

Give Musqueam piece of Pacific Spirit Park instead of golf course

Save the Course campaign proposes controversial land claims alternative

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A group of West Side residents wants the provincial government to remove the UBC golf course from a land claims settlement with the Musqueam First Nation--and replace it with a portion of the 2,000-acre Pacific Spirit Regional Park.

"We believe this alternative would be acceptable to the Musqueam if it didn't have any conditions attached to it, or any objections from the greater community," said NPA park board commissioner Marty Zlotnik, a frequent UBC golfer and founder of the Save the Course campaign, a group of mainly West Side residents.

Pacific Spirit Regional Park falls under the authority of the Greater Vancouver Regional District. The GVRD could not be reached for comment on this story.

The provincial government sold the 120-acre golf course in 2003 to UBC on the condition that the site be used only as a golf course. However, in 2005 the B.C. Court of Appeal suspended the sale citing insufficient consultation by the government with the Musqueam band. In June, a joint announcement by the band and the provincial government stated the site will be included in a land claims settlement. But the golf course will remain a golf course until at least 2033, when it's handed over to the Musqueam.

Band officials could not be reached for comment on this story, although the residents resisting its handover predict the course--located on the UBC Endowment Lands, some of the most valuable real estate in the province--will eventually be commercially developed.

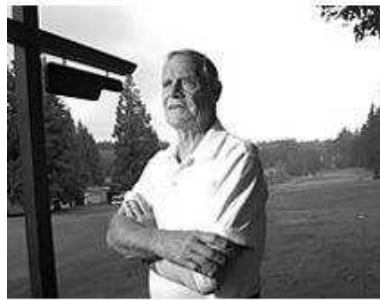
Although Zlotnik was not privy to settlement negotiations, he is concerned about Musqueam plans after the 2033 deadline. "The thought of billboards, casinos, commercial development, all that sort of stuff, is not something I particularly relish."

For other members of the Save the Course campaign, losing their beloved golf course is almost incomprehensible.

"It's absolutely ridiculous," said Dr. Bob Hindmarch, a retired UBC kinetics professor and UBC golfer since 1955. "Here you have a fantastic green space and we are talking about giving it away."

Hindmarch bristled at the notion the campaign is composed exclusively of West Side golfers who only care about their Sunday round. "That is nonsense," he said. "I used to hear that only rich people ski. People who say that have no idea. It's a public golf course--it's for everybody."

Green fees at UBC range from \$60 to \$70, while nearby Shaughnessy Golf and Country Club rates range from \$100 to \$250.



CREDIT: Photo-Dan Toulgoet

Retired UBC professor Bob Hindmarch says the provincial plan to turn UBC golf course over to the Musqueam as part of a land claim is ridiculous.

The Save the Course campaign will soon circulate a newsletter around the West Side in preparation for a community opinion poll aimed at gauging the level of opposition to the government's plan. Organizers claim the campaign is growing. A recent meeting at the golf course involved more than 200 supporters, and a 1,500-signature petition was sent to the provincial government.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation refused to comment on this story.

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