappan

test wells. In fact, in a perhaps fatal act of disrespect for traditional customs, they moved in and began building a road when many in the community were away at the funeral of an elder.

On March 2, 2005 the Tl'abānot'in Clan, Iskut First Nations, and Tahltan Elders held a major demonstration in Iskut to protest Shell's operations in the Sacred Headwaters. At the rally they served notice on Shell representatives that no coalbed methane development would go forward. Two days later Shell announced it was halting its operations.

Shell's plans to develop coalbed methane hit another roadblock in mid June when, in a display of growing Tahltan unity, the Iskut First Nations, Tahltan Elders and Tl'abānot'in Clan each rejected Shell's offer of a free trip to Wyoming to look at existing coalbed methane operations.

The three groups gave Shell letters stating that it would be "inappropriate for us to engage directly with you until you have indicated whether Shell intends to deal with us and our Elders honourably."

"I told Shell that no coalbed methane exploration and drilling will take place without the consent of our Elders and families," says Oscar

Dennis, spokesperson for the Tl'abānot'in. "Shell and the Crown made a major mistake by agreeing to rights in our territory without engaging with us. Further testing our resolve by trying to divide and conquer us will only backfire."

The letters from the three groups informed Shell that the Tahltan would not engage in further discussions until the company provided certain information and addressed the shared concerns of Tahltan communities. To date, despite repeated requests, Shell has failed to respond to requests for maps, assessments, plans and studies about its proposed operations and their potential effects on fish, wildlife, water and Tahltan culture.

Shell also has refused to indicate whether it will respect the moratorium (Dena nenn Sogga neh'ine) imposed by Tahltan Elders on February 25, 2005. The moratorium prohibited any further resource development in Tahltan territory until conditions for governance, sustainability, shared decision-making, and revenue-sharing are addressed.

Shell received the latest "on notice" letter at a symbolic blockade at the road turnoff to the Klappan. Shell's representative Russ Marshall then confirmed the company would not send crews into the Klappan to drill in the near future.

Shell's decision to back down again came

less than 36 hours after a community meeting in Iskut at which over 40 Elders, councillors, hereditary leaders and community members voiced their concerns about coalbed methane.



Majestic mountains, expansive plain – this is how the Tahltan, other local people, and visitors see the Klappan-Spatsizi

They identified as their key concerns the potential massive footprint of development, effects on salmon and wildlife, difficulty disposing of produced water, and toxic pollutants resulting from coalbed methane, along with the lack of consultation.

“Who wants their sacred land, their heritage, to be part of an experiment?” said

one elder.

While the ultimate future of the Sacred Headwaters rests with the resolve of the Tahltan people, they are not alone. A number on non-profit groups, including Dogwood Initiative, are providing support. Also, neighbouring clans of the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en

Chiefs have pledged to join the Tahltan on the blockades if Shell tries to move in. But in the end success will depend on the resolve of the affected families, elders and community members.

Shell is not the only corporation with proposals to make a buck by exploiting resources in Tahltan territory. The area is ground zero for the Liberal government’s plans to energize the BC economy by promoting virtually any resource play promoters can dream up.

Locals are being inundated with mining, hydro, road, rail and energy proposals, including Fortune Minerals’ coal-mining plans for the Sacred Headwaters.

It is in response to this avalanche of projects, and some internal governance issues, that the Tahltan Elders imposed their moratorium.

“The Tahltan Elders have been very clear. No further resource development is allowed, including Shell’s coalbed methane plans for the Sacred Headwaters, until the conditions in our moratorium are addressed,” said Lillian Moyer, spokesperson for the Elders. “Shell and others can’t buy our approval.”

Although Shell is big and powerful, I’m betting on the heroes I met. The ferocious resolve I saw in the eyes of Oscar and Lillian, as well as other elders, family and community members, convinced me that Shell doesn’t have a chance. ✂

Bulletin excerpt: “New relationship” is just spin—for now

By *Will Horter*

Forget the supposed flip-flops of John Kerry in 2004. The biggest political flip flop of the new century (so far) is probably Gordon Campbell’s switch from brinkmanship with First Nations to the creation of an Aboriginal ministry with “reconciliation” in its name, and “new relationship” in all its news releases.

Our bulletins of June 13 and 21 compare the government’s new jargon to its conduct in its first term. In our next *Lands & People*, we hope to review the steps the government has taken to give meaning to its talk of a “new relationship.” (See the *Newsroom on our website, www.dogwoodinitiative.org, for the June 13 and 21 bulletins.*) ✂

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Staff and volunteer update

This spring was a time of transition for staff at Dogwood Initiative, with familiar faces leaving, and new ones appearing. We welcome Catriona McDiarmid as our freelance Web Assistant for the summer. Catriona is currently in the Applied Communication Program at Camosun College and can be found drinking milkshakes at Pluto's in downtown Victoria when she's not poised in front of her keyboard.

Michael Begg has left his permanent position as Director of Operations at Dogwood Initiative to begin a Master's degree in law at UBC in the fall. He's planning to write his thesis on land reform driven by Aboriginal law and corporate law, looking at the work Dogwood is doing in British Columbia and at a couple of other places, possibly Brazil and the South Pacific. (Yes, he's accepting donations for his travel budget!) He'll be continuing to edit our newsletter, manage our website and work for Dogwood Initiative on a contract basis as his time (and distance) allows. Moira Campbell will be taking over his other administrative responsibilities. Good luck Michael!

Arthur Caldicott has left his permanent position as Dogwood's Energy Director. He continues to work actively on energy issues, through cbmwatch.ca and other projects. We hope to keep him in the family with contract work on our energy projects.

While much of our volunteers' efforts have been focused on the Lands & People Festival, there was still plenty of other work to do.

The Dogwood Initiative t-shirt, with an exclusive design by Haida artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, is finally here! Thank you Michael

for donating your time, and to Charles Campbell for assisting. Check out Michael's website at www.rockingraven.com for more about his stereotype-defying art. A free shirt goes to everyone who makes a donation of \$75 or more (while supplies last). We'll also be giving them away via our website when we launch our new look later this summer. (See page 2 for further details.)



Our new t-shirt design

We are still collecting stories and interviews from people around the province engaged in community activism. Thanks to Rikardo Shedden for his current help with this.

Anne Paxton, her daughter Kate and cat Junior have joined longtime supporters Claudia and Hope Campbell and Tim Lindsay at the big table, helping to mail out our appeals, election specials and newsletter. Thank you for helping with this essential but somewhat onerous task—much appreciated.

We're currently seeking volunteers to help with a new project to get big money out of BC politics, research and write about media bias in the recent provincial election, scan the media for articles of interest to our supporters to post on our website, and to represent Dogwood Initiative at festivals and events. If any of these projects interest you, or you have particular skills to offer, then please do get in touch. You can check out a list of volunteer opportunities on our website under "Get Involved". ☘