

Natives target Olympics - Kamloops This Week, 11/16/2001 -- Natives protesting expansion at Sun Peaks Resort took their cause to the international stage Wednesday.

At a press conference in Vancouver, Neskonlith Indian Band Chief Arthur Manuel announced the Native Youth Movement (NYM) will petition the International Olympic Committee to reject the Vancouver-Whistler bid for the 2010 Olympics.

"The Olympic Committee looks at a country's human rights and environmental record when awarding the event. Once (police) started arresting and removing our people from their land, it turned into a whole new dimension." Manuel has repeatedly accused the provincial and federal governments of genocide in their dealings with Shuswap people since Europeans arrived in the area more than 200 years ago.

NYM members have been camped at Sun Peaks for more than a year, claiming the expansion infringes on their traditional territory. However, Ottawa rejects their claim.

The group is currently manning two camps, one near McGillivray Lake and the other at the base of a ski run near the village.

Attorney General Geoff Plant broke off talks with Manuel surrounding the dispute earlier this week after the native leader refused to tear down the camps. He said talks are off until the camps are gone.

On Thursday, Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Bid Corporation spokesperson Sam Corea said the group wasn't overly surprised by the natives' move.

"When someone speaks negatively of the bid, of course, we're going to take notice but the Olympic movement is an international one so many groups use it to further their cause. Our focus is to provide the best bid possible for the people of British Columbia."

Corea says the International Olympic Committee will decide who gets the 2010 Games in July 2003.