

Comox Valley Record - News

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Two of Canada's leading social and civil rights activists are coming to the Comox Valley for a special community forum Sept. 23 at Mark Isfeld School at 6:30 p.m.

Maude Barlow is the national chairperson of the Council of Canadians, a citizens' advocacy organization with members and chapters across Canada. She is also the co-founder of the Blue Planet Project, which works internationally for the right to water.

Maude chairs the board of Washington-based Food and Water Watch and is an executive member of the San Francisco-based International Forum on Globalization and a councillor with the Hamburg-based World Future Council.

In 2008/2009, she served as senior adviser on water to the 63rd president of the United Nations General Assembly. She has authored and co-authored 16 books.

Maude is the recipient of many educational awards and has received honorary doctorates from 10 Canadian universities for her social justice work.

She is the recipient of the 2005/2006 Lannan Cultural Freedom Fellowship Award, the 2005 Right Livelihood Award (known as the "Alternative Nobel") for her global water justice work, the 2009 Earth Day Canada Outstanding Environmental Achievement Award, and is the Citation of Lifetime Achievement winner of the 2008 Canadian Environment Awards.

Leo McGrady, author and lawyer, was one of a number of lawyers who ran a legal aid clinic out of the offices of the Georgia Straight newspaper in the days before there was any organized legal aid in British Columbia.

Leo wrote the first Protester's Guide to Civil Disobedience in B.C., which has been an invaluable aid to activists for almost two decades.

In 2009, Leo updated the handbook in preparation for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

Its widespread distribution to both the public and law enforcement agencies is credited with helping to make the Olympics, and the protests that accompanied them, a peaceful success. Leo's handbooks represent the most current summaries of citizens' right to peaceful protest in Canada today.

Maude and Leo will be joined at the speaker's podium by Tarah Millen, a young Comox Valley activist who has been campaigning to halt the slaughter of dolphins in Japan.

Tarah has returned from her challenging activities on the high seas and is planning to return again soon to continue her campaign. She will speak about peaceful direct action from a youth perspective.

“We are thrilled to be able to present this lineup of Canadian civil society leaders to our community,” says Kel Kelly, a spokesperson for the Peaceful Direct Action Coalition, which is sponsoring the event.

“Perhaps most exciting for us, is that when we explained the purpose of our coalition and invited all three to speak, they accepted without hesitation. Maude Barlow is coming from the eastern United States and Leo McGrady from Honolulu solely to speak at the event.”

The coalition’s main purpose is to educate the Comox Valley public on its rights and responsibilities in relation to peaceful protest and peaceful direct action. Their stated goal is to mobilize hundreds of Comox Valley citizens to relearn that peaceful direct action is a fundamental democratic right.

The Friday town hall meeting will be followed by an all-day Saturday workshop designed to give citizens information and the tools they need to organize peaceful direct actions of their own. That workshop will be held at the lower Native Sons Hall on Sept. 24 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Mark Isfeld School is at 1551 Lerwick Road in Courtenay and the Native Sons Hall is at 360 Cliffe Ave. in Courtenay.

There is no charge for either event, although donations are welcome.

For further information, contact Kel Kelly at 250-337-8348 or by e-mail at [kelkelly55@yahoo.ca](mailto:kelkelly55@yahoo.ca).

— Peaceful Direct Action Coalition

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