

CUPW Statement on the Land Defenders in Wet'suwet'en Territory

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers commend the land defenders in Wet'suwet'en territory for their brave and noble stand against greed and destruction. We condemn the RCMP for trespassing on unceded territory and intimidating land defenders there. Coastal Gaslink wants to build a 670 km pipeline through their territories and a pristine wilderness. Once again, land is given away to corporations to enrich shareholders and divide communities.

Police showed up for the first raid early in the morning on February 6 with [guns, tactical gear](#) (CBC) and [heavy machinery](#) (Tyee) to evict the protesters. And, as [reported](#) by the Guardian, they had semi-automatic weapons aimed at the land defenders. It is clear that the only violence we see is that directed by the Canadian state and police.

As reported by Pressenza, the [RCMP arrested journalists](#) covering the protests and have made it difficult to witness their raids. In many Indigenous communities, unlike settler culture, women are respected for their wisdom and leadership in the community. It is not uncommon for police to isolate women and elders as an attempt to violate those ancient principles of respect and dignity and draw a reaction from others to justify their violence. They attempted to block people from filming their raid. What more is being kept hidden from world view?

All over the country, there is a response from those tired of the colonial legacy that continues to disrespect Indigenous peoples and their lands. This is in line with ongoing practices to erase and eliminate traditional Indigenous values and practices. Genocidal attempts at erasure change form over time, including but not limited to forced sterilization, violence, kidnapping of babies from their mothers, residential schools, and the catastrophic incarceration of Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women. Many are condemned to poverty if they resist the destruction of their culture and territory. Languages were erased, rivers polluted, and now in Wet'suwet'en, they fight for the very existence of life on earth. It is also reminiscent of past violent state strategies, to name the Oka crisis as but one example.

RCMP and government impunity must be halted. Their attacks on peaceful protest against injustice and invasion must cease. Such long-term and continuous violence can no longer be tolerated.

Canadians should be concerned that we subsidize oil and gas, an industry aimed at profiteering while destroying the planet. We all pay for the tactical gear, helicopters and police used to go into the wilderness to appropriate land while banks and corporations benefit from the wealth stolen from Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. Weapons and rifles were aimed directly at peaceful protestors.

The Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs re-affirm our humanity. Their commitment and bravery is inspirational. They provide a lesson for all of us that Mother Earth is not for sale and that there are lines that should not to be crossed. These are things worth fighting for. The seeds of a better world and a kinder future can be found today in Wet'suwewt'en land, by defenders that still dream of a different future and defend Mother Earth for all of us.

At this time, we have learned RCMP are withdrawing from traditional unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. If this is the case, we are encouraged by this de-escalation and recognition of sovereign traditional territory. We hope for a new relationship that will address the past, preserve the land and create a peaceful existence.

Let's stop criminalizing front line communities who are protecting a greater good.

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