



Musqueam elder Victor Guerin drums at the B.C. Day protest against the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

Rick Green

Surrey North Delta Leader

Road protesters hold vigil for native sites

By Jeff Nagel - Surrey North Delta Leader

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First Nations elders, archaeologists and Gateway opponents held a vigil Monday in North Delta on the site of an ancient aboriginal site slated to be paved over by the now-approved South Fraser Perimeter Road (SFPR).

Critics said the project will cause "unforgivable destruction" of aboriginal heritage because of the heavy concentration of archaeological sites along the 40-kilometre four-lane truck route.

The protest included drumming and a smudge ceremony at the 4,500-year-old St. Mungo site, near the Alex Fraser Bridge.

Both St. Mungo and the nearby Glenrose Cannery site – southern B.C.'s oldest shell midden with material up to 8,000 years old – are human burial sites where government consultants have warned

human remains may be disturbed by the road.

"I don't think we want to start messing around with burial sites," said Tsawwassen band member Bertha Williams.

"That's our ancestors that are going to get disrupted there," she said. "It's desecrating. It's sacrilegious."

Livable Region Coalition rep Rick Green said the transportation ministry's plan to cap some sensitive areas in concrete before paving over them isn't an acceptable method of protecting artifacts and remains.

"A site that has human remains is deeply sensitive," he said. "I question the government's sincerity."

He pointed to the recent excavation of an ancient Katzie village site to make way for the road off the north end of the new Golden Ears Bridge.

Just five per cent of the site was actually unearthed and catalogued. Archaeologists have said it should have been preserved.

"I find it abominable what they've done with that," Green said. "I'm very offended by the willingness of the government to sacrifice sites for what they call the progress of their projects."

Project opponents also fear other impacts of the road, including potential damage to Burns Bog.

The demonstration came just days after the SFPR received environmental approval in late July.

The province has called proponents to announce their interest in the private-public partnership to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the perimeter road.

The SFPR will follow the Fraser River from Deltaport to Highway 15 in Surrey, with connections to Highways 1, 91, 99 and the Golden Ears Bridge.

The project promises to provide an efficient bypass for truck and regional traffic that will reduce the number of big rigs on local streets in North Delta and Surrey.

Construction is to be finished by 2012.

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