

Statement of Indigenous Youth Standing in Solidarity with Wet'suwet'en



Youth hold press conference on the steps of the BC Legislature, February 26, 2020.

These are demands for Canada, for BC, for Canadian officials. We are Indigenous youth from nations across Canada standing independently in solidarity with all five clans of the Wet'suwet'en nation who have unanimously rejected the Coastal GasLink (CGL) project. In standing with our Wet'suwet'en relatives we will occupy Ministry offices, rail lines and legislative and parliamentary precincts in order to hold all levels of the Canadian government responsible for their perpetuation of Canada's genocidal legacy. We are committed to holding Canadian officials accountable. This means continually returning to the spaces of governance and law until Canada abides by Wet'suwet'en traditional governance and law. It is our inherent responsibility as Indigenous youth to resist injustice and defend Wet'suwet'en sovereignty. We recognize that the Wet'suwet'en upholding their responsibilities to lands, waters and climate justice protects our collective futures.

Indigenous youth stand in solidarity with all Indigenous peoples defending their lands across Canada, from Wet'suwet'en to Tyendinaga. We resist the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Ontario Provincial Police violently criminalizing Indigenous peoples for demanding a bare minimum of Canada. Through these shameful arrests the world has witnessed the colonial façade of reconciliation come crashing down to expose the Canadian reality of Indigenous genocide that has never been interrupted or reconciled. Indigenous youth across the country declare that reconciliation is dead. We condemn the coercive tactics employed by CGL, the lack of meaningful dialogue from the Canadian state, and the overall attempted erasure of Indigenous rights, title and law.

The situation on Wet'suwet'en territory has revealed the true nature of Canada's predatory consultation practices. It has been made clear that the Indigenous nations do not have the right to free, prior and informed consent. The ongoing raid against the Wet'suwet'en shows that saying NO

results in a paramilitary invasion. Good faith negotiations do not look like seizing Indigenous lands at gunpoint while simultaneously denying critical programs and services for our communities. Not only is the RCMP raid of Wet'suwet'en territories a coercive force on behalf of Coastal GasLink, but so is the systemic treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Our communities should not be subject to predatory consultation practices that exploit cycles of poverty that Canada intentionally maintains, meanwhile generating immense wealth from our territories since colonization. Boil water advisories, near extermination of traditional foods like wild salmon, caribou and buffalo, as well as underfunded social, health and education programs accessed by regular Canadians are all coercive conditions for negotiations with industry. This is the inescapable economic component of ongoing colonization. There is undue pressure for Indigenous nations to engage in impact benefit agreements/mutual benefit agreements with environmentally destructive projects. The economic oppression of colonization is leveraged by corporate interests and supported by the government. The impact benefit agreements negotiations are a corrupt process. This is not equivalent to true consent.

Our human rights as Indigenous peoples are inherent and cannot be contingent upon a transaction and annihilation of our lands. As Indigenous youth we will do everything in our power to protect our future and Wet'suwet'en lands from destruction. It's time for Canadian officials to do the same. If you do not stand with us you are complicit in ongoing injustice. Our generation and all future generations of our nations will remember those who took a stand against genocide. We will also not forget those who were complacent in ongoing colonial acts of violence.

We demand that the leadership of British Columbia and Canada enter into nation-to-nation discussions with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. In order for these discussions to take place in good faith and without duress, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police must be withdrawn from Wet'suwet'en territories. All ongoing RCMP patrols and surveillance must also cease. The removal of the Community Industry Safety Office will not satisfy this requirement unless all RCMP activities are discontinued. Coastal GasLink must cease activity and withdraw personnel from Wet'suwet'en territories in accordance with the eviction [order] that was issued by Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs on January 4, 2020. Canada must critically examine how the systemic treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada is a coercive factor in negotiations with industry. There can be no free, prior and informed consent while many Indigenous nations in Canada still have boil water advisories. British Columbia must revoke all permits granted to CGL, especially in light of the BC Environmental Assessment Office's rejection of CGL's technical data report. British Columbia must also cease its defamation and criminalization of Indigenous leaders and governments. The inflammatory rhetoric of the BC Premier only serves to incite hate and violence against Indigenous peoples standing up for our inherent rights and livelihoods. Canada must cease the criminalization of all peaceful Indigenous solidarity actions and blockades that exist because of Canada's failure to adhere to diplomacy and meet with Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Call off OPP from Tyendinaga Mohawk territory. It is time for you to act upon your responsibilities.