

Protect SPAET Mountain

A Mountain for the Taking: Tangled Webs on "Bear" Mountain

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Residents of the Capital Regional District, in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, remain committed to the protection of SPAET Mountain/Skirt Mountain in Langford. A Land Titles search in December revealed a Crown land grant of 44 hectares to Bear Mountain for \$1.05-million, a month after Gordon Campbell's Liberals were sworn into office. This public land, in parcels 81 and 84, Highlands District, borders Goldstream Park, below Mount Finlayson, and now contains the Bear Mountain Golf Course and proposed Bear Mountain Parkway. The mainstream media has been silent on this issue. On adjacent Bear Mountain property in the Highlands, a 2nd golf course is under construction.

The Bear Mountain Development Group (legally known as LGB9, Len G. Barrie's holding company), has been reluctant to disclose several studies, and provincial regulations governing land use are inadequate. Details surrounding the disposition and regulation of the LGB9 lands should be open to public scrutiny, including: the Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Management Plans, Geological Study (and Terms of Reference), Traffic Control Study (and Terms of Reference), Fire Hazard Study (and Terms of Reference), Water Course Surveys, Development Plan, and all permits and waivers for these studies.

The outstanding issue of protecting sites on SPAET Mountain considered sacred by Indigenous people must be addressed. Many sites continue to be at risk and damaged. Songhees Lands Manager Cheryl Bryce is banned from the Bear Mountain Property. In December, Bryce was prevented from taking part in an impact assessment of the cave.

Connections run deep -- linking the Bear Mountain developers, City of Langford, District of Highlands, BC Liberal government, BC Archeology Branch, Western Forest Products, and officials of the former Social Credit government and RCMP. CRD chairperson Denise Blackwell, a Langford city councillor and chairperson of the CRD Planning committee, works for the BC Archeology Branch, which approved the bulldozing of the cave site in November 2006. Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe has completed architectural work for Bear Mountain and attended the grand opening of the Bear Mountain Hilton in June 2006, as did BC Community Service Minister Ida Chong. Bear Mountain Residential Projects Manager Bob Flitton was agent for Western Forest Products during the 2001 Crown land giveaway, and was Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests for the Social Credit government during the BC Place land deals of the 1980s. Questions have arisen over the neutrality of RCMP Sgt. John Brewer, the mediator between the developer and First Nations.

Langford City Councillor John Goudy owned a large chunk of land on Skirt Mountain known as 'Mini Skirt Mountain', which was sold to LGB9; this land was formerly part of the Forest Lands Reserve, which prohibited residential subdivision. The Provincial Capital Commission owns land on the south slopes of Skirt Mountain, the location of the proposed Savory Road Interchange. Land slated for preservation near the shores of Florence Lake was sold to an associate of LGB9 for the proposed highway, and contains endangered Garry Oak meadows. Last summer, Florence Lake experienced the lowest water levels in recent memory, residents say. They believe that Bear Mountain may be diverting water destined for local aquifers with

the intention of constructing a reservoir for its golf course.

These questionable practices are slowly being exposed and can be defeated. The First Nations stand on November 16, 2006 succeeded in halting development near the summit, and we can support these efforts in several ways:

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY

1) Write a short note to Premier Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberal Cabinet requesting protection of the SPAET/Skirt Mountain Summit, including the damaged cave site and all forested slopes. Request a moratorium on any further destruction of all sacred sites on Spaet and 'greenfield' expansion into forested areas. Request that the province deny funding or regulatory approval to the proposed Savory Road Connector and Bear Mountain Parkway, which would run through the former Crown land adjacent to Goldstream Park. Request changes to the Heritage Conservation Act that include accommodation, respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous rights to protect sacred sites.

Premier Gordon Campbell, Legislature, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4. Email: premier@gov.bc.ca
Send a copies to the BC Liberal Cabinet, to Songhees land manager Cheryl Bryce, landsmanager@shawbiz.ca and to Tsartlip land manager Wendy Edwards, lands@tsartlip.com:

2) Send a short email to the Ministry of Transportation (John.Dyble@gov.bc.ca) and cc Stantec Consulting (malahat@stantec.com), the firm contracted to solicit public input on the Malahat Corridor Study. A final report will be released early in 2007. State your opposition to Option B-2, which proposes a highway running through Spaet/Skirt Mountain, the Highlands and Gowland-Todd Provincial Park, over a bridge crossing Saanich Inlet to the Trans-Canada Highway near Bamberton. The Savory Road Connector would be the southern access point. <http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/malahat/index.htm>)

3) Write a short Letter to the Editor (50-200 words) to keep up the pressure. Discuss issues relating to SPAET/Skirt mountain that are most important to you. Question the silence of the media on the Crown land grant that ended up in the hands of LGB9. Times Colonist: letters@tc.canwest.com

Act now and keep up the pressure in the New Year. In coordination with the protection of Indigenous sacred sites, a movement is needed to put environmental stewardship networks on a more permanent basis and turn the tide against short-sighted development interests -- to prevent any future schemes like 'Bear Mountain' and contain the current one to the greatest extent possible.