



First Nations Join Protest Rally Against the Bear Mountain Interchange

An event dedicated to Squamish elder Harriet Nahanee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Langford, BC - First Nations are joining other Capital Regional District residents for a 4:00pm protest rally at the Trans-Canada Highway and Savory Road, the site of the proposed Bear Mountain Interchange. The event is being dedicated to Harriet Nahanee, a 71-year-old Squamish elder who passed away February 24 after serving a 14-day prison sentence in the Surrey Pre-Trial Centre for opposing the Sea-to-Sky Highway expansion at Eagleridge Bluffs.

"Harriet was a true warrior and a true elder," says Cheryl Bryce, a Songhees First Nations member who attended memorial services for Nahanee in Squamish and Vancouver earlier this week. "Harriet was there for the future and the protection of the land and the people. It wasn't about herself it was about the land, our future and future generations. She lived it as much as she spoke out on the concerns of the environment and cultural rights. We are honouring her for all she has done and keeping the spirit of her work going. She had tremendous courage and perseverance. She was a teacher and still is. That is a large part of an elders' role. They teach. They teach by their actions. She spoke of cultural rights, human rights and environment concerns to all. First Nations people including myself are taking part in the rally for SPAET, honouring Harriet and acknowledging Six Nations."

Bryce and other indigenous people are joining with the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed in an effort to convince the Government of British Columbia to deny regulatory approval, funding, and Provincial Capital Commission lands for the Bear Mountain Interchange project.

Friday's rally follows the one-year anniversary of the Six Nations Land Reclamation near Caledonia, Ontario, one hour southwest of Toronto. Located at the site of a former housing development, the land was reclaimed by the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory on 28 February 2006 and purchased by the Government of Ontario in July 2006. It is now held in trust pending a negotiated settlement, while Six Nations continue to occupy the site.

"We are standing in solidarity with Six Nations," Bryce says. "This isn't an issue for just one Nation but for all. When we support each other and work together on protecting the environment and cultural rights that's when the issues will start to be addressed. The letters of support are wonderful, but it's not pushing the will of government to do anything. That's where the action comes in for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. So we can stop governments from running the land and people like a business. It is offensive to the environment and all people. Corporations have too much power over the environment, health, and cultural rights. We are a part of the land. When the land is unhealthy so are we."

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