No Tankers, No Pipelines!

BALACLAVA!

Hoodie up Vancouver

by Maryann Abbs

EAST VANCOUVER - Several hundred people donned hoodies and attended a memorial protest on April 1 in Grandview Park. The event was in remembrance of Trayvon Martin and in solidarity with all young people who have been targeted, hurt, or lost their lives as a result of racial profiling.

This event was organized as part of the One Million Hoodie March for Trayvon Martin. Since Trayvon was killed on February 26, hundreds of thousands have attended protests in dozens of cities throughout North America, including one in Sanford, Florida, just a few miles from the gated housing complex where Martin was killed.

Kat Norris, an organizer and spokesperson for the Indigenous Action Movement opened the demonstration. She said that "they can say it wasn't because of the colour of his skin of his age, but we know that's not true. We as indigenous people face this daily."

Democracy Now reported that 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was an African American high school student visiting his father in a gated community when he was shot by the neighbourhood watch captain. Trayvon was wearing a hoodie, on foot and un-armed. He had been to the local store to get candy. Prior to shooting him, the neighbourhood watch member called police to report "suspicious" behavior and insisted on pursuing him.

Photo: Maryann Abbs

WAM – UPRISING!
Second meet for Women, Action & the Media

by Sandra Cuffe

VANCOUVER - The Centre for Peace was abuzz with discussion about gender justice March 31, as dozens of local feminists, activists, journalists, artists, and others gathered for UPRISING!, WAM! Vancouver's second annual community conference.

The local chapter of Women, Action, & the Media (WAM!) hosted workshops and discussions as part of a 10-day 'WAM! It Yourself' decentralized conference that took place in six cities as well as several online venues.

Founded in 2004 as "part of a growing advocacy movement for gender justice in media," WAM! "connects and supports media makers, activists, academics and funders working to advance women's media access, representation, participation and ownership."

As examples of the power and privilege the organization is challenging on several fronts, WAM! points to a wide array of studies and reports about gender inequity in the media.

"The conference, Uprising, proved to be a powerful day for people interested in WAM! Vancouver's values and vision to meet and partake in panels and workshops," WAM! Vancouver core organizer Meenakshi Mannoe told the Vancouver Media Co-op. She added that the panels and discussions were curated to "reflect the broad and varied interests of WAM! communities."

After WAM! Vancouver core organizers welcomed participants to the conference and went over the organization's history, values, and safer space policies, the day began with a facilitated discussion about media representations of recent movements: From Tahrir to Occupy.

"The problem is bigger than the Arab Spring; it's actually Western media reporting on

the Middle East in general," said Egyptian-Bahraini UBC Master of Journalism student and UBC Perspectives Magazine Editor-in-Chief Mohamed Algarf. He added that the recent increase in Western media coverage of the region simply brought to light existing problems. "The issue with reporting on women and the Middle East is so intertwined with Islam and Islamophobia."

"Women in the Middle East are portrayed as either passive or oppressed: with the veil or the burqa, or in the background, or praying... So it's either that or the historical sexual bellydancer kind of harem image," continued Algarf. When covering street protests, "the reporting was so shocked" at the participation of women that it illustrated the problems with the portrayal of women in Western media in the first place, he said.

Miranda Nelson, assistant editor of the online version of The Georgia Straight, was closely monitoring coverage of the Occupy movement in mainstream, alternative, and social media.

She noticed that mainstream media coverage tended to fall into the pattern of representing women as victims - if they were arrested and beaten, for example: "They're not asked for their opinions. If they get hurt, then that's a story."

The second panel and discussion of the day focused on the representation of SlutWalk and its critiques.

Participants engaged in a passionate debate about the name of the phenomenom, the organizing and media tactics, and media representation of SlutWalk.

The first SlutWalk rally took place in Toronto in April 2011, sparked by a comment made by a Toronto police officer that to remain safe, "women should avoid dressing like sluts."

**Get the full story at:
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Musqueam blockade halts destruction of burial ground

flux photo

by Murray Bush

MUSQUEAM TERRITORY - Musqueam First Nation members and supporters have blocked condo construction at the site of an ancient burial ground. Workers and the 'owner' of the property were turned away when they showed up at 1338 SW Marine Drive.

Musqueam spokesperson Aaron Wilson called the peaceful three-day protest a grassroots response after talks with the condo developer broke down. The developer had planned to start digging up intact burials (undisturbed since they were originally placed there by Musqueam ancestors) on the Marpole Midden and Village site. Protesters stayed until the development plan was put on hold pending further talks.

The Musqueam consider the midden "one of the most meaningful storehouses of the history and culture of our people." Elders point to evidence of continuous occupation for more than 4,000 years.

Pipelines – Rising Tide of Opposition

By Sandra Cuffe

ABBOTSFORD, STO:LO TERRITORY - Residents of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and the surrounding areas gathered at the University of the Fraser Valley to learn more about Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline. In many cases, it literally runs through their backyards.

Texas-based Kinder Morgan announced that the company will go ahead with a $5 billion expansion, increasing capacity to 850,000 barrels per day. The company's plans also include an expansion of the Westridge terminal in Burnaby, on the Burrard Inlet.

"This makes Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain the biggest proposed tar sands export pipeline," states the Wilderness Committee. "This expansion alone would be equivalent in size to the proposed Enbridge pipeline."

Originally built in the early 1950s as a multi-use pipeline, since its operation by Kinder Morgan from 2005 to present, the Trans Mountain pipeline has been transporting some 300,000 barrels per day of tar sands crude through Jasper National Park across the Rockies and down through the Fraser Valley to the Burrard Inlet. After a series of spills in recent years, local residents are increasingly concerned about impacts on ecosystems and the health of their communities.

"It goes right by my property on Lickman Road, by my neighbour, and then it goes underneath the Vedder river," Chilliwack resident John Kupp said, expressing his skepticism about the safety of the aging 60-year-old pipeline. "I don't know how in the hell they can rationalize that. These pipelines are so old. I've never seen such a rusty mess in my whole life," Kupp added.

A pipeline rupture at the Sumas Tank Farm

Photos by Michael

Hundreds Protest Enbridge Pipeline and Oil Tankers in Vancouver

Hundreds of people from First Nations, environmental and community organizations, and from Vancouver and beyond rallied against Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline and coastal oil supertanker traffic at the Vancouver Art Gallery.
The march was led by the Heiltsuk Nation of the Central Coast.The rally marked the 23d anniversary of the infamous Exxon Valdez oil spill off the coast of Alaska. A rally was also held outside the BC Legislature in Victoria.

in Abbotsford occurred earlier this year, on January 24, 2012, spilling approximately 110,000 litres of tar sands crude.

People living in the area reported odours, nausea, headaches, and fatigue. Another spill occurred in July 2005, when 210,000 litres of crude were released into the area surrounding the Sumas facility, making its way into Kilgard Creek on Sumas Mountain.

"They're still monitoring that spill and they're

still cleaning it up," longtime Sumas Mountain resident and Fraser Valley Watershed Coalition member John Vissers said. "They didn't call it a spill. They called it a release."

"People were getting violently ill," said Vissers, adding that local residents noticed effects five days before the company discovered the spill.

"It's not just about direct contact with oil; it's also about the fumes - about the toxins in the fumes," said Wilderness Committee Healthy Communities Campaigner Ben West, adding that little information is publicly available about the Sumas facility spill less than three months ago. "We still don't know exactly what caused this spill."

"There really is no such thing as cleaning up an oil spill," explained West. "The majority of that oil remains in the ecosystem."

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Latin Americans spearhead C-31 Rally

VANCOUVER - Chants against Bill C-31 rang out in Spanish at West Georgia and Hamilton recently when dozens of people gathered in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board office to protest the proposed reforms to Canada's refugee determination system.

The rally was organized by the Movement to Protect the Human Rights of Refugees and Immigrants, a nascent coalition spearheaded by individuals and groups from various Latin American communities in Vancouver. Voicing total opposition to Bill C-31, also known as the 'Refugee Exclusion Act' and the 'Anti-Smuggling Bill,' the group coalesced after two well-attended community meetings and decided to call the rally. "For us, the objective is to raise our voices and tell the government that we are here and we support our communities," organizing committee member Oswaldo Godoy said.