

**TO ALL INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITORS**

## **OPPOSITION TO VANCOUVER OLYMPICS GAMES IS ALIVE!**

**About the Olympic Resistance Network**

**(Website: <http://olympicresistance.net>)**

The 2010 Winter Olympics will take place in Vancouver & Whistler, on unceded Indigenous land, from February 12-28 2010. Over the past seven years, there has been a groundswell of opposition to the Games. Given the range of social injustices perpetrated by the Games, the anti-Olympics movement has created an opportunity for a diversity of groups, individuals, and communities to join forces. Due to a growing and vibrant movement to oppose the Olympic Games, VANOC and government officials are no longer able to host large public Olympic events in Vancouver without being shamed. During the Olympic Torch relay, protesters in over thirty cities, towns, and Indigenous communities successfully disrupted the Torch Relay, forcing delays and route cancellations, with at least thirteen arrests.

The Olympic Resistance Network (ORN) is coordinating many of the anti-Olympics activities. Our organizing, as native and non-natives alike, is being done under the slogan of "No Olympics on Stolen Native Land", acting in solidarity with other communities across the province – particularly Indigenous communities who have been defending their land even before the onslaught of the Olympics. The ORN supports the international resolution passed by over 1500 Indigenous delegates at the Intercontinental Indigenous Peoples Gathering in Sonora, Mexico to "boycott the 2010 Olympic Games" based on Resolution #2 of the Gathering which states "We reject the 2010 Winter Olympics on sacred and stolen territory of Turtle Island–Vancouver, Canada".

The ORN is working towards a global anti-capitalist and anti-colonial convergence against the Games from February 10th-15th 2010.

### **What are some of the facts to back up your claims about the impacts of the Games?**

- *Theft of unceded Indigenous lands, particularly for sport tourism and resource extraction.* There are over \$5 billion worth of resort plans since the Olympic bid, despite significant grassroots Indigenous opposition; for example around Kamloops and Mount Currie. At the Sun Peaks Resort alone, there have been over 50 arrests of Indigenous people who have been opposing the \$295 million expansion of the resort. Indigenous land has also been appropriated for the creation of transportation infrastructure such as bridges, port facilities, and highways. Since the Olympic bid the BC government has expedited the application process within the construction, mining, logging, forestry, oil/gas and resort sectors, thus opening up unceded Indigenous territories for sale to corporations, akin to the "gold rush."

- *Increasing homelessness and gentrification of poor neighbourhoods, especially Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).* It is projected that the number of homeless in Vancouver will triple from 1000 homeless people since the Olympic bid in 2003 to over 3200 people by 2010. Over 1200 low income housing units have been lost in the DTES since the Olympic bid in 2003. Meanwhile, real estate speculation and gentrification has led to a projected 1500 new market housing units, primarily condominiums, being built in the DTES. According to a report by the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, the Olympic Games have displaced more than two million people

around the world over the last 20 years, not including the estimated additional 1 million displaced in Beijing.

- *Unprecedented destruction of the environment.* This includes: massive deforestation in the Callaghan Valley to build the Whistler Olympic Center; clear cuts of Cypress Mountain, which is a designated 2010 venue location; massive sand and gravel mining operations to build construction materials; and the destruction of Eagleridge Bluffs due to the Sea-to-Sky Highway construction. In 2007, 71-year old Pacheedaht elder Harriet Nahanee and 78-year old environmentalist Betty Krawczyk were two of the arrestees at a blockade opposing construction at Eagleridge Bluffs. Harriet Nahanee contracted pneumonia at the Surrey Pre-Trial Center. She died a few days later, while hospitalized, on Feb. 24, 2007.

- *More privatization of public services and ballooning public debt.* The total cost for 2010 and related construction will be close to \$7 billion, with Olympic venues alone costing over \$4.5 billion. For example, taxpayers are on the hook for \$875 million for the 2010 Olympic Athletes Village's construction costs alone, while costs for the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre have skyrocketed to almost \$900 million.

- *Union busting through imposed contracts and vulnerable working conditions for migrant labour.* There are an estimated 3,000-5,000 temporary migrant and undocumented workers in the Olympics-fuelled and speculation-driven construction industry that are prone to hyper-exploitation and are vulnerable given their lack of full legal status.

- *Increased funding (up to \$1 billion) for the police, military, and border agents in the name of "national security."* Sociologist David Lyon has dubbed Vancouver 2010 "the Surveillance Games," since security operations will include over 13,000 RCMP, military & other security personnel as well as joint US-Canada military & North American Aerospace Defence Command operations.

- *Criminalization of the poor.* Plans to "cleanse" the city's core of the poor include increased funding for private security initiatives such as the Downtown Ambassadors; banning dumpsters from the downtown core; an aggressive ticketing campaign for petty by-law infractions; and more.

- *Corporate profiteering:* While making billions, the corporate sponsors of the Olympic Games also have some of the worst environmental and social practices on record. For example: Petro-Canada is one of the most environmentally destructive oil and gas companies; Royal Bank of Canada is the top financier of the environmentally devastating Alberta Tar Sands; General Electric is one of the world's top three producers of military aircraft engines; Dow Chemical is the world's second largest chemical manufacturer and cause of the Bhopal gas disaster in India; Coca Cola has been responsible for toxic waste pollution and massive depletion of ground water; and McDonalds is one of the largest junk food restaurants and known for its exploitation of workers.

- *Repression of dissent:* Anti-Olympic activists are already being subjected to heavy surveillance and repression, and countless people have been intimidated and harassed by CSIS and VISU (Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit). A May 2008 CSIS Threat Assessment document notes that "opposition to the 2010 Olympic Games is most noticeable amongst the more extreme elements of First Nations communities in conjunction with groups like No One is Illegal, the Anti-Poverty Committee, and the Downtown Eastside Residents Association."

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## SCHEDULE

- Mon Feb 8, 2010 onwards: Rhizome Cafe, 317 East Broadway. Bring in your own contributions and artwork for "Bringing the World together--In Collaboration, not Competition."
- Wed Feb 10- Thurs Feb 11: Olympic Resistance Summit from noon until 10 pm. Wise Hall (1882 Adanac St) and nearby Centre for Socialist Education (706 Clark Dr).
- Thursday, Feb. 11 between 6-7pm. Protest the Torch relay at UBC. Meet at the Old Bus Loop (corner of University Boulevard and East Mall near the Student Union Building).
- Fri Feb 12: Resist the Torch! Resist the Games! Meet at Victory Square (Cambie and Hastings) at 8:30 am or Grandview Park (Commercial Drive) at 9 am. Let's show VANOC and their Coca-Cola corporate spectacle what community looks like. Celebrate our strength, creativity, and diversity.
- Fri Feb 12: Take Back Our City! "Welcome" the 2010 Olympic Torch. Beginning with a festival at the Vancouver Art Gallery at 3 pm, followed by a parade and protest to BC Place Stadium.
- Friday, Feb 12, 2010 at 8:00pm, Legion Hall, 2205 Commerical Drive. We do not like the Olympics Celebration Party! Cost: \$3 - (\$1297 cheaper than a ticket to the opening ceremonies).
- Fri Feb 12: Resistance Media Lounge at Rhizome Café, 317 East Broadway at 8 pm. Join Vancouver Media Co-op for a mash up of protest footage and images from the anti-Olympics convergence.
- Sat Feb 13. 2010 Heart Attack: Street March to Clog the Arteries of Capitalism. Arrive at 8:30 am in Thornton Park (Main and Terminal).
- Sat Feb 13, 8 pm at Rhizome (317 E. Broadway). Anne Feeney in Concert: 5 Ring Circus Special.
- Sun Feb 14th, we will be standing with the 19th Annual Women's Memorial March to honour all the missing and murdered and women in the DTES. Memorial march begins at 1 pm at Main and Hastings. Note this is not an anti-Olympic protest, no banners, placards, or face masks please.
- Sunday Feb 14. People's Prom at 805 East Pender. Doors at 8 pm. The most kick ass antidote to Valentine's Day. All proceeds to grassroots, direct action and creative resistance to the Games.
- Mon Feb 15 (ONGOING): Noon at Pigeon Park. Rally for Homes: No More Empty Talk, No More Empty Lots. Support the grassroots, autonomous Olympic Tent Village going up. Organized and led by Downtown Eastside residents and groups.
- Mon Feb 15: Vancouver Art Gallery, Gathering at 6:00pm. Anti-war demonstration.
- Friday, Feb 19, 7:00pm at Rhizome Cafe (317 East Broadway). Board Games, not Olympic Games!
- Saturday, Feb 20. Rally for a National Housing Program from noon-2 pm, Vancouver Art Gallery.
- Sat Feb 20: Anti-OH-LIMP-IC show at Rickshaw Theater, 254 East Hastings Street. Door at 8 pm. D.O.A. will headline with guest speaker Chris Shaw.

## **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

\* TO PRE-ARRANGE INTERVIEWS: Email [olympicresistance@riseup.net](mailto:olympicresistance@riseup.net).

\* EMERGENCY MEDIA LIASONS: Harsha Walia: 778 885 0040 or Gurb Gill: 604-436-0366

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- Tuesday: Chris Shaw: 604-875-4111 or 604-710 8291 or [cashawlab@gmail.com](mailto:cashawlab@gmail.com); Caitlin Wright: [arlinandcaitlin@hotmail.com](mailto:arlinandcaitlin@hotmail.com)

- Wednesday: Harjap Grewal: 778 552 2099 or 604 340 2455 or [hgrewal@canadians.org](mailto:hgrewal@canadians.org); Carol Martin: 604 681 8480 x 233 or [carolmartin43@hotmail.com](mailto:carolmartin43@hotmail.com)

- Thursday: Anna Hunter: 604-764-5103 or [ahunter@riseup.net](mailto:ahunter@riseup.net); Arthur Manuel: 250-319-0688 or [amanuel@telus.net](mailto:amanuel@telus.net); Cara Fisher: 604-319-2102

- Friday: Native Youth Movement: [nymcommunications@gmail.com](mailto:nymcommunications@gmail.com); Maryann Abbs: 604-877-1223 or [maryann@resist.ca](mailto:maryann@resist.ca); Marla Renn: 604-788-3995 or [marlarenn@gmail.com](mailto:marlarenn@gmail.com)

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2) Downtown Eastside/Housing/Poverty: Harsha Walia (including interviews with DTES residents): 778 885 0040 or [hwalia8@gmail.com](mailto:hwalia8@gmail.com); Anna Hunter: 604-764-5103 or [ahunter@riseup.net](mailto:ahunter@riseup.net)

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7) Healthcare Impacts: Maryann Abbs: 604-877-1223 or [maryann@resist.ca](mailto:maryann@resist.ca)

8) Right to Protest/Civil Liberties: Alissa Westeragrd-Thorpe: 778-668-0790 or [alissawt@shaw.ca](mailto:alissawt@shaw.ca); Cara Fisher: 604-319-2102

## **FROM THE FRONT LINES – QUOTE SHEET**

### **Why are you opposed to the 2010 Winter Olympics?**

“The 2010 Winter Olympics will take place on unceded Indigenous land. Far from being simply about sport, the history of the Olympics is one rooted in displacement, corporate greed, repression, and violence. The effects of the upcoming Winter Games are apparent to everyone – expansion of sport tourism on Indigenous lands; increasing homelessness across the province and especially in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside; misdirected public spending and debt; vulnerable working conditions especially for migrant labour; unprecedented destruction of the environment; and unparalleled police and security spending,” according to the Olympics Resistance Network.

### **Do you have a problem with sports and the athletes?**

“Sports and physical health are a positive aspect of any society. The Olympic industry, however, uses sports and athletes as commodities to market corporate products,” says Gord Hill, a member of the Kwakwaka’wakw nation and editor of no2010.com. “Governments use Olympic Games to attract corporate investment. Despite claims that Olympics are not political, they are deeply political with devastating social and ecological impacts that cannot simply be ignored.”

### **Aren’t the Games good for the economy?**

According to Chris Shaw of 2010 Watch, “One of the most prevalent Olympic myths is that hosting the Olympic Games is good for the economy. In fact, the opposite is true as a variety of studies have shown time and time again. While it’s true that limited sectors can do well during the Games operating period, the benefits to these few sectors are vastly outweighed by the overall costs to taxpayers of the infrastructure, Games-related megaprojects, and security.”

### **What do you mean by No Olympics on Stolen Native Land?**

“Because we have no treaty with Canada, the imposition and encroachment of Whistler – their hydro lines, their highways, their railroad, in fact all infrastructure development for the 2010 Games – in our territory is illegal,” says James Louie from the St’at’imc nation, Whistler.

“There are over \$5 billion worth of resort plans since the Olympic bid. The Olympics are opening up our land, our sacred sites, and our medicine grounds for sale, but we want the world to know that our land is not for sale,” says Kanahus Pellkey, a member of the Native Youth Movement and Secwepemc mother who has been jailed for fighting Olympics-related expansion of Sun Peaks Resort, Kamloops.

### **Doesn’t the 2010 Olympics have the support of Natives through the Four Host Nations?**

“The Four Host Nations is a corporate body made up primarily of government-funded Indian Act band council chiefs, not hereditary chieftainships,” says Seislom, a Lil’wat Elder. “An overwhelming number of Indigenous people in these territories and in the interior are opposed to the Olympics because of the long-term impact including destruction of the land, commodification of Native art and culture, and the creation of long-term poverty once the few token jobs are gone.”

“It is the reality of strong opposition to the Olympic Games by Native peoples that has forced VANOC to desperately try and create the perception of Native support for the Olympics by throwing a lot of money to a few select people,” according to Native 2010 Resistance.

“By hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics, Canada has opened up their Human Rights record to international scrutiny. Canada is trying to buy their way around their poor Human Rights record by funding just a few Indigenous Peoples but the reality remains that Indigenous Peoples are the poorest and most marginalized peoples in Canada because the government continues a policy of non-recognition of our Aboriginal title,” says Arthur Manuel of the Indigenous Network on Economies and Trade.

### **You are claiming the environment is at stake. Are these not the Green Games?**

“The corporate green-washing of the Games has acted as a cloak for unregulated irresponsible development. The 2010 Olympics will be one of the most ecologically damaging Games in history with and will also displace indigenous peoples, and working and poor people,” according to Clayton George Thomas-Muller of the Indigenous Environmental Network. “Many of the Games sponsors such as Petro Canada and Royal Bank of Canada are also notorious investors in Canada’s environmental armageddon known as the Alberta Tar Sands.”

“Over 100,000 trees cleared in the Callaghan Valley, a rare wetland destroyed to house the Hydrogen Highway, mountain blasting to expand the Sea-to-Sky Highway, Whistler’s last remaining urban forest cleared for a temporary medals plaza, 68,000 kgs of ammonia used to power the Whistler Sliding Centre (aka the fridge in the sky), a massive carbon footprint, and a lack of “green and sustainable” innovation are the legacy of these Games. We can hardly call these the greenest games ever!, “ states Pina Belperio of Whistler Watch.

### **Do you believe the DTES is being targeted in the lead up to the Games?**

“The Bid Committee promised that not a single person would be displaced due to the Games, but there are now 3000 homeless people sleeping on Vancouver’s streets – a 373 % increase since the Bid – and these people are facing increased police harassment as they try to clean the streets in the lead up to the Games,” says Carol Martin, a victim services worker in the DTES.

“It is not a coincidence that handing out of over 2000 tickets for minor bylaw infractions like jaywalking, which is being selectively enforced in the DTES, is happening in the lead up to the Games. The Vancouver Police Department will have an increased police presence in the DTES over the next year,” says Priscillia Mays, a member of the Power of Women Group at the Downtown Eastside Women’s Center. “All this is happening to ensure that residents live in a state of fear and intimidation so that the DTES is cleaned of poor and homeless people in time for the tourists.”

### **Do you think you have the support of most British Columbians?**

“We are seeing increasing resistance across the country as it becomes more visible how these Games are a big fraud. While Olympic corporate sponsors are getting bailed out with taxpayer dollars, Indigenous lands are being stolen, more people are becoming homeless, the environment is being destroyed, and millions of dollars are being sunk into Big Brother surveillance measures,” says Harsha Walia of the Olympic Resistance Network. “All of those things are going to be the legacy

of the Olympic Games and from our perspective this legacy is something we can use in order to build resistance to the 2010 Games.”

### **Protestors are listed as a major security threat. How would you respond?**

“There is little explanation or evidence for protestors being deemed a major security threat. Such statements are an attempt to discredit criticism and undermine our freedoms of assembly, expression and opinion,” says Alissa Westergard-Thorpe from the Olympic Resistance Network. “It is also an attempt to justify designated protest pens, which are undemocratic as the whole country is supposed to be a free speech zone.”

### **Do you advocate violent protest?**

“Simplistically classifying Olympic resistance and disruptions as violent is a scare tactic. We will do whatever we can to disrupt the 2010 Olympic Winter Games because disruption has proved extremely successful,” says Anna Hunter. “The rich should not just be allowed to carry on with their violent business-as-usual as poor people continue to suffer.”

## **BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF RESISTANCE TO THE 2010 OLYMPICS**

June 2002: Members of St’at’imc and Secwepemc Indigenous Nations file submission with International Olympic Committee outlining human rights abuses carried out by Canada against Indigenous peoples.

February 22, 2003: City of Vancouver holds a non-binding plebiscite on hosting the 2010 Games. The vote is 63.4 % Yes, 36.6 % No. However, the vote represents just 45 % of Vancouver voters.

March 2003: Two representatives from Secwepemc Indigenous Nation travel to IOC headquarters in Switzerland requesting that Vancouver-Whistler not be hosts for the 2010 Games.

April-May 2006: At Eagleridge Bluffs near North Vancouver, environmentalists begin blockade of construction work for Sea-to-Sky Highway expansion. Some two dozen protesters are arrested.

October- November 2006: A number of vacant buildings are occupied to highlight the growing problem of homelessness and its relation to the 2010 Olympics. Over 25 arrests take place.

February 12, 2007: Anti-Olympic protesters disrupt VANOC ‘2010 Countdown’ event, at which the large countdown clock is unveiled.

February 24, 2007: Native elder Harriet Nahanee, 71 years old, dies shortly after serving a 14-day jail sentence following her conviction for taking part in the 2006 blockade at Eagleridge Bluffs. Betty Krawczyk, 78, an elderly environmentalist, is later sentenced to 10 months in jail for the 2006 blockade.

March 6, 2007: The large Olympic flag at City Hall is stolen. The Native Warrior Society release a communiqué claim to have taken the flag to honour Harriet Nahanee and in opposition to the Games.

March 12, 2007: Over 200 Anti-Olympic protesters disrupt the VANOC flag lighting ceremony at City Hall. Over 100 police are deployed. People entering the grounds are searched; mega-phones are prohibited.

May 19, 2007: APC member David Cunningham is arrested by police posing as journalists, who lure him to a meeting. He is arrested for “uttering threats” during a rally. Many media outlets condemn the police.

May 22, 2007: Ken Dobell, a VANOC board member, is ‘evicted’ from his office in an action aimed to mimic evictions in the DTES.

October 15-21, 2007: ‘Homeless Action Week’ is carried out by community groups in Downtown Eastside. The UN Special Rapporteur on Housing Miloon Kothari describes homelessness as a “national emergency.”

October 2007: At a gathering hosted by the Zapatistas and National Indigenous Congress in Mexico, over 1000 international Indigenous delegates adopt a resolution to oppose the Games.

December 2007-present: A series of attacks against the corporate sponsors and affiliates of 2010 Games have taken place in Vancouver, Victoria, Guelph, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa, including many windows of RBC, Re/Max Real Estate Corporation, Bell Canada, Delta Hotels, Kiewit construction.

Feb-March 2008: Series of educational events and actions to counter two year countdown and ‘Cultural Olympiad’. Groups picket VANOC volunteer recruitments across the city.

Sep-Oct 2008: Anti-Olympics actions, including a rail blockade, in over eight cities disrupt the CP-VANOC Spirit Train. Over 300 people attend a “Why Resist 2010” conference in Vancouver.

Feb 2009: Helen Lenskyj, renowned author of Inside the Olympic Industry, joins ORN in a press conference in Vancouver to condemn Olympic security exercises and military exercises.

March 2010: ORN protests the International Olympic Committee, VANOC and corporate-sponsored 8th World Sport and the Environment Conference, denouncing it as greenwashing.

June 2010: ORN publicizes and condemns the targeting of the anti-olympic movement by the Vancouver Integrated Security Unit. In a rash of intimidating visits, approximately 20 anti-Olympics activists were visited by VISU within 48 hours. These visits have continued till the present.

Sep 2009-Jan 2010: A series of educational events take place across Vancouver, in campuses (including a speakers series at UBC), workshops in schools, and speaking tours are conducted across BC and the US West Coast.

Oct 2009-Feb 2010: ORN releases a call across Canada to protest the Olympic Torch. Protests and disruptions are held in over 30 cities, towns, and Indigenous communities across the country.