

CREEKER: Volume 2

Anonymous

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Something Borrowed

If it were solely an encampment of fringe radicals with years of experience and impeccable politics, it would be much smaller and far less interesting. The beauty is the process, not the occupation. Though the police have successfully cleared the streets of barricades after multiple nights of confrontation, they cannot clear them from memory of everyone who has participated. What's taking place now will produce a new generation of radicals, just as Occupy did a decade ago. Entire crowds of people can learn so much in only a few nights. Some of it can be communicated online; most of it, you've just got to be there. — *The Cop-Free Zone*

Less than a year after Fairy Creek's arrest marathon, a blockade protecting Argenta Face in the Kootenays had the RCMP's CIRG show up and unexpectedly, everyone was arrested:

The script they thought would be followed, the one both sides had often read from at Fairy Creek last year, disappeared. The negotiations between appointed police liaisons and commanding officers, used to determine where peaceful protesters could and couldn't be, didn't happen. The rules of the game had changed. — *I Watched My Mom Get Arrested At A Logging Blockade*, The Narwhal

I guess they didn't get the memo: there are no scripts and the rules are a ruse. That was one of the first lessons that anyone spending more than a week at the blockade last summer learned. And so it begs the question... if folks at Argenta had to learn that the hard way, are we failing to communicate hard-won knowledge?

It's no secret that we're reinventing the wheel every time. There are generational gaps, if not outright divides. Repression, burnout and recuperation are real. It takes a lot of energy just to survive. Accumulated knowledge is apparently not valued or prioritized in what passes for resistance culture these days, if it ever was.

Cathedral Grove. Bear Mountain. Elaho. Perry Ridge. Lasca Creek. Gustafsen Lake. Walbran. Sutikalh. Clayoquot. Occupy. Elphinstone. Ista. Jumbo. Unistoten. Lax U'u'la. Sun Peaks. Athlii Gwaii. Cheam. Not to mention all the Lil'Wat, Gitsxan, and Wet'suweten blockades too numerous to list.

I wonder if veteran land defenders feel welcome at today's blockades. Is it easier to show up to your second blockade than your first, or does it get harder each time? What's it like to be afraid of running into younger versions of yourself, so bright-eyed and naive? Or maybe experienced folks were there all along. Could be that they were just keeping their heads down, smiling to themselves, doing the communal dishes that you were too excited to do yourself. Maybe they didn't speak up much. Maybe no one asked. Could be they're just biting their tongues, honoring our need to experiment, to make our own decisions, to learn our own lessons. After all, these are vital personal explorations that cannot be rushed.

We show up with our cups overflowing, insisting on a vision of resistance badly in need of a reality check, but when that reality check is offered from experience, we ignore it. Yet, a lifetime later when we finally leave the blockade, we've started to sing a different tune. And the cycle begins anew. So what does it mean for new people to be saying the same old thing?

Maybe it would be nice to build on the knowledge and momentum of previous movements. To not have to learn the hard way every time...

Echoes of the Past

Our photos share brief glimpses into the lives that we'd shared just this last summer. Moments of triumph and trauma linked together into a blurred dreamscape-like vision of the many moments we'd endured in each and every day. In one moment we'd sit down by the river; cleansing ourselves with the freshest waters left available to us in the world as helicopters flew low just above our heads. An invasive reminder of the invasive impact the colonial hand has laid upon our lives and lands. Sleepless nights spent in various forms across an endangered mountain ... sweat, blood, and tears running down our faces as we'd locked into a communal embrace. Feeling the sun slowly rise through the mist as the birds sang us good morning prayers. Lines of blue braced before us, enacting a country's legacy before our very eyes. So this is what it feels like to have your home destroyed by the RCMP ... and to be completely unable to stop it from crumbling down into a pile of smashed flowers and spices in the rubble. Suddenly the pain of the past was laid out before me.

The feeling of helplessness against an armed militia. Has it really only been a year since I'd first ventured out to camp? Have I really been back out in 'society' for seven months? It's hard to tell sometimes, time seems to move differently when your mind is going through constant loops of the past. Adrenal fatigue lurks in the back of my brain, a reminder of the effect of giving all you have to a battle that has not yet been won. Is this what it has been like for you coming back out into the world, as well? It seems all I've spoken with have been sharing the same fate; this groggy lack of drive and focus, unable to really feel alive despite how much sleep we may try to catch up on... and it makes sense ... sometimes it all feels too hopeless out here in a world full of people blinded by their own volitions. I left camp dressed in camo head to toe, injured and unable to lift myself out of bed. Where previously I'd felt at my strongest, now breathing alone caused me pain. It was November, and I was thankful to be indoors. To be dry. To have warmth. To have a goddamn fucking bubble bath.

Soon my mother was asking me what I'd wanted for Christmas, as if she could help solve the problems of this world and give me something I truly wanted. "Indigenous sovereignty?" I thought... Land Back? A way to go back in time and stop everything that has brought us to this point... to stop the decimation of untouched lands. To bring back the women killed in Witchhunts before the colonial hand made its way to these lands. To return to the land and knowledge which has been stolen and squelched by power-hungry men in their colonial suits in search of wealth. To change all of the horrors that have brought us to this point in time... It's true that so many changes in such short time frames... and yet so much is forced to stay the same. I settled for beeswax candles and a bubble bath when my mother asked me yet again what I'd wanted. If I was going to be forced out into this world tired and in pain, I may as well treat myself. I may as well learn how to care for myself again, and how to heal the wounded after battle.

With the touch of summer sun and the days growing longer, I've begun to feel like myself again, not the same version who'd left for 'Fairy Creek' a year ago, nor the version who'd left Ada'itsx the following fall. But I am me, some new version trying to exist within this world. And I

hope you are feeling the same; that you are you, and you are able to stand strong with the power we'd felt when together standing for a cause. They may take so much from us; our freedom, our lands, maybe even our future ... but they will never take our reason for fighting.

The Concrete Ceiling

“Even the most militant of the protesters are respectful, intelligent and peaceable by nature. They are good citizens who care intensely about the common good. They reflect the diversity of our culture. They are disciplined and patient adherents of standards of nonviolent civil disobedience.” – Supreme Court Justice Thompson, as quoted by the Fairy Creek Blockade page on Instagram

The Honorable Justice pounds faller’s wedges into our sides, attempting to control the direction of upheaval. He seeks to soften revolt into mere protest by removing the claws he finds too sharp and refashioning them into hooks. These hooks are willingly swallowed by those who see themselves as an epitome of the Responsible Citizen.

One gets the sense that the justice’s comments are received as the highest praise for some: those who had dabbled in lawlessness, but only as an exception, otherwise content to kick back and have the government pat them on the head. “We’re proud of ya, kiddo. Thanks for doing the right thing out there, for showing us the error of our ways. We’ll take it from here.”

Kill The Manager in Your Head

We don’t have to look far for the kind of toothless, stage-managed dissent that Justice Thompson would be more comfortable with, the kind that would’ve saved him bothering to comment at all. If you stick to fighting over symbolic terrain, as activist campaigns generally do, you can safely be ignored. Strategies that focus on public discourse, media tropes, and the moral high ground confuse abstractions for the actual thing being fought over. By deploying narratives such as scientific truth, indignant grandparents, police brutality, etc, the hope is that by presenting all the right stories and data, people will see the truth, change their minds, and things will be magically fixed. But successfully marketing who the Bad Guys are is not the same as stopping them.

This style of symbolic engagement is exemplified by Extinction Rebellion (XR), though its strain of resistance management is hardly new. Even the barely-more- interesting offshoots of XR, namely Save Old Growth and Glue Yourself To An RBC, still fundamentally follow the same hand-me-down template that has been laid out by state-collaborating ‘rebels’ for decades². The strategy of Non Violent Direct Action (NVDA)³ is convoluted, yet remarkably predictable: Engage in some mild form of civil disobedience and hope that by either inspiring people, or by getting beat by the police and vigilantes in a way that upsets the public, the government will be pressured to swoop in and grant you your wishes.

This strategy of pre-formulated and ritualized sacrifice requires plenty of useful idiots: You are expected to wear your Sunday best, show your face, give your name, and regurgitate the talking points. It’s all predicated on a woefully naive political analysis and it hamstring all other possible strategies in the hope of ‘being taken seriously’ by the media, the public, and those in

power. This strategy of lowest common denominator mass appeal is a lifeless corpse that dances only to the tune of publicity. Slave to the same logic as the expanding frontier of a colony, infinite growth continues as the law of the land.

If we wish to invalidate the official managers of society — bosses, politicians, cops, judges — then it follows that we also undermine the self-appointed managers as well: professional ‘paper-wrenchers’, entrenched lefties, and everyone else groomed to obsess over respectability, optics, public opinion, legitimacy, and legibility.

Regardless of strategies being used on the frontline, the official social media accounts of most land defense struggles inevitably seem to operate from a symbolic strategy mindset and as a consequence are usually hopelessly disconnected from the experiences of those fighting over actual material terrain. We don’t win by talking about how important a healthy ecosystem is, or climate change. The likes of RBC and Teal Jones simply aren’t vulnerable on a symbolic level. Cops, industry, and politicians all wish to channel dissent into parliamentary discourse and have us forget the possibility of material conflict.

New Ceilings

At Fairy Creek, a sort of symbolic and material hybrid strategy developed organically. It started with something easily recognizable as typical civil disobedience. However, for once, there was enough of a flood of people willing to be symbolically arrested that there was actually a material advantage gained — the advancing position of police and industry was slowed down for months, at least in a few valleys. This was a numbers game that began with the usual outward facing infinite-growth-seeking mass appeal and paternalistic codes of conduct. Despite starting on such questionable ground, people showed up in droves and the baton was not passed so much as it was taken, without asking permission from the old guard, by a new generation of frontline land defenders. Mostly out of wifi and cell range, people met one another in physical space. Untethered to the whip of public opinion, the necessity of land-based warfare sprouted and nurtured itself, producing struggle that was considerably more combative than the heavily controlled and centralized Clayoquot mass arrests of ’93. The Clayoquot peace camp has somehow become what people associate with that area. However, the nine of years of resistance involving a diversity of tactics that preceded it cannot be removed from that legacy. That struggle has been sterilized of its militancy through a process of revisionist history; and it was this laundered version that some struggle managers wished Fairy Creek would live up to.

The beauty of Fairy Creek was that with its consistent frontline and many supporting camps, it was able to create the time and space within a conflict zone for a prolonged encounter with ourselves, both individually and collectively. By ignoring the vanilla media strategies that those on the outer orbit chose to focus on, the on- the-ground-necessities of meeting our own needs together was transformational. There was a contagious spirit that was undeniable and there was nothing civil about it. Refusing to be intimidated by cops could be modelled for newcomers, flagrant lawlessness became the norm, and Fuck The Police became a lived experience. Broken from a lower class allegiance to mere survival and a middle class allegiance to respectability, a space was created where the economy held only as much sway as any other public relations boogeyman. An entirely new way of engaging with one’s immediate surroundings could emerge based on joy, adventure, comradery, and belonging. These qualities were novel for many people,

and a prolonged immersion in such a setting was usually quite profound. There are forms of resistance where you stand where you are told, tell the news cameras that you did it for your future grandchildren, and then rest easy because you 'did your part'. Fairy Creek was not that.

Still, while the tactical and strategic hybrid produced results, elements of it eventually became fetishized and reproduced ad nauseum. Logging can be contested across more of the province than any other resource extraction industry. Yet there was a trajectory of Stockholm syndrome at Fairy Creek that could never fully pull itself away from meeting the police head-on in increasingly predictable ways. This led to repeatedly brutal victimization at the hands of the police and ultimately stagnation. Arguably, the struggle was diminished by a collective sense of martyrdom (though some would argue this was its strength), and at its worst it operated like a sort of dictatorship of the Most Committed.

Peace Police

The expectation that protesters play by the rules is something that both liberals and conservatives have in common. If you believe that you need to appeal to middle class voters, you are operating on a theory of change that trades agency for something far less interesting: performativity. If a different sort of optics is possible, it will be one that is but a by-product of reclaiming our lives from the death machine, shrugging off entirely the politics of recognition, and refusing to smile for the viewers at home. This is not to suggest that we simply adopt an affect of blind hostility. Having a place for art, families, and healing not only makes us stronger and more connected, it also confuses our enemies.

Would-be blockaders often have an infatuation with 'being peaceful'. It is not so much that every tactic of NVDA is inappropriate per se. It's more that the method is underpinned by colonial values that misunderstand the political and social ecosystems that their civil disobedience predecessors existed in⁶. The NVDA strategy requires a sort of wilfully naive religious fervor. The politics, goals, and strategy narrow the scope of engagement so much that you are expected to jettison many actions that would otherwise be a natural fit, effectively conforming yourself to a sanctioned protest that is highly predictable and controllable by the state and self-appointed struggle managers. But tactics, while never being entirely politically neutral, are still just tactics. We ought to be able to carry, especially as ephemeral communities, toolboxes big enough to fit all sorts of tools. Stripped of their dogma and statist assumptions, we might prefer certain so-called nonviolent tactics. Like the video of a land defender at Fairy Creek taking down a machine operator using grappling moves rather than a haymaker punch; there is a fierceness and a dedication that need not overstate itself.

Separated from the baggage that it usually comes with, there are many principles of nonviolence that we can benefit from. It's just that we shouldn't be practicing them for the benefit of industry and state, nor the media and its passive audience. 'Non-violent communication', check-ins, debriefs, and de-escalation can all be beneficial practices when used to limit lateral hostility and promote conflict resolution. But as much as we can value de-escalation as a skill, why do we not also value the ability to escalate? If we aren't escalating, our agency becomes limited to a sort of defensive reactivity that is demoralizing. If we aren't escalating, we probably aren't disrupting the colonial leviathan.

Liberals in a Militant Garb

While more militancy within land defense is an encouraging trend, it can also be a trap. Ultimately, it is of limited value unless paired with a radical analysis. On its own, fixating on militancy merely turns garden-variety social democrats into More Extreme social democrats. There is a militancy that adopts all the lingo of a radical: direct action, affinity groups, anti-oppression, security culture, etc but only as buzzwords to trade for social currency.

The disappointing slogan of ‘We police the police’ can evolve into ‘ACAB’ through a relatively short incubation time at an active blockade. But this is often stalls out at a blind hatred of cops, rather than combining with a deeper recognition of how state power functions. It takes years to decolonize to a point where we are no longer carrying assumptions that lend legitimacy to monopolistic violence, white supremacy, the logic of punishment, and all forms of social control. Police abolition has grown legs in the past few years, but as it becomes more popular, it seems like it’s become more diluted too. Unfortunately abolition is becoming understood as something that is achieved through the signing of new laws and forming of new policies. If your vision of abolition focuses on top-down solutions, you are not dismantling institutionalized power relations and a thin veneer of radical posturing doesn’t make up for it.

In fact, when someone’s street politics are actually just an extension of their legislative politics, it should be seen for what it is: aggressive lobbying. If what someone is calling ‘direct action’ means an action that is pressuring the government into stepping in to resolve the issue, they are still legitimizing the state. In that case, abolition, or anything else, is nothing more than a demand, and it has already failed at its transformative potential. If all we are doing is registering dissent, we are undermining our ability to organize for ourselves and are essentially asking the state to improve its apparatus of control through alternative means.

However, an edgy chic with no theoretical grounding can get in the way even when we *are* organizing for ourselves. Fairy Creek underwent quite the plot arc when it came to security culture, but many people eventually shed a certain openness for a more closed, cool-kid approach. There is a long tradition within movements of wielding dogmatic adherence to security culture as a gatekeeping bludgeon. If your security measures are preventing you, or others, from doing the thing you set out to do, your adversaries have already won and something probably needs to shift. There can also be an individualistic tendency to focus on the tech-heavy side of security culture, brandishing digital solutions as social status markers while remaining relatively closed off to others. Instead, it would make more sense to create a certain type of social environment: one that, having established certain basic, reasonable, and context-dependent security parameters as norms, feels welcoming and open to newcomers, allowing for authentic connections between strangers. If your security culture isn’t building trust and allowing people to take risks together, then what’s the point?

Power dynamics can develop in less overt ways as well, such as how different roles at Fairy Creek were valued. Simply having a name for a blockade role or not could largely determine how the role would be understood and respected by others. This was often true for care work and served to invisibilize many crucial contributions that were being made. Emotional support, conflict mediation, cleaning, organizing, and cooking were all things that tended to happen in the background, and it’s no coincidence that this is consistent with normative gender roles. There is a grandiose heroism that wears blinders, romanticizing frontlines as though they are the only possible site for confronting the status quo, as though the cops and politicians and managers

didn't also exist inside our heads. These unexamined power fantasies tend to ignore the usually-gendered work that makes a frontline possible, let alone all the work that occurs outside of blockades. Too often people were oblivious to the work needed to make sure a camp could run relatively smoothly. Turning a blind eye to the efforts that make supply chains, hot meals, and some semblance of emotional stability possible, there was a laser-focus on certain types of flashy actions that actually comprise but a fraction of what makes collective land defense possible.

The Choose-Your-Own-Adventure aspect also seemed to apply unevenly across gender. People who could seize exciting opportunities usually weren't cluing in to the situation they were creating in doing so. Some people had no qualms about exercising their own agency on a whim, but in the process, they tended to ignore all the people who could not ignore their awareness of the basic needs of a camp, and so could not in good faith choose the path of most adventure.

Conclusion

We would do well to ask if NVDA actually does what it says it does on the box. Promising a way to transform ourselves and change the world, it does neither⁸. There are many conceptual false starts when it comes to land defense and too many forms of resistance that were never worth copying, despite the persistence of certain evangelists. Choreographed resistance is bound to be as tiresome as it sounds. While nobody can know what will actually work ahead of time, there are modes of struggle that seem to lead to the same dead end every time. Fairy Creek found its own ceilings, but it charted a unique path in getting there.

The quality of individual experiences at the blockade happened despite the attempts of various personality types who pushed for a more rigid, traditional, prescribed, and hierarchical form of resistance. While it is too early to tell what the legacy of Fairy Creek will be, there is little to regret about opening up new spaces for autonomy and new types of social relations. By focusing on stopping the industrial juggernaut in a specific time and place, the material fight allows us to engage in a process where we can be grounded. Can a strategy that merges material conflict with an ethos of collective liberation and autonomy help us break through the concrete ceiling we have made for ourselves? If so, it'll mean we stop showing up expecting to be told what to do, and start showing up refusing to be governed at all, by those inside or outside the movement. But it will also mean reflecting on the ways that we show up for each other in communal spaces. Let's create the conditions that simultaneously allow us to confront our enemies and sow the seeds for whatever we will become in the process.

Other footnotes:

- Roger Hallam, XR Co-Founder: "...only through disruption, the breaking of laws, do you get the attention you need[...] only through sacrifice – the willingness to be arrested and go to prison – do people take seriously what you are saying. [And] only through being respectful to ourselves, the public and the police, do we change the hearts and minds of our opponents."

- Most NVDA training emphasizes intentionally misleading ‘studies’ as evidence that NVDA is superior. See the two excellent articles at roarmag.org, ‘Debunking the myths around nonviolent resistance’ and ‘No, Extinction Rebels, non violence is not the only way’
- ‘Non violent civil disobedience’, often seems to be interchangeable with ‘non violent direct action’, despite the obvious semantic difference.
- Clayoquot is famous for being the most civil disobedience arrests in Canadian history (until Fairy Creek). Despite having a prior history of torched bridges, tens of thousands of tree spikes, and protesters storming the legislature in Victoria, after the peace camp was established, the ‘official’ codes of conduct were so strict that even treesits were considered unacceptable. This was definitively a centralized blockade with a clear manager class. After being arrested, leader Tzeporah Berman was quickly released “as the RCMP feared they would lose control over the protests without the leaders” (Encountering Clayoquot, Reading the Political, Karena Shaw). Berman later played a key role in guiding the movement towards negotiation and compromise with governments and corporations, and within a few years was selling out grassroots defenders of vast rainforests far beyond Clayoquot. See Talk and Log in Creeker Vol 1. Clayoquot has been heralded as a peaceful victory in the dominant narrative, yet clearcutting in the area continued, even after receiving UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.
- Pain compliance has long been a police tactic for dealing with land defenders. This seems to be a lesson that has to be continually re-learned during land defense over the past 25yrs. During the summer of 2020 at the protests against Enbridge’s Line 3 pipeline, cops used pressure point pain compliance on protesters, leaving multiple people with seemingly permanent bell’s palsy as a result, a type of facial paralysis. See youtube video by More Perfect Union, ‘Police are Torturing Protestors Who Oppose The Line 3 Pipeline’.
- For a recent example, the Save Old Growth Instagram on June 12, 2022 posted a brief summary on the civil rights era Freedom Riders campaign, where activists directly challenged segregation on buses by riding on buses in mixed race groups, resulting in massive violence from white mobs, often with cops standing by watching. The post ends with, “It will take nothing less to win on ending old growth logging in BC”. As though blocking commuter traffic is in any way directly tied to saving old growth and as though protesters risking commuter violence is in any way comparable to white supremacist violence in the U.S. in the 60’s.
- see Ada’itsx/Fairy Creek Blockade Facebook post Oct 1 2021, video in comments: bit.ly/3QtRrvU
- A CBC article, ‘14 arrested...’ on June 13 2022, quotes a Vancouver officer saying “Having seen so many protests in Vancouver, like hundreds alone last year... we’re pretty familiar with how these groups work.”

The Diggers/World Turned Upside Down (Fairy Creek Version)

*Two years ago
Pacheedaht land
A group of forest loving rebels came to make a final stand
For the misty treetops
And the waters bright
They swore they'd not give up without a fight
Though we come in peace we won't back down
We will not let you past and you cannot go around
Under these trees upon this ground
You'll never break us cuz this place it makes us strong
You have more money
But we have more heart
For the past ten thousand years it's been like that from the start
You've got big trucks and men with guns
But we have something that you'll never understand
We're full of love for rock and leaf
For the gently singing water and this place so full of peace
But test our patience
Disgrace this land
You'll face resistance that you cannot comprehend
We blocked the bridges
Dug up the roads
Climbed high up in the treetops and we hiked with heavy loads
We put our bodies in the way
And we fought by silver moonlight and by day
Many good deeds both great and small
Victories in battle acts of bravery and love
Friends and comrades
Though some are gone
If we keep on fighting then their spirits will live on
From the men of property the orders came
They sent a gang of hired thugs may they die or live in shame
They waged a war and beat us down
But we got up and we'll be back next year again*

*Warriors take courage industry take care
This earth was made a common treasury for all of life to share
All places wild all creatures free
This fight won't end until we're dead and in our graves*

Clearly and Breathtakingly Illegal: Remembering the Elaho

“From a constellation of forgotten movements we choose to remember the direct action camp of the Elaho. Not to put it at risk of becoming another ‘heritage moment’ for radical environmentalism – but for its consistency in wreaking havoc. There is much inspiration to be taken from this small crew of anarchists[...], whom with limited resources in an isolated space committed excessive sabotage to decisive infrastructure.” – Moment of Insurrection

It was a different world back then. The rhythm of visible resistance had reached a certain frequency in BC. On the heels of Oka, there was the Gustafsen Lake standoff, the Native Youth Movement occupations, Ista/King Island, the Anti-Sun Peaks campaign, Sutikalh, and the Cheam/West Coast Warrior Society fight against the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Indigenous Sovereignty had taken off, even if solidarity with the movement was far from being mainstream². This all took place near a Vancouver that was much earlier in its gentrification, halfway between Expo '86 and the 2010 Olympics, when connections between radical communities and underground economies allowed people to drop out of the regular economy and either not work at all, or earn cash seasonally trimming weed. In other words, people had time for struggle, not needing to scrape just to get by. The border was also a lot more porous back then. You could cross into the U.S. with just a driver's license, or sneak onto a train and skip customs entirely. This allowed for a lot more American/Canadian cross-pollination and solidarity between folks in both countries. APEC at UBC in '97 and The Riot at the Hyatt in Vancouver in '98 laid some of the groundwork politically and tactically for the summit-hopping era that was to follow, but it was of course The Battle of Seattle in '99 that really catapulted the anti-globalization movement and anarchists into prominence. *A real sense of possibility filled the air.*

The fight against logging by Interfor in the Elaho Valley near Squamish had been brewing for a few years. Several actions happened in '97, including a counter-blockade by the loggers. Things heated up more in '99, with steady actions over the period of a few months, with soft arrests and lockdowns, but some sabotage as well. This first year of the blockade was key in getting momentum going. The low point of the year, however, was in September, when in a virtually unprecedented attack, over 80 Interfor loggers showed up at the blockade camp at night, beat everyone up and burned down the camp, sending 3 people to the hospital and traumatizing everyone. It was devastating, but word of the attack also spread across the continent.

The next spring, an anarchist gathering was held in the Elaho⁴. Many who attended the gathering planning to stay a few days ended up staying for months. As well, there had been informal calls to action sent out to the land defense milieu of the '90s, a subculture that was a unique product of the time: train hoppers, permaculturists, insurrectionists, surrealists, etc. This resulted in a scene where anarchists were a sizeable part of the demographic, if not the majority. As a con-

sequence, there was no space needed for the usual tiring, circular debates over violence/nonviolence that have tended to bog down movements. This resulted in a refreshing lack of divisiveness and a brought about real clarity at the blockade.

Those present in 2000 were of course nervous about the potential for more vigilante attacks, but the publicity of the previous year's attack meant that this new demographic was a self-selected bunch. People showed up willing to defend themselves. Everyone was masked up, people camped off the road so as not to be surprised, there were people on watch 24/7, and a bucket of weapons was staged in camp at all times in case aggressive drunk loggers showed up again; a community self-defense mindset was widespread. Police and logger aggression would not be taken lightly. This really set the tone for the summer.

With grassroots blockades escalating over the '90s, environmental NGOs were starting to be heavily criticized for how they constrained disruptive protest and donors were looking to fund more combative grassroots groups that could get results. Friends of the Elaho, a small registered society, lacked the formal trappings of the larger, more formal NGOs and had a more direct action approach. They were able to attract new donors but also had members who were quickly becoming radicalized. Having unofficially run the blockade camp in 1999, the Friends took a step back in 2000, but still supported the anarchists from a distance, as did other participants from the previous year who couldn't be there in person. The group arranged food donations, shuttle rides up the valley, money, gas, and gear. This was a far cry from the middle class politics of larger groups and marked a rare cooperation that simply didn't exist in the decade that followed.

There was also Direct Action Network (DAN), a grassroots social centre in Vancouver that was the local chapter of a continental confederation that supported the anti-globalization movement. It became the urban logistical hub for the blockade, providing an entry point for people showing up from out of town, as well as a central point for donations of food, gear, and money. This helped folks get their bearings before heading out and also offered workshops to learn last-minute skills. With the Elaho camp 60km up a logging road, having a stopover point in the city proved crucial. Squamish itself was closer to the blockade, but still in its pre-gentrification phase, it was an industry town and proved very hostile to blockaders. The camp was considerably less accessible than, for example, some Fairy Creek camps that were adjacent to a paved highway. With the DAN space, people could show up in the city to get oriented, knowing that some of their basic needs could be met.

Unlike most land defense both before and after the Elaho, there was no hostility between those willing to be arrested as part of a hard block and those willing to engage in sabotage. Such unity did not extend far at the time: while a diversity of tactics was widely accepted at the blockade, arguments would still erupt at Elaho solidarity rallies in urban spaces. People at camp simply didn't police each other like more obnoxious mainstream environmentalists tended to do elsewhere.

The first part of the summer of 2000 reached a peak with a now-legendary Artemis treesit near the Lava Creek camp, where two fortified trees were connected up high and down low through a barricaded pickup truck on a bridge over a canyon. This culminated in an 8-day camo-wearing, canine-unit-and-guns-drawn siege by the RCMP. The central incident occurred when officer Bud Mercer⁵ cut a rope that was part of the treesit, leaving someone dangling from a branch for their life. Later that year, when one of the treesitters filed a negligence complaint that led to charges against Mercer (which the prosecutor later dropped), CSIS⁶ started harassing the treesitter, and his friends and family with threatening phone calls, followed by the RCMP

charging him with obstruction and perjury. In a stunning example of victim blaming, the cops argued that the whole treesit was some sort of conspiracy set up to make officer Mercer look bad. The judge bought the story and convicted the treesitter. Mercer, whose previous accomplishments included laying landmines at Gustafsen Lake and pepper-spraying protesters during Spraypec3, went on to become the head cop in charge of the entire 2010 Olympics RCMP-led security force and is currently a Chilliwack city councillor.

The raid on the treesits and dismantling of the final hardblocks ended with the loggers finally getting through. With no more lockdowns, clearcutting began. A few weeks later during a tripod action, the police arrested everyone in the area. Most signed their release conditions which meant they could no longer be seen in the valley. With visibility impossible, a sea change occurred. Between the treesit raid and the mass arrests, many at the blockade were angry and jaded. The camp had to be moved outside the injunction zone⁷ just when the logging was starting to pick up steam. With no other path forward, these feelings were channelled into a sense of vengeance. Gone were the days of leading lambs to the slaughter with voluntary arrests. It was time to send a message and make the motherfuckers pay.

The Elaho had a fraction of the number of people that Fairy Creek had, yet Interfor faced considerably more sabotage than Teal Jones did. On one day alone, the company discovered that six bridges had been spiked⁸, a water tower had been pulled down across the road, and two machines severely damaged. With no lockdowns to attract police attention, land defenders had free reign of the valley, despite there being only one road up the valley and no way out. There had been a police trailer that cops would be flown into (though no round-the-clock presence) and a security company camp that was manned 24/7. Once the blockade camp was lower down the valley and visibility ceased, the police removed the trailer. While the logging near Lava Creek was the focus of attack due to new roads and cutblocks pushing into the wilderness beyond, all logging in the valley was considered fair target.

Outside of the die-hard logging community of Squamish itself, there was no public outcry over the damage done to machinery and infrastructure and in fact there was plenty of sympathy. This, despite a general hostility towards journalists at the blockade, with only occasional press releases and granting of interviews. Performing for an audience simply wasn't part of the plan. Still, a sign of the times was that there had even been full-page spreads in national newspapers on the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front, completely lacking the over-the-top media hostility of later years. Despite the generally unfounded myths guiding today's movements, the police did not respond more aggressively to property destruction. After sabotage was reported by Interfor, usually only a few cops would show up to camp to ask questions, inevitably getting heckled until they left. While people eventually did jail time for the civil disobedience (>6 months in some cases), nobody was ever arrested or charged for the sabotage, despite there never being more than a few dozen people in camp at once. And so it went, with covert attacks by night, the loggers were left to pick up the pieces by day; they cleared the road with new machines, hauling out vandalized machinery, or used metal detectors to search the cutblocks for tree spikes. Eventually though, winter snow forced both loggers and land defenders out of the valley for the season.

The following spring, Interfor announced it would sell TFL 38 to the Squamish Nation, who eventually continued conventional logging in part of the valley while also protecting parts of the upper Elaho and part of the Sims valley, one of its tributaries. So did Interfor 'lose'? They certainly intended to profit greatly from their Tree Farm License, presumably they were deciding to cut

their losses by selling it at market value. On the other hand, blockaders sitting down valley or back in the city knowing that old growth is falling in real time is an awful feeling, regardless of what the future held. So some considered the Elaho a defeat, as the blockade failed to stop the logging entirely, while some considered it a partial victory, albeit a complicated one.

Over the years, one upshot was that the Elaho blockade helped boost the Victoria and Vancouver anarchist scenes as well as strengthening radical connections between the two cities. The ensuing anti-poverty movement was influenced, leading up to the fight against the gentrification of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. However, part of the fallout of the Elaho was that many people fell into post-struggle depression and substance use. This was a time when movements in general had yet to come to terms with the trauma vortex that blockades can create. Still, many of the friendships continue to this day, over 20 years later.

When asked if they had anything to pass onto the new generation of land defenders, participants of the blockade offered the following advice: Less formality, more experimentation, playfulness, and relationship with the land. The need for debriefing was also emphasized. Be able to pace yourself for a lifetime of continued resistance. Maintain continuity and connection to avoid generational gaps and the forgetfulness that can creep in. Remember that there are always people out there keeping the flame alive even when it's not obvious.

But another theme emerged as well. The intense security culture in the Elaho scared off a lot of people. Some folks admit they were young and cliquish. Looking back, they wonder if there was a way they could've welcomed more people to the blockade, while still maintaining the trust and unity that existed. It's a hard balance to avoid being too risky on one hand and too much of an asshole on the other.

The Elaho blockade had peaked a year before 9/11. It didn't take long before The War on Terror sent waves of repression throughout militant environmental struggles across the continent kicking off an era known as the Green Scare.¹² Primarily based on investigations by the FBI (who named the Earth Liberation Front the #1 domestic terrorist threat in the US), several Canadians were among those sentenced to long prison terms, and one is still on the run 16 years after her indictment. Among other impacts, this further divided radical grassroots struggles from NGOs, as the institutional side of environmentalism was quick to get in line behind the new patriotic rhetoric that denounced militant action as terrorism¹³. Elaho land defenders engaging in blockades and sabotage acted in solidarity with each other, without denunciation of each other's tactics. However, as is too often the case, there are few sources available for firsthand accounts of the Elaho. Even if there were, textbooks have no space for such radical histories and the NGOs continue to present an intentionally misleading understanding of the last few decades of land defense. In the time between the Battle of Seattle and 9/11, the limits of business-as-usual were challenged. Sometimes all we get is a stolen glance of new horizons, but once in a while it lasts an entire summer.

The best source for accounts of the Elaho blockade has always been The Journal of Sasquatchology by the Elaho Valley Anarchist Horde that was released only a few months after the blockade ended. A newly remastered, uncut printable version of the zine is available at creekerzine.wordpress.com

Fierce times at Fairy Creek and beyond: A timeline of badassery

By now, most people are familiar with the broad strokes of the mainstream narratives of the Ada'itsx (Fairy Creek) blockade movement, with much attention paid to the record-breaking tally of arrests (more than Clayoquot! More than the G20 Summit in Toronto!)... and to the violent, colonial, paramilitary actions of the violent, colonial, paramilitary RCMP. Despite 1200 arrests at Adai'tsx (and a growing number under the 'Save Old Growth' banner), and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on quixotic legal crusades, old growth logging continues behind the government/industry smokescreen of 'deferral'.

There's oh so much more to the story of course, and at the same time, so much else has been going on in this part of the world, beyond Ada'itsx and the vast media spectacle it's become. Connections made through involvement in Ada'itsx are stirring in many folks an awareness of diversities of resistance and social struggle they haven't had before. In that spirit, I present to you this *timeline of badassery*:

Focusing not on arrests, nor police violence, but for the most part on manifestations of resistance which the cops could not control, or weren't pre-planned with voluntary arrests as the goal. People taking the streets without asking. Taking down statues and running. Tagging shit up in the middle of the night. To my knowledge, with a couple of exceptions, including references to large mobilizations of people at Ada'itsx, no one has been arrested in connection with any of the actions listed here.

This is just a compilation of things that have happened – I neither endorse nor condemn any of it. Where? Ada'itsx and beyond, but I'll focus on "Vancouver Island" and the "Lower Mainland". When? Since the beginning of Ada'itsx blockades up til the present. Who? All kinds of badasses. What? Ada'itsx solidarity, and more! Why:

"In fact, solidarity has nothing to do with what side one is on, and everything to do with the understanding that one is on a side—that is, at war." – August O'Claire

- Ma'amtagila People begin reclamation of Hiladi Village (Spring/Summer 2020)
- Anarchists create autonomous barricade against logging near Ada'itsx (Sep 2020)
- Sea-to-Sky Gondola cable cut for second year in a row (Sep 2020)
- Victoria highway blocked in solidarity with Mi'kmaq (Oct 2020)
- Graffiti targets Victoria By-law officers for their repression of people living in Beacon Hill Park (Feb 2021)
- Statue of Queen Elizabeth II beheaded in Victoria (Feb 2021)

- Tree bark ‘spiked’ on TMX pipeline route in Burnaby (Feb 2021)
- Anarchists sabotage logging road survey markings in solidarity with Ada’itsx (Spring 2021)
- Solidarity demonstrator in Victoria warns gov’t that Ada’itsx “will make the 1990s Clayoquot Sound war in the woods look like a quaint disagreement” (Mar 2021)
- Anarchists lock gate across logging road near Ada’itsx (May 2021)
- 2000 people join Ada’itsx & 200 break through police line in one day (May 2021)
- Ada’itsx solidarity demo marches to Teal Jones HQ in Surrey (May 2021)
- Police lines frequently broken, camps frequently reclaimed from cops at Ada’itsx: sometimes with strength of numbers, sometimes with strength of tactics (Spring & Summer 2021)
- Block The Boat picket obstructs Vancouver Port in solidarity with Palestine (Jun 2021)
- Large Ada’itsx solidarity demo takes the streets in Vancouver (Jun 2021)
- TMX pipeline contractor’s office sabotaged in solidarity with Ada’itsx (Jun 2021)
- Ada’itsx solidarity action blocks access to Teal Jones HQ in Surrey (Jun 2021)
- Statue of Queen Victoria defaced with red paint at BC Legislature (Jun 2021)
- 3 plainclothes cops escorted out of Ada’itsx (Jun 2021)
- Indigenous youth blockade non ‘old growth’ logging near Powell River (Jun 2021)
- Churches burned or vandalized after discovery of unmarked mass graves at Residential Schools (Summer 2021)
- Coyotes repeatedly attack humans in Stanley Park (Summer 2021)
- Persons unknown lock gate at RCMP compound in Mesachie Lake (Summer 2001)
- Ada’itsx defender escapes arrest by jumping off cantilever blockade into bushes (Summer 2021)
- Victoria statue of James Cook destroyed & replaced w/ red dress figure (Jul 2021)
- 18 trees felled to block logging road at Ada’itsx (Jul 2021)
- Indigenous youth block Justin Trudeau’s bus in Victoria (Aug 2021)
- Ada’itsx solidary action blocks Victoria’s Johnson Street Bridge and drops “ABOLISH THE POLICE” banner across it (Aug 2021)
- Liquid poured on Victoria Police Chief (Sep 2021)

- United Steelworkers (union representing Western Forest Products workers) claims Ada'itsx land defenders spiked trees, tampered with heli pads and interfered with tree fallers (Sept 2021)
- Ada'itsx defenders turn back excavator, engage its operators with grappling moves (Oct. 2021)
- Black bloc joins Wet'suwet'en solidarity blockade of Vancouver Port (Oct 2021)
- Logging machine destroyed near Ditidaht (Nov 2021)
- Traffic blocked outside Victoria RCMP HQ in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en (Nov 2021)
- Victoria highway blocked in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en (Nov 2021)
- Victoria law enforcement monument tagged with "ACAB" graffiti (Nov 2021)
- BC Forest Minister Katrine Conroy knocked down while walking home (Dec 2021)
- Truck Loggers Association billboards get culture jammed on Vancouver Island (Winter 2021)
- Gassy Jack statue destroyed in Vancouver (Feb 2022)
- Masked land defenders block Ada'itsx logging road without arrests (Apr 2022)
- BC Forests Minister Katrine Conroy receives harassing phone calls (Apr 2022)
- Anarchists from ANVI demonstrate in Victoria on May Day (May 2022)
- BC Attorney General David Eby's office windows smashed in Vancouver for approving prosecution of criminal charges against Wet'suwet'en land defenders (Jun 2022)

"Morality plays no part in deciding upon which tactics to use in a given situation. It only matters what is compatible with our strategy and principles." – Lawrence Jarach

Let's Attack Our Enemies, Not Our Bodies! A Critique of Hunger Strikes

CW: this essay contains graphic language, and includes references to self harm
(I feel that way about any content about hunger strikes...)

I support diversity of tactics, including hunger strikes. a given tactic has varying effects depending on the situation. it's up to us as individuals and collectives to make those assessments.

Ppl starving themselves makes me feel uncomfortable in a triggering way with regard to the issue of eating disorders. there's much more to be said about that, but that's the essence of it from that aspect.

I'm not asking anyone to cease action cuz it triggers me or makes me uncomfortable. I just haven't seen this raised anywhere, other than privately with friends who feel the same. I suppose there are many tactics which could be triggering to others, for various reasons. The hunger strike seems like an especially conspicuous form of self-harm though.

In the context of fairy creek & adjacent movements which still valorize and ennoble civil disobedience – which often involves some kind of “non-violent” sacrificial use of one's body, instead of combat or self defense – it feels like the hunger striker is the ultimate sacrificial lamb.

These quasi-suicidal people are presented to us as heroes to be honoured, supported, and proselytized for (write a letter! Call a politician! Beg for media coverage! Spread the word on your socials – have you heard that dozens more have joined the strike & are now starving themselves too?). They perform the most sacred ritual of nonviolence culture, offering their lives via highly visible, protracted public suffering for the greater good.

I want no part of this death cult, with its deeply internalized abrahamic morality plays masquerading as resistance. I struggle to find sound reasoning for use of the hunger strike beyond specific contexts, e.g. prisoners whose freedom is restricted to a degree that it's among the last, or very last tactic they can use.

In such a circumstance, they are using it to fight for their dignity and their life, to regain agency that is being denied them thru violence and coercion.

People who have comparatively broad agency & control of their bodies, choosing to do such violence to their bodies, is as repugnant to me as watching someone torture or cut themselves, while they ask everyone to support/campaign for them/ etc.

States routinely kill their enemies to maintain social control... they are killing machines. they're always killing, they can't function without it. killing ourselves is doing that murderous – yet structurally & economically normalized to the point of near invisibility – routine for them.

As an act of blatant self-violence, while one still has other options, to me the hunger strike is amongst the most myopic and disempowering of all tactics: killing yourself, in the hope that a system based on killing, will value your life more than you do. Self-immolation, as someone recently did to themselves in washington d.c. on earth day, is more abjectly suicidal... but at least it's a quick death compared to the slow torturing to death of starvation.

“The important thing is to find a rhythm we can sustain and thus not become the very ones to destroy us [...] We shouldn’t continue building a martyrology that teaches the hasty path, the suicidal path [...] We are going far.” – Josep Gardenyes: Social War, Antisocial Tension

I appreciate how passionate the hunger strikers are, and that they may feel as though they are prisoners on this dying planet, and running out of options. I propose that instead of harming our own bodies, let’s promote healthy bodies & self defense of those bodies, and the ecosystems they are a part of.

The gov’t has shown its willingness to see hunger strikers wither away in recent years, with a stop site c hunger striker (2016) and a save old growth hunger striker (2022) both hospitalized with potential organ damage about 3 weeks into their strikes. both ended their strikes without their demands met by gov’t. The stop site c hunger striker was camped outside the head office of bc hydro during their strike and was ignored by them & by gov’t. Instead of meeting with the save old growth hunger strikers during their strike as was their demand, bc forests minister katrine conroy met with the bc truck loggers association, and attended the annual convention of the bc council of forest industries.

A few mortalities for the sake of industry is what capitalists euphemistically dismiss as an ‘externality’. at least 5 loggers have died on the job on Vancouver Island in the last few years, due to increasingly profitable, horrifically unsafe work conditions, such as “multi-phase logging” (heavy machines working above fallers). WFP paid some token “WorkSafeBC fines” which might as well have been called “murder your worker fees”.

I was further troubled to see a save OG hunger striker telling the media of their plans to attempt “citizens’ arrests” of bc politicians. why replicate the criminalizing logic of the colonial, carceral society that puts land defenders in jail?

“Every order is founded on a crime against the preceding order—the crime that dissolved it. Afterwards, the new order comes to be perceived as legitimate, as people begin to take it for granted. The founding crime of the United States of America was the rebellion against the authority of the king of England. The founding crime of the society to come, if we manage to survive this one, will do away with the laws and institutions of today. Can we imagine an order not premised on the division of life into legitimate and illegitimate, legality and criminality, rulers and ruled?” — To Change Everything: The Last Crime by CrimethInc. Ex-Workers’ Collective (crimethinc.com/tce)

Contrast the state’s indifference towards civilian hunger strikers, with incarcerated hunger strikers — who are often force-fed. the slow death of the free striker’s body poses no threat to the social order that governs them, whereas the caged striker’s action subverts the ability of the state to cage them. There are many examples of prisoners whose hunger strikes gain them better conditions or freedoms. a recent example are Mapuche prisoners in colonial Chile, who militantly defend their land from logging & mining (much of it perpetuated by Canadian corporations) with acts of mass sabotage and armed resistance.

“March 23, 2022: José Tralcal Coche and Luis Tralcal Quidel have decided to end their hunger strike after the gendarmerie granted the benefits of weekly day parole and quarterly week parole.

We consider it necessary to protect the physical and spiritual health of our pu peñi, pu lamgen, since they have been on three different hunger strikes now, for which it is necessary to continue advancing toward better conditions.

As Mapuche people we are repressed and imprisoned...but as Mapuche people we will free ourselves!” – Earth First Journal: Mapuche Political Prisoners José and Luis Tralcal End Hunger Strike After Winning Concessions

Those of us fortunate enough to be on the outside of the prison walls (for now) have the freedom to die, or to be subversive and fight for our survival against the extractivist death machine that will kill us all. I support the freedom to choose to end one's own life for whatever reason. but dying is surely no way win the war that we find ourselves in.

Know Your ENGO Enemies: Big Green is not your friend

This article focuses primarily on the environmental NGO Wilderness Committee (WC), and some associated groups and individuals. There is no intention to slander WC or anyone mentioned in this writing – only to share some critical information, most of which is already in the public domain. Some information is presented as corollary or a mere series of facts; it's up to readers to ponder or explore any potential connections not made explicit here, and come to their own conclusions. Research and writing in a similar vein about other ENGOs or NGOs, specifically or in general, is desired and encouraged.

The War in the Woods (1989–2004)

On at least three occasions, WC (most notably through its former national campaign director and media spokesman Joe Foy) have offered monetary rewards for information leading to the arrest of land defenders: in 1989 in Clayoquot Sound, in 1992 in Kax:iks (aka the Walbran), and in 2004 in Elk Creek near Chilliwack (Cheam Territory). In Kax:iks, they were joined in this by the Carmanah Forestry Society (CFS), an NGO that also offered such a bounty. In response, persons unknown glued the locks on WC's Vancouver office, and put up a wanted poster identifying Foy as a traitor.¹ Paul Watson offered financial support to any person needing legal assistance as a result of WC's bounty in the Walbran.⁴ Going above and beyond the colossal, continuous repression by the state and corporations, the pro-cop, pro-industry bounties issued by WC and CFS to encourage snitching on tree spikers show unequivocally whose side these ENGOs are really on, and whom they would betray in service of their own interests. The Sierra Club has also offered a bounty on at least one occasion.

“The federal and provincial governments are promoting an obscene scheme to leave a ribbon of rainforest along the west coast of Vancouver Island. Beyond this ribbon the rainforest will be clearcut and obliterated, through to the east coast of Vancouver Island, within years that can be counted upon the fingers of one hand. My heart breaks. My soul rebels.” — Peter Knighton, Carmanah, My Carmanah

Although it's been largely whitewashed from history in no small part by ENGOs with their well funded capacities to dominate narratives, tree spiking and other sabotage (such as burning log road bridges and disabling logging equipment) by grassroots land defenders in the early '90s contributed significantly to movement successes in defense of Clayoquot and Carmanah/Kax:iks – successes which ENGOs like WC use to raise even more money for themselves, in a vicious cycle of co-optation.

“Violent dissent represented a pressing problem for moderate ENGOS” — James Davey, *A Bridge to Nowhere*

At the time, WC and other ENGOS tried, but failed, to control the grassroots rebellion of “organic, spontaneous lawbreaking”¹ and diversity of tactics that was defending places like Carmanah/Kax:iks. They correctly identified it not only as a threat to the state and corporations, but to their own orgs which were part of the emerging non-profit industrial complex.

The Carmanah/Kax:iks land defense movement was an “untidy insurgency” that included Indigenous sovereigntists like former Ditidaht First Nation chief Peter Knighton (who was fighting for the survival of the Qua-ba-diwa hereditary system), Pacheedaht warrior Harriet Nahanee, veterans of the Kanesatake Resistance (aka Oka Crisis), local nodes of the decentralized Earth First! movement, anarchists, and other unaffiliated individuals.

“As tree spiking shattered environmentalist cohesiveness, WC nearly disintegrated from within.” — James Davey, *A Bridge to Nowhere*

WC co-founder Paul George decried that logging deferrals were happening in areas where resistance was dominated by illegal activity, whining to the media that environmentalists who went through “proper channels” were not being rewarded by the BC government.

In 1991, BC Premier Rita Johnston was pelted with dirt at an election campaign rally, and people pounded on the windows of her bus with fists and objects. Earth First! signs were visible in the crowd.

In 1992 in the Indigenous newspaper *Windspeaker*, Knighton gave props to “the persons, whoever they are, who have spiked the trees in the Walbran valley of my country, Carmanah” and said that spikes were helping to stop the ongoing genocide in the area.

Knighton had earlier called out WC and its high profile campaigner Joe Foy for cashing in on the Carmanah name to “promote its own bureaucratic empire building” while doing “nothing to stop the genocide of native people,” instead serving as “part of the power structure that pretends the Forest Act applies.”

WC redwashed its push to create the Carmanah/Walbran park, by tokenizing Ditidaht sovereigntists without supporting their claims to the land. WC and Sierra Club’s “moderate, state-sponsored line spoke to policymakers and the courts” in favour of recreational access, not land claims. These groups have persevered “under their legal mandates, operating in corporatized forms.”

“As Walbran radicals physically impeded logging, charity ENGOS continued their broad strategies of public education geared toward slow, incremental change within the framework of the Canadian legal system. By so doing, their park wins would inherently validate colonial authority at the expense of Indigenous nations.”

“In Carmanah, ENGO constructions of nature barely recognized land claims, reflecting the colonial character of patriotic environmentalist campaigns which invoked the natural heritage of the Canadian nation-state. In framing the Carmanah Giant as Canada’s tallest tree, a ‘unique’ feature which met Ministry of Forests preservation criteria, ENGO efforts did not interrupt Canadian colonial authority; even courting patriots with the ‘Canada Day Carmanah Caravan.’”

“Though tasked to do so on countless occasions, the state never challenged forest corporatism, instead acting as its sponsor, defender, and regulator in a friendly, lucrative alliance.” – James Davey, *A Bridge to Nowhere*

In 2000, WC’s Joe Foy (then their national campaign director, currently their ‘protected areas campaigner’) told the Vancouver Sun “we’ve offered the Squamish RCMP any help we can give” to identify tree spikers in the Elaho Valley, describing spiking as a “violent, terrorist activity that should be condemned by everyone.” Widely demonized perhaps due to its effectiveness as a tactic of economic sabotage, there’s been one documented injury in the history of tree spiking, and the circumstances of that incident have been called into question.⁸ When spikes were discovered in Kax:iks in ‘92, a retired logger from Victoria offered to cut into a spiked tree to prove he wouldn’t be injured. He said rocks, nails, barbed wire and other hard objects are common in trees, and safety measures are adequate if logging companies use them.

The War in the Woods and beyond (2004–2022 onwards)

“Groups such as WC and Carmanah Forestry Society keep USING the Cathedral Grove issue to raise funds for themselves without doing anything whatsoever to help... BC’s big ENGOs worry mostly about their funding and charitable status... nearly all the biggest ENGOs have entered into agreements with Weyerhaeuser and ilk not to criticize their Vancouver Island devastations as a result of their ‘consensus’ over the Great Bear Rainforest, which if implemented would offer only 20% protection for that enormous and vital tract of forest.

Why is it that Greenpeace is involved in direct action campaigns everywhere else in the world, while here in BC, they languish behind the scenes in the corporate boardrooms, working out pathetic compromise deals...” – Frontline report from Cathedral Grove, BC’s longest continuous treesit c. 2004–2006

WC (primarily through its national campaign director and media spokesman Torrance Coste), along with other ENGOs such as Sierra Club BC and Ancient Forest Alliance, cleverly benefited from extensive media coverage during the Ada’itsx (Fairy Creek) struggle, despite having little or nothing to do with the actual frontline resistance activity. In so doing, they raised their profile and fundraising capacity without contributing materially to the grassroots direct action movement that caused the media spotlight. In its 2020 and 2021 annual reports, there is much talk from WC of forests, but aptly no mention of Ada’itsx or the blockades. Compare this approach with Stand.Earth (fka ForestEthics) – an org described as a corporate front group by investigative journalists²⁶ – who donated large sums of money to the blockades in an attempt to greenwash themselves or their funders, or both.

“To what extent are corporate and anti-corporate activists from rich nations unwittingly on the same side of capitalist expansion and global development, modifying capitalism’s harshness and thus enabling its expansion and lessening possible resistance...?” – Damani James Partridge, *Activist Capitalism and Supply-Chain Citizenship*

There can be close connections and at times ‘revolving doors’ between the offices of NGOs, the state, and corporations.¹¹ A recent local example of this shell game: in March 2022, Sierra Club BC sued the BC gov’t for failing to meet its own climate targets, specifically naming George Heyman – Sierra Club BC’s former director, and current BC Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy.

An anonymous Greenpeace associate remarked in testimony posted to www.SaveGreenpeace.org: Greenpeace actually started the Kyoto Plus campaign to battle Power Up, the organization that Tzeporah Berman started. And now they’re hiring her. The hypocrisy blows my mind.” — Dru Oja Jay, Greenpeace’s Corporate Overreach

WC was not an official partner in the Great Bear Rainforest betrayal, but has been a vocal supporter of the GBR deal. Some sources name it as a GBR-collaborating org. In 2021 during the Ada’itsx blockades, it joined other NGOs in calling for a new GBR-like deal, specifically naming it as an example to follow.

“[After the GBR deal] Sierra Club BC disappeared from all of their Vancouver Island campaigns... Suddenly they just walked on it. They abandoned the Quatsino Nation [located on Northwest Vancouver Island] who had gotten all excited that they were going to get some of their territory protected and Sierra Club just abandoned it. What the hell happened?... It was clear to me they had sacrificed Vancouver Island in order to get mileage on the Great Bear Rainforest. Subsequently my suspicions were confirmed... It was on the Rainforest Action Network website that they found it really regrettable that Vancouver Island had to be sacrificed to the Great Bear Rainforest deal.” — Ingmar Lee, *Offsetting Resistance: Negotiated Surrender*

While some GBR-associated ENGOs have ‘campaigned’ against logging on Vancouver Island in recent years, it’s been all bark no bite, and it seems like their campaigns have been de-fanged while practically all remaining old growth has been liquidated since GBR negotiations began in secret over 20 years ago. Their utter failure to take meaningful action is a major reason why the Ada’itsx blockade movement began and has grown so large.

Other GBR orgs like Greenpeace appeared to drop the issue of logging in BC entirely – until Ada’itsx received a bit of clumsy, token coverage when it became too big to totally ignore – in keeping with GBR spin that the “war in the woods” was over because the GBR deal “brought the war to the boardroom”. It’s possible that individuals and orgs involved in GBR negotiations are still restricted in what they can say or do by gag orders which were part of the deal, the details of which were never disclosed.

ENGOs were initially invited to the Unist’ot’en Camp when it was established c. 2010, but backed away in following years due to its uncompromising stance opposing all pipelines. Between 2013 and 2015, WC published three of its mainstay ‘educational reports’ on fracking and pipelines in BC, including maps and details of pipelines planned to be built through Wet’su’wet’en territory. These were extensively researched and had a combined press run of 106,000 copies, and prominently solicited money and memberships for WC. The reports made no mention whatsoever of the Unist’ot’en Camp, which had received a groundswell of support and solidarity. Each of these reports was therefore an act of colonial erasure. A further report in 2016 briefly mentioned Unist’ot’en and showed it on the map of proposed pipelines.

For many years WC campaigned for the creation of a park that would include the militantly defended Elaho Valley forest in Squamish Territory, pushing for the park to be named after Randy Stoltmann (who claimed to have “discovered” places like the Carmanah valley). This has drawn criticism and distrust from anti-racist and anti-colonial activists.

Enmeshment in the Non-profit Industrial Complex

In his essay *The Crisis as Pacification*, anarchist Peter Gelderloos criticizes the role of NGOs in social movements on Turtle Island:

“NGOs provide such a useful safety valve, preventing social tensions from becoming social struggles. NGOs turn revolutionaries into careerists, radical politics into office politics, struggles into bureaucracies.

Social movements... need to assert the autonomy of our struggles. Political parties, politicians, and corporate or state funding are not welcome. Projects that do need to rely on funding to alleviate harm in the short-term need to be open and honest that they have traded in their autonomy... they have not embarked on a sustainable, long-term path of struggle that can address the root causes of social harm.”

Approximately 85% of WC’s funding comes from individual donations and membership fees, the rest comes from grants and merchandise sales. Some of its grant funders in recent years have been Tides Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts—via the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI). Tides Canada (now known as MakeWay) was the ‘convener’ of the controversial Great Bear Rainforest sellout, a role it played in secret at the time. Tides Canada greenwashes funds for pipeline financier RBC, while Tides is funded by Pew (an org closely tied to tar sands developer Sunoco). The CBI and Tides’ Tar Sands Solutions Network (fka Tar Sands Coalition) have been described as “corporate fronts” for greenwashing and “offsetting resistance.”

“Pew never goes it alone. It always works in coalitions with these others, which means no radical opposition to its environmental policies can get any money.” –
Offsetting Resistance

While Gelderloos takes aim most explicitly at NGOs which get most of their money from the state or foundations, the largely non-foundation based funding model of a large org like WC does not reduce its reformist enmeshment in the capitalist-democratic status quo. For the sake of its funding, its lobbying clout, and the perpetuation of itself as an entity, it clings to its mainstream respectability and charitable tax status more dearly than any action that would subvert colonial extractivism, or liberate us from the state or capitalism.

Resistance movements and radical individuals should likewise be wary of themselves becoming enmeshed with NGOs. As described in *Talk and Log: Sometimes the Carrot, Sometimes the Stick* in Creeker Vol 1, they tend to have parasitic effects on grassroots movements. NGOs also play key roles in the kind of process described in *Co-opting the Radical Instinct* in *The Creeker Companion* Vol 1.²⁷ Many well intentioned radicals engaged in grassroots resistance come to find themselves surrounded to a surprising degree by people who work for NGOs, or are in other ways connected with them, which can lead to compromising situations. An unfortunate reality is that working for an NGO is sometimes the only work that one can find in order to survive.

“The non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) is a system of relationships between the state, the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service & social justice organizations that results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements.” — Anonymous: What’s the Non-Profit Industrial Complex and why should I care?

Some former WC canvassers have described a work culture in which they felt treated as 2nd or 3rd class citizens of the organization, below the executives and staff. WC canvassers are contractors, without the rights and benefits of employees. These canvassers worked full time, going door to door to solicit donations in exchange for memberships and wildlife calendars, their earnings based on commission. Is it painfully ironic that this sales force, which brings large sums of money into the org and is in some ways its public face, is not treated better by its bosses? Or simply reflective of the painfully normal capitalist nature of such an org?

A former Ancient Forest Alliance (AFA) canvasser described themselves as passionate about the AFA and the causes for which it claims to struggle, and willing to do its grunt work of street canvassing. When the opportunity came to go on an AFA field trip to an endangered forest, they were disillusioned to learn they would have to pay trip costs they couldn’t afford with their canvassing income – the trip was not offered as a reward or gesture of gratitude for their pounding of the pavement in service of the org.

“NGOs treat people like garbage while claiming to serve noble causes. They are part of the problem and should be destroyed.” — Anonymous former ENGO canvasser and volunteer

A few years ago, WC employees had to unionize for better treatment – in an office with a handful of staff and an even smaller handful of executives – a labour vs capital conflict in what began as a grassroots project three decades earlier.

WC employees are now part of BCGEU (BC Government Employees Union) Local 2003, which includes employees of BC’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – a government department which WC campaigns against, for more transit and less highways. The BCGEU also represents prison guards (aka screws) who keep humans, including land defenders, locked in cages. The vice-chair of WC’s board of directors is a paid organizer for BCGEU, and its secretary is the BCGEU’s director of research, campaigns and communications. A former policy director of WC worked closely with the BCGEU on campaigns to increase staffing at BC Parks.

In 2020, days before the Ada’itsx blockades began, WC co-founder Paul George was appointed to the elitist, colonial Order of British Columbia – BC’s highest state decoration. His endorsers for the appointment included David Suzuki and Wade Davis. WC was founded in 1980, and George and his wife Adrienne Carr co-founded the BC Green Party in 1983, the first Green Party on Turtle Island. Carr is a former WC executive, former leader of the BC Green Party, and current Vancouver city councillor. In 2021, WC gave its annual Eugene Rogers Environmental Award to Pacheedaht elder and Ada’itsx land defender Bill Jones.

“The problem of how to express and communicate a radically different ethos cannot be solved by enclosing it within the logic of the system it seeks to subvert.’ Critiquing the BC forest industry is a well-travelled path...” — James Davey quoting Mick Smith, A Bridge to Nowhere

In the present context of the Ada'itsx blockades, it remains to be seen what will become of nascent orgs like Last Stand For Forests/ Rainforest Flying Squad, Save Old Growth, etc. The established ENGOs perpetuate a culture of compromise and conformity. They've negatively influenced the initially, and still variably informal/autonomous grassroots Ada'itsx movement with their institutional, state-friendly and capitalist-friendly ways. Perhaps this article will contribute to a rejection of such formalizing tendencies, in favour of grassroots resistance that is autonomous, uncontrollable, and uncompromising.

a song of love

by rentch
blood flows
oils gears
business usual
managed state
60 years ago, mario savio proclaimed
to “stop” the machine, “until” we are free
“you’ve got to put your bodies upon the gears”
“that doesn’t mean you have to break anything”
but you’ve gotta take care of your ravaged body,
& we’ve gotta destroy this tyranny.
if we wanna live free,
or even exist...
we screw each other over.
for the powerful, the few.
they watch & they laugh :D
& make our nightmares come true
let’s fulfill each other’s dreams.
delight in each other’s desires.
let’s raise up our hatchets
& smash up their ratchets!
freedom can’t be given
only taken.
there’s no guarantee of tomorrow
only today.
we’re too young,
we can’t wait any longer.
b/c we love freedom.
& hate authority...
we’ll taste their fear.
we’ll dance into freedom.
before we forget what it feels like
to be free.

Final Message

*Living in a mundane world
you can know someone for years
and not truly know them as you do
after a day of struggle*

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Glossary Note: Some of the language used in the following essays reflects how the terms were used at Fairy Creek/ Ada'itsx and may be confusing to readers from different contexts. For clarification, 'hard block' means someone who is locked or somehow suspended in a device, such as sleeping dragons, loraxes, tripods, etc. 'Soft block' means debris piled onto the road, usually logs and rocks. 'Soft arrest' means people blocking the road with their bodies but not requiring technical extraction.

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