

KJELL AASEN IS A BIG FAT LIAR

Debunking the lies of Pan Fish/Omega Salmon and their destructive fish farm hatchery

LIE	REALITY
“Out of respect for First Nations, and in order to seek accommodation through consultation, Omega Salmon Group Ltd. today announced a temporary stop to construction at Ocean Falls.” ¹	By saying “Out of respect for First Nations” one would expect Omega Salmon Group to have sought prior informed consent BEFORE construction work began. Omega did not. Instead, the company ignored clear and explicit opposition against their plans by both the Heiltsuk and Nuxalk First Nations. Omega temporarily halted construction for two weeks, but construction has since resumed, without any steps taken by the company to consult with the Nuxalk Nation. The Heiltsuk has responded by suing Omega Salmon based on lack of meaningful consultation.
“We invited First Nations to meet with us, any time, anywhere...” ²	Never throughout the entire planning phase has Pan Fish/Omega Salmon contacted the Nuxalk Nation. When Nuxalk Hereditary Chief Sximana (Rhonda Schooner Sandoval) tried to meet with Omega parent company Pan Fish at their Seattle office in January 2003, Pan Fish responded by locking doors and shutting blinds. Supervisors at the construction site in Ocean Falls promised in December 2002 that Omega representative Kjell Aasen would be present during a future visit by the Heiltsuk and Nuxalk to Ocean Falls – a promise that was outright broken.
“...this type of activity is illegal and unacceptable,” ³	The question arises: whose activity is illegal? Both the Nuxalk and Heiltsuk Nation considers the construction work on their ancestral, unceded lands illegal and unacceptable.
“As First Nations' claims are being resolved, nobody should have a veto over sustainable economic development.” ³	The company assumes a blatantly colonial attitude by claiming to know that salmon farming ought to be the desired ‘sustainable economic development’ to be sought by the Nuxalk and Heiltsuk peoples. Secondly, it is not be up to Omega Salmon to determine whether or not First Nations’ land rights are being resolved (most First Nations would justifiably say that they are not).
“Omega is keeping all avenues, including legal options open, as they work to reach agreement...” ³	Omega’s version of ‘legal options’ is a lawsuit against Nuxalk Hereditary Chiefs. Their version of ‘reach agreement’ is to continue with the construction regardless of First Nations title, the sentiment of local citizens, or public opinion.

<p>“Omega is building an environmentally-sensitive... hatchery”¹</p>	<p>The hatchery is designed to produce up to 20 million Atlantic Salmon smolts, to supply fish farms in the Pacific Ocean. Atlantic salmon are non-indigenous to the Pacific Ocean and their release into the wild – inevitable with net-cage fish farms – is a direct threat to wild salmon. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity has identified invasive species like Atlantic salmon as a major threat to biodiversity on the planet. The fish farm industry in British Columbia has also been wrought with disease, parasites and pollution. It has had devastating impacts on wild salmon. The hatchery, and in fact the entire salmon farming industry, is a far cry from being ‘environmentally-sensitive’.</p>
<p>“[This is] a land-based hatchery facility.”¹</p>	<p>This is terribly misleading. The facility itself is on land simply because salmon have to be hatched in fresh water (though the plans do in fact call for both salt-water intake and outflow pipes). More importantly, the 5-20 million smolts that Omega intends to rear at this facility are destined exclusively to supply their net-cage salmon farms in the ocean.</p>
<p>“The project has been misrepresented by some as a salmon farm expansion in the Central Coast.”¹</p>	<p>The hatchery is entirely about expansion. It will be producing five million Atlantic Salmon smolts per year, <i>but</i> it is being built with a capacity four times greater. Omega is the only corporation thus far with newly approved fish farms in the Great Bear Rainforest (central and north coast of BC). Omega is banking on continued fish farm industry expansion in BC.</p>
<p>“...[they] call themselves an element of the Nuxalk Nation... not the elected council or the Nuxalk First Nation.”⁴</p>	<p>No one has ever called themselves ‘an element of the Nuxalk Nation.’ In fact, the Atlantic salmon industry has been opposed by the elected Nuxalk band council, all the hereditary chiefs of the Nuxalk House of Smayusta, commercial fishermen, the Heiltsuk Nation, and local citizens and environmental groups. Hundreds of people have been showing up to community meetings and protests in opposition to Omega’s hatchery.</p>

For further information please visit the Forest Action Network website www.fanweb.org

¹Omega Salmon, News Release, “Omega announces temporary construction halt to seek further consultation with First Nations”, January 14, 2003.

²Kjell Aasen, Omega Project Manager, as quoted in the Coast Mountain News, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2003, p.3

³Omega Salmon Group, News Release, “Activists from the Nuxalk Nation yesterday began occupying Omega Salmon Group Ltd's land-based hatchery construction site at Ocean Falls, BC.” 20 February 2003.

⁴Kjell Aasen, interview, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) news, Monday, Feb. 24, 2003.