

GITXSAN GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE GITXSAN HEREDITARY CHIEFS

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**GITXSAN CONCERNED ABOUT POLICING OVER INDIGENOUS ISSUES
AND STAND WITH WET'SUWET'EN NEIGHBOURS TO URGE BC GOVERNMENT
TO WITHDRAW POLICE ENFORCEMENT AND RESOLVE PEACEFULLY**

GITXSAN TERRITORIES/Hazelton BC – As the Wet'suwet'en Nation prepares to defend its rightful jurisdiction against the Coastal GasLink Pipeline project and invasion made by the RCMP, the Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs- as they have done since the historic case at Delgumuukw/Gisday'wa – extends its full support to its neighbour nation. The Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs will be keeping a close watch on the activity of the RCMP to ensure they are resolving these land issues peacefully and collaboratively.

Since 2018, the Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs have been hard at work organizing and rebuilding their nation to address many of the issues that present themselves today such as jurisdiction, industry impacts on the environment, self-governance and policing (to name a few).

In light of the work being done, the Gitxsan are concerned over using policing and military resources that are being enforced during their neighbours blockade against the Coastal GasLink pipeline.

“To use police or military resources over indigenous land issues such as the one with the Wet'suwet'en Nation, who are our neighbours, who are currently protesting peacefully is a waste of taxpayer dollars. We are concerned that this will impact any peaceful work that has been done to date in our own community and will make this tough for any indigenous communities to see any real benefit of the UNDRIP announcement. This is an issue of uncertainty with respect to land issues and it needs to be resolved respectfully and peacefully with the Hereditary Chiefs. Policing is a community matter and the RCMP cannot take sides in these circumstances of co-existing jurisdictions,” says Simogit Sakimhigookxw, Vernon Smith.

The Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs have begun what promises to be a constructive process with the Provincial and Federal Governments to ensure sportfishing permit holders are not breaking the Gitxsan Ayook (laws) by trespassing on their jurisdiction without permission and playing with the fish. Catch and release is considered playing with the fish and is breaking traditional Gitxsan law.

The Gitksan Government requests that the government stop using taxpayer dollars on police enforcement to address indigenous land claims.

“These issues are no place for police involvement. It is for industry and government to come to an agreement with Hereditary Chiefs,” states Simogyat Gwiiyeehl, Brian Williams.

“RCMP actions to set up check points is contrary to Bill 41 which provides that Indigenous lands will be demilitarized” states Simogyat Nola/Molexan, Norman Moore.

The Skeena River Watershed includes the Bulkley and Morice Rivers which are under the jurisdiction of the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs. The current NDP Government lead by Premier John Horgan has not followed through and this is a direct result of the unfinished consultation process that is required by the Environmental Assessment Acts.

Horgan and his government claim that existing Provincial and Federal law allows the pipeline development to continue is ambiguous which is forcing First Nation communities to address projects like this with blockades and peaceful protest leaving First Nations with even more uncertainty since the commitment to UNDRIP was announced.

“We feel that this NDP Government has not met its burden to ensure the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs consent to this development nor has it met its commitment to ensure this proposed pipeline project benefits the individual interests of all Wet’suwet’en people. We should stop asking our courts to solve problems that cannot be solved in the colonial courts” states Simogyat Gwiiyeehl. ***“It is unfortunate that Premier Horgan is undermining the work done by his cabinet minister, the Honorable Doug Donaldson.”***

The Gitksan Government urges the Federal and Provincial governments to recognize that indigenous land claims should not be met with police or military enforcement and are advising to stand by their promise to indigenous nations for truth, reconciliation and that includes proper consultation with Hereditary Chiefs.

Gitksan Government representatives:

Simogit Sakimhigookxw, Vernon Smith, Chairperson (phone/email)

Simogyat Gwiiyeehl, Brian Williams, Chairperson (phone/email)