HEAL
THE PEOPLE

HEAL
THE LAND

UNIST'OT'EN CAMP

YOU ARE NOT ALONE WHEN YOU PROTECT YOUR TERRITORY – THE ANCESTORS WALK WITH YOU

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LAYOUT: MOLLY JANE

Wet'suwet'en Peoples

YINKA DINI – PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH
UNIST'OT'EN – PEOPLE OF THE HEADWATERS

The Unist'ot'en (C'ihlts'ehkhyu / Big Frog Clan) are the original Wet'suwet'en Yintah Wewat Zenli distinct to the lands of the Wet'suwet'en. Over time in Wet'suwet'en History, the other clans developed and were included throughout Wet'suwet'en Territories. Unist'ot'en territory is abundant, and the terrain is very treacherous.

The Unist'ot'en took action to protect their lands from Lions Gate Metals at their Tacetsohlhen Bin Yintah, and built a cabin and resistance camp at Talbits Kwah at Gosnell Creek and Wedzin Kwah (Morice River - a tributary to the Skeena and Bulkley River), protecting from seven proposed Tar Sands and LNG pipelines.

Unist'ot'en Chiefs enjoy the beautiful territory

TIMELINE

1997

Delgamuukw Supreme Court Case: Landmark decision recognizing that aboriginal title is not extinguished in the areas claimed by Wet'suwet'en and Gixtsan. This case sets criteria for future rulings on aboriginal title. Plaintiffs in the case are all hereditary chiefs.

2007

Interest and Use study on proposed PTP project: Wet'suwet'en express will to prevent all pipelines.

2008

Decision by all Wet'suwet'en Clans to unanimously opt out of the BC Treaty Process, asserting rights and title on ancient jurisdiction belonging to them.

2009

Checkpoint established on Wedzin Kwa entrance to Unist'ot'en Territory

2010

Construction begins on log cabin, directly on the exact location of the proposed pipeline corridors.

DEC. 2011

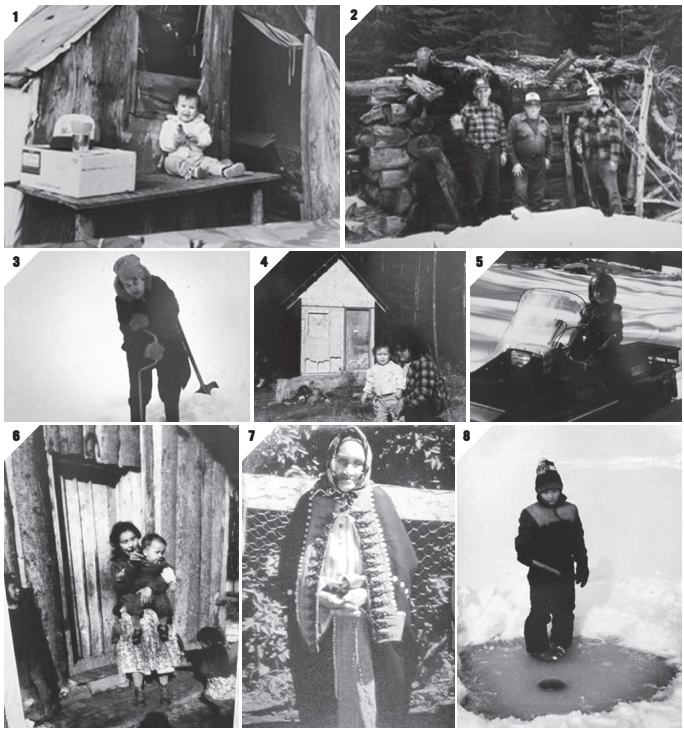
Unist'ot'en supports their grassroots neighbors, the Gitxsan nation, who blocked entry to their treaty office to contest a deal with Enbridge.

AUG. 2012

3rd Annual Unist'ot'en Action Camp: 200+ people attend a 5 day series of educational workshops, from all over Turtle Island and beyond.

HISTORIC WET'SUWET'EN USE OF THE LAND

These photos, taken about 25 years ago, provide a glimpse into the lives of the Wet'suwet'en people using their territory.



1 *This is the grand daughter of Wehalih spending time on her territory about 25 yrs ago. She now lives in San Diego.* **2** *Freda's dad Wigidimschol is to the left. His best friend XimSim is center. Ximsim's brother Billy is on the right. Billy now holds the name XimSim. These three enjoyed the outdoors in all seasons.* **3** *This is Tsakiy Ze' Wehalih (Freda's mother) using an ice auger at a lake on the territory.* **4** *This cabin stood beside a slightly larger cabin just below the 66km bridge (where the checkpoint is located). It was built as a trapping cabin and used for one season before the logging company CANFOR came and burned the two cabins to the ground because they considered them a fire hazard.* **5** *This Yamaha BRAVO is still in operation and was recently restored to do some trapping this year at Unist'ot'en Camp.* **6** *The old cabin on the territory* **7** *Nedebeez* **8** *Wehalih's grandson (Freda's son) icefishing on the territory.*

Unist'ot'en Camp

WHERE WE ARE LOCATED

The camp is located on the shores of the Wedzin Kwah (river) and mouth of the Gosnell Creek. These are all tributary to the Skeena, Bulkley, and Babine Rivers. Energy companies propose pipelines crossing the river at the exact point of our home and structures on the Unist´ot´en Territory of Talbits Kwah.

GOVERNACE STRUCTURE

The Unist´ot´en homestead is not a protest or demonstration. Our clan is occupying and using our traditional territory as it has for centuries. Our Free Prior and Informed Consent protocol is in place at the entrance of our territory, expressing our jurisdiction and our right to both give and refuse consent.

Our homestead is a peaceful expression of our connection to our territory. It is also an example of the continuous use and occupation of our territory by our clan. Our traditional structure of governance dictates the proper use and access to our lands and water.

Today all of our Wet´suwet´en territory, including Unist´ot´en territory, is unceded Aboriginal territory. Our traditional legal systems remain intact to govern our people and our lands. We recognize the authority of these systems.

September 3rd, 2015

TIMELINE

2012

Speaking tours educate wider audiences on Unist'ot'en resistance to fracking and tarsands expansion.

2013

Construction of traditional Pithouse on the territory.

2014

Construction of bunkhouse for visitors.

2015

Construction begins on the Healing Centre.

SEPT 3 2015

Hereditary chiefs from all five clans, and Office of the Wet'suwet'en staff, visit camp at the Wedzin Kwa. They assert their support for Unist'ot'en and affirm their position being NO to ALL pipelines. •

ANIMALS OF UNIST'OT'EN TERRITORY

Sggïgit
Bald Eagle

Wesiy
Lynx

C'itsit
Grouse

Dedzï
Loon

Tsa
Beaver

Yis
Wolf

Lhoc
Salmon

Ihiyil
Mountain Goat

Cas
Grizzly Bear

Hida
Moose

...and many more

Freda Huson leads protocol at the bridge over Wedzin Kwa

FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT PROTOCOL

The Free Prior and Informed Consent protocol used by the Unist'ot'en is a request of permission to enter the lands of the traditional chiefs and matriarchs. Visitors are asked to identify themselves and their relationship to the hosts, as our ancestors did. Like a border crossing, the protocol questions make Unist'ot'en land a safe place. FPIC ensures peace and security on the territory.

UNIST'TOT'EN TRADITIONAL TERRITORY REMAINS RELATIVELY INTACT. THE FORESTS ARE STILL THERE, WILDLIFE PROSPERS, AND THE WATER IS STILL PURE.

To enforce the decision to preserve the territory for future generations, a cabin was built in the exact place where Trans-Canada, Enbridge, and Pacific Trails want to lay pipelines.

A solar powered electric grid - built with donations and volunteer labor - powers the camp with energy from the sun.

No Pipelines

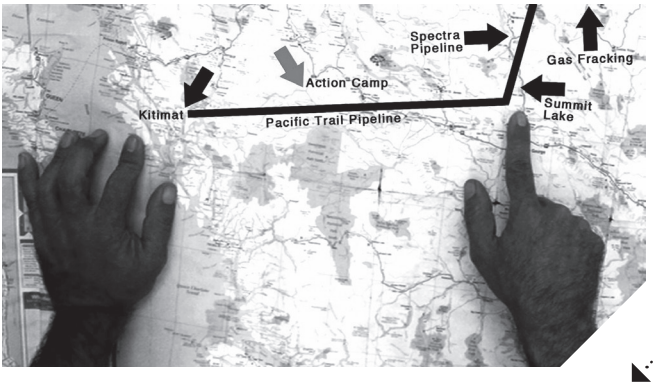
A constantly expanding number of companies have proposed Tar Sands and Fracking Gas pipelines through Unist'ot'en territory. Three particular companies, Chevron, TransCanada, and Enbridge, are still working without consent from Unist'ot'en.

TransCanada
Coastal Gaslink

Chevron
Pacific Trails Pipeline

ENBRIDGE
Northern Gateway

The proposed pipelines are a threat to the watershed, as well as the plants, animals and communities that depend on them. The Unist'ot'en are fighting for the future health of the land. They are protecting the traditional hunting, trapping, and fishing territories to ensure that the natural beauty and bounty of the earth will be enjoyed for generations to come.



FRACKING PIPELINE FACTS

NATURAL?

"Natural gas" conceals the dirty truth of fracking, which government, industry, media, and NGOs have tried to silence.

SAFER?

Although sold as a safer form of gas transportation, there have been over 990 natural gas transmission line accidents, 137 injuries, and 34 deaths since 2000.

DANGER ON THE WATERS

Supertankers are the size of the Empire State Building in length. They would pass through Hecate Strait near Kitimat, the 4th most dangerous body of water in the world.

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF IF THERE WILL BE A SPILL. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF WHEN.

FRACKING PIPELINE FACTS

THE LAST DROPS

BC has been doing "natural gas" extraction for 50 years – reserves of gas will be depleted by 2020.

KILLER MIX

Fracking uses a mix of water, sand, and chemicals. There are 750 substances used in fracking. 29 are known to be toxic and/or cause cancer.

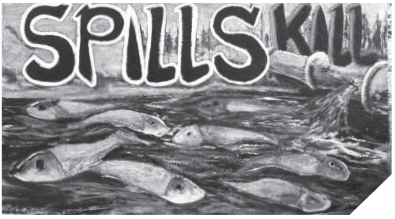
WASTING WATER

Fracking wastes huge amounts of clean water. For example, Apache plans to drill 2,000 to 3,000 wells in the Horn River Basin every several decades. Each well will use up to 90 million liters of water. That's up to 270 billion liters of water!

IS THE CAMPAIGN WORKING?

No pipeline work has been done within Unist'ot'en territory since we started. Several times, contractors from pipeline companies have been confronted by indigenous land defenders and peacefully turned away.

The camp has grown to a whole community in resistance. Volunteers helped build a permaculture garden, a solar powered mini-grid, and a healing lodge/cultural centre, under the guidance of hereditary indigenous leadership to help create a working vision for future generations.



WHAT ABOUT JOBS?

Dirty energy industries use the promise of "jobs" as their main argument to force people, who need money, into accepting their destructive plans. But these promises are usually broken.

Even for such a massive project as the Keystone XL pipeline (875 miles of pipeline), there are only 3500 temporary jobs and 35 permanent jobs. For smaller projects like the ones proposed here, there are far less, both temporary and permanent jobs. And… there are **no** jobs on a dead planet!

96% of profits go to the company – **$178.2 billion**. The Moricetown Band agreement states that the Band would receive $20.4 million over 35 years – which amounts to approximately **$364,000** when divided between 16 partners. **Should we settle for crumbs from the industry's feasting table?**

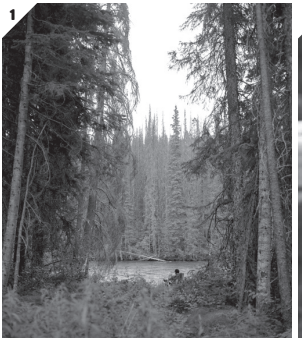
Life at Camp

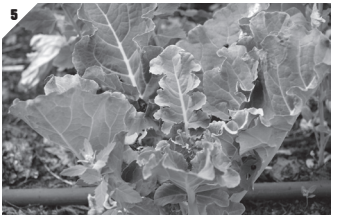
1 *TV environmental star David Suzuki paid a special visit to the camp to show support. He went through protocol with future Unist'ot'en chief, Destiny.* **2** *A pine marten on the Unist'ot'en territory* **3** *Supporters working on a construction project using solar power* **4** *Mountains of the Unist'ot'en Yintah* **5** *A home-made greenhouse provides delicious herbs and vegetables for the camp*

A DAY IN THE LIFE AT UNIST'OT'EN CAMP

Summer

gardening
hiking
construction
berry picking
harvesting medicines
sharing the language
canning salmon
hunting
fishing
fireside chats
singing
dancing
swimming
sports
learning together



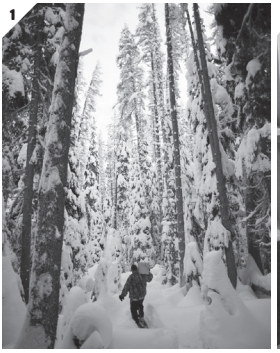


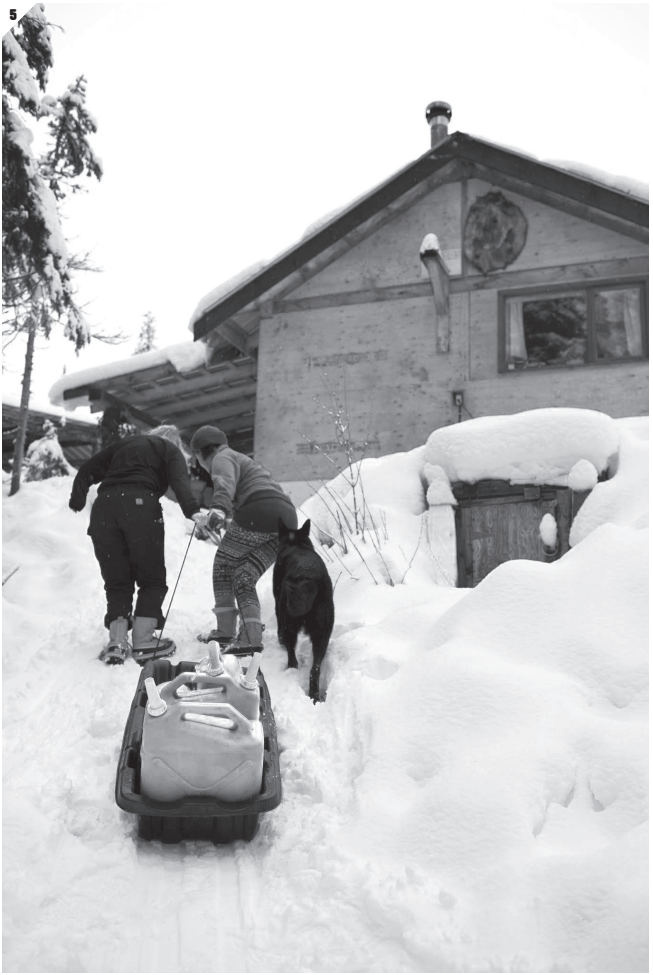
1 *Wedzin Kwah* **2** *Toghestiy works on a construction project.* **3,4,5** *Permaculture Garden* **6** *Supporter takes a break during roof construction on the Healing Centre.* **7** *Freda's family has a great time picking berries on their Unist'ot'en territory.* **8** *Supporters work on construction* **9** *In the summer many happy children play at the Unist'ot'en camp.* **10** *A drum group, made up of members of many Wet'suwet'en clans, performs a song.*

A DAY IN THE LIFE AT UNIST'OT'EN CAMP

Winter

hunting
trapping
saunas
chopping wood
skinning
snowmobiling
canning food
cooking
movie nights
reading
storytelling
board games
playing cards
arts and crafting
celebrations





1 *A supporter walks through the trapline in the bush on Unist'ot'en territory* **2** *Supporters read stories together in the bunkhouse in the evenings* **3, 4** *Supporter removing a pine marten from the traps* **5** *Making the daily run, carrying water up from the Wedzin Kwah - the pure water is used for everything, from cooking to bathing.* **6** *Walking the trapline, over a frozen lake deep in the territory* **7** *Using a chainsaw to buck down logs into firewood. Buildings in the camp are heated with woodstoves.* **8** *Taking inventory of the abundant canned wild meats and fruits at the camp - the goal is to be self-sufficient.*

Decolonizing Pipeline Resistance:

AN INTERVIEW WITH FREDA HUSON

This is an excerpt from a 2014 interview.

Multiple proposed pipelines, including Northern Gateway and Pacific Trails Pipeline, are slated to pass through the land of the Unis'tot'en - land that was never ceded to the Canadian state. The Unis'tot'en, however, have vowed to stop all pipelines, and built a cabin and pithouse on the right-of-way. They have also reinstated a traditional protocol to pass into their land, to keep surveyors for pipeline companies out.

Performed on a bridge over Wedzin Kwah, the pristine Morice River, the protocol consists of five questions:

WHO ARE YOU, AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM? WHY ARE YOU HERE? HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN TO STAY? DO YOU WORK FOR GOVERNMENT OR INDUSTRY THAT ARE DESTROYING THESE LANDS? HOW WILL YOUR VISIT BENEFIT THE UNIS'TOT'EN PEOPLE?

The protocol indexes an important shift in thinking on environmental issues: a shift that recognizes control is in the hands of indigenous communities. Mainstream environmental activism is often framed as an ethical imperative based on a bottom line determined by scientific discourse. An unfortunate effect is that this can pit environmental groups against the (often indigenous) communities most affected by environmental devastation.

And yet around the world indigenous peoples are leading movements that view ecology as a result of the adoption of local practices long suppressed by colonialism. The indigenous perspective is often silenced, though: their words passed over in favor of environmental scientists and activists. I recently had the opportunity to visit the Unis'tot'en Camp and interview Freda Huson, spokesperson for the Unis'tot'en.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY IS TO DECOLONIZE OUR PEOPLE.

Lee Veeraraghavan: The cabin, the camp, the checkpoint: these have been framed in the media and elsewhere as pipeline opposition, but the larger project is about much more. Could you talk about that?

Freda Huson: Well, we decided to develop a community, and the purpose of the community is to decolonize our people. Because via residential school, and even public school, they've been trying to get our people to forget our culture, forget about who we are, and become part of Canadian society. And that hasn't done justice to my people. You look at all the reservations: people are lost, young people don't know where they fit in, and they're getting into substance abuse. They game all night and sleep all day and they're basically dead - spiritually dead. They walk around like zombies trying to fit in.

LV: And the community that you're starting here is the first in a series of projects to return to the land?

FH: We don't categorize it as healing, but that's our ultimate goal. My niece is going to get her doctorate next year - she's a psychologist - and her plan is to develop a healing lodge to help our people get back to where we were before. We were really a strong people, and even though our culture is fully intact and still strong (our governing system), a lot of our young people aren't buying into it. You don't see them in our Feast hall. It's people of my generation that are in there. I myself didn't start going until fourteen years ago.

LV: What made you make that change?

FH: It was my dad telling me, "If you don't participate in the Feast system, and something happens to one of your kids, nobody's going to be there for you." You look at families that are not participating, and if they have a death, or somebody gets ill, nobody's there to lend them a helping hand, because they're not part of the system. He said, "You need to start going. You want somebody to help you, you need to start participating and helping other people, and then when you're in need, they're going to help you."

LV: On your website you talk about the protocol: what it is, and the history behind it. Could you talk about why you're bringing it back now?

FH: We're doing it to protect what's left of the land. When you drive in, you see a lot of areas that have been clear-cut and damaged. And because we only had ten percent left, we decided we were going to resurrect the protocol, and ask people these valid questions about why they're here. There's so much destruction all around us: mining, logging, and even people feeling they have free rein because that's what the government says: this is "Crown land" [land belonging to the Canadian public, held in the name of the Crown]. They hunt the game, and they just take...even though the government tries to regulate it, nobody really comes out and ensures that these hunters aren't taking a female moose. Nobody checks. Our people don't take cow moose, because they're the ones that reproduce. People start taking everything and anything, and then they wonder why our numbers are low.

OUR PEOPLE'S BELIEF IS THAT WE ARE PART OF THE LAND. THE LAND IS NOT SEPARATE FROM US. THE LAND SUSTAINS US. AND IF WE DON'T TAKE CARE OF HER, SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN US, AND WE AS A GENERATION OF PEOPLE WILL DIE.

But if we feel that people have successfully answered the questions, and if we're in agreement that they don't want the pipelines, and they just want to come back here and try fishing in one of the lakes, or just come to relax and camp out, then we let these people in. But if people are disrespectful and give us a lot of attitude, we tell them, "Turn around. We don't need people like you in here."

You are passing into our land, and we're ensuring that we'll find out who you are, where you come from, why you're here, and how your visit will benefit my people. Because if it's not going to benefit my people, why should we let you in? Right now, everywhere around us, all the industries that are in there - they throw us crumbs. And you always hear the government saying "We're giving handouts to these indigenous people!" Bullshit! It's not handouts! They basically steal all our resources, they kicked us off our land, confined us in prison on these reservations and forbade us from coming to live off our lands - just so they could take all the resources! They owe us way more than those scraps of "handouts" they're giving us. They keep us impoverished so that our people won't be able to stand up and fight them.

WE KNOW THIS LAND IS LIFE... WE'RE JUST TRYING TO GET BACK TO WHO WE ARE, TO GAIN OUR SPIRIT BACK, AND FEEL THAT CONNECTION.

LV: What does the land mean to you?

FH: It's actually...life. I get revitalized - my health has been better than it ever has been because I'm out here - and everything out here is alive. The water's alive: it's got all the mineral content in it when you drink it. When you go into the municipalities, in our community of Moricetown, they chlorinate the water, and it goes through a filtering system so that the water's basically dead. So you're just wetting your lips. Our people's belief is that we are part of the land. The land is not separate from us. The land sustains us. And if we don't take care of her, she won't be able to sustain us, and we as a generation of people will die.

We've started to restore this area via permaculture gardens, in order to grow our herbal plants and medicines and our berries. Eventually. But right now we're just growing conventional potatoes, things like that, just to restore the soil. Once the soil's restored, we're going to transplant some of our berry bushes. But back in the day our people used to stay fit and active on the land, and they'd live to be a hundred, they were so healthy! So we know, this land is life.

LV: Finally, what should I have asked? Is there something really important that I missed?

FH: Our people lived like this for a long, long time, and we're just trying to get back to who we are, to gain our spirit back, and feel that connection. A long time ago, animals used to talk to our people, and we'd understand them. Now it's been so long that our people have been away from the land, but I think the longer we're here, that'll come back. We respect the animals. For example, this is grizzly country, but they don't come into our space, and when we see they've marked their territory we respect it. We say, "OK. A grizzly has claimed this, let's go somewhere else," and we leave. That's their home as this is ours, and we're respectful of it. You respect them, and they respect you back. •

View of the stars from the Pithouse on Unist'ot'en territory

Testimonials

STORIES FROM VISITORS TO UNIST'OT'EN LAND

The following testimonials were written by people from many different walks of life, who have each found a unique form of healing in their visits to the Unist'ot'en land - mind, body, and spirit.

BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

Danny Michell, Jr. (Freda Huson's brother) was close to death. Deep in a coma, the doctors were ready to pull the plug. It was at that moment that Danny had a dream, or vision. He went to a place in his mind with a beautiful, clear, flowing river. All of his elders were there, but they were young. In the vision he could walk, although in life he used a wheelchair. The ancestors and elders touched him and brought him back to life – he woke up from the coma. The doctors were amazed.

Danny believed the place he went in the dream was at Poplar Lake, that the family often went to. But when he talked about it with his relatives, they realized it was the Wedzin Kwah, on the Unist'ot'en traditional territory. When Unist'ot'en people visit their land, they have emotional and healing experiences like this one. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE WHEN YOU PROTECT YOUR TERRITORY – THE ANCESTORS WALK WITH YOU.**

THE HEALING LODGE AND CULTURAL CENTRE

So many indigenous people and reporters have come out to Unist'ot'en land and found it to be healing experience, to live on the land and have a connection with the natural world and our teachings. We saw the healing lodge as an opportunity to expand and offer this to our community members. We envision holding healing camps there. It is a chance to return to some of our traditional teachings and land-based wellness practices of our ancestors. Our people have been impacted by intergenerational trauma, and disconnected from those practices.

Healing Centre

We are part of something bigger than ourselves. I am hoping we can emphasize how those traditional ways relate to current healing practices, leading to more holistic ways of achieving physical, psychological, and spiritual balance.

- from an interview with Karla Tait

HEAL THE PEOPLE. HEAL THE LA

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UNIST'OT'EN CAMP

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

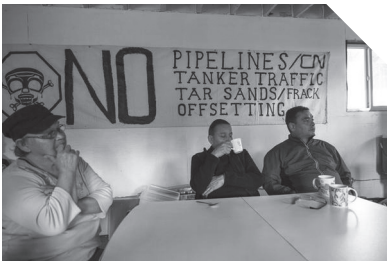
PRESIDENT OF THE UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

Like most people and organizations, we were aware of the camp's existence for a number of years, as well as the controversy surrounding it. My wife Joan and I spoke on it at a fundraising dinner at a church in Vancouver.

The 7 members on the BC First Nations Leadership Council meets with senior officials from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) from time to time, pursuant to a safety and security protocol. The RCMP requested meetings regarding the Unist'ot'en Camp, and we met with them on two occasions.

In the first meeting, with myself and the executive director, Don Bain, the RCMP raised their concerns about the camp's presence being opposed by some neighboring First Nations - because of their involvement in LNG contract work. They were making some very aggressive remarks, and we didn't appreciate the tone of the comments, particularly when they talked about physically removing the camp. In the second meeting, this time with the entire Council, there was no doubt from the RCMP's commentary that they had plans of moving into the camp. Our statement was that we absolutely would not support that, and it was not necessary. The RCMP later denied the aggressive statements were made.

Time progressed and there were reports that the RCMP were mobilizing their forces. 200 RCMP officers were involved in an operation to forcefully take down the camp, taking up hotel rooms in Burns Lake, and Smithers. At that point, I decided I was going to visit the Unist'ot'en camp.



Unistoten chief Lt'at'en meets with UBCIC grand chief Stewart Phillip & AFN BC chief Shane Gottfriedson at camp. Photo: Michael Toledano

I drove all night to get up there, and an APTN reporter happened to be on the same flight there as Chief Shane Gottfriedson. All 3 of us ended up going into camp together. The RCMP had a bogus claim that the camp is impeding major transportation or highways, but the road goes into nowhere – into old cut-blocks, ending a few kilometers after the checkpoint. It was a little bit tense at the beginning- we arrived wearing vests, in a black Yukon truck – the people at the first checkpoint were not aware of who we were, and thought we might be RCMP.

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE AMOUNT OF WORK THAT WENT INTO DEVELOPING THE CAMP.

We spent the afternoon there, and came out around suppertime. Upon arriving, I was very impressed with the amount of work that went into developing the camp. When you hear the word "camp" it suggests something temporary or makeshift, but I was so impressed with the buildings - how well constructed and up to code they were. It was all very well planned, well established, and organized. We spent the afternoon visiting elders and spokespeople. When we were in the camp we were treated with respect, we took "selfies", and it was very cordial.

Word quickly spread throughout the Wet'suwet'en nation that we were coming, and by the time we had left camp in the evening, there was a group of about 25 upset people waiting at the foot of mountain. They were doing contracting work, and had organized a gathering at a hotel in Houston. I had the opportunity to meet with them, and spent 3 hours hearing their side of the story. I explained it was a matter of public safety.

I felt if I were to visit the camp, it would create a very public awareness of the impending raid, and the RCMP would reverse their decision - which they did. A public letter was developed to tell the RCMP to back off, with 400 individual groups and high-profile international signatories.

There is no need to use police force at the Unist'ot'en camp. In the event the RCMP were to attempt it again, there would be even more public opposition. I never have and never will support heavy handed police tactics.

I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO COME BACK AGAIN.

On behalf of Joan and myself, we send warm regards to everyone at the camp, elders, spokespersons, and supporters. •

- from an interview with Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POSITIVE AND EMPOWERING ONE.

We visited the Unist'ot'en Camp on several different occasions. We were first invited up to the camp in 2013. **THE EXPERIENCE LEFT ME WITH A FEELING OF HOPE AND STRENGTH.** It was good to see how the Unist'ot'en members were committed to protecting the land, the water and their family's way of life. I loved getting to the checkpoint and witnessing the way Warner and Freda guided us through the protocol. It was such a respectful way to remind us that we were on their traditional territory and that they had expectations of us to be mindful and share the beauty of their territory.

On our first visit, we were shown around. We got to see the hard work that went into building the permaculture garden, the early stages of the pithouse, the greenhouses and the small smoke house. It gave me a glimpse of the history of the people and how important it was to keep the land protected. We continued to eat a traditional meal with Freda and company before singing some traditional songs. It was only a day visit, but it was comforting to go back to the territory and have such a loving visit.

The second visit was to witness the action camp. During our day visit, we got to see the progression of the pithouse and enjoy fresh food from the territory. Many people spoke of the importance of the land and water to our people. The camp was now filled with more people, some Wetsuwet'en and some supporters of the Unist'ot'en. I loved to see the community that developed over a few months. It was also uplifting to see so many more Wetsuwet'en traveling up there to be with their family. Again, we sang and danced and listened to the elders talk about the land and the importance of protecting it. Many traditional stories were shared. Both my children were able to come out to the camp with me and beautiful Aunts. We all left there satisfied and empowered to witness the love and passion that the Unist'ot'en had for their territory, animals, water and each other. My children, Sy and Sim Wilson, both spoke of how it made them want to cry when we left. They quickly became connected with the land and the people. This experience helped them to have a sense of belonging and was another stepping stone in learning more of the Wetsuwet'en traditional ways. They were very inquisitive.

The third visit that we had was to visit with our little niece, Jamie Lee, who had gone to live with Warner and Freda. They went above and beyond to include her in their daily lives. They had to build her a safety exit of the cabin, they provided her with traditional foods to eat and help preserve, in addition to showing her how to live in a simple manner. She struggled living in many homes previous to her stay at the Unist'ot'en Camp. She was considered a behavioral child and unfortunately, many people were unable to cope with the behaviors. The camp helped her to see life from a different perspective. The changes that were most notable included: less talking back, respect for adults, engaging more positively with others, and wanting to include herself with daily activities. She was very proud to construct a bow, to help process a deer, to swim in the river and go for walks. She was always very excited to show us around the camp. Jamie adapted to her new home but she had a hard time accepting that she would have to home school and moved back to Smithers.

Our last few visits to the Unist'ot'en camp were day drives that my children organized. They brought some of their friends up there to see the camp. They wanted them to see the beauty of the land, the water and the people. Both times we were there, we missed seeing Warner and Freda, but we were still allowed to visit. Our companions were mystified at the feeling of contentment they had. One discussion on the way home was full of laughter and pure joy. When we stopped at the river, my daughter's friend Amanda said that she would love to live out there. She spoke of the beauty and the power that the land had. We again, all had a brief cry because we had to go home.

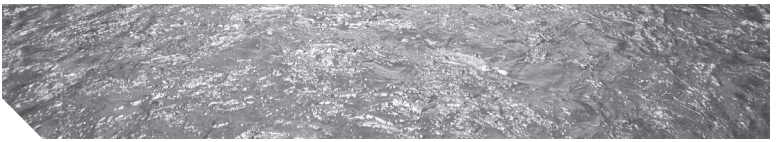
OVERALL, THE VISITS THAT WE HAD TO THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP LEFT US WITH A FEELING OF HAPPINESS. IT WAS A STRESS RELIEF LEAVING THE WESTERN WORLD AND EXPERIENCING SUCH A MEANINGFUL WAY OF LIFE. IT TAUGHT US THE VALUE OF THE LAND, THE PEOPLE, WATER AND OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. I MOSTLY LOVE HOW IT UPLIFTED OUR SPIRITS TO SEE HOW OUR PEOPLE ARE REGAINING THEIR IDENTITIES AND REBUILDING THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY BY PRESERVING OUR WAY OF LIFE. IT IS EMPOWERING TO GO TO OUR LAND AND FEEL LIKE WE BELONG TO SUCH A STRONG NATION. •

words: Lillian Wilson

painting: Kasha Konaka

ENGUSSI WEDZIN KWAH

She is my healer
a consoling friend
a life giver, a grandmother
a sister to the ancient ones
she heard the songs and touched the skin
of the original Wet'suwet'en
sacred knowledge in every drop
but we forgot
we try to listen with our ears
time has made us deaf to her
there's too much background noise
the smog is in our souls



shhhhhhhhhhhh..... can you hear her cry for you?

I need a job, I need a new car
I just bought an eco-friendly travel mug from *fill in the blank*... it's funny right?
the love of my life is not my cell phone
a flat screen tv or my shoes

Engussi Wedzin Kwah!

I don't need to tell you how beautiful she is
how her clear blue/green sparkles in the sun
or how her glacial currents take your breath away
and jumps starts your soul and every cell in your body
how her voice sings you alive
this isn't that kind of love poem

Let's get back to listening.....

What are the names of your rivers?
Can you hear them inside you?
Let's resurrect those words together
ALL our words, all at once
I want to feel all those hard and soft sounds
hitting me at the same time
just let me absorb the words of our ancestors

like Wedzin Kwah
but I'm not a river
I am a Wet'suwet'en woman
and my purpose is clear

Like ancient protocol and boundaries
I'll show you where the line is
we were born her guardians
warriors watch over Wedzin Kwah

poem: Jennifer Wickham, Gitdumten of the Wet'suwet'en

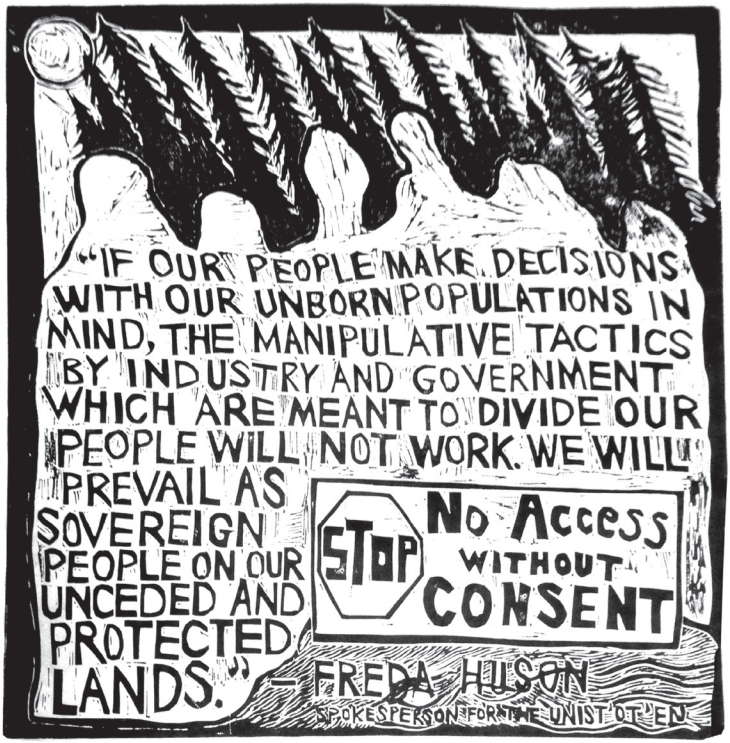
VISIT TO UNIST'OT'EN

ONE FINE DAY IN AUGUST OF 2015, after I had sustained some serious injuries from a motorcycle accident, a couple of my nieces and I decided it would be great to get out to the Unist'ot'en camp to show our support to our land defenders. I would often simply think about going, but I would make an excuse and put it off, knowing full well that I should be making my way out to show my support. I visited a couple of times before and just loved the environment. I was taken on a tour of the permaculture garden, the pit house and the living arrangements. This was very progressive compared to the first time I went up there. When I first went up. There was a cabin and many people lodging in tents. Everyone was like-minded. **THEY WERE ALL THERE TO DEFEND OUR PRECIOUS RESOURCES FROM THE LAND AND OUR RIGHTS AND TITLE TO THE LAND.** It was evident, every step of the way. Now, like I said, there is a permaculture garden, pit house, tents, a mini-farm with goats and chickens, bunk houses, a cook shack/healing center a gathering place by the fire and the main cabin that houses the Unist'ot'en members. The change was great.

Well, this last August, Aleah, Angie and I decided to just go. We went up and to our dismay, as we were driving up to the camp, we noticed people from our own nation working for industry right at the doorway to the Unist'ot'en. I felt disillusioned. We continued on our way and upon entering Unist'ot'en, we did the "Prior and informed consent," welcoming protocol. Upon our welcoming, we were escorted to the cook shack where there was a hub of activity. A few people were milling around the fire. Others were in the cookshack preparing the next meal for the large crew. Others were doing their watchmen shifts out on the territory. I of course wanted to know where Freda was, so I could announce my presence. She was in the back, canning salmon.

I limped to the back to the cook shack and came across an outdoor kitchen. I loved it. People were cutting and prepping salmon for canning. I basically asked my niece to bring me my bungey chair so I could sit comfortably. I rolled up my sleeves and set up a work station and assisted with the canning station. Aleah and Angie and the girls found other things to occupy their time while they were there. During the time I was working there, I literally rubbed shoulders with people from all walks of life. They all had one common goal. They were land defenders first and foremost. They were there to experience life 'off the grid' in the wilderness. **EVERY PERSON LOVED THE EXPERIENCE. IT WAS A PHENOMENAL EXPERIENCE.**

Freda takes on the role of big sister, mother, administrator, guide and foreman. She will instruct on the spot when something is not working just the way she wants it to work. There is a kitchen crew. There is a farm crew. There is a garden crew. There is a berry picking crew, there is a watchmen crew. There is a wood cutting crew. There are the hunters and trappers. **THERE IS NEVER A SHORTAGE OF THINGS TO DO, WHILE ASSISTING AT THE UNIST'OT'EN, HOME OF FREDA HUSON.** It is a hub of activity right from the get go.



print: Annie Banks

All in all, I was welcomed with the greatest hospitality. The Kitchen crew did a phenomenal job feeding us. In the evening, we were entertained by the fire with diverse topics of conversation. We met people from different nations. We were able to share some commonalities of culture and language. We were able to welcome hereditary chiefs to the territory. It was great. We stayed the night and we were housed in the bunk-house. I was awakened in the morning by the crow of the rooster. It was lovely. We got up, had breakfast. I helped with the breakfast dishes and then we started prepping for our journey home. **MY HEART WAS FULL.**

In search of Freda that day, I found her at the smokehouse. She was cutting salmon. I said, I just came by to get a farewell hug. My niece inquired about making hux'm japan, a style of fish cutting that was passed on to our family from the Gitxsan. Within moments, I was rolling up my sleeves and holding a knife and cutting fish. Only to learn from Freda, that she already knew this technique. It was great. I washed my hands and continued on my journey. I would like to say. Thank you to the people of Unist'o'ten for allowing us the opportunity to feel so safe and grounded and in touch with nature. It certainly is an experience that revitalizes one's soul. Tabii missiyh! Awitza.

Hagwilowh – Hereditary – wing-chief of Liktsamisyu. Antoinette Austin

WEYTK, GREETINGS TO OUR BEAUTIFUL WORLD COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES AND FELLOW INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

First of all I would like to take this time to introduce myself, My name is Kanahus Freedom Manuel, my traditional names are Kanahus Pellkey - Ecotaya Guari (Red Woman - Turtle Mountain Woman), I am from the Secwepemc and Ktunaxa Nations of the south-central interior of so-called British Columbia. My parents are Arthur Manuel and Beverly (Dick) Manuel, my paternal grandfather is Freedom Fighter Grand Chief George Manuel and grandmother Marceline Paul from the Ktunaxa Nation. My maternal grandmother is Rita Dick from Neskonlith, Secwepemc Nation and Pat Roy, a French Canadian. I reside in the Secwepemc community of Neskonlith, unceded, unsurrendered Secwepemc Nation.

I am a Mother of four beautiful children and Freedom Babies, that I raise as much in our traditional ways as I can, decolonized and Free from the burdens of Canadian society. **WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP MY EYES AND SPIRIT FILLED WITH TEARS OF JOY AND HAPPINESS, OF HOPE AND COURAGE.** I knew I must go, make the big journey with my family and children to bring them to this historical stand to defend our Indigenous Territories, not just for the Peoples of the Wet'suwet'in Nation and Unit'ot'en Territory, this is for us all. All of our Water is connected, all of our air in connected, our lands all connected, we cannot separate one from the other, just like the geographic distance that separates us Secwepemc and Ktunaxa from the Unist'tot'en cannot stop us for joining in our struggle to protect our Homelands.

My family and children we embrace our visits to Unist'ot'en camp. **I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP, ESPECIALLY ENFORCING OUR AUTHORITY TO OUR HOMELANDS THROUGH THE FREE AND PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT PROTOCOL, THAT EVERYONE MUST GO THROUGH IN ORDER TO ENTER INTO THE UNIST'TOT'EN TERRITORY AND HOMELANDS.**

When I first arrived at the Unist'ot'en Camp, my family got out of our vehicle and walked to meet the Unist'ot'en on the bridge that crosses the Morice River, we were asked to introduce ourselves and who we were, what our intentions are, and what skills we have to offer if allowed to enter. I carry this with me everywhere.

Kanahus Freedom Manuel with her children and Freda Huson at the bridge over Wedzin Kwah

We have attended the Unist'ot'en Action Camp, my sons have went hunting there with members of the camp, my children spent weeks picking huckleberries there, we take dips in the ice cold Morice River to cleanse our spirits and give thanks for all those that sacrifice so much on the frontlines, those of our ancestors and Peoples that struggle on a daily basis and lifetime for all of us.

On our last family visit at the Unist'ot'en Camp my children had so much fun playing, we ate fresh moose liver and a massive feast with everyone at camp. My children love their Auntie Freda, who set up the movie projector to let them watch Princess Mononoke, they are so happy and loved by everyone at Camp. We always sleep so good there and are sad when we have to leave.

I WILL CONTINUE TO RETURN WITH MY FAMILY AND CHILDREN AND ENCOURAGE OTHER FAMILIES TO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN THERE TO LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING ON THE LAND AND PROTECTING OUR LANDS AND WATER.

KUKSTSEMC, TO ALL THOSE AT UNIST'OT'EN CAMP.

words and photo: Kanahus Freedom Manuel

WATER IS LIFE

This is a photo of our cousin Marten who is about 5'7" holding a Chinook salmon who was on its way to the spawning channels which flow right by the Unist'ot'en Camp.

WE WET'SUWET'EN NEED THESE SALMON TO SUSTAIN US FAR INTO THE FUTURE.

Proposed Fracking pipelines are threatening our way of life and our lifelines, which our people depend on to get us through the long cold winter months. The Deterritorialization of our people, Indian Residential Schools, 60's Scoop, and continuously reduced social programs on the Indian Reservations has forced our people to resort to being 100% dependent on fragile and threatened salmon runs.

THIS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST REASONS WHY WE MUST VIGOROUSLY FIGHT FOR OUR LANDS AND WATERWAYS. THIS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST REASONS WHY WE WILL WIN.

quote and photo: Unist'ot'en Camp facebook

It was a symbol of resistance. To protect mother earth, we wear the colours of mother earth. If you are protecting mother earth – because native people are the environment. When you speak of the environment it's us you're talking about, because we are part of that environment. When you wear camouflage clothing, you're honouring the earth and you're showing that you've dedicated yourself and your life to protecting the earth, and if you protect the earth you're protecting all people. It goes back to people. We don't differentiate – the need for that environment goes to all races, so we're protecting the environment for everybody's children, and by honouring the earth and wearing these colours – we're not doing it to intimidate everybody. I can understand how mainstream looks at it, that's fine, but it is what it is.

We wear camouflage with pride because it's the colours of mother earth that we're defending. The armies use these kind of things to hide from people. We're not hiding. We're showing that the colours of mother earth mean everything to us.

When you speak of the environment and First Nations, you can't separate the two. It's our environments that are being destroyed for the wealth of everyone else. That's why we wear camo. WE wear it with pride, because we're telling everyone we're not afraid. What have we got to lose? We're fighting for humanity and for the ecosystems that support that humanity. Wearing camoflague just shows that mother earth is the boss, and we know it. That's why we wear it.

- from an interview with Brian Granbois

IN THE NEW STORY

solidarity sailboat

"LAND CONTAINS THE LANGUAGES, THE STORIES, AND THE HISTORIES OF A PEOPLE. IT PROVIDES WATER, AIR, SHELTER AND FOOD. LAND PARTICIPATES IN THE CEREMONIES AND THE SONGS. AND LAND IS HOME." Even though the Unist'ot'en territory is not my home, over the years I have come to feel at home there. I have been welcomed onto the territory and it has been a healing welcome. And, if the land holds stories, I am hopeful that the Unist'ot'en's story will be the narrative that continues to unfold as we continue to resist the destructive "ceremonies" of colonialism and capitalism that would see the destruction of Unist'ot'en land and life.

words and photos: Teresa Diewert

DECOLONIZE

FOR ME, THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP GIVES US A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT RECONCILIATION LOOKS LIKE ON THE TERMS OF THOSE MOST AFFECTED BY COLONIZATION.

It's a place where community is built, ecological laws are put above economic ones and future generations are not an externality but a part of everyday life. The camp made me realize that resistance is as much a lifestyle as it is any individual action. Not only does the camp stand as a checkpoint against pipelines but also as a place of learning, healing, connecting with nature and actively decolonizing. Natural laws and customs have been resurrected in that camp that have supported life on this land for millennia."

words: Tamo Campos

IT WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT UNIST'OT'EN CAMP LEFT ITS MARK ON MY LIFE.

The unlearning is a huge part of it. It was at the camp that I attended my first workshops about Decolonization and direct action, tree climbing and permaculture. Life hasn't been the same since. I suppose the simplest way to put it, is that in this space I heard truths spoken and felt their message resonate in the depths of my belly.

I felt empowered by what I learned there, and I engaged with the community around me. I made a heartfelt promise to the land that I would do what I could to support its protection and have been lucky enough to go back time and time again. It is a real privilege to do so. Freda is a constant example of strength without violence, truth without insult, humour without crassness, and I am endlessly learning how to do things better by being around her.

The energy of the camp is inspiring. Some mornings, an elder of seventy-five lead exercises before morning prayer circle, or someone else leads lessons in karate on the bridge. One night during construction camp the bunkhouse was teeming, and all at once there was a tattoo being done at the back, cribbage off to the side and someone rambling along on a guitar next to the wood stove. Issues are hashed out over coffee or around the fire, or wrung out in prayer circle.

It is both easy and serious to commit to this land, to these people and to this movement that is so intimately entwined with so many others. I believe that the more you know, the more you care, and the amount of empathy and experience that crosses that river is staggering. This place is a gift, a place of healing.

EVERY NOW AND THEN SOMEONE WILL ASK ME, "DO YOU REALLY THINK THE CAMP CAN WIN THIS THING?"

I NOW REPLY, "IT ALREADY HAS IN SO MANY WAYS."

words: Hilly

HEY GOOD LOOKIN

WE ALL KNOW THAT STOPPING PIPELINES AND ROLLING BACK THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY IS GOOD FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PLANET.

And of course the Unist'ot'en Camp is the front-line in that global fight back. What you may not know is that spending time at the Camp is also fantastic for your personal health and well-being.

After just four relatively short visits over the course of a year you can see the amazing change that healthy food and hard work creates.

FROM A PUDGY OLD FART TO A LEAN, MEAN PIPELINE STOPPING MACHINE. You may also notice that after spending time at the camp hair began growing out of my face – creating that attractive George Clooney look. Of course I'm happily married but if you're not, and looking to partner up, couldn't hurt.

Solidarity, Bob Ages

before

after

Fighting frontline fatigue is something you will never see in front of me is just a hot cup of tea to go, if you please, no milk or cream just sugar, or black, hoping it'll smack me out of this lucid nightmare I'm caught in

excuse me I need to sleep in a trance so deep in terror I dream that the world around me melts polar bear pelts and head dressess on display

PTSD as a plane flys by and people panic yet the slogan is "don't panic we got bannock"

I've yet to see bannock everyday at the community up north

but we pray for a safe return, and we hope for a safe journey home, bannock or not, this is a frontline

I'm still shot sliently screwed by the aftermath of genocide my family just barely survived and struggles with here and today

you're not Indian because you didn't have things, structures, languages removed from you violently oppressing you quietly and to us this savage speaks loudly

media, newspapers, digital prints, you read it everyday about the terrorists amerikkkans are bombing and the terrorists blocking pipelines and crippling klanata's so-called economy

I'll just change some names around and pretend to enjoy writing this thank you when the 1% of white wealthy people and anyone with excess amounts of money guilting us making us forcing us to worship the ground you walk on is pathetic but thank you for the money

be polite and write this letter with conviction just know these are your lands and not the white mans

I said to a dear friend over social media, "soon I'll mail you a file in a birthday cake." "a file?" She said

Yes, I said, "a file to saw down the prison which captures us all and be free, running back to the Yintah, familiar, comfortable, known"

returning home is where the heart beats though my soul lives up north and my spirit is free to wander, a spiritual saunter through the valley of death this isn't my last breath, just be known I'm here to stay to say corruption is not the Indian way...

poem: Henry Mellstrom, photo: "leaving klanata" by Kevin Henry Photography

LEARNING AND TEACHING

I am forever indebted to the Unist'ot'en Camp and to all the elders, matriarchs, and land defenders who granted me access and welcomed me to their beautiful and unceded lands and territories (yintah). Unist'ot'en Camp is a revolutionary and healing vision for the world we need -

ONE THAT IS ROOTED IN DEEP ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND AND ITS STEWARDSHIP, IN AFFIRMATION OF INDIGENOUS LAWS AND GOVERNANCE, IN THE DIGNITY AND RESILIENCE OF A CLAN AND NATION THAT IS RIGHTFULLY AND RIGHTEOUSLY PROTECTING THEIR LANDS AND WATERS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

At the Camp, I heard stories from elders about hunting, fishing and trapping on the yintah, about the shrinking habitats for the four-legged and winged creatures, about taking seriously our collective responsibilities to one another and the land. The Unist'ot'en Camp has profoundly moved and shaped who I am and who I want to be as a future ancestor, shukriya

words: Harsha Walia

photos: Aaron Lakoff

Workshopping on the land, learning and sharing, at the Unist'ot'en Action Camp with Harjap and Harsha (right) and Mel (above)

SACRED SITES, OVER 26,000 PEOPLE, AND COUNTLESS PLANTS AND ANIMALS, IN ABOUT 9,000 HA OF A TERRITORY NOW CALLED HUILA, COLOMBIA, ARE INVOLVED IN A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE QUIMBO HYDROELECTRIC DAM PROJECT ALONG THE MAGDALENA (GUACACAYO OR YUMA RIVER).

After many years of desiring to journey, connect, and build, the opportunity arose to go to Unist'ot'en land as part of the Art of Resistance Tour. The tour came at an important moment, after eight years of struggle against the Quimbo Hydroelectric Project: in that case, bearing witness to how the people's organization and resistance was not enough to keep the territory from being destroyed. To say that one feels destroyed, depressed, shattered, and traumatized is an understatement.

Before I left for the tour my elders gave me tasks, homework: speak and tell others about us but also learn of other peoples' struggles and build ties with these other processes of territory defense, and to exchange a small part of our territories in what we call "payment to the territory".

OUR TIME AT UNIST'OTEN CAMP WAS SO CENTERING, BALANCING, AND HEALING. We shared about our struggles, and with permission from the spokesperson of the hereditary chiefs of Unist'ot'en, their ancestors, their territory, as well as permission from my own territory, elders and ancestors, we exchanged a small part of our two territories. Our territories are connected - not that they were not before - but that relation with our territory and with each other is now strengthened. Now it is up to us to see how we will continue to weave and walk our resistance.

Freda shared something with me: all of the waters of the world are one, and we as beings made of water are also one with those waters. It is easy to see how all waters are interconnected. Any act against this connection - a dam, mine, or pipeline - is an attack on all of us. **WE LAND AND RIVER DEFENDERS ARE ALL IN THE SAME FIGHT, THE SAME STRUGGLE, WHAT WE REFER TO IN ABYA YALA (SOUTH AMERICA) AS THE LIBERATION OF MOTHER EARTH.** Being on Unist'ot'en lands reminded me of how far our relations and connections stretch and the impact of what we are all fighting for. I hope to return soon.

Thank you – Gracias – Pai. ¡Ríos Vivos, Pueblos Libres!

words: Jonathan, Beehive Design Collective

WAYS TO SUPPORT:

DEFEND THE LAND
VISIT THE WEBSITE: **UNISTOTENCAMP.COM**
LIKE THE UNIST'OT'EN CAMP ON **FACEBOOK**
FOLLOW ON TWITTER **@UNISTOTENCAMP**
DONATE TO: **FHUSON@GMAIL.COM**
HOST A FUNDRAISER (KITCHEN PARTY OR BENEFIT)
START A LOCAL SOLIDARITY NETWORK/GROUP