



July 2, 2024

Open Letter: Premier David Eby Stop the criminalization of Wet'suwet'en land defenders!

Wet'suwet'en land defenders, under the governance of the Wet'suwet'en Nation's Hereditary Chiefs, oppose the construction of a natural gas pipeline by the Canadian-based company Coastal GasLink Pipeline Ltd. (CGL), owned by TC Energy Corporation. This pipeline is being built through their ancestral, unceded territory in British Columbia, Canada without the free, prior and informed consent of the Wet'suwet'en Peoples' Hereditary Chiefs.

Despite the Wet'suwet'en Nation's opposition, construction of the pipeline began in 2019 and is proceeding without their free, prior, and informed consent. For more than a decade, Wet'suwet'en land defenders have exercised their rights on the Yin'tah (territory) to protect it from unwanted development projects and industries. In December 2018, the British Columbia Supreme Court granted CGL an injunction that criminalizes land defenders if they attempt to impede pipeline construction.

Operating under the terms of the injunction, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the pipeline's private security company (Forsythe Security) have been intimidating, harassing, and unlawfully surveilling land defenders. More than 75 land defenders have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in four large-scale RCMP raids on Wet'suwet'en territory.

In 2022, the provincial government prosecuted 20 land defenders for allegedly disobeying the terms of the injunction order. Those who have gone to trial face jail time if found guilty. In January 2024, Sleydo' (Molly Wickham), Shaylynn Sampson and Corey "Jayochee" Jocko were found guilty of criminal contempt for violating the terms of the injunction. However, this conviction was based on solely peaceful actions that they took to stop pipeline construction, such as blocking a road and building tiny houses on pipeline construction sites. Their trial is ongoing because the land defenders presented an application arguing that the RCMP violated their human rights during the raids and their arrests. It will resume in September 2024. If this application is successful, the land defenders' guilty charges will be stayed; if it is unsuccessful, they face jail time and a criminal record. Similarly, Chief Dtsa'hyl, a Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief, was found guilty of criminal contempt by the British Columbia Supreme Court in February 2024 on charges from the 2021 CGL blockade. He will be sentenced in July 2024. The Crown is asking for 6-9 months jail time.



Canadian Sign Ons



CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE



The Wet'suwet'en Nation has the right to decide what forms of economic development should take place on their ancestral lands with their free, prior, and informed consent. They have the right to live in safety, free from surveillance, harassment, racism, criminalization, and gender-based violence. The land defenders are protecting their land and everyone's right to a healthy environment by opposing another harmful fossil fuel project. They have the right to carry out their land defense activities free from violence. The continued construction of the pipeline is unlawful.

The government of British Columbia must immediately:

- Drop the criminal contempt charges against land defenders who are awaiting trial.
- Stay the proceedings of those land defenders whose trials are already under way.
- Halt the harassment, intimidation, unlawful surveillance and criminalization of Wet'suwet'en land defenders.
- Ensure that injunctions are not used to infringe the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including forcibly removing them from their territories.

Sincerely,

CANADIAN SIGN ONS:

Above Ground (a project of MakeWay)

Ben & Jerry's

Amnesty International Canada English Speaking Section

Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder-Morgan Expansion

Amnesty International Canada French Speaking Section

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Association for the Support of North American Indians

Climate Emergency Unit

David Suzuki Foundation



Decolonial Solidarity

Dogwood BC

Freedom from War Coalition

Georgia Strait Alliance Josette

Wier

Lawyers Rights Watch Canada

Le Centre Oblate

LeadNow

Lush Cosmetics

Manitoba Energy Justice
Coalition

MiningWatch Canada

OMI Lacombe Canada

Project Heart

INTERNATIONAL SIGN ONS:

Aktionsgruppe Indigene &
Menschenrechte e.V.

Amnesty International
Cloppenburg

Amnesty International France

Amnesty International Germany

Amnesty International
Tuebingen

European Alliance for the Self-
Determination of Indigenous
Peoples

Retired United Church of
Canada Clergy

Salal and Cedar Watershed
Discipleship Community

Say No to LNG

Sierra Club BC

stand.earth

Victoria Climate Action Team

Victoria Secular Humanist
Association

Union of BC Indian Chiefs

US Tax Consulting

Wilderness Committee

Women's International League
for Peace & Freedom

XAXE TENEW Land
Rematriation Society

Front Line Defenders

Healing Well Healthcare

Incomindos

Medicine Horse Village

Tokata-LPSG RheinMain
Germany / Support Group of
Indigenous Social,
Environmental, Cultural and
Human Rights Projects

Working Circle Indians of
North America/Austria



**International
Sign Ons**



European Alliance for the
Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples



arbeitskreis
indianer
nordamerikas (AKIN)
Working Circle Indians of North America