

Press Release: Youth Organizers Speak Out About Julian West's Behavior

September 22, 2008  
Victoria, British Columbia

Having recently become aware of the CBC news story regarding Julian West's behavior in 1996 at a youth environmental retreat, we would like to clarify our experience of this event. As witnesses to Mr. West's behaviour during this conference, we feel strongly that his actions were a far cry from "a serious error in judgment." In fact, Mr. West's behaviour was grossly inappropriate and of a sexual nature.

We are speaking out as witnesses of the incident and participants of the youth-lead environmental conference, which took place in May 1996 in Cowichan Lake. Mr. West was invited to speak as the local Green Party representative at the conference. At one point during the conference he removed all of his clothing and stood naked, with an erection, in front of a large group of young women aged 14-17 years. The youth were face painting at the time and were completely clothed. Mr. West was participating in the activity when he said, "Why stop here", then removed all of his clothing and stood completely naked with an obvious erection. He was immediately asked to leave; and finally left following an emotional and dramatic outcry from the participants. We received an apology from the Green Party, but never from Mr. West himself. The Green Party made it clear to us that they would deny Mr. West political involvement in the future.

The event was deeply traumatic and embarrassing for many of the young women who attended the conference. It seems obvious to us now as adults that we should have taken immediate legal action. Mr. West's behaviour was completely inappropriate and disturbing. We did not take legal action out of fear we would draw media attention to ourselves, the environmental organization we were representing, and the camp where the event occurred. As youth we were unaware and poorly guided through the proper legal procedures.

It is not at all our intention to damage the NDP's campaign, but we feel strongly that this man should not be allowed into a position of power.

Sincerely,

Amy Brownhill  
Jessica Gnyp