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DREAMSPEAKER

Race on to save thousands of fish

by Lyse C. Cantin

The race against time is on. So far, about 7,000 exhausted salmon have been helped across an impassable rock slide on the Nahatlach River in B.C. Resource officers of the Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council and people from the Boothroyd, Boston Bar, Spuzzum and Lytton First Nations, as well as technicians from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, have been working frantically to save thousands of fish trapped behind the natural slide. Using dip nets while hanging precariously from rocky cliffs, volunteers are catching the fish and passing them to runners who carry them up to release them above the falls.



Shaun Freeman, biologist for the Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council, said saving the fish is critical to the First Nations fishery. "We were expecting about 3,000 sockeye but transferred only 2,040. We've also been able to move more than 4,500 pink. The number of fish coming back to spawn is already low and nothing was getting above the obstruction. Without our help, all the fish will die without successfully reproducing."

Freeman is also worried about the crews who are working under adverse conditions. The rock slide is located in a narrow canyon fifteen kilometres out of North Bend, accessible only by an active logging road. "The water is fast and cold. The terrain is steep and rocky. Even though the dip-netters and runners are tethered on safety lines to the rocks, we are worried about injuries. So far two people have fallen into the river." Luckily, says Freeman, all they got was a very cold bath.

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Over the next few weeks, an additional 5,000 pink and 1,600 coho salmon are expected to arrive. And since spawning salmon don't feed once they are in the river, those arriving at the slide are at risk of dying. "These fish have been in the river for over one hundred miles and they haven't been feeding. They are using up their own fat reserves, body tissues and internal organs to increase the size of their reproductive organs."

The challenge is to save the spawning salmon before they run out of enough energy to spawn. The task is daunting, especially since the West Coast salmon fishery is experiencing alarmingly low returns this year. To conserve remaining fish stocks, First Nations in the area have even opted to close their own fishery this season.

Phillip Campbell, councillor for the Boothroyd First Nation says support for the project has been tremendous. "About thirty-five volunteers from the Lower Mainland joined us to try to save the salmon," he says. "It is slow, difficult work but they are doing all they can to help."

One of the volunteers, Blake Covernton, used to be in the fishing industry. He organized the donation of the 15 aluminium dip nets. "I originally came up to see if I could just help out moving fish. When I saw how desperate things were, I knew I had to do something." Covernton rallied the industry for donations - everything from netting to a truck company to carry the nets to the site and to carry the fish past the slide.

"What drew me up there were the fish. Now, it's also about people - people banding together to get the job done."

So far, several companies have joined in. The dip nets were supplied by several commercial fishing operations in the Lower Mainland. In only one day, Queensboro Marine, Ocean Fish, Canadian Fish, and Redden organized the manufacturing and delivery of the dip nets to the Boothroyd First Nation.

Rio Rafting Adventures supplied the safety equipment and has been spotting the river for any dippers or runners who fall in. When the Department of Fisheries and Oceans decided to blast the mountainside in an attempt to widen the channel, the local logging company, J.S. Jones Timber Ltd., offered to do the job. They supplied the drilling equipment and expertise. Rio Rafting ferried the drilling equipment to and from the blasting site.

Unfortunately, the blast was only partially successful and did not bring the hoped-for reprieve. "Only the strongest fish are getting past the area," Says Freeman. "That's still leaving the majority of fish pooling below. We might try to drill a ladder into the rock since we can't take another chance at blasting." Apparently, J.S. Jones Timber has



Salmon being released in Nahatlach River
Photo by Mary Jane Mendes

again offered to help out.

The support of the private sector and volunteers is far from lost on the local First Nations. "The Boothroyd band and Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council appreciate the help and concern and interest everyone has given and shown, " says Campbell. "It is an important thing to us to maintain our watershed and we thank everyone who is trying to help."



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DREAMSPEAKER

Pochahontas gets a thumbs down

As a teenager I once had a blond boyfriend. Walking downtown we'd get catcalls and racist and demeaning taunts. I can't count the times I heard "There goes Pocahontas and Custer" behind my back. As an adult, once I travelled alone on CP Rail. My long black hair was braided. All night a group of drunk non-Aboriginal men tormented me on their way to and from the lounge car: "Hey Pocahontas, want a good time?" I hated that name - every context it was uttered in was intentionally hurtful and mean because it was loaded with ugly connotations. In the minds of those who taunted me and other Aboriginal women, Pocahontas represented "the Indian woman", stereotypically molded as an easy lay (a licentious squaw), who preferred White men over Aboriginal men, and would turn her back on her own people for the slightest European favour.

The sad reality is, that it was these alleged characteristics of the legendary Pocahontas that were mythologized in American history.

In the historical American mind only two kinds of Indians existed - Noble Savages and Bloodthirsty Savages. Noble Savages resisted American expansion in their attempts to preserve their lands and ways of life. That Walt Disney would select Pocahontas, the ultimate Noble Savagess/Indian Princess, for the big screen only proves that the racist ideas of manifest destiny, EuroAmerican superiority and Aboriginal inferiority are alive and well in 1995.

Clearly the Walt Disney version is historical garbage. John Smith was a nasty Indian killer, here portrayed as the quintessential Indian lover. Pocahontas was 12 years old when he seduced her, not 20-something. And, about that 20-something body - she looks like no Aboriginal woman I know! All she is is a well-tanned Barbie doll with Bering Strait fantasy features. A projection of every non-Aboriginal male's voyageur fantasy - the perfect exotic princess who avails herself to the superior conquistador/frontier man and aids him in his conquests.

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Despite endorsement by Russell Means, this flick has effectively set us back at least 20 years. What is Pocahontas but a feminized version of the cowboy and Indian fantasy - the cowboy always wins and gets the princess. Believe me, Aboriginal peoples throughout North America are cringing as thousands of North American kids don tacky Pocahontas threads and run around playing Indian Princess and Indian Fighter.

Disney productions and Pocahontas fans have no idea of the damage this film will inflict on the self-image and esteem of Aboriginal children. What does it tell our kids? That White men are stronger, braver, smarter, more industrious and better looking than Indian men. And that Aboriginal women have no loyalty (will turn on their own people) and are the fulcrums of our people's demise.

With the image of Pocahontas reaching icon status among our children, it will traumatize our daughters' self-images and pervert the perspectives of our sons.

Pocahontas is brought to you from the producers of Davy Crockett -- the Indian Killer, Peter Pan, Aladdin and Squanto. Thanks a lot Walter!

Winona Stevenson is professor at the University of Saskatoon. Winona originally gave her views on Pocahontas on Commentary, CBC Radio Canada, aired June 23, 1995.



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DREAMSPEAKER

Did you know ...

- First Nations are assuming more control in the education of their children.
- The number of band-operated schools increased from 53 in 1975-76 to 372 in 1993-94.
- The proportion of children enrolled in band-operated schools increased from four percent in 1975-76 to 51 percent in 1993-94.
- The proportion of children enrolled in federal schools dropped to three percent in 1993-94 from 41 percent in 1975-76.

From: Basic Departmental Data, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, January 1995.

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DREAMSPEAKER

Man with a mission: a profile of Bill Montour

by Lyse C. Cantin

He's big. He's here. And he's as comfortable on a construction site or out in the wilds as he is at the negotiating table. He's Bill Montour, the new Associate Regional Director General of B.C. Region.

And, believe it or not, he LIKES his job! What's wrong with this picture?

Maybe a look into Bill's background can give the clues needed to figure out what makes the man tick. Bill started out on the family farm on the Six Nations Grand River reserve in Ontario. Born in 1941, Bill grew up working on his father's two-hundred-acre farm. Not to mention the extra three hundred acres under grain. He learned from his father to tend cattle, feed pigs, harvest wheat, and use his head.

"Growing up on a farm is the best schooling. You have to learn to be self-reliant and innovative, create your own technology, solve your own problems. You can't wait around for committee meetings!"

It's pretty easy to figure out that Bill has a cutting sense of humour and it pretty much carries him through the challenges presented to him in his new position.

As a young man, Bill went into construction. It only took him three years to move from apprentice to the top.



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"Construction is a school of hard knocks," says Bill. "It gives you a heck of a degree because it focuses on reality. If a procedure doesn't fly, you set it aside and move on to something that will."

[Renaë Morriseau: a voice for First Nations Peoples](#)

In all, Bill Montour has spent 22 years in steel construction and economic development. Somewhere, he found time to be a councillor with Six Nations for one term, was elected Chief of Six Nations for three terms, and was appointed to the Assembly of First Nations, by Ovide Mercredi, for three years. He also found time to get married and raise four children who have, in turn, given Bill six grandchildren. Now separated, Bill's M.O. (magnificent other) joined him in B.C. early this spring and they have moved into a home in Richmond.

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While he was chief, Bill was able to negotiate three new schools for his community and helped to develop a Six Nations natural gas company - only a few of the many projects he greeted head on. These experiences, he says, helped him learn to deal with politicians. "If you are able to have a calm and rational discussion, you can usually find a calm and rational solution."

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Bill joined DIAND in 1994 as the Director of Devolution for Lands and Trust Services at headquarters. He joined the B.C. Region in May, and there's been no looking back since. He brings a refreshing private-sector-cum-First-Nations outlook to his job. A "straight-shooter", Bill hopes his innovative background will help promote better ways of doing business in the region.

When it comes to DIAND, Bill says that the department has been in charge of deciding "Indianness" in Canada for over one hundred years. DIAND decides bylaws, who is elected as leadership in communities and defines council powers. "I believe that it's time that First Nations' responsibility be returned to the people." He sees the department as not disappearing completely. It will remain as a residual body to represent the interest of the Canadian government.

Notwithstanding his negative criticism of the department, Bill thinks DIAND and the *Indian Act* have done two positive things for First Nations. For one, the department has "helped preserve the identity of First Nations as *peoples* with unique and distinct identities." For another, DIAND "has helped preserve the land base. It's small, but it's still there." These two features are critical to First Nations people, says Bill, for successful self-government.

On the *Indian Act*, Bill takes a pragmatic stance. "To get rid of the Act, we'd better have something better to take its place. We have to reestablish governing structures that resemble what was there in the past." One of Bill's priorities is to help First Nations understand their government structures, especially where it comes to the dependency on DIAND for elections, the disposal of estates, and lands management. Another of his priorities is to find ways to effectively make First Nations' governing structures accountable to their constituents.

He hopes to make a difference - from the inside.



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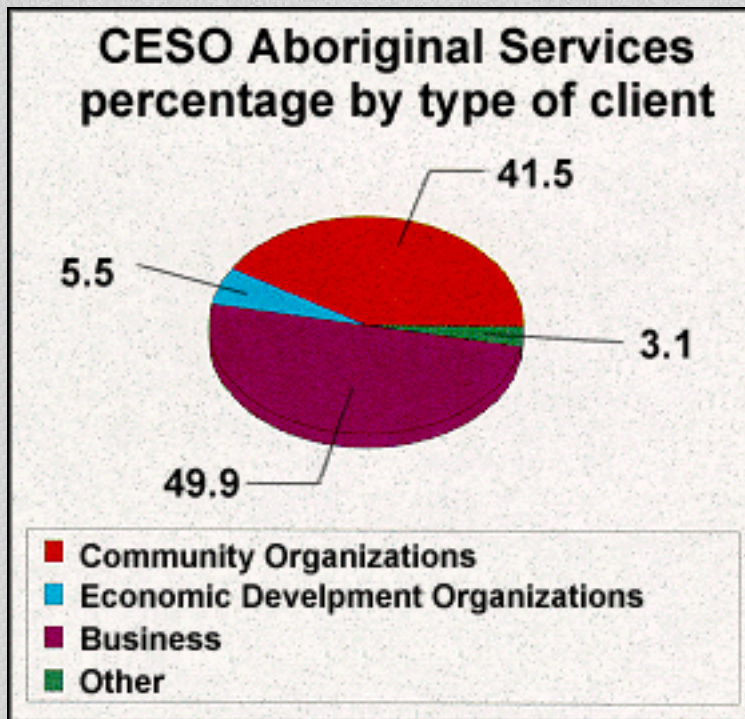
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DREAMSPEAKER

CESO Aboriginal Services: helping people to help themselves



CESO is a not-for-profit volunteer-based organization founded in 1967 to transfer Canadian expertise to businesses, communities and organizations in order to help them achieve their goals of economic, social and technical self-sufficiency. CESO volunteers, highly experienced in their profession or industry, serve as advisers and trainers to clients in Aboriginal communities,

developing Nations and the new market economies of Central and Eastern Europe.

CESO Aboriginal Services provides volunteers to assist the development and management of Aboriginal businesses and communities in Canada. Among private organizations, CESO probably has the longest track record of working with Canada's Aboriginal peoples. For more than 25 years, CESO volunteers have provided 200,000-plus days of work on more than 20,000 Aboriginal

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assignments in Canada, representing a volunteer contribution valued at more than \$70 million.

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CESO regional offices handle requests for assistance from Aboriginal businesses, organizations and communities. Volunteer selection, briefing and travel arrangements are also made through CESO regional offices. Projects are usually short term, averaging seven days, and are often done on a part-time basis.

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In B.C., for example, CESO helped the Whispering Pines First Nation to prepare a long-term plan for the development of a recreational complex in Kamloops, B.C., and to complete the development of the first phase, consisting of a rodeo, campgrounds, general store, restaurants and bus tours.

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In a very different kind of project, CESO assisted the Nanaimo First Nation in writing, directing and producing a video titled "Seeyaq'w uq'w si/yaas", which translates as "Help Wanted", to train young Aboriginals on how to conduct a job search.

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CESO Volunteer Advisers receive no salary, but are reimbursed for travel, meals and out-of-pocket expenses related to the project. All costs are covered by CESO Aboriginal Services and contributions from clients.

CESO Aboriginal Services is funded by provincial and federal governments, including the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as well as various Aboriginal organizations, clients, and corporate and individual members.

Aboriginal services offered by CESO include business advisory services to help solve financial, management or technical problems and community administration advisory and training services for elected leaders and for administrators, in the areas of organization development, human resources administration and financial management.

This year, CESO Aboriginal Services' program has been expanded to specialize in such emerging sectors of need as banking and training. Says CESO Aboriginal Services Vice-President J.A. Richardson, "We have set up a Banking Advisory Group to demystify the banking industry for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and to assist them in accessing loans and determining other financial options. This group has successfully enlisted more than 200 volunteers across Canada, all of whom have senior level expertise in banking and financial services."

CESO Aboriginal Services is also continuing to form new alliances with major Aboriginal organizations to ensure services remain linked to the requirements of Aboriginal peoples, particularly as the move towards self-government gains momentum. V-P Richardson says, "Through the ongoing proliferation of dynamic partnerships with major Aboriginal organizations, we are gaining a higher profile in those communities that fall outside our traditional 'on-reserve' client base. As a result, our services are in growing demand with urban Aboriginal groups and we are directing efforts, and actively seeking sponsorships, to respond to these requests."

Aboriginal clients wishing to take advantage of CESO's services can contact Larry Wong at CESO's British Columbia and Yukon Territory offices, Plaza Towers, 2645 - 1979 Marine Drive, North Vancouver, B.C., V7P 3G2; tel: (604) 986-4566/1-800-986-4566; fax: (604) 984-3584.



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DREAMSPEAKER

Persistence Triumphs



Jim Edenshaw is a well-known Haida gold and silversmith. Edenshaw, a member of the Skidegate Indian Band, approached CESO about three years ago for assistance in drafting a business plan that would help him get a loan to establish a studio for his jewellery carving business. Unlike many carvers, Edenshaw had meticulously recorded all of his sales for years, so he had ample documentation of his inventory and income to show prospective lenders. Even this wasn't enough initially, however, and CESO volunteer Evelyn Miller

stayed with Edenshaw through several funding rejections. After drafting and redrafting the business plan time and time again, their persistence finally paid off. With CESO's help, Edenshaw secured sufficient funding to buy equipment and rent studio space in Vancouver. Now he's eagerly looking forward to the next stage of his dream -- establishing a studio in his home in Skidegate, on the Queen Charlottes. Edenshaw is shown here in his Vancouver studio standing next to the blueprints for his band council-approved home in Skidegate.

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DREAMSPEAKER

New sport development centre for Aboriginal youth

DIAND Associate Regional Director General Bill Montour, Premier Mike Harcourt and Tsartlip First Nation councillor Samuel Sam (l. to r.) at the August ground-breaking ceremony announcing the construction of an Aboriginal Sport Development Centre in Saanich, B.C. The federal and provincial governments will each provide



\$500,000 toward construction of the centre, which will be a two-storey timber-frame building designed in traditional Coast Salish style. DIAND ARDG Montour said, "This centre, the first of its kind in Canada, will allow Aboriginal youth from across Canada to develop in sports, not only at the national and international levels, but at the traditional level. Traditional Coast Salish sports, such as canoeing, will be taught alongside sports like soccer, lacrosse and softball." Premier Harcourt noted, "This centre will keep the spirit of athletic excellence and cultural celebrations alive for future generations," and Native Participation Committee chairman Tom Sampson pointed out that "a strong and healthy mind, body and spirit are essential elements in the holistic approach to developing the health of First Nations people."

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DREAMSPEAKER

First Nations and municipal leaders discuss self-government

by Margo Novack

The key message of a conference on treaty making and self-government negotiations can be best summed up in the words of Squamish leader Chief Philip Joe: "As good neighbours, it is in all of our interests to acknowledge how we benefit each other and to find the means of resolving land and resource-use issues."

The one-day conference, sponsored by the Pacific Business & Law Institute, brought First Nations and municipal leaders together in late September so that they might learn from each other. The conference, attended by about 60 people, focussed on relationships between First Nations and municipalities within government policy and legal frameworks, and presented case studies from the Lower Mainland -- some success stories and other examples from which everyone can learn.

To place the discussions in context, Anna Terrana, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, outlined the new federal policy on Aboriginal self-government. "In the case of British Columbia," she said, "the policy provides that negotiations on self-government will take place at the same table as discussions on land and resources. Negotiation of treaties and self-government agreements, therefore, will both take place in an integrated and efficient manner under the B.C. Treaty Commission process."

Terrana said this means that, for the first time, the parties will be able to have all of their issues dealt with at one table, at one time.

Philip Halkett, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, indicated that the

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province supports the framework of the federal self-government policy, but emphasized that B.C. wants to be involved in its definition.

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Lawyer Geoff Plant presented the legal case history surrounding municipal/First Nation relations. He explained that municipal planning must take into account the potential existence of Aboriginal rights. "The outcome of legal disputes regarding infringement of these rights will be based on the unique facts and circumstances of each case, but," he emphasized, "there is good reason for municipal governments to establish practical, effective working relationships with neighboring First Nations."

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Examples of municipal input to First Nation land development and the corollary integration of First Nation goals into local land-use plans came from two areas. Chief Sharon Bowcott, Tsawwassen First Nation, and Victoria Huntington, councillor for the District of Delta, presented both sides of the debate related to the establishment of a servicing agreement for the First Nation lands. Unfortunately, talks aimed at resolving issues related to the provision of water services have ended without resolution.

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These presentations contrasted with those made by mayors Mark Sager of West Vancouver and Murray Dykeman from the District of North Vancouver, and Chiefs Philip Joe and Leonard George of the Squamish First Nation and the Tsleil'waututh (Burrard) First Nation. Land-use planning discussions on Vancouver's North Shore include the Squamish First Nation and the Tsleil'waututh First Nation as required, in order to ensure that decisions are made together as neighbours. All speakers recognized the most effective place to work out issues is at the First Nation/local government level. Mayor Dykeman said, "Community planning, *not* treaty negotiations, will ensure that community standards are met."



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DREAMSPEAKER

Principles of Self-Government

At a recent conference on treaty making and self-government negotiations, Vancouver East MP Anna Terrana outlined the principles upon which the federal self-government policy is based.

These principles are:

- The policy is premised on the fact that the inherent right of self-government is an existing Aboriginal right under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. This means that the federal government recognizes that Aboriginal people were self-governing before the arrival of Europeans and that they have never given up their right to govern themselves.
- The second principle is that Aboriginal self-government will be exercised within the existing Constitution.
- The third principle is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to Aboriginal governments as it does to all other governments in Canada.
- Fourth, federal, provincial and territorial and Aboriginal laws must work in harmony.
- Fifth, where all parties agree, the federal government is prepared to protect rights in self-government agreements as new treaties under section 35 of the Constitution, as additions to existing treaties, or as part of comprehensive land claims agreements.
- Finally, due to federal fiscal constraints, all federal funding for self-government will be achieved through the reallocation of existing resources. There is no such thing as new money in the face of a \$500 billion debt.

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DREAMSPEAKER

Inherent right to self-government

Background

The policy announced on August 10, 1995, fulfils the government's Red Book commitment to implement the inherent right of Aboriginal people to self-government through negotiated agreements.

The federal government operates on the premise that the inherent right to self-government for Aboriginal peoples exists, and is recognized as an Aboriginal right under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The inherent right policy provides a framework in which the scope and content of self-government can be negotiated.

Negotiations are the best way to ensure that Aboriginal people are provided with the means to make decisions that affect their own lives and communities; and, that the evolution of Canadian society can proceed with First Nation communities fully involved.

Policy Implementation in B.C.

In 1993, a new process to negotiate treaties with First Nations was put in place when the provincial and federal governments and the First Nations Summit signed an agreement creating the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC). To date, over 70 percent of the First Nations in B.C. are engaged in the BCTC process.

The signatories to the BCTC Agreement support the inclusion of self-government as a topic for negotiation within the B.C. treaty-making process. Accordingly, the BCTC will carry on with the task of facilitating treaty negotiations, including the implementation of the inherent right to self-government. Self-government will be

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dealt with at the same treaty table as other items such as land and resources.

First Nations wishing to negotiate will continue to submit their Statements of Intent to the BCTC which will then assess the parties' readiness to negotiate and monitor their subsequent progress leading to a final agreement.

The federal government will not establish additional processes for self-government negotiations for Aboriginal groups that are involved in the existing treaty process in B.C. Existing structures and processes will be used to negotiate and implement self-government.

The current Chief Federal Negotiators who work out of the Federal Treaty Negotiation Office will represent Canada in self-government negotiations. Budgets allocated for the B.C. treaty-making process and managed by the BCTC will support self-government negotiations.

Public Consultation

The federal government is committed to full and extensive consultation with the public and third- party groups in British Columbia. In other words, the principals and practices of openness which currently characterize the B.C. treaty-making process will also apply to self-government negotiations.

The advice of the existing Treaty Negotiation Advisory Committee (TNAC) and Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) will be sought in support of self-government negotiations. Public information initiatives will also encompass self-government.

The Road Ahead

The federal government looks forward to the conclusion of modern-day treaties which recognize the inherent right of self-government for B.C. First Nations.



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DREAMSPEAKER

Renae Morriseau: a voice for First Nations Peoples

by Colleen Thomas

She is entering her fourth season on CBC's "North of 60" and she appears frequently on the hit series "X-files". Lately, however, actress/producer Renae Morriseau has attracted more attention for her work behind the camera.

Morriseau, co-producer Richard Hersley, and their North Vancouver-based production company, The Coyote Collective, recently garnered their third Native American Journalists Association's Best Documentary Award for "The Medicine Wheel". This award is given to Native producers whose work is considered outstanding in the area of television and video documentary.

"It's encouraging to know I've been honoured and recognized by peers," said Morriseau.



Renae Morriseau

Part of an ongoing series called "4Sight", "The Medicine Wheel" explores traditional Native spirituality through personal journeys such as sweat lodge ceremonies and vision quests.

As a Cree and Saulteaux Native from Peguis, Manitoba, who now resides in Vancouver, Morriseau draws on aspects of her heritage to create insightful, interesting programs that deal specifically with Native issues and concerns.

"Keeping our own images of our people is my main

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motivation. We need to claim our images in order to give a true idea of who we are," Morriseau insists. "The time has certainly arrived for First Nations people to tell their stories and Coyote is here to help them do it."

Morriseau's biography visibly reflects her ascent in the film industry. In 1987 she began a career in television by creating programs called "Within the Circle". Broadcast by a local cable station, these programs were designed as a teaching tool for the Mama Wi Chi Itata Centre in Winnipeg's north end, where Morriseau worked as a Program Development Officer for the centre's youth program.

She then co-hosted, wrote and produced a news magazine show about Canada's Natives for CanWest titled "First Nations". An experience Morriseau considers a stepping-stone.

"Hosting is just a face on camera. It didn't have power, but I was able to understand what is involved in writing for television in terms of music, visuals and voice-overs. I learned that there are a lot of means to create an effective show; it's more than just taking a pen to a paper and writing."

Morriseau has since parlayed this knowledge to create "Indigeni, Native Women: Politics" and "Role Models". In addition to her first two NAJA Best Documentary Awards in 1993 and 1994, Morriseau was honoured with a nomination for best producer at the 1995 Dreamspeakers Festival in Alberta, where "Role Models" was screened for the public.

Among other projects, The Coyote Collective is currently producing a breast cancer video especially designed for a Native audience.

In fact the creation of The Coyote Collective is attributed to this desire to inform and educate. Morriseau's production company, composed of Native directors, technicians, broadcasters and artists, was established to give a wider voice to First Nations issues.

"Through Coyote, First Nations will gain acknowledgement and respect. Acknowledgement of traditional, individual and future perspectives and respect for First Nations as a diverse and independent people."

While not actively or vociferously advocating change, the honesty and intelligence of Morriseau's productions help to eliminate negative stereotypes about Natives. According to Morriseau, acceptance and understanding will improve as First Nations peoples "develop in their style and approach to certain issues and concerns."

"We already know our images," Morriseau said. "It's a matter of capturing our words and presenting them to mainstream society. It's better to control your own image than have other people put words in your mouth."

The Coyote Collective's productions are highly acclaimed by critics, supported by

First Nations communities and eagerly consumed by the general public.



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DREAMSPEAKER

Laxwesa Wa - Strength of the River

by *Renae Morriseau*

The salmon fishery in B.C. is in a state of crisis -- salmon stocks have continually declined over the years. Although the statistics on the level of the fish stocks provide different figures, the bottom line message is always conservation. That's also the message that comes through in Barb Cranmer's new film.

Laxwesa Wa - Strength of the River explores the traditional fishing practices of three Aboriginal communities on the west coast of B.C. Written and directed by Cranmer, the one-hour film documentary gives us a view of the 'Namgis, Heiltsuk and Sto:lo First Nations' traditional fishing practices that have sustained them for thousands of years...until now.

A member of the 'Namgis First Nation, Cranmer's people have a long fishing tradition that stresses respect for the ocean's resources. Cranmer has fished B.C.'s Johnstone Strait with her father for 16 years, and she believes that it's time for people to listen to what Natives have to say about maintaining a sustainable fishing industry. "It's important that Native people become involved in the decision-making process," she says.

For the Heiltsuk First Nation on the central coast, "grassroots knowledge" is conservation and community economic development. They have created a community-based management team that monitors the various species of fish that swim through their traditional territory. "Pride of ownership for anybody,



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whether they are white or Indian, they're very proud that they're able to deliver to their own fish plant, put their own people to work," states Edwin Newman, a leading voice in *Laxwesa Wa*.

One of the highlights of the film is the role Aboriginal women played in the formation of the commercial fishing industry.

Stories from Elder women pull the black-and-white photos through time, speaking about the change of lifestyle when the commercial fishing industry and canneries came to the coast. "They were hard workers," says Donna Cranmer, who appears in the documentary. "Because they already knew, they had the knowledge of cutting fish and cleaning it and preparing it, and they were fast. They got paid not by the hour, they got paid by the number of flats they could fill in a day."

Aboriginal women from up and down the coast would make their way to the canneries; sometimes waiting for the barge load of fish to arrive. In harsh working conditions they would cut, clean, and fill their cans with fish. "I wanted the film to acknowledge what Native people have contributed to the commercialization of fishing," says Cranmer.

In *Laxwesa Wa*, Cranmer keeps her approach simple, yet direct. We are not bombarded with the politics of fishing; we are not awash with sorrow for the injustices of the past. We are simply given a perception that is continually denied in our local media -- that there is a lifestyle that can maintain and has maintained a sustainable fishery.

"As far back as anyone can remember, we have been travelling up the (Fraser) river. Great-grandchildren still fish in the camps where their grandparents and great-grandparents fished," says Georgina Malloway, a member of the Sto:lo First Nation.

Barb Cranmer says she had no idea her documentary would come out right in the middle of a fish war. "But the timing couldn't be better," she says. "It may be seen by some as controversial, but I think it tells it like it is."

Laxwesa Wa - Strength of the River is available on video from the National Film Board. To order call toll-free 1-800-267-7710.



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DREAMSPEAKER

Tin Wis: out of the ashes

by Lyse C. Cantin

They say that calm waters will eventually prevail - given time. It looks like that is exactly what has happened on one sandy stretch of pristine beach on the western shores of Vancouver Island. A former residential school has been reborn as a posh resort. Sounds impossible? It isn't if you're the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.



Room with
a view at
Tin Wis

The Nuu-chah-nulth have turned pain into gain by converting the site of an old Indian residential school into the Tin Wis Resort Lodge. The 56-room lodge is built from cedar pillars to blend in with its wild and natural setting and is part of the Best Western hotel chain. The hotel sports a 60-seat restaurant and mini-bar. Some rooms have fireplaces. All suites have a panoramic view

of the Pacific Ocean.

Tin Wis, which means "calm waters", is named after the quiet inlet it is tucked into and is located about two kilometres south of Tofino. Until one hundred years ago, when the residential school was built, the beach served as a landing place for

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Nuu-chah-nulth whale hunters. Even during the roughest storms, the bay remains relatively calm.

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Francis Frank, chief of the Tla-o-qui-aht (Clayoquot) First Nation, says the key to the success of the hotel is that it is a franchise of the Best Western hotel chain. "Our affiliation with Best Western has forced staff to maintain a high level of service and given them a sense of pride in belonging to a professional organization." Seventy percent of the Tin Wis workforce is First Nations. "This was one of our main objectives," says Frank. "We wanted to create job opportunities for our people. There aren't that many in

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DREAMSPEAKER

For The Record ... Guess Who?

Can you identify the women in the photo?

The photo was taken at a festival in Chilliwack, B.C.

If you can, please let us know by contacting the editors at (604) 666-2944 or (604) 666-5232.



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Dreamspeaker is a quarterly publication of B.C. Region, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The opinions expressed in *Dreamspeaker* do not necessarily reflect DIAND policy.

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