

Vancouver Media Co-op • vancouver.mediacoop.ca

Reflections on the Action for Safe Shelters

by Lauren Emily Oxford

VANCOUVER - On March 22, a coalition of women's groups marched to BC Housing. Members of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, WISH drop-in, Power of Women Group, and Battered Women's Support Services brought three demands:

- 1) Open a 24-hour, low-barrier, women-only drop-in space and shelter in the Downtown Eastside;
- 2) Build housing for homeless women and children with at least 100 new units available immediately;
- 3) Implement clear provincial standards for women's safety in co-ed shelters immediately in all existing and new shelters.

They were met by more than 30 Vancouver police barricading the entrance to the Terminal Avenue building. The crowd walked up a parkade driveway to see a group of First Nations elders and frontline workers negotiating with BC Housing Regional Director Dale McMann surrounded by police and media.

Nintey minutes later, BC Housing announced a 24-hour, women-only, drop-in centre in the DTES to be managed by Atira.

There are lots of questions we are all asking ourselves: What did that process look like at 369 Terminal Street? Was there prior discussion around the opening of this 24-hour shelter? If the funding was there, why wasn't it opened earlier? Or did BC Housing CEO Shane Ramsey speed dial his wife - Janice Abbott - the CEO of Atira, asking her to get him out of this mess? Wife you ask? Yes wife. DTES service provision politics always seems to include a large amount of nepotism for some bizarre reason.

The general tone of the community is that BC Housing should not have been let off the hook. People feel that more and more we are seeing service



March by DTES women's groups to BC Housing to demand safe shelter. *photo: Sandra Cuffe*

providers co-opting the movement, and silencing the demands of grassroots organizations by collaborating with government and settling for crumbs.

We've seen this with 58 West Hastings and the Portland Hotel Society, planning to build social housing at the site of last year's tent village with zero consultation or communication with the community that spent years demanding housing on that site.

Do you ever wonder how non-profit organizations and programs are created? Do bureaucrats sit around and think "Today is a good day to be charitable!" "We have gaps in services that need to be filled and it's our duty to do it!"

No, although I'm sure there's the odd Robin Hood bureaucrat ripping through red-tape somewhere to create some type of change from within. The reality is that the only way resources are ever funded is if there is enough of a demand, and that demand usually comes from the community.



March Against Racism

Nearly 500 people in Vancouver marched to mark the International Day to End Racial Discrimination. Organized by No One Is Illegal, speakers addressed colonialism and indigenous sovereignty, state racism, deplorable employment conditions for migrant workers and Canada's legacy as a racist state.



photos: murray bush and David P Ball



Activists denied an opportunity to question federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney. *photo: murray bush*

■ Women, men, and children marched down Commercial Drive in Vancouver to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Womens Day.

■ A candlelight vigil was held outside the Chinese Consulate on Granville street to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

■ The RCMP enforced an injunction granted to Sunshine Logging by the BC Supreme Court against the Slhu7kin-Perry Ridge Protection Camp in Sinixt Nation territory. The camp was taken down without conflict; however, court battles, community organizing, and territory protection are ongoing.

■ Federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney showed up for a photo op at a new immigrant swearing in ceremony. But despite being a public event, opponents of Kenney's racist policies were barred from entering and physically removed by RCMP and Vancouver police.

■ More than 100 people on the speakers' list did not even make it to the podium at a packed City Council review of Chinatown's historical building height restrictions; more meetings are scheduled. Opponents of lifting the restrictions say opening the area to luxury condo towers would displace many of the more than 1,000 low-income residents in the area and squeeze out affordable food stores.

■ Celebrations took place late in March after Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council pressure led to supportive housing for single moms and kids being included above the future Strathcona Public Library on East Hastings .

■ A theatrical action was held outside Enbridge's Vancouver office after major media picked up a

NEWS ROUNDUP!

hoax story that the pipeline company would use human hair to mop up oil spills. The following week, dozens attended an upbeat rally to support the Yinka Dene

Alliance and broad Indigenous opposition to Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline.

■ Anti-war activists gathered in front of the US Consulate as part of an international day of action to free alleged whistleblower on war crimes Bradley Manning, being held in solitary confinement in a US military prison.

■ On March 22, anarchists in Vancouver caused a disturbance at the Chilean Consulate and on the street outside ``to send a strong embrace to our imprisoned companeros on hunger strike in Chile.'' Fourteen anarchists and comrades have been framed with conspiracy charges for explosive attacks against state and capitalist institutions. Nine of the prisoners began an indefinite hunger strike on Feb. 21. Four Mapuche Indigenous prisoners re-started their hunger strike on March 15.

Gentricide

by Joseph Jones

let me manufacture new language
for the same old displacement

absentee land speculators
team up their mouthpieces
with a brigade of daytrippers
foolish footsoldiers
always the enthusiastic
know-too-little youth

all out to revitalize
Chinatown in Vancouver
where parking-garage monuments
stand from the last incursion

a beholden city council
opens the campaign
desperate to develop
at the eleventh hour
their fallback strategy
to sever the situation
pick off at least one piece
within the target perimeter
under the current mandate
do some payback

say the streets are empty
claim no one can thrive
but insist that entrepreneurs always will
prepare to disappear unwanted classes
the poor the old the immigrant
not to mention the aboriginal third
who never left their own land

a dying ocean of acid
global capital keeps on eating away
ready to corrode any perceived safe
haven

in the ghetto
pushed to the last alternative
bodies will fill the streets

Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 16 7pm

Vancouver Launch Party for the Dominion magazine's special issue on Climate Justice. Speakers, music! By donation Rhizome Café 317 E Broadway,

Wednesday, April 20 7pm

Crisis and Revolt in Greece: Occupied London comes to Vancity Joe's Café, 1150 Commercial Dr

Friday, April 22 2pm

Mother Earth Day Climate Justice Action, Meet at Annieville Supermarket, 10996 River Road, Delta

SUPPORT local independent news!



It takes a community to raise a Media Co-op!

As you know, the Vancouver Media Co-op is this city's source for news from the grassroots. Our model – reader funded, collectively run – creates space for critical, democratic media in Vancouver. Readers like you are an integral part of what makes our project work, so first off, thanks for your support!

The VMC relies on the active participation of hundreds of activists, journalists, readers, and concerned people to contribute stories, photos, press releases, personal accounts, and videos in an open-publishing format that receives over 10,000 page views every month. In addition to user-created

media, the VMC is an open and democratic collective open to you to join.

Become a sustaining member of the Vancouver Media Co-op and help us keep up momentum as we take radical media to a new level.

Check out vancouver.mediacoop.ca