

PIPELINE AND TANKER FREE BC EVENT A WONDERFUL SUCCESS

GATHERING OF EAGLES: Convergence for a Pipeline and Tanker Free BC, held June 2nd, at the Brilliant Cultural Center in Castlegar was a successful merging of groups, cultures and nations on behalf of important issues which concern people, our province and our planet.

Despite the provincial governments' recent announcement that they were rejecting the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline to Kitimat, approximately 400 Kootenay residents and guests still turned up to the event, and over 150 people arrived early, to participate in the Doukhobor prayer meeting, which emphasized prayers for the Earth, led by Ernie Verigin.

The main event commenced at 1:00pm with unifying traditional First Nations prayers and songs by First Nations people from Washington, BC and Peru followed by uplifting hymns by the Doukhobours and Friends for Peace Choir.

Bear biologist Wayne McCrory of the Valhalla Wilderness Society led with a powerful visual presentation on the devastation to the boreal forest from tar sands production. Based on his recent studies, McCrory revealed how an imminent bitumen tanker spill would wipe out the rare genetic population of spirit bears along the tanker route on Gribbell Island. McCrory pointed out that this would only be one of many devastating impacts to the vast coastal ecosystem. "The ink was hardly dry on the government's and First Nations agreement to protect 1/3 of the Great Bear Rainforest when along comes the biggest threat ever, the Enbridge Pipeline" said McCrory. He affirmed what he learned from the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill, including the myths being perpetrated by industry and government, which incorrectly declare oil spills on the coast, can be cleaned up. "The bitumen will be there on the beaches and sea bottom for centuries. It can never be cleaned up," said McCrory.

Other presenters included "Salmon Speaks" a twinkling bouquet of innocent children from the Slocan Valley who sang out their hopes for clean healthy rivers and for the salmon to return.

Gerald Amos, former Chief Councillor of the Haisla First Nations of Kitimat, also expressed his deep concerns of pipelines and tankers threatening the traditional livelihood of his people, who still rely on the sea for much of their sustaining foods. He invited people to join them to stand in front of the bulldozers should the project be approved. He stated it would not be civil disobedience because the Coastal First Nations made a Declaration saying No to Tankers, and a blockade would be in obedience to his peoples' declaration.

Alex Atamanenko MP pointed out that less than 13% of the conventional oil spilled at the Exxon Valdez disaster has been recovered, and bitumen being heavier than water will sink to the bottom, so the potential of clean up could be less than 7%.

SjengDurkx, spokesperson of the Nelson-Creston Green Party urged the public to continue their opposition, and MP, NDP Energy and Natural Resources Critic, Peter Julian, spoke about the need to create a national green energy policy that would generate thousands of green energy jobs. He reiterated that just the costs of insurance rates soaring into the billions from damages resulting from run-away climate change would bankrupt us all if we did not pursue a green energy policy soon.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and wife, Joan Phillip, Penticton Indian Band Councillor, conveyed inspirational messages of unity and the power of the people, and encouraged the audience to keep up the campaigns to stop Enbridge.

“The Gathering of Eagles was an enlightening convergence of people of many cultures and groups who came together to build awareness and a more uplifted, powerful and successful movement”, said Nadine Podmoroff, conference coordinator, following the event. “We’ve risen, and we’re walking in groups of many to preserve what we value most; All life; what no money could ever buy or replace”, said Podmoroff.

Edited video footage will be mounted on Youtube.

For more information contact:

Nadine Podmoroff: nadia@netidea.com 250-825-4517

Wayne McCrory: waynem@vws.org

For Photo reproduction Keith Wiley: wileykeith@gmail.com

Gathering of Eagles was sponsored by Kootenay Region Branch United Nations Association in Canada, KRUNA, Nelson Chapter Council of Canadians NCCoC, USCC Working Groups, Valhalla Wilderness Society, Kootenays for a Pipeline- Free BC, Lower Columbia All First Nations, MIR Center for Peace, Eco Society, Regional District of Central Kootenays Area I, Castlegar Canadian Postal Workers Union, Oso Negro, Kootenay Country Store Coop and Peter and Nellie Rezansoff.