

## In Memoriam – Harriet Nahanee (Tsibeotl) 1935 - 2007

A poem by Rolf Auer

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Most of British Columbia  
*is unceded Native territory*  
traditionally under the jurisdiction  
of Native people's nations.

“Our relationship to the land  
has always been of the greatest importance  
to our existence. The land  
is a physical representation  
of our spirituality.”  
—Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs

It is difficult to envision  
a situation more symbolic  
of the Native struggle  
for territorial entitlements than the 2006  
land rights protest at Eagleridge Bluffs.  
Environmentalists clashed with  
the provincial government plus  
big business, which were intent  
on destroying this pristine area  
in the name of the 2010 Olympics.

United in their stand  
against overwhelming forces  
were Respected Native Elder and  
Indigenous rights activist  
Harriet Nahanee (Tsibeotl; Pacheedaht), age 71  
and Caucasian social justice activist  
Betty Krawczyk, age 78.  
They were arrested on May 25, 2006  
for blockading construction of  
the 2010 Olympics Sea-to-Sky Highway.

Harriet Nahanee received a  
14 day prison sentence—  
despite having filed an appeal—  
in the Surrey Pre-Trial Centre  
described by an esteemed journalist as  
*“a noted hell-hole for women in poor health.”* (italics mine)  
Upon being released, she died shortly thereafter.

Justifiably outraged, many people signed a petition protesting BC Supreme Court Justice Brenda Brown's handling of Harriet Nahanee's court case and sentence; the public now demands an investigation into that judicial process.

Betty Krawczyk received a 10 month prison sentence which she served. Upon being released, she filed an appeal of her sentence in order to prevent such harsh sentences from being handed down in the future. In response, the BC Attorney General argued that Betty Krawczyk *should receive a life sentence* for her environmentalist "crimes."

This abusive treatment of these elder women of two races speaks of racist, misogynist, senior-hating rank discrimination that one would typically expect from a government which is in thrall to big business, is primarily motivated by love of money, is totally uninterested in equality, and is therefore anti-democratic.

The aforementioned journalist wrote "What if government and big business can operate irrespective of public opinion and without having to obtain legitimacy for their projects, while those who protest go into the slammer?"

Indeed. It stinks of neo-fascism.

Aboriginal Title—  
that is, common law  
property interest in land—  
was confirmed in 1997  
by the Supreme Court of Canada.

In BC, however, even today,  
only a tiny fraction  
of the land is under treaty.

This is just more evidence that,  
as could be expected  
from any neo-fascist state,  
racist contempt by its  
ruling elites is rampant.

Can ordinary British Columbians learn  
from the example of Harriet Nahanee and Betty Krawczyk?

Can White people learn  
to cooperate with Native people  
by, say, electing a provincial government  
which is more fair and responsive  
to Native people's land claims?

How about across all of Canada?

“In our culture, you’ll find a belief  
in the sanctity of the natural environment.  
This belief can inform and inspire all Canadians  
as we struggle to formulate a sustainable economy...”  
—editorial, *The Globe and Mail*, June 12, 2007,  
Floyd Favel (Plains Cree-Saulteaux)