



HOME • PR TOOLKIT • PUBLICATIONS • DOWNLOADS • ABOUT US • CONTACT US

PRHeadquarters.com is a discussion forum for senior practitioners in issues management and crisis management, and for students of public relations as a discipline.

Cascadia Communications Associates

440 Sandbar Place
Delta, BC
Canada V4L 2L1

Phone: 604-943-5131
Cell: 604-787-6088
Fax: 604-943-9288

INSIDE ARTICLES

NEWS AND REVIEWS

[The Smithson Report: Removing Issues Management From Its Strait-Jacket](#)

[What role does the Internet play in orchestrating protest?](#)

[What's the Internet doing to investor relations?](#)

[Should PR students work for a PR agency? Some wise career advice.](#)

[Should you hire a big PR agency or a freelancer? Tips for the CEO.](#)

GUIDES

[Indispensable tools for strengthening your PR skills.](#)

COMING UP

- Does your PR program measure up?
- Fighting hostile takeovers with public relations
- New ways to help clients measure their return on investment from PR

The dirty little secret of the campaign against salmon farming

Why won't The *Vancouver Sun* publish Vivian Krause's research?

Join me for a moment in a little thought experiment.

Pretend that you have been following the decades-long controversy over salmon farming in B.C. Now let's imagine that someone has discovered that for a number of years all the research into the environmental and health affects of salmon farming had been bought and paid for *by Norwegian salmon farming companies*.

Now let's imagine the explosion that would result.

Rafe Mair lights his hair on fire. Greenpeace, the Living Oceans Society, the Georgia Strait Alliance, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform, all demand government investigations. All the academics in the Fisheries faculties at Simon Fraser and UBC sign open letters denouncing the salmon farming companies for this sinister exercise in corporate power. David Suzuki is in the *Globe and Mail* fulminating about the dire influence of foreign salmon farming companies on Canadian government policy. The *Vancouver Sun* headlines the story and gives Mark Hume a three-part feature in which to elaborate the details of this terrible subversion of truly independent science. The CBC commissions a one-hour special.

OK, end of thought experiment.

None of this happened. The Norwegians didn't fund the research and the environmental and journalistic establishments didn't storm the ramparts.

What did happen, in the real world, was something else.

A very different – but equally important – piece of information about the salmon farming controversy was unearthed by a lowly private citizen. Information that one of the longest-running advocacy campaigns (and at least some of the research associated with it) has been paid for by a group of very wealthy U.S. foundations.

What is interesting is what did NOT result from this discovery. No headlines (in fact, virtually no news coverage). No barrages of letters to the editors. No open letters from scientists. No demands for investigation or that anyone resign. No questions in the legislature.

Nada.

Background

Vivian Krause is a former employee of the salmon farming industry and someone with a long interest in the controversy. For several years she has been interested in how the decades-long campaign against salmon farming has been paid for.

A fair question, one would have thought, since the campaign dates back to the 1980's when it was launched by the Fisheries and Allied Workers Union with the stated purpose of preventing farmed salmon from undercutting the price of wild salmon. And since the campaign has morphed into an international one and has been a fixture of BC political life over at least five elections.

Using public information sources Ms. Krause discovered that in the recent past a group of U.S. Foundations – in particular the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts -- have poured more than \$100 million (she says over \$126) million into B.C. organizations that have campaigned against open net-cage salmon farming. These same organizations promote "wild" salmon produced in Alaska as an alternative to farmed salmon.

Ms. Krause reports that the Packard foundation has spent \$60 million to support the Marine Stewardship Council and promote MSC-certified fish - most of which is Alaskan. All of this is done under the rubric of "de-marketing" farmed salmon (ie., attempting to discredit it in the minds of consumers and to persuade retail grocers not to sell it).

The recipients of this money have included the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace, the Living Oceans Society and the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform.

This is not some conspiracy theory. According to Ms. Krause the "money trail" is contained in the Foundations' own public records. She outlines them in her blog at <http://fair-questions.com/>.

Now let us go back to our thought experiment. If true, an allegation that one of the longest-lived environmental campaigns in B.C. history has been financed – and I mean *financed* -- by foreign Foundations – and that the foundations themselves admit that one of their goals is to "de-market" (shut down) a significant B.C. industry in favour of the Alaska wild salmon industry – is of significant importance to the people of British Columbia.

In a properly working open society, the media would report the story, people would read the evidence, environmental groups and foundations would tell their side of the story, and the public would decide what is true and whether it matters. Right?

Environmentalists have always contended that any research supported by corporations is "tainted" and therefore dismissable. Do these groups now argue that research and advocacy funded by a group of powerful U.S. foundations – with a stated political goal of eliminating farmed salmon from the marketplace – is beyond reproach?

We don't know. Because the environmental groups, and the *Vancouver Sun*, have dropped a curtain of silence over the matter. Apparently it is not to be mentioned or reported or discussed.

One would have thought that such well-known advocates of "transparency" as the *Vancouver Sun* would have been all over the

story and that everyone from Rafe Mair to David Suzuki and Greenpeace to the Living Oceans Society would have been rushing to the ramparts to either refute the information or “explain” it.

Instead: silence. Publication bans. Whisperings that the information couldn’t possibly be true – or couldn’t possibly MEAN anything – or that Vivian Krause is not to be taken seriously (after all, did she not used to work for the salmon farmers?).

I suspect that the groups in question are hoping that Vivian Krause will quietly fade away or be written off by the citizenry as a tool of industry.

What I can’t understand is why the *Vancouver Sun* has apparently decided, as a matter of policy, that it will not report the story. *The Sun* is the flagship of the mainstream news media in BC. As such, it has a special responsibility to report important news fully and impartially. The Sun’s handling of this story is dismaying.

Are Ms. Krause’s facts in error? Is there some explanation that this much U.S. foundation money flooding into a B.C. issue is unimportant, or has not corrupted the integrity of our politics?

Is *The Sun*’s reasoning that, to publish the story would undermine the credibility of groups like the David Suzuki Foundation, groups with which the newspaper has a relationship?

Hopefully *The Sun* will explain itself, instead of leaving Vivian Krause’s research to the blogosphere.

Last but not least, download a gorgeous new free screen-saver (see box on right) for PR practitioners. An inspiring vista - and a quote to help keep you sane!

▶ Feature FREE Download:

Screen Saver

To download this screen saver, please supply your name and email address first.

Your Name:

Your email:

you only need to hit submit once and you should get a file to download to your computer.