

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**February 7th, 2020 Lekwungen Territories / Victoria, BC**

### **Indigenous Youth to Hold Press Conference at 10am Friday, February 7th, 2020 on the Front Steps the British Columbia Legislature, Victoria, BC**

A coalition of Indigenous youth will speak to the unfolding RCMP raid on Wet'suwet'en territory, and the urgent need to bring visibility to the violations of Indigenous and human rights through solidarity actions in support of Wet'suwet'en. The Green Party's Racelle Kooy will also be making statements.

*As Indigenous youth we stand with Wet'suwet'en assertion of sovereignty because we understand that Indigenous Peoples will cease to exist without our land; our languages, cultures, and future generations cannot survive without our it. Indigenous youth are not only inheriting a climate crisis driven by fossil fuel projects like CGL, but Canada's legacy of colonization, genocide, and gendered violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. In protecting the lands from industrial development, we are protecting our bodies from violence.*

Indigenous youth of Nuuchahnulth, Wet'suwet'en, Tla'amin, Sto:lo, Secwepemcúlecw, Namgis, Heiltsuk, Kwagu'ł, Ma'amtagila, Lil'wat, Xwlemi, Qayqayt, Lue Chogh Tue, Shishalh, W̱SÁNEĆ, Gitxsan, and Sḵw̱wú7mesh Nations are locked down and holding ceremony with a sacred fire at the ceremonial entrance to British Columbia Parliament in Victoria, BC in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and in conjunction with Indigenous youth actions from Vancouver to Winnipeg, Tyendinaga to Tkaranto, and the many other collaborative actions of solidarity across the country.

We conduct our ceremony, with sacred fire, at the ceremonial entrance to the legislature in response to the ceremonial rights that are being denied and the sacred sites that are being desecrated in the name of industry. We are accountable to our more-than-human relations, future generations, the land, and waters, and we require our traditional territories to conduct our law and ceremony, and thus to continue to exist as Indigenous peoples.

Canada and British Columbia have committed to upholding UNDRIP, [as well as implementing the TRC calls to action](#), yet the actions of the federal and provincial governments in placing the agendas of industry above the survival of Indigenous peoples echo the state's long history of bans on ceremony, misleading and racially charged narratives and dispossession through Indian residential schools, establishment of reserves and forced relocations. The parallels between

today's state violence and Canada's history with Indigenous nations leads us to question if the era of reconciliation differs that greatly from the eras of residential schooling and potlatch bans.

Notably, Canada's violations of Wet'suwet'en peoples rights to maintain their culture and existence as a nation violates *Article 8* of UNDRIP:

*Article 8*

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
  - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
  - (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
  - (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
  - (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
  - (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

In response to these violations, Indigenous youth for Wet'suwet'en are occupying political buildings and offices across Canada to urge elected representatives stand by Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs representing all five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation in opposition to Coastal GasLink. Coastal GasLink (CGL) has never obtained free, prior, and informed consent to operate within unceded Wet'suwet'en territories. The decision from the BC Supreme Court to extend CGL's injunction order is a criminalization of Wet'suwet'en law and directly violates their constitutionally protected rights to occupy their own unceded lands, as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Canadian government cannot continue to ignore these actions while also claiming commitments to reconciliation and climate action. It is long-past time that Canadian politicians no longer perpetuate Canada's shameful status quo in relation to Indigenous rights and instead respect our sovereignty as Indigenous Peoples. This is the *minimum*.

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