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Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs Launch Court Challenge to Coastal GasLink Pipeline's Environmental Approval

Feb 3, Vancouver (BC) – Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs have filed an application for a Judicial Review of the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) decision to extend the environmental certificate for Coastal GasLink's proposed fracked gas pipeline in Northwest BC for another five years.

The application challenges the BCEAO decision to extend permits despite over 50 instances of non-compliance by Coastal GasLink and a failure to incorporate the recent findings of the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The inquiry found direct links between extractive industries, “man camps” and increased violence against Indigenous women.

Wet'suwet'en Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze' (Hereditary Chiefs) stand united in pursuing this legal action. Canadian law recognizes Wet'suwet'en traditional governance, as the Supreme Court explicitly stated in the ground-breaking *Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa* decision and as reaffirmed in the *Canfor v. Sam* case.

“Coastal GasLink has repeatedly flouted the conditions that were spelled out in their previous certificate, and shown only contempt for our people. My cousins are listed among the Murdered and Missing Women and Girls (MMIWG), BC must not be allowed to bend the rules to facilitate operations that are a threat to the safety of Wet'suwet'en women,” stated Dinī ze' Smogelgem, one of the Hereditary Chiefs of the Laksamshu (Fireweed and Owl) Clan.

“This case is about questioning the integrity of the environmental assessment process. In recommending that CGL be granted a project extension of 5 years, the EAO failed in its legislated duty to properly consider the facts, abdicated its responsibility to interrogate newly identified potential harms of this project, and has made a decision that is unjustified and unjustifiable,” said Caily DiPuma of Woodward and Co., legal counsel for the Wet’suwet’en. “Public confidence in the administration of BC’s environmental assessment system requires that the EAO be held to account for its failings.”

This legal challenge comes at a time when Canadians at large are increasingly concerned about the growing epidemic of violence against Indigenous women. The final report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG urged immediate action to address Canada’s “race-based genocide of Indigenous peoples,” and found that “work camps, or ‘man camps,’ associated with the resource extraction industry are implicated in higher rates of violence against Indigenous women at the camps and in the neighbouring communities.”

The Wet’suwet’en people, under the governance of their hereditary chiefs, have never consented to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project. This legal action seeks to overturn the EAO’s decision to extend Coastal GasLink’s certificate due to an established pattern of non-compliance from the project proponent.

The Dini ze' and Ts'akë ze' continue to resist colonial and gendered violence against Wet’suwet’en people, and to protect Wet’suwet’en lands for future generations.

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