

## **First Nations File Discrimination Claim at UN over Canada's Industrial Development Process**

*Terrace, British Columbia Canada, August 14, 2017* – A delegation of Indigenous leaders intent on protecting the Skeena River and wild Salmon in northwest British Columbia (BC) is in Geneva this week to press the United Nations to investigate their claim that Canada's ongoing industrial development of Indigenous lands and waters constitutes a violation of the UN conventions by overriding Indigenous peoples who depend on healthy water systems.

"The ongoing pandering to multinational corporations through exploitation of resources is very much a threat to our ways of life" said Dini ze Na'Moks, (John Ridsdale), of the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. Na'Moks a signatory to the UN submission "We might be the first to live with the consequence, carbon based economies are already causing wholesale change to natural systems and suffering of people around the world. "

Na'Moks and two other delegates will appear as witnesses in Geneva when Canada comes up for review by the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD). In a submission to UN CERD, the tribes say Canada's environmental assessment laws continue to measure money instead of impact."

In addition to environmental impacts, NW BC First Nations are informing the UN that Canada is failing to properly consult with Indigenous peoples - especially their traditional governance systems. Canada is also failing to provide adequate resources to Indigenous peoples so they can undertake their own environmental impact assessments, instead of relying on biased information from industrial proponents.

"Spoiling the lands and waters that provide for our people, is an assault on human rights", says Skil Hiilans, (Allan Davidson), of Haida descent whose culture and life ways also depend on salmon.

"Multinational companies, particularly energy projects, have continued to carry more weight when measured against the environment and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP)." Says Kirby Muldoe Canada's history of racial discrimination towards Indigenous peoples has been by design, and is compounded today by deep Geopolitical ties in international trade that give far more weight to foreign interests than indigenous people."

UN CERD Article 2 (c) requires that "Each State Party shall take effective measures to review governmental, national and local policies, and to amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists."

"UN conventions show that cooperation between indigenous and 'state' authorities may be the best opportunity to protect this planet," Ridsdale said.

Davidson, Ridsdale, and Hup Wil Lax A, Kirby Muldoe of Tsimshian and Gitksan descent, travel to the UN on the heels of the recent approval and then cancellation of Petronas' plans to build a massive pipeline and liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in the Skeena River estuary region of northern B.C.

Canada approved the project in spite of strong objections from the scientific community and Indigenous Nations. The project threatened hundreds of millions of juvenile salmon and would have been the largest climate polluter in Canadian history.

While the immediate threat of Petronas's Pacific Northwest LNG project has been removed due to unfavourable market conditions, "the cancellation of one project because of poor gas prices does nothing to address the underlying legal issues that will plague any project that threatens the wild salmon." Muldoe said.

Several other global energy players with regulatory approval from the B.C. and Canadian governments still have plans to invest billions in fossil fuel projects in NW BC. Governments and industry continue to insist that it is necessary to bring oil to the coast, threatening some of the most important salmon habitat in the world.

"Our people aren't against development," Ridsdale said. "The government of Canada has got to pursue other ways to create an economy that respects our livelihoods, our cultures and our lands and waters."

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