

# Valhalla Wilderness Society

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Newsletter No. 54

December 2010

## AMIDST AN AVALANCHE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES: SOLIDARITY, VOLUNTEERISM, UNEXPECTED DONATIONS AND MODEST SUCCESSES

Dear Members and Supporters,

Usually the Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) saves funds, time and paper by sending out only one newsletter per year. It is devoted to reporting VWS's activities throughout the year. But this year there are so many serious environmental crises that the activities report has had to be squeezed to make room for information on impending threats. We'd like to tell you where to direct letters to the BC government, but as many of you will know, the Premier has resigned and his Cabinet has been disrupted by controversy and dismissals. Before he resigned, he transferred many of the powers of the Ministry of Environment into a new mega-ministry, the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations. The new mandate: to streamline the exploitation of BC's resources!

The front edge of the tidal wave of environmental damage that *could be* approved is already coming at us in the Enbridge oil pipeline and the Raven Underground Coal Mine. But this is not a time to despair. To the contrary, the Xeni Gwet'in (Nemiah) First Nation and the Tsilcotin National Government, with the help of the Friends of Nemaiah Valley, Valhalla Wilderness Society and other environmental groups defeated the mine that would have destroyed Fish Lake (Teztan Biny). Some of you participated in writing letters to the federal government at a crucial point. Unfortunately, the company is planning to submit a revised application.

This year VWS once again called attention to the BC government's plan to start shooting wolves from helicopters. Some of you went into action with letters, networking and more. VWS found great allies in the Canadian Wolf Coalition, in wolf activist Gary Allan, and in animal protection groups across Canada. At this time there is no information on exactly how many letters we generated, but government has intimated it was massive. Helicopter killing appears to have been pushed back (if we can trust the government to tell us the truth), but trapping and shooting continue.

Last year VWS participated in campaigns led by other groups to overturn the massively damaging proposal for a private power project on Glacier and Howser creeks. It now appears that the project has been soundly defeated.

These successes are mixed, but they are proof that, even in these dark times for the environment, *people power WORKS if there are enough people behind it*. So it is important for those of you who have the time to do so to write letters to the Environmental Assessment processes for the Enbridge pipeline and the Raven Coal Mine.

Speaking of people power, VWS has never before had the benefit of so many volunteers and people coming to the aid of our issues. Talented photographers, the Ontario organization Earth Rangers, and major funders came to see the ancient forest of the upper Incomappleux Valley. All were thrilled and offered help. Once again, these field trips were made possible by a handful of community volunteers or visitors who contributed hard labour to keep the road to the Incomappleux open. And math whiz Baden Cross of Applied Conservation GIS created a treasure trove of maps of the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal with infinite patience and very little remuneration.



At the start of the year, Valhalla was at its lowest ebb in funding ever. We cut our overhead expenses substantially by moving our work from a central office to our homes. This operation involved unbelievable work on computer systems, physical labour and sorting through 30 years worth of files. This prodigious effort was engineered in an orderly fashion by our phenomenal volunteer accountant and office manager, Carma Sherrod, with a mountain of work by volunteers. Many of the files of our former Chairperson, Colleen McCrory, are now in the archives at Simon Fraser University. VWS is now tons lighter and ready to roll for 2011.

Meanwhile, throughout 2010, donations kept coming in from unexpected directions. Despite economic hard times and a large decline in foundation funding for VWS, public-spirited, philanthropic individuals continue to watch over this Society. At the same time, your year-end donations were larger than ever last year. And we have a small but important number of new members and donors, many gained at the Society's tables at craft fairs and in the local Nelson Mall. The result is: *very good prospects for next year's work if we all keep it up*.

Throughout the year VWS sends out a few Action Alerts by e-mail. If you would like to receive them, make sure we have your e-mail address. Donations from the grassroots members, whether small or large, are critically important to this Society.

Sincerely,  
Anne Sherrod, Chair

# THE TRIPLE THREATS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, OIL SPILLS AND SPECIES LOSS

**"Is there any real chance of averting the climate crisis? Absolutely. It is possible — if we give politicians a cold, hard slap in the face. The fraudulence of the Copenhagen approach — 'goals' for emission reductions, 'offsets' that render ironclad goals almost meaningless, the ineffectual 'cap - and - trade' mechanism — must be exposed. We must rebel against such politics as usual."**

Dr. James Hansen, Director  
Goddard Institute for Space Studies  
NASA, 2009



**"Coal is the single greatest threat to civilization and all life on our planet."**

**"In my opinion, if we burn all the coal, there is a good chance that we will initiate the runaway greenhouse effect. If we also burn the tar sands and tar shale (a.k.a. oil shale), I think it is a dead certainty."**

**"The trains carrying coal to power plants are death trains."**

Dr. James Hansen

It is impossible to come to the end of a year such as this without pausing to look back on an estimated 21,000 people dead from climate change in the first 9 months alone. The heat wave in Russia that caused hundreds of fires killed an estimated 15,000 people and left many homeless. Flooding from unusually severe monsoons killed 1,600 people in Pakistan and affected 14 million people, with about 4 million now homeless. In Africa, people are starving to death due to drought, and pastoral indigenous people are killing each other in wars for Africa's shrinking water supply.

While poor people in countries that contribute the least to global carbon pollution suffered horribly, the wealthy countries with some of the highest emissions (e.g. the US and Canada) engaged in disgraceful obstructionism at climate talks, determined to mine their wealth irrespective of predictions that climate change will eventually cost millions of lives.

In the face of a growing shortage of oil, instead of cutting back, the powers that run our world are in a deadly race to squeeze every last drop from the Earth. And so we have huge pressures for offshore drilling, for drilling deeper below the surface of the ocean, deeper beneath the ocean floor, for strip mining the oilsands, for fracturing rock to liberate natural gas, and more.

In areas surrounding the oilsands we have people dying of high rates of cancer, dead ducks by the hundreds, deformed fish downstream, and toxic chemicals found over a 50-kilometre radius, carried by melting snow into the drinking water. We have seen the agonizing black deaths of marine wildlife in the ocean and estuaries in the Gulf of Mexico — the result of British Petroleum's (BP's) irresponsible management of a deep sea drilling rig. And now the dispute over transporting dirty tarsands oil across BC has opened the lid on the already existing horrible impacts of conventional oil development in northeastern BC. There, caribou and moose seek oil-contaminated soil and water as a source of minerals, and high rates of cancer stalk the aboriginal people who eat them.

BC claims to be a leader in climate action. It boasts that it has banned coal burning plants. It doesn't tell you that it is amping up the production of coal and permitting new mines to fuel the coal burning of other countries; and especially to exploit the new China market.

Shipments of coal from BC soared 84.9% in September, 2010 compared to the same month a year earlier (BC Stats, Sept. 2010). BC has nine operating coal mines, six undergoing an Environmental Review Process, and another five in the early stages of development. Industry is gearing up for increased plunder of Canada's coal reserves to exploit high prices caused by China's growing appetite. China wants long-term contracts, making the deals impossible to revoke. BC and Canadian citizens will pay the price of living amidst the pollution and wreckage.

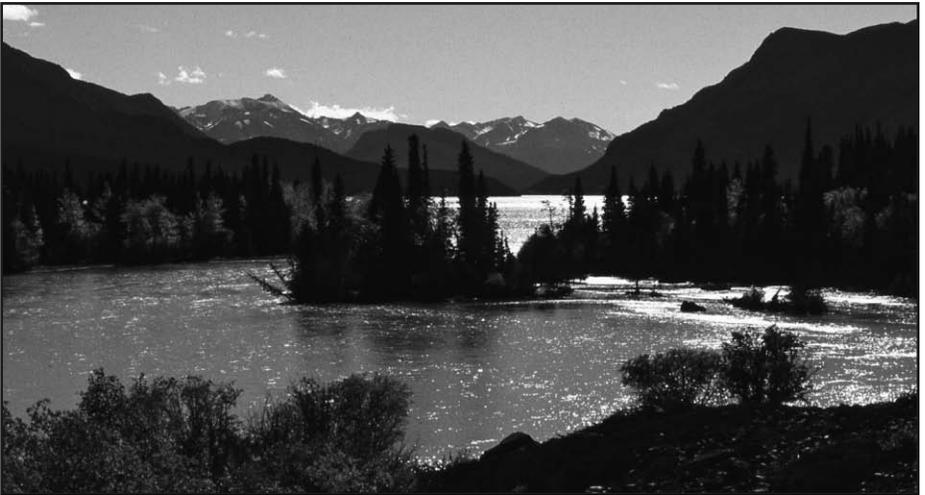
But over the long term, the deadliest effect of all will be climate change. There is much more carbon dioxide contained in coal and unconventional fossil fuels than in conventional oil and gas, and production of tarsands oil emits four times more carbon than conventional oil production.

In a recent book published by Harvard Medical School, *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*, 100 leading scientists warn that extinctions are occurring at hundreds or thousands of times the natural rate. They say this is a threat to human health equal to, if not greater than, climate change. Forty percent of species whose status has been assessed by BC are considered imperiled; 80% of those species are dwindling, not because of climate change or oil spills, but because of *habitat destruction and degradation*. These scientists say that innumerable very small, seemingly insignificant species have provided many of our medical breakthroughs. Scientific studies have shown that when one species disappears from an ecosystem, others may disappear too. When enough are gone, ecosystems collapse, causing huge problems. After a glance at the Fish Lake victory, we'll go to other issues that need your help.

## CHILCOTIN GRIZZLY BEAR STUDY HELPS STOP OPEN PIT MINE AT FISH LAKE

**Fish Lake has been at least temporarily saved, but the mining company is considering a new application after the old one was turned down. Further, the federal deregulation that would have allowed Taseko Mining Company to destroy a natural lake and use it as a tailings pond is still in force, jeopardizing any lake in Canada that has a mineral or coal deposit nearby. The last we heard, twelve lakes had applications on them and five had been approved.**

Wayne McCrory



High in a remote corner of the vast Chilcotin Plateau in the BC interior, there is a large, pristine lake filled with rainbow trout. To the local Xenigwet'in (Nemah First Nation) it is "Tetzan Biny," which translates to Fish Lake. It is not only a traditional food gathering site, it is also a place of the ancients, as recent archeological studies have found evidence of First Nation occupation dating back 5,000 years.

Back then, who would have guessed that one day aboriginal occupants would have to rise up in unison to defend Fish Lake from being wiped off the face of the Earth forever. A mining company called Taseko (named after the Taseko River into which Fish Lake water flows) proposed a huge copper-gold open pit mine nearby and wanted to drain the lake and use it for a tailings pond.

Recent federal government deregulation now allows mining companies to use water bodies, including lakes occupied by fish populations, as disposal sites to neutralize sulphide-laden wastes generated by mines. All of this is an attempt to reduce the horrible problems of acid rock drainage and metal leaching at old mine sites that are today costing Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars to attempt to clean up.

Taseko's own studies showed that these contaminants posed a huge problem for their development. The mining company insisted that the only alternative was to drain Fish Lake and use it as a tailings pond for waste rock. The "mitigation" plan included excavating another lake nearby and moving most of the Fish Lake trout there. The new man-made lake would be called Prosperity Lake, after the name of their proposed giant open pit mine for gold and copper.

Unbelievably, after a BC Environmental Assessment, the provincial government approved the mine project in January 2009. This only escalated the tidal wave of opposition, much of which was voiced at the federal Environmental Assessment that was carried out this year by an independent panel review with public hearings.

The federal panel concluded that the Prosperity Mine: "would result in significant adverse environmental effects on

*fish and fish habitat, on navigation, on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by First Nations and on cultural heritage, and on certain potential or established Aboriginal rights or title."*

The panel also concluded that the Project would result in a significant adverse cumulative effect on grizzly bears in the South Chilcotin region. This was based upon the submission of bear biologist Wayne McCrory, who convinced the federal panel that the proposed mine would push the already threatened West Chilcotin grizzly bear population over the threshold of extinction. McCrory cited the loss of 405 hectares of wetland and 352 hectares of riparian habitat, as well as the certainty that increased mine and recreational traffic along the 50-kilometre mine-access road would kill or displace grizzlies. The population surrounding the Taseko mine site is down to about 100 animals.

The Valhalla Wilderness Society, Friends of Nemah Valley and the Xenigwet'in supported McCrory's grizzly research in the area. Part of his panel submission was based on a conservation study by McCrory and Lance Craighead, which described the grizzly bear population in the Chilcotin Ranges as the largest residual dryland population left in the Coast Ranges foothills of western North America. Their diet includes salmon, whitebark pine nuts and wild potatoes. The study recommended more habitat protection.

As the final decision was being considered, VWS sent out an Action Alert to its e-mail list. Quite a few VWS members wrote letters and sent us copies of their message to government, and/or voted in a newspaper poll. In early November, the federal government rejected the proposal. The decision is a huge victory for everyone opposed, as approval would have set a dangerous precedent for all of Canada.

**With the mineral deposit in the ground, this area will never be safe unless a decision is made to fully protect it. VWS and Friends of Nemah Valley are working on a wilderness proposal to First Nations for the whole Upper Taseko, a truly magnificent salmon-grizzly bear ecosystem.**

## PROPOSED COAL MINE THREATENS COMMUNITIES WITH A TOXIC FUTURE

**Coal mines may have a relatively short lifetime, but they leave the area with huge heaps of waste rock that can produce deadly acid mine drainage and heavy metal pollution for a long time to come. So it is surprising that one of the proposed new mines is on Vancouver Island, perched above the town of Fanny Bay and the marine waters of Baynes Sound in the Georgia Strait. This is where Compliance Coal Corporation wants to extract 30 million tonnes of coal and rock over 16 years.**



**The Raven Mine site on the hill above Fanny Bay.**

Seventeen million cubic metres of waste rock will be produced — a source for highly toxic pollution that could seep into three creeks and the Tsable River, which empty into Baynes Sound. Values at risk include Coho and Chinook salmon, trout streams, a spring herring spawn in the Sound that feeds a large migration of birds on route to their breeding grounds, several known, and untold unknown, species at risk, domestic oyster beds, and aquifers that supply domestic water for the town of Fanny Bay.

The residents also would incur health impacts from coal particles in the air as coal is stored above ground and transported with a constant flow of huge trucks. There will be dredging in the Sound for coal transport ships and Port Alberni will become a coal port. Communities that are beautiful places to live, devoted to sea food production and tourism, with a healthful environment for retirees as well as children, would be turned into a grimy industrial area.

It is also surprising that a project with huge potential impacts is not getting a top-of-the-line Environmental Assessment with a review panel and public hearings. This means that Fanny Bay will not have the benefit of an independent panel such as the one that saved Fish Lake from a clearly biased BC Environmental Assessment.

The residents of the Comox Valley are waging a spirited campaign against the impacts they face, but they will need massive help from across Canada. And they should have it. *The coal mined from the Raven Project, when burned, will put over 80 million tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.* Whether the coal is burned in China or in BC makes no difference, the carbon emissions affect the whole planet through global warming.

The citizens of the world are also the victims of the cumulative effects of coal burning. How much carbon pollution does the total increase in exports represent? How much from all existing and prospective mines? Exporting coal to other

countries is like being a drug pusher rather than a user.

Human food security, water security and about every other kind of security are threatened by climate change, peak oil and species loss. Increasing negligence towards the care of water and fish is particularly disturbing. Industry and government aren't just mining coal to sell to China, they are mining our very life support system; they are selling our birthright to a healthy environment, condemning our children to live in the long-term consequences.

Please take action on this issue as one of your Christmas gifts to the environment. Consider these points:

- ▶ Coal mines are short-term profit and long-term pollution. They have no business being upstream from homes, domestic water sources, fish streams and sensitive estuaries and marine waters.
- ▶ The export of coal is immoral because it condemns young people to face terrible problems from climate change.
- ▶ The climate action programs of BC and Canada are worthless if our governments do not stop the mining of coal. There should be NO NEW COAL MINES.
- ▶ Continued negligence towards fish must stop. The salmon runs, trout and herring and shellfish of this area are critical to humanity. The migratory birds and other biodiversity are part of our life support system.
- ▶ If the project cannot be terminated, it should have the fullest possible Environmental Assessment by the federal government, an independent panel review.

**The citizen's group fighting this proposal is the Comox Valley CoalWatch. For more information on this project, you can download their Backgrounder at:**

[www.coalwatch.ca/coalwatch-comox-valley-joint-review-panel/](http://www.coalwatch.ca/coalwatch-comox-valley-joint-review-panel/)

**See the back page for addresses for letter writing.**

## PROPOSED ENBRIDGE PIPELINE THREATENS BC COAST AND SPIRIT BEARS

Construction of two 1,170-kilometre pipelines to carry dirty tarsands oil from Alberta to a tanker terminal at the port of Kitimat on the BC coast represents the most massive direct threat to the environment in the history of BC, short of the global threats of climate change. The Fraser, Skeena and Mackenzie River systems, as well as the Inside Passage would be vulnerable to oil spills of a magnitude much greater than the Exxon Valdez disaster.



Ocean Adventures

These spirit bear cubs have accompanied their black mom to the shore of Gribbell Island to feed on mussels and barnacles exposed by the low tide. Imagine the black death that engulfed the shoreline of the Gulf of Mexico washing up on these shores.

One pipeline would carry 525,000 barrels of crude tarsands oil a day to BC's coast; another would bring 193,000 barrels of toxic condensate back to Alberta each day. The condensate is needed to thin the crude oil enough to flow through the pipeline to the coast. The dual pipeline system would cross over 1,000 streams and rivers in the Fraser, Skeena and Mackenzie watersheds. Without any oil spill at all, these streams will first be contaminated with silt from road and pipeline construction. But this year an Enbridge pipeline spilled four million litres of oil into Michigan's Kalamazoo River. And Enbridge admitted that between 2003 and 2007, it had had an average of 67 oil spills a year.

At Kitimat, oil from the Enbridge pipeline would be pumped into supertankers that are 0.4 kilometres long and hold 2 million barrels of oil — over 8 times what the Exxon Valdez was carrying in its collision off the coast of Alaska. The tankers would then have to navigate the sometimes stormy and treacherous marine channels for some 240 kilometres to the open sea. There will be an estimated 350 supertanker trips annually.

Large runs of salmon use these same marine highways on their mysterious journeys from the Gulf of Alaska to spawn in the hundreds of pristine creeks and rivers in the area. In the next spring or the spring after, depending on the species, hundreds of thousands of newly hatched salmon swim back down the inlets to rear in the open Pacific. An oil spill could wipe out many salmon and other fish species such as herring. It is common to see humpback and killer whales feeding in these passages along with numerous waterfowl and seabirds. This includes the red-listed marbled murrelet that depends on herring and other small sea fish and nests in old trees in the rainforest. Besides the direct mortality to these species through contact with oil, oil-soaked krill, fish and mollusks would have deadly effects throughout the food web.

The proposed supertanker route would pass through the traditional territories of 10 First Nations, many of whose traditional and commercial livelihoods would be irreparably damaged from a large oil spill if a tanker runs aground or breaks apart in heavy seas. The Coastal First Nations have

drawn a line in the sand and said “No” to the pipeline.

The Valhalla Wilderness Society and the Gitga'at First Nation have been studying Gribbell Island as a potential protected area for 20 years. Gribbell has the highest incidence of white-phased black bears in North America. The island has only two small salmon-bearing streams for them, but bears are enterprising foragers. To supplement their fall diet of salmon and berries, they often forage in the intertidal zone on barnacles and mussels — so much so, in fact, as to suggest the bears may be seasonally dependent on a supplement of these nutritious marine crustaceans.

Hunger alone could kill the spirit bears and grizzly bears of the BC coast if an oil spill wipes out the salmon or crustaceans. But in addition, there is the possibility of mortality to any wildlife in the intertidal zone coming in contact with oil and ingesting it.

VWS is still working to protect Gribbell Island. But there are rumours of a package of new marine protected areas that will be created as a pacifier for the environmental movement and as “mitigation” for damage done by the pipelines and tankers. Everyone must understand that no park can protect anything in the flow path of an oil spill.

In 2006 the province protected many new conservancies along these inland coastal waterways. Protection included the marine foreshores 1/3 km out into the ocean, including rich, estuarine salt marshes at river mouths. Many of the new conservancies include grizzly bears and habitats for the spirit bear. Preserving habitat will have been for nothing if there is a large tanker oil spill on this coast. And no respectable environmental group would laud new protected areas in the glaring contradiction of allowing an oil pipeline and supertanker highway that will inevitably mean death-dealing disasters to these ecosystems. This proposed pipeline is currently undergoing its Environmental Assessment and it is critical that you write letters to the process and be ready to write more letters in the future as needed.

## UPDATE ON VWS PARK PROPOSALS

### SELKIRK MOUNTAIN CARIBOU PARK PROPOSAL

This year VWS completed a 35-page report to government on the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal. Baden Cross of Applied Conservation GIS produced a set of colour maps showing the biogeoclimatic zones, old-growth and clearcutting within the park proposal. The report has been posted on the VWS website, but you will need high-speed Internet to download this large document full of colour photographs. Other accomplishments towards creation of the proposed new park include:

- A powerpoint presentation to the staff of Glacier National Park (GNP). Protection of the upper Incomappleux Valley would greatly enhance the biodiversity values of GNP.
- A slide show at the Capitol Theatre in Nelson.
- VWS assisted in the creation of a film about the Incomappleux by Riel Marquardt. To see an excerpt, go to [www.theincomappleux.org/](http://www.theincomappleux.org/). The film has already been shown in Kelowna and an expanded version will soon be available.
- Volunteer photographer Mari Omori set up another website. You can see her gorgeous photographs at: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/mari\\_omori/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mari_omori/).
- VWS had tables at craft fairs in Kelowna and New Denver, as well as the Nelson Mall, to get more signatures on cards asking the BC government to protect the park proposal.

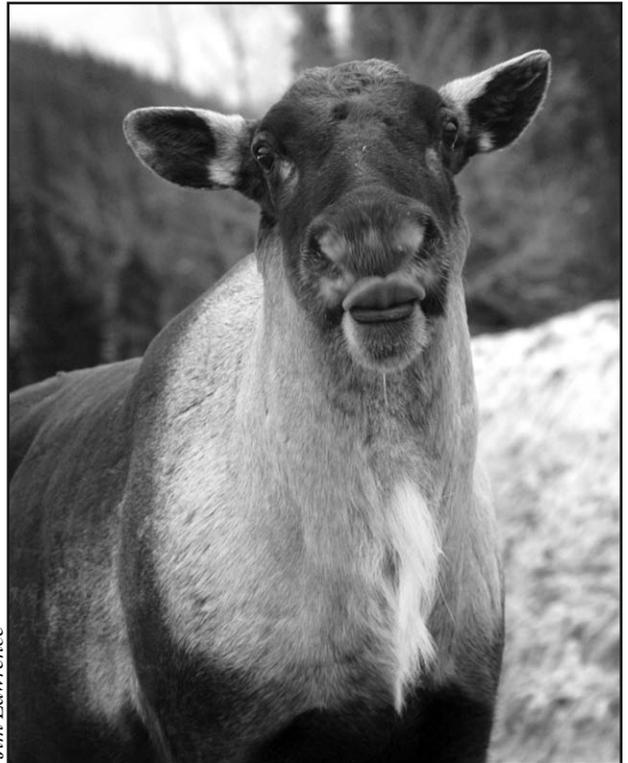
### Quesnel Lake Wilderness

In 2007, with the help of the Vancouver Foundation, VWS organized a joint First Nations-environmental organization-scientific expedition to the head of the North Arm of Quesnel Lake. They were exploring for inland temperate rainforest, biodiversity and First Nations cultural values. The team identified important pithouse and other cultural/heritage sites of the Xats'ull (Shuswap) First Nation.

Since that time the T'exelc (the Williams Lake band of the Shuswap Nation) have started a land-use plan to guide their negotiations with the province. It includes new protected areas decided by their elders and community. Valhalla's inland rainforest maps and candidate conservancy map were used to identify mountain caribou, grizzly bear and other values that would help define candidates for T'exelc and provincial protection.

In 2010, the T'exelc invited VWS to present its wilderness proposal to the band council. A date has not yet been set. Also this year, VWS biologist Wayne McCrory made a field trip to the area to assess the caribou reserves and grizzly bear-salmon habitats, as well as to interview long-time guide-outfitter Betty Frank for her knowledge of mountain caribou habitats, mineral licks and caribou-wolf interactions. VWS is continuing to work with the T'exelc on protection of this incredible area.

**Photo at right:** a grizzly bear cub with the "white grizzly" colouring similar to a Siamese cat, near the Selkirk Park Proposal.



Jim Lawrence

The census report for 2009 indicates that there are about 85 mountain caribou in the Selkirk Park Proposal, a small number but still much more than can be found over a vast area of the southern Interior Wetbelt. No one knows whether the caribou can be saved, but by preserving their habitat, this area may be able to maintain its grizzly bears, wolverines and hundreds of other species.



Craig Pettitt

## WILD HORSES OF THE CHILCOTIN



The Chilcotin is a vast plateau that gradually rises from the dry grassland and deep canyons around Williams Lake to the coast range. Numerous rivers cut swiftly through the plateau, swarming with salmon in summer and fall. It is a mixture of grassland and salmon, bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, innumerable lakes where large trout make for a fisherman's paradise, extensive marshy wetlands teeming with waterfowl, and finally, grassland yielding to the forest and the mountains. All this is mixed with the indigenous people who live there and some of Canada's last wild horses to form a place like no other on Earth, a place deeply imbued with spirit.

In 1992, based on the recommendation of an ecosystem-based study of the wild horses by VWS director Wayne McCrory, the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation designated their whole aboriginal reserve as a wild horse reserve—western Canada's first. It was named Eagle Lake Henry Cayuse Wild Horse Preserve after a rather famous Xeni Gwet'in chief and elder.

Several years ago VWS obtained a grant from the Vancouver Foundation for a number of wild horse projects with the Xeni Gwet'in and the Friends of Nemaiah Valley. This helped to fund a genetics study to determine whether the wild

horses have Spanish bloodlines. The report is now in its final stage. The grant also supported university-based studies on range use and wild horse management. The latter concluded that the Ministry of Forests' current management policies for wild horses are "archaic," and made recommendations for improvement.

In 1924 the Ministry of Forests started a cull program in which an estimated 15,000 BC wild horses were shot or rounded up for pet food. As late as 1987 a bounty hunter was paid \$40 per head (pair of ears brought in) to shoot all of the small herds roaming Elkin Valley. To this day they have avoided coming back, except in the lower part of Elkin Creek.

Over the years VWS has worked with a number of film crews documenting the wild horses. Some years ago, the Valhalla Foundation purchased several old homesteads in that area, comprising 240 acres on Elkin Creek. This includes a large area of wetlands and spawning grounds for Fraser-run Chinook salmon. The area is being managed as a nature preserve for salmon, grizzlies, endangered species, wild horses and Xeni Gwet'in cultural/heritage values.

### OTHER VWS ACTIVITIES IN 2010

- VWS continued to work throughout the year with other groups and individuals opposing the grizzly bear hunt. VWS biologist, Wayne McCrory, assisted with a study by the David Suzuki Foundation that showed hunting in provincial protected areas was even exceeding Wildlife Branch guidelines. (It is scandalous that grizzly hunting is still allowed in many of our provincial protected areas.) VWS also signed on to a major ad campaign and petition against the grizzly hunt.
- McCrory was one of the contributing essayists to *Faltering Light*, a book by Andrew Wright critiquing the BC grizzly hunt. It was presented to Gordon Campbell and other key politicians. To view this excellent book and read Wayne's essay go to: [www.blurb.com/books/1187881](http://www.blurb.com/books/1187881)
- Directors Craig Pettitt and Anne Sherrrod had major input into a scientific book on forest conservation. Look for *Temperate and Boreal Rainforests of the World: Ecology and Conservation*, edited by Dr. Dominick Della Salla. It uses much information from VWS's research.
- VWS reviewed and made submissions to government on the Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Park draft Master Plan and met with park staff; on the Whitewater ski area (near Nelson) master development plan; and on an application for mountain biking on hiking trails in the Slocan Valley by Rilor Mountain Biking.
- In February, VWS reviewed a draft plan for Slocan Lake that designated the majority of the lakeshore for potential development. VWS wrote extensive reports and letters on the plan to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the provincial government, and made them available to the public. The plan had numerous flaws and deficiencies. As a result of our report and letters, DFO turned it down. A new one is supposed to be available soon.
- In February, after consultation with a group of ecologists

continued on page 9

## THE CELL PHONE CONTROVERSY

**Whether anyone uses a cell phone is their choice; but people living near a cell phone transmitter don't have a choice to get away from harmful radiation, except by moving out of their homes. This is what confronted many residents of New Denver when Telus announced that it was going to install a transmitter in this previously cell-phone-free town where the Valhalla Wilderness Society had its office. The site was next to a children's playground, a popular beach on Slocan Lake, and a campground. These and many residents' homes were within the distance where elevated rates of cancer had been found in scientific studies around cell phone transmitters elsewhere.**

When a number of the residents asked VWS to join their campaign against it, the directors currently involved in wilderness campaigns could not be spared. But founding director and strategist Richard Caniell gave up major time from his business as a sound engineer to take on the project, astonishing everyone with the same searing intensity he had once brought to saving Valhalla Park 30 years ago.

In 2007 the Society set up the Valhalla Committee for Environmental Health with Caniell as its head. He was quickly joined by Scott Cherry, a sharp, tireless researcher who volunteers in our office. Scott began networking with other researchers in the village and Director Craig Pettitt helped where necessary. Many individuals and several local organizations worked together. We were able to get key resolutions from the Village Council forbidding the cell tower within municipal boundaries, a bylaw Telus ignored.

A major part of the battle was publicly refuting numerous denials, omissions and misinformation put out by Telus and Health Canada. The Valhalla Committee went toe to toe with Telus, taking out full-page ads in the local newspaper to inform the public of the health risks, and of the special vulnerability of children. It sent packages of scientific reports to CEOs and government, with notification that they were now responsible for information provided to them. VWS had very little in its budget for such expenses, so residents gave from their own pockets.

With the Village Council's support, an aroused citizenry and Caniell's media work, the story of the little village of 500 people confronting corporate giant Telus flew far and wide. It turned up in newspapers from Toronto to Vancouver and became known as far south as San Francisco.

In such cases, Industry Canada makes the final decision, often siding with the telecom industry. This happened this year to New Denver. Industry Canada ruled that the installation was consistent with Health Canada guidelines, including one called "Safety Code 6." But that code is based on very narrow criteria, and Health Canada simply refuses to recognize other factors shown by years of scientific research to cause great harm to people.

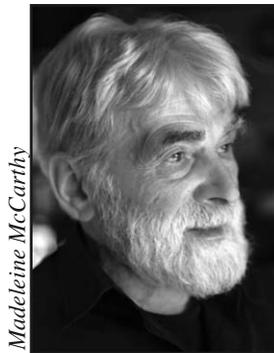
With Industry Canada's approval, Telus insisted it was going to install the transmitter. Everyone knew there was no way that could happen without Telus being met by a major unwelcoming committee. VWS and the Parents' Association were determined to be standing there with a lawsuit for Telus rather than watching their neighbors arrested for trying to protect themselves and their children.

The basis for the pending legal action was a major peer-reviewed compendium of numerous scientific studies that had found increased rates of cancer and other illnesses linked to cell transmitters and phones: the "BioInitiative Report." The authors advised that governments should take a precautionary approach and permit only transmissions well below the levels associated with cancer. They prescribed a precautionary level of radiation that was acceptable. Telus's proposal approved by Industry Canada in August 2009, showed radiation 5-15 times higher.

As the summer of 2010 approached, the Valhalla Committee joined with the local Parents' Association to develop a lawsuit. Some of the Valhalla Committee's activities this year included:

- Undertaking an exhaustive search for a lawyer, finally arriving at a very good one in the Slocan Valley.
- Obtaining the agreement of two experts in electromagnetic radiation to testify on behalf of the community in court hearings.
- The House of Commons Standing Committee on Health was holding hearings into the health effects of electromagnetic radiation. The Valhalla Committee submitted two bound volumes of material, including a detailed history of governmental bias towards the telecom industry and disregard of local government attempts to protect their citizens, with voluminous documentation.
- The material was then bound in one volume and sent to Telus's lawyer with the information that the residents were going to sue them if they installed the transmitter.
- Richard acted as legal liaison and strategist with the New Denver and Area Parent-Children's Association, involving many meetings with residents and the lawyer.
- Numerous letters to the editor and four full-page advisories were published in the local newspaper.
- The Village Council received two lengthy letters updating the Councillors.
- Provided research documentation requested by the Mayor of San Francisco when that city was having a conflict with the telecom industry.

The intent to file a lawsuit on behalf of the Parent-Children's Association was sent to Telus. In reply, the groups'



Madeleine McCarthy

## THE CELL PHONE CONTROVERSY

lawyer received an astonishing letter stating that Telus would be arriving in New Denver to install the transmitter in three days, and that the radiation level would be lower than the BioInitiative precautionary level. The lawyer and the potential plaintiffs recognized that the scientific basis to prove a lack of reasonable caution regarding health hazards was no longer applicable. The Telus attorney requested that the pending lawsuit on behalf of the Parents' Association and other residents be dropped. And while he stated in writing that he didn't believe the lower levels were necessary or appropriate, we would be receiving them.

The organizations explained to Telus that they needed more time to inform the community, and they would like more information to make them comfortable with Telus's claims. The day before the arrival date the organizations received a letter from Telus stating that it would not provide further information, that anyone standing in its way would be sued (now that the transmissions were on the safe side of the BioInitiative level, they would win) and would seek maximum court costs against anyone standing in the way.

After much debate VWS and the Parents' Association agreed to take Telus's claims in good faith, monitor the transmission levels, and renew legal action if the claims turn out to be false. VWS was concerned that some residents might blockade and step into a legal trap, not knowing that Telus was now meeting the BioInitiative Report standards. The Committee emailed concerned citizens overnight and attended the site, passing out a press release and informing people that the legal landscape of the issue had greatly changed.

While the transmitter was being installed, Telus in-

formed the media that it was always going to install a low-radiation transmitter — inferring that three years of opposition by the community had been useless and unnecessary. There are many instances on the public record that disprove this. For instance, Industry Canada issued a coloured illustration (August 2009) showing radiation from the New Denver tower as being 5 to 15 times higher than the BioInitiative level.

Telus was enabled to meet the BioInitiative standards, which they resisted for 2 1/2 years of our campaign, when they adopted in November 2009 a new technology, referred to as G3. Whether G3 generates a different type or degree of danger will take time and research to document. Concerned citizens are working on that inquiry.

For the present, what we achieved was to hold Telus off until their technology could meet BioInitiative standards, as well as increase national awareness of the dangers present in cell phone technology. It would not have been possible without the great energy brought to the defense of the village by so many concerned persons and the Village administration.

**New Denver now has protection for its children from the old technology. The equally hazardous technology, wireless Internet connections, is not allowed in the New Denver school. But we cannot protect children from using the cell phones, which have their own dangers, and which they can now operate in the town. Some medical experts believe this will be a massive health crisis in the future. For many studies documenting the health risk of cell phone use, see the VWS website at [www.vws.org](http://www.vws.org). For an excellent article on what's wrong with Wi-Fi (wireless Internet) in homes and schools, see the magazine of the BC Teachers' Federation, *Teacher*, Oct. 2010: [www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherNewsmag.aspx?fid=8585&id=21694](http://www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherNewsmag.aspx?fid=8585&id=21694).**

### Continued From Page 7: Other VWS Activities in 2010

and wildlife biologists, VWS sent out a press release denouncing the killing of wolves as part of the mountain caribou recovery plan. We then drafted and networked with scientists and environmental groups an open letter to Premier Gordon Campbell protesting the killing of wolves as part of the mountain caribou recovery program. The letter was signed by 16 environmental groups. A number of animal protection groups included VWS material in packages to their large membership lists, generating what appears to have been a massive flow of letters to government.

► VWS continued with its Bear Smart program in the Slokan Valley. Due to berry crop failure, the Slokan Valley had numerous black bears at cherry ripening time. Executive Director and Bear Smart Coordinator Daniel Sherrod was available day and night to help with bear problems anywhere in the Valley. He monitored garbage and fruit in the communities, went door to door to caution people when a bear was in a neighborhood, and searched out the attractant and got it cleaned up. He also helped set up electric fences. This work, with the help of the villages, the RCMP and a very responsive public, pre-

vented a number of potential bear deaths.

► VWS hosted a meeting in New Denver for watershed activist Nelle Maxey to make a presentation on the **Water Act Modernization** (WAM) initiative. The BC government is planning sweeping changes to its *Water Act*. This year it held a public input process. (VWS did not participate, due to dealing with other important situations.) The process did not contain specifics of proposed new legislation, but there are signs that the new law will be enabling legislation for water markets and commercial uses such as water exports. Several measures that would diminish the rights of rural water users, such as breaking the perpetuity aspect of water licenses and moving instead to water permits that could potentially not be renewed, are of great concern. Even worse, the responsibility for managing water has now been transferred from the Ministry of Environment to the new Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, which has a mandate to expedite the exploitation of resources. Reportedly there will be another phase of public input after the proposed new law has been drafted. VWS hopes to be able to keep our readers informed.

## CONCLUSIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

The massive problems that now threaten life on the planet have their roots in humanity's most common belief these days, that the economy must come first, at any and all costs. This belief has bred a politics so dominated by an obsession to maintain the continual growth of corporate wealth that the environment is not seen to be connected to human affairs except as an obstruction to be removed. And so with the rising tide of environmental poisons around us, truly, humans are being sent to the same slaughterhouse to which we send our wildlife and biodiversity.

Because of the severity of the crisis, the solution will now require that the health and the survival of life become the #1 priority. Obviously we are a long way from this. Nature, when protractedly violated, is more than capable of sufficient rampage to bring about change, but the point is to undergo self-willed change before it is too late to save the planet as a place to live.

The solution can only be for more people to first value life more deeply, to understand better the interconnectedness of all living things, and to see that the developed world's requirements for living have been so above and beyond the things that we actually need as to be deadly to the planet. This will lead to amended or intensified action. One place we can all start is to write letters to stop the Enbridge pipeline and the Raven Coal Mine.

### Raven Underground Coal Mine

Raven Underground Coal Mine  
 Andrew Rollo, Project Manager  
 Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency  
 805 -1550 Alberni Street  
 Vancouver, BC V6G 1A5  
 Telephone: 604-666-2431  
 Fax: 604-666-3493  
 Email: Raven@ceaa-acee.gc.ca

Please send copies to your MP and MLA, as well as to CoalWatch at info@coalwatch.ca.

### Enbridge Gateway Pipeline

Joint Review Panel  
 Enbridge Northern Gateway Project  
 444 Seventh Avenue S.W.  
 Calgary, AB T2P 0X8  
 Fax: 403-292-5503; toll free: 1-877-288-8803  
**You can comment online at** <http://gatewaypanel.review-examen.gc.ca/efile/LetterOfComment.aspx>

VWS members are joined together to seek a better world. We each have a role to play. Some have funds to donate but not time; others have no funds to spare, but time to write letters. It's up to us to make the environment an election issue, and this requires letters to newspapers. Some people who don't send funds or letters have donated incredible hours of volunteer labour. Whatever is your situation, please give something, if it's only to revolutionize your view of the world and recognize that humanity is not separate from its environment.

### For More Information

**YouTube on the Enbridge Pipeline see:**  
 "Oil in Eden" — [www.thecanadian.org/k2/item/287-enbridge-pipeline-video](http://www.thecanadian.org/k2/item/287-enbridge-pipeline-video)

**YouTube on current effects of climate change in Africa:**  
[http://e360.yale.edu/feature/when\\_the\\_water\\_ends\\_africas\\_climate\\_conflicts/2331/#video/](http://e360.yale.edu/feature/when_the_water_ends_africas_climate_conflicts/2331/#video/)

**YouTube on the current effects of oil wells on wildlife and aboriginal people in northeastern BC:**  
[http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20101125/bc\\_first\\_story\\_1303\\_101125/20101125/?hub=British-ColumbiaSpecialEvent3/](http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20101125/bc_first_story_1303_101125/20101125/?hub=British-ColumbiaSpecialEvent3/)

**To find out what real climate action ought to look like, see an article by James Hansen at:** [www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/29/copenhagen-summit-climate-change/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/29/copenhagen-summit-climate-change/)

**Or visit Dr. Hansen's website at:** [www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/](http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/)

**Or read Dr. Hansen's book,** *Storms of My Grandchildren*.

## Valhalla Wilderness Society

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 Phone: (250) 358-2333, Fax: (250) 358-2748, [vws@vws.org](mailto:vws@vws.org) [www.vws.org](http://www.vws.org)

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