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Smithers, BC:

Wet'suwet'en Chiefs Reaffirm Opposition to Pipelines

With the federal Joint Review Panel's final recommendations on the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline expected this month, the 13 Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs are re-stating their opposition to the pipelines to ensure that government, industry and investors receive the message.

“We have a responsibility to all living things and to the unborn generations. The health and well being of the people and Yintah “traditional land” are paramount. It does not take a pipeline rupture or spill to have an impact to our Title and Rights. Just the proposed construction alone will impact the water quality, fish habitat and wildlife abundance. We have never stated that we are against resource development, however, after careful consideration weighing the risks and potential benefits, We are opposing proposed pipelines on our Yintah.” Says David deWit, Natural Resource Manager.

On April 20, the Tsayu Clan hosted a Baht'lat's “feast” at which they formally established their position that no pipelines shall pass through Tsayu traditional territory, enacting Inuk Nu'at'en "our laws". The four other Wet'suwet'en clans have supported this decision.

The Wet'suwet'en along with the Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs advanced the Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa court challenge to the Supreme Court of Canada where a historic decision that benefitted all First Nations in Canada was rendered in 1997, establishing Aboriginal Rights and Title ownership to the land and resources as legal principles in Canadian case law.

“We have been clear that Oil and Gas pipelines do not match our vision for our territory and for our grandchildren's future. Our Chiefs arrived at this decision through the careful consideration that is central to our governance system. We ask that this decision be respected, and we are prepared to do whatever it takes to protect our territory from pipelines,” stated Dini ze' Na'moks.

“The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs are committed to providing a prosperous life for future generations of Wet'suwet'en. This means protecting the clean water, salmon, wildlife and land that is so central to our culture and survival,” said Dini ze' Wah Tah Keght.

If built, the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline would carry diluted bitumen 1,170 kilometres from Alberta to Kitimaat for shipping by oil tanker to Asian markets. It is opposed by over 130 First Nations groups, unions, numerous municipalities and regional districts.

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and Moricetown Band Council met on December 7, 2013 in Vancouver, British Columbia with the First Nations Limited Partnership to discuss the proposed Pacific Trails Pipeline project that proposes to cross 175 kilometers of Wet'suwet'en Yintah "traditional lands". PTP proposes to construct pipelines under critical salmon rearing rivers and streams that have sustained and nurtured the Wet'suwet'en people since time immemorial.

At the conclusion of this meeting the Hereditary Dini ze' and Tsakiy ze' were unequivocal in stating their position that no pipelines will be granted permission to cross Wet'suwet'en Yintah pursuant to Inuk Nu'at'en "our laws";

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