

Canadian Conference on Preventing Crimes Against Humanity: Lessons from the Asia Pacific War (1931-1945)

March 21-22, 2003 University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

MEDIA ALERT

March 20, 2003

Organizers condemn invasion of Iraq, 'Song of Healing' will mark Conference Opening Ceremony

When: **Wednesday, March 21, 2003, 9:00 – 9:30 a.m.**

Where: **First Nations Longhouse, 1985 West Mall, University of British Columbia**

Conference sponsors today condemned the invasion of Iraq by the Bush regime as a crime against peace and praised the Canadian government for its opposition to the war. "The government should uphold international law and support the United Nations," said Thekla Lit, co-chair of the conference. "We must prevent crimes against humanity at all costs."

Survivors of previous crimes against humanity will come together in a moving and visually impressive ceremony to mark the opening of the **Canadian Conference on Preventing Crimes Against Humanity: Lessons from the Asia Pacific War (1931-1945)**. The opening ceremony, 9 to 9:30 a.m. at the First Nations Longhouse, involves survivors of such atrocities as biological warfare, wartime sexual slavery, unparalleled cruelty in a prisoner-of-war camp, internment and loss of property because of ethnic origin, and atomic bombing among others.

The highlight of the event is the singing of a song of healing performed by Dr. Richard Vedan of the Neskonlith Band of the Secwepemc First Nation and director of UBC's First Nations House of Learning, and graduate student Tim Michel, also of the Secwepemc Nation. The survivors being welcomed at the ceremony will include:

- **Grandma HWANG Geum Joo**, Korean survivor of the sexual slavery system of the Japanese Imperial Army
- **Xu Jiayi**, Chinese survivor of Japanese biological warfare in China
- **Kinuko Laskey**, survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb
- **Don MacPherson**, Canadian Hong Kong Veteran and former POW
- **Mary Kitagawa**, survivor of the internment camp system which imprisoned Japanese Canadians during World War II

Conference guests and participants will be officially welcomed by Coastal Salish Elder Bob George of Tsleil-waututh (Burrard) Nation. Additionally, Richard Vedan will give a welcoming to Sty-Wet-Tan and the First Nations House of Learning, and Deputy Mayor of City of Vancouver Tim Louis will give an opening address.

Remarks will be given by Thekla Lit, Co-chair of Canada Association for Learning & Preserving the History of WWII in Asia & Co-chair of the Conference.

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