

Vancouver filmmaker focuses lens on Little Mountain

David Vaisbord says local social housing issues connect to global trends

BY CHERYL ROSSI, STAFF WRITER OCTOBER 25, 2012



David Vaisbord's work will screen three days before the Residential Tenancy Branch decides the fate of Little Mountain's remaining tenants.

Photograph by: submitted, for the Courier

Documentary filmmaker David Vaisbord didn't anticipate spending 100 hours in meetings and shooting 300 hours of footage when he focused his lens on events in his own neighbourhood.

But Vaisbord, who travelled the world to make his 1996 feature *Mischa*, decided six years ago that he didn't want to miss his children's early years. Turning his camera to the demolition of the more than 50-year-old community of 224 social housing units at Little Mountain made sense.

He quickly recognized local issues connect to global trends.

"Aspects of neoliberalism are at work at Little Mountain and it's three blocks away from my home," he said.

Some of the first results of his work will be shown as six short films screened this Friday, Oct. 26, three

days before the Residential Tenancy Branch is scheduled to decide the fate of the remaining tenants. The films, which will eventually be woven into a feature, are part of a multidisciplinary work he's dubbed "The Little Mountain Project," which will include additional digital and installation works.

Vaisbord could have ceased shooting after the old buildings were levelled, but he decided to record the development process with the hope that doing so would influence a better outcome.

"I want viewers_ to support the last tenants in the last building in their desire to stay in that building until the new project is built," Vaisbord said.

While one film focuses on the eviction of blind seniors, they are reportedly not all doom and gloom. One profiles two people who grew up at Little Mountain, including RED 1 of the RASCALZ who performs a spontaneous rap.

The federal government transferred ownership of the 15.3-acre property that's bounded by Main and Ontario streets, 33rd and 37th avenues, to the province in 2007. Most of the residents of Little Mountain were moved by September 2009 and all but one building was demolished. B.C. Housing agreed to invest the net proceeds of the sale of the site to developer Holborn Properties Ltd., after the social housing is replaced. Half of the proceeds would fund the development of social housing throughout the province and half would fund social housing in Vancouver.

Vaisbord says he's captured CEO of B.C. Housing Shayne Ramsay saying all of the proceeds would benefit Vancouver, at a point when extra high densities of market housing were being considered for the site.

He hopes Vancouverites will learn from the Little Mountain experience so that destroying a community and moving tenants into spaces needed by others years ahead of any redevelopment never happens again.

"Now write a letter, go to the rally on Monday at the Rental Tenancy Branch, write the letters to the City of Vancouver, the people that have the power, the province," he said.

For more information, see littlemountainproject.com. The screening starts at 7 p.m. at Little Mountain Gallery on East 26th Avenue just west of Main Street and is free of charge.

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