

Truth and Reconciliation Community- Bobcaygeon

Statement of Support for the Wet'suwet'en Nation, February 6, 2020

Truth and Reconciliation Community – Bobcaygeon*(Ontario) stands firmly in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation who continue to assert sovereignty over their traditional territories and resist state violence. We support the demands of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs who are once again facing a triple threat to their sovereignty from the federal government, the provincial government in B.C. and Coastal GasLink (CGL).

Background

In open violation of Wet'suwet'en, Canadian and International law, CGL is attempting to push through a 670 kilometre fracked gas pipeline that would carry fracked gas from Dawson Creek, B.C. to the coastal town of Kitimat, where LNG Canada's processing plant would be located. LNG is the single largest private investment in Canadian history. CGL is one of many proposed pipelines attempting to cut across the Wet'suwet'en traditional territories. After centuries of colonial oppression, racism and traumatic experience, the Wet'suwet'en Nation is once again facing a monumental threat to their right to sovereignty.

The Wet'suwet'en Nation have lived on and governed their territories for thousands of years. They have never signed treaties or sold their land to Canada. Hereditary Chiefs have maintained the use and occupancy of their lands and hereditary governance system; they are the Title Holders of their territories and maintain the authority and jurisdiction to make decisions on their unceded lands. The 22,000 square kilometers of Wet'suwet'en Territory is divided into five clans and thirteen house groups. Each clan within the Wet'suwet'en Nation has full jurisdiction under their law to control access to their territories. They fought for many years in court to have their sovereignty recognized and affirmed by Canadian law. In 1997 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Wet'suwet'en people had never given up rights and title to their 22,000 square kilometres of territory in northern British Columbia. The court decisions also recognized Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs as the rightful representatives of the Wet'suwet'en title holding collective.

Recent History

In January 2019 the RCMP forcibly removed Wet'suwet'en people and their guests from the Gidimt'en checkpoint. In a heavily militarized raid which included assault rifles, the RCMP were authorized to use lethal force against Indigenous land defenders. Since that brutal attack, solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation has grown and awareness of their situation increased worldwide. Other important developments have occurred as well, including:

- The government of British Columbia has passed into law the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which include the right to give free, prior and informed consent to activities on Indigenous lands. That right includes the right to say no and this is what the Wet'suwet'en nation is continuing to assert.
- On December 31, 2019, British Columbia Supreme Court Justice Marguerite Church granted an injunction against members of the Wet'suwet'en Nation who have been stewarding and protecting their traditional territories from the destruction of multiple pipelines, including

Coastal GasLink's liquefied natural gas pipeline. The Wet'suwet'en issued a call for international solidarity actions in response to this escalating situation.

- In January 2020 all 5 clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation evicted CGL from their territories. The Company sought and obtained an injunction from the B.C. Supreme Court which gave the Wet'suwet'en until 3 pm on Friday, January 10 to comply with an order to remove gates and cabins on their own land. The standoff continues.
- In January 2020, the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) called upon Canada to halt construction of the CGL pipeline until the Wet'suwet'en people grant free, prior and informed consent to the project. The Committee also urged Canada to cease the forced eviction of land defenders and prohibit the use of lethal weapons against Indigenous Peoples, and to guarantee that no force will be used against them. It also urged the federal government to withdraw the RCMP from traditional lands.
- In February 2020, the RCMP is acting to forcibly remove people in Wet'suwet'en territory, including members of the Wet'suwet'en nation from their own territory, arresting people and denying media access to and observation of their activities.


Solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en


TRC Bobcaygeon supports the following demands from the Hereditary Chiefs:

- That the province cease construction of the CGL Pipeline Project and suspend permits;
- That the UNDRIP and our right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are respected by the state and RCMP;
- That the RCMP and associated security and policing services be withdrawn from Wet'suwet'en lands in agreement with the most recent letter provided by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination (CERD) request;
- That the provincial and federal government, RCMP and private industry employed by CGL respect our laws and our governance system, and refrain from using any force to access our lands or remove our people.

Truth and Reconciliation Community-Bobcaygeon stands in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en land defenders. We demand that the government of Canada and British Columbia end their violence and threats against Indigenous People immediately and respect the sovereignty of the Wet'suwet'en Nation.

Sincerely,


Rodney Smith-Merkely
TRC Bobcaygeon Co-Keeper


Sherry Telford
TRC Bobcaygeon Co-Keeper

* Truth and Reconciliation Community – Bobcaygeon (Ontario) is comprised of a group of Settlers who are learning about Truth & Reconciliation and have a sincere desire to make some positive contributions to promote awareness to other settlers in our community. Our mission is to foster and develop respectful relationships among Settlers, Indigenous neighbours and the Land. We encourage and support one another and anyone who will join with us in moving towards restitution and decolonization.