Haudenosaunee Confederacy stand in Solidarity with Wet’suwet’en

For Immediate Release
Enniśka (February) 7, 2020

Greetings from the Haudenosaunee External Relations Committee (HERC) of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

On the morning of February 5th, the heavily armed RCMP initiated an invasion of Wet’suwet’en territory, detaining land defenders at the Unist’ot’en and Gidimt’en camps.

For 10 years, the Unist’ot’en clan of the Wet’suwet’en people have been maintaining a peaceful camp in their unceded traditional territory to prevent the construction of a natural gas pipeline on their ancestral lands. The Unist’ot’en and Gidimt’en camps have the support of the Wet’suwet’en Nation’s traditional leadership.

The Haudenosaunee strongly condemn the RCMP raids on the Unist’ot’en camp and their attacks on the Wet’suwet’en people and call upon the Government of Canada to halt any further attacks. These land defenders are carrying out their own traditional laws as they endeavor to protect their ancestral lands from Coastal GasLink - a faceless corporation that aims to place a pipeline in Wet’suwet’en territory without the free, prior and informed consent of the Wet’suwet’en people - a project that poses a risk to their land, water, and way of life.

In addition to detaining Wet’suwet’en land defenders, the RCMP have also begun arresting journalists who are documenting the raid. Without the presence of journalists providing the world with a visual account of the situation, we fear that land defenders may be harmed and mistreated by the RCMP.

At heart of this conflict is the usurpation of unceded traditional Wet’suwet’en lands without their free, prior, and informed consent. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1997 that Wet’suwet’en lands were never ceded and the fact that British Columbia officially adopted the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into law – the Governments of Canada and British Columbia have proven these commitments to be empty gestures and have undermined any prospect of trust, reconciliation, and justice.
In addition to Canada’s failure to respect the Wet’suwet’en people’s inherent land rights, the Government of Canada is also failing in its commitment to establish true nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Instead of working with traditional Indigenous governments, Canada and British Columbia choose to work only with elected band councils who are empowered and funded through Canada’s Indian Act. In essence, they are merely dealing with themselves. By ignoring the legitimacy of traditional governments, the Government of Canada often exacerbates conflict by ignoring the self-determining rights of Indigenous Peoples to maintain governing institutions that they have maintained since time immemorial.

The use of coercive force will destroy any hopes of reconciliation and is not consistent behavior in a true nation-to-nation relationship, as promised by the Government of Canada. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has stated that Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples is a priority for his government. This has been proven a lie – as Canada clearly prioritized its economic interests over a peaceful and dignified relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The Haudenosaunee call upon the Government of Canada to cease any further aggressions upon to Wet’suwet’en people and insist that Canada engage with the hereditary Wet’suwet’en leadership to explore a political solution that respects the inherent indigenous rights of the Wet’suwet’en Nation.

Unless Canada redeems itself - their attempts at reconciliation have clearly failed.

In the pursuit of peace and justice,

Roiá:ner Howard Thompson, Co-Chairperson
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