

The undersigned faculty, staff and students of the tri-campus Department of Geography & Planning at the University of Toronto stand in solidarity with members of the Wet'suwet'en Nation as they peacefully defend their unceded territories, in the face of militarized police action, raids and arrests by armed RCMP officers. We express our support as geographers and planners, who understand our roles as educators, researchers and organizers to have specific responsibilities to Indigenous peoples' efforts to protect their lands, waters and peoples.

Under Wet'suwet'en law, authority over the nation's 22,000 square kilometres of unceded territory lies with hereditary chiefs from five clans in a system of governance that long predates colonization. All five hereditary chiefs reject the construction of the pipeline on their territory. We stand in solidarity with the hereditary chiefs who are protecting their traditional territories from oil and gas development. In the words of Gidimt'en spokesperson Molly Wickham (Sleydo): "We have a right and a responsibility to be protecting our territory, to be protecting our water, to be protecting our future generations."

The inherent legal right of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs has been affirmed in the Canadian courts. The Supreme Court of Canada ruling on the Delgamuukw case, in which the Hereditary Chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en were among the plaintiffs (along with the Gitksan), defined the grounds for Aboriginal title in Canada. The ruling affirmed Wet'suwet'en land rights; recognized that Wet'suwet'en land is unceded and that the Hereditary Chiefs are the title holders to Wet'suwet'en traditional territories; and identified the need to reconcile colonial and Indigenous legal orders.

We are concerned with the use of militarized police force and the arrests of Wet'suwet'en land protectors, including the recent arrests of Unist'ot'en matriarchs as they held a ceremony honouring their missing and murdered Indigenous sisters.

We urge the Canadian and BC governments to uphold the United Nations' Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which includes provisions recognizing the right to self-determination, the need to obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous nations when development is proposed in their territories, and expressly condemns the forced removal of peoples from their lands and territories. British Columbia has passed legislation bringing the UNDRIP into law. We assert the need for Canada to respect its international commitments to Indigenous rights as endorsed by federal and provincial governments.

We urge the federal and provincial governments to adhere to the demands of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, as stated here: <https://unistoten.camp/wetsuweten-hereditary-chiefs-no-access-without-consent/>

- That the province cease construction of the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline project and suspend permits.
- That the UNDRIP and our right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are respected by the state and RCMP.
- That the RCMP and associated security and policing services be withdrawn from Wet'suwet'en lands, in agreement with the most recent letter provided by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's (CERD) request.

- That the provincial and federal government, RCMP and private industry employed by CGL respect our laws and our governance system, and refrain from using any force to access our lands or remove our people.

Signed by:

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