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Wet'suwet'en Dini'ze

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Re: Concerns about the growing numbers of COVID-19 cases from industrial work camps in our Families

We are expressing grave concerns about the public health impacts on our families and the lack of public safety with the spread of COVID-19 in our yintah and in the communities of our northern region.

We are astonished to learn of the health and wellbeing impacts of our People who are coming from their workplace, LNG/CGL industrial work camps that have contracted the COVID-19 virus. There are three industrial camps on the yintah, on C'ilhts'ekhyu (Burns Lake area), Gitdimt'en (near Houston) and Unistot'en (Camp 9A). Wet'suwet'en workers that have the disease are coming home to their young children, young adults and parents or grandparents that have chronic health conditions. As you may know our families often have many generations living in one home. We have a number of clan members hospitalized and fighting for their lives, unknowingly sharing the disease with others before they realized they are carrying the disease. We are grateful that we have not lost any Clan or House members at this time. But we are deeply concerned with the high risks being taken to continue the pipeline construction at the cost of our Peoples' wellbeing, public health and safety.

Due to the lengthy colonial history with the settler population in B.C. our People carry the wounds of many generations. These soul wounds often show up in our body as heart disease, diabetes and arthritis. These chronic health conditions combined with limited northern health supports put us in a high-risk situation, you are gambling with the lives of precious tsoh, grandmothers, and the Dini'ze and our skiy'ze, our beautiful children. With the numbers of hospitalizations growing, our People will fill the ICU wards in the hospitals, and already see our loved ones being sent away from our homelands for intense treatment. Once again, the greater good (i.e. The economy) supersedes the lives of the Wet'suwet'en. Have we not learned from our shared histories in the last century?

In general, we see camp workers leaving the worksite, unknowingly sharing the highly contagious virus, going for days, without being tested. How is this possible? They are travelling throughout the region, shopping, having a beer, getting fuel or flying home if the north is not their home (which is most). The airports are full of camp workers and there is no testing prior to utilizing flights, we see flights from the Terrace airport identified as carrying covid-19 passengers, risking the lives of many.

We hear in the press of the safety measures the company insists are in place yet, in just two weeks we see the numbers increasing, workers are still leaving their camp worksites with the disease. Our People



are social, and have big families. How can the camp workers be released to go home without being tested for COVID-19? It is next to impossible for our families to self isolate, a transition plan is needed.

We support the Nov 30, 2020 Ts'ako ze' letter and all their recommendations; they requested a transition plan be put in place for camp workers that have been tested and have Covid-19. There could be a two week stay in a hotel or stay at industrial work sites before they come home to their spouses and or families. Many First Nations are utilizing this practice to ensure adequate social isolation measures are in place. Has this suggestion been acted upon? It has been 5 days now since this letter was sent to you. We support the grandmothers, the matriarchs and our fellow leaders, the Ts'ako ze' in sharing their concerns. We are grateful for the letter from the frontline workers who came out to support the Ts'ako ze' and Skiy'ze. We expected a response of some kind. All there is silence.

On the yintah, we hear the cries, fears and worries of our Clan members. They want their loved ones to come home from the hospital, and to be safe from COVID-19.

The number of camp workers transmitting the disease is growing each day. The spread of the disease is growing in our families and now spreading out in to various first nation communities in the north.

The carelessness and risk taking of the CGL/LNG industrial work camps, who let camp workers travel back into our families and town centers is astounding. This is also at a time when the "In Plain Sight Addressing Indigenous Specific Racism Report" highlights the neglect and harmful point of care practices our People endure. This just adds more to the extreme level of stress and anxiety of the covid-19 affected families, and with the pandemic in general. Then we have a health system that has been identified with serious concerns about quality health services to our People, we put immense trust in you, that you will help our grandmothers and Dini 'ze get well and return home.

We are seeking a response, to hold the companies accountable for their carelessness, to help stop the spread of the disease and to support our Members that have been unknowingly infected by the disease. This is not the time to have industrial camp worker sites, if there ever was a good time.

Awetza.

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