



# WET'SUWET'EN VOICE



Winter 2012

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Photo by: Sara Panofsky—taken on the bridge in Moricetown

Submitted by: Mike Ridsdale, Environmental Assessment Coordinator

The Joint Review Panel is a quasi-judicial panel that takes in information by all parties on the Environmental Assessment of the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline application. The Wet'suwet'en were given the chance to give their information in the traditional sense by giving oral statements, the Panel and, with Panel permission, Northern Gateway and other Parties may ask questions to seek clarification about the information provided.

The process for the Joint Review includes two sets of hearings, the community hearings, where interested parties and participants can provide evidence to the Panel orally and the final hearings where Northern Gateway and other parties can be asked questions about their evidence and provide their final arguments to the Panel.

*Cont. Pages 2-6— Enbridge*

*Enbridge cont..*

Those who gave oral evidence at the JRP Hearing in Smithers and Burns Lake **must be available at the final hearings** to answer questions on their evidence from the Panel and other parties. Therefore, those who gave evidence must be available for the final hearing as well. If individuals are not present to defend their oral evidence, their statement may be taken off the records.

In preparation for the January 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> JRP Hearings held in Wet'suwet'en Territory, there were two days of preparation with legal council set aside for the speakers at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en.



The list below represents speakers for Smithers and Burns Lake locations. Each speaker was allocated to speak for approximately 10 minutes each in Smithers and approximately 15 minutes each in Burns Lake. Since most were Hereditary Chiefs and leaders, they took between ½ hr to an hour describing their stories and connection to their lands as traditional protocol dictates; and giving reason why they reached the decision to reject the Pipeline where the environmental good outweighed and trumped over Enbridge's proposed pipeline as described within the regulatory process.

The JRP Hearing in Smithers started at 0900 am and ended for the Wet'suwet'en speakers at 5 pm which allowed for 8 hours of the Wet'suwet'en related stories; that was on average an astounding 21 and ½ minutes per speaker.

The following speakers spoke in Smithers:

Gitdumden: Darlene Glaim, Mervin Glaim, Russell Tiljoe, Lucy Gagnon

Laksilyu: Ron Mitchell, Samantha Vincent, Richard Sam, Theresa Tait-Day

Gil\_seyhu: Herb Naziel, Lorena Morris, Debbie Pierre, Tieasha Pierre, Stanley Namox, Elsie Tiljoe

Tsayu: Sue Alfred, Victor Jim, Marj Dumont, George Williams, Helen Nikal

Laksamshu: Herb Nikal, Alphonse Gagnon, Adam Gagnon



Pictures of the Hearing in Smithers, BC courtesy of Pat Moss

The following are the speakers in Burns Lake:

Gitdumden: Jeff Brown, Frank Alec

Laksilyu: Ron Austin, Henry Alfred, David deWit

Tsayu: John Ridsdale, Andrew Tom, Mike Ridsdale

Laksamshu: Walter Joseph

The Wet'suwet'en speakers spoke about their spiritual and cultural connection to their territory, stories that they have on their territory, access to medicines (plant/animal), gatherings, songs and dances about their crests. Traditional uses, cultural values, Baht'lats (Feasting), their names relating to their territory.

As the person who is gave their testimony it was related orally, and cannot be said by anyone other than that person. They put this into context of the proposed pipeline route and the effects that it would put onto them.

We had translators for both events:

Smithers' translators: Victor Jim & Ron Austin

Burns Lake translators: Ron Austin & Frank Alec

Critique as written by Sara Panofsky.



At the Smithers JRP hearing, a strong, proud and unified Wet'suwet'en Nation. A long line of Chiefs and membership in full regalia were drummed powerfully into the meeting hall at the Hudson Bay Lodge. Chief Wila'at, Susie Alfred, and her daughters Delores Alfred and Marj Dumont had written a song specifically for the occasion.

***"Our territory is our livelihood.***

***We live off our land.***

***We survive on the wildlife on our land.***

***Law, Language, Land...***

***Enbridge do not step on our land.***

***Enbridge do not step on our land."***

There was never a doubt in the day as to the Wet'suwet'en position on the project. All 22 members who spoke emphatically stated that the project risks their territory and the river but also their culture, the root of their community. The Wet'suwet'en who addressed the panel, chiefs, elders, trap-line holders, younger adults and the first youth to speak in these hearings, Tieasha Pierre, a girl of 10, chosen as representative by her clan; itself evidence of healthy Wet'suwet'en traditional governance. It was vital that everyone selected be given a chance to speak.



*Enbridge cont.*

This approach was more in line with the feast system than the bureaucratic panel meetings. Chair, Sheila Leggett, politely noted that the Wet'suwet'en had gone over their allotted time of 3.5 hours and reminded those to speak that information should not be repeated. "They need to learn this is Wet'suwet'en-Gitxsan time," said Chief Wila'at.

The Wet'suwet'en spoke passionately and knowledgeably about their *Yintah*, the Wet'suwet'en word for territory. *Yintah* signals the physical land but, more than this, it expresses the interconnectedness of all aspects of the ecosystem; *Yintah* encompasses the people as well. Impacts to Wet'suwet'en lands are impacts to the Wet'suwet'en community.

The ancestors were continually evoked, giving meaning and reason to speaking to the panel. "It is the words of our ancestors that I speak to you today. That is why we say no," said Chief Likh Dilye, Russell Tiljoe. Marj Dumont thanked her ancestors for giving her the courage to speak and looking openly at the panel, said, "we ask the creator that you make recommendations based on our stories". These stories were told in the Wet'suwet'en language as well as in English.

Richard Sam asked the panel that they respect the decision of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and deny the project, "show our young people that what our chiefs say matters," he pleaded.

Lorena Morris spoke emotionally of a lifetime of community healing from residential schools, the reserve system, alcohol abuse, suicide, "I'm tired of listening to broken promises," she said. Her clan members stood behind her in support, putting reassuring hands on her shaking shoulders.

### An account by both Tyler McCreary and Mike Ridsdale

The following day in Burns Lake more testimony was to be given by the Wet'suwet'en on their Traditional Territory. Sheila Leggett, the Joint Review Panel (JRP) Chair, requested for respect for all parties in the Hearing being held in Burns Lake, B.C and be respectful of government timelines while presenting Oral Evidence. Once again as in Smithers the Wet'suwet'en sang the Anti-Enbridge song although they were requested not to. The song expressed the depth of our connection to our territory.

The JRP must follow Wet'suwet'en Law, and not just Canadian Law while in Wet'suwet'en Territory. By dictating the terms of traditional opening ceremonies to Wet'suwet'en chiefs on Wet'suwet'en land is to disrespect our chiefs and their authority. As was in Smithers, the Wet'suwet'en chiefs paraded into the room in full regalia, assembled before the crowd, and again affirmed our opposition to the crowd, and the JRP.

Hereditary chief Frank Alec spoke at the opening of the Hearing, the rattle *sinehk* which is calling in Wet'suwet'en Spirits, is generally not recorded, so the spirit is not captured in the recording, and the release of Eagle Down is the beginning of serious business. The chiefs spoke in detail not only their traditional use of the territories but also the system of traditional governance in relation to our unceded lands and waters.

The JRP panel had limited respect for the Wet'suwet'en jurisdiction and traditional Oral Evidence, and of storytelling in Burns Lake. After listening to hours of testimony from dozens of speakers, the panel indicated their desire to hurry things along. Panel Chair, Sheila Leggett, suggested the final five Wet'suwet'en speakers finish up with the next half hour of your presentation and, then, she suggested that a break be given, and move on to the rest of the parties who are here ready to speak.



*10 year old Tieasha Pierre, told the panel about the rules of hunting: "When I go hunting with my uncle, we never kill what we will not eat". The pipeline, she insisted, would be like killing an animal you will not eat. This is not following Wet'suwet'en law.*

The panel offered the final Wet'suwet'en speakers the option of returning to speak late in the evening, after all the other presenters. Most of the Wet'suwet'en who came to speak lived hours from Burns Lake in the communities of Smithers, Moricetown, and Hagwilget and drove through freezing conditions with temperatures  $-35^{\circ}$  to get there needed to drive home in the dark, having to wait and speak after 9:00 pm was not an option.

Segment from JRP Transcript:

Chief Namoks, John Ridsdale, stood to speak; there was heat in his voice. After traveling two and half hours from Hagwilget to present in Burns Lake, he had expected to receive more than a token five minutes to present.

"6647. With five minutes to speak, I will only say a few words because it's highly insulting you tell a Chief that you're only going to say a few words when he stands on his own land. I am Wet'suwet'en. I carry the name of Namox and I know my authority. I know my rights and I know our title."

6649. I'm going to speak on our survival on the land, how we become Chiefs, how we get from boys to men and how we do that when we're teenagers; how we set ourselves up to carry names in the future; how we know to speak on our lands; how we know to respect our Elders; how we know to respect the guests on our territory. With a couple of minutes, that's a quick view that I can give you. Later, after his speech, Chief Namoks said that in the old days when they try to hurry you in your speech, you must use your "Fight Talk" to make them hear you, and do it loudly.

Another speaker, David deWit spoke about Wet'suwet'en principles.

"6692. The Wet'suwet'en have been conducting business for thousands of years. This is where our laws, our protocols, our principles come from. Our leaders hold their titles for a lifetime. Discussions take a long time. Respect and trust must be gathered. That's how we arrive at conclusions."

"6705. We have knowledge that needs to be shared to ensure the health and well being of our communities and the others that rely on us and our resources. There is a balance that needs to be achieved. There are thresholds our "Yintah", our land, has, that if breached; the land will not be able to support our culture, nor the health and well being of our communities."

*"6647. With five minutes to speak, I will only say a few words because it's highly insulting you tell a Chief that you're only going to say a few words when he stands on his own land. I am Wet'suwet'en. I carry the name of Namoks and I know my authority. I know my rights and I know our title."*

A reminder was issued to the JRP panel at the end of the Wet'suwet'en Oral Evidence stating:

Our Wet'suwet'en title is the right to make decisions on our lands, waters through our governance system. Within the Wet'suwet'en title is the right to access our lands and waters to fish, collect medicines, berries and the animals needed for our cultural identity.

The Wet'suwet'en not only were, but are, an oral traditional. In formal political processes such as in a feast hall oral communication has primacy. Also through experience, the Wet'suwet'en have found that the written words are often untrustworthy because they may be interpreted in different ways and can't speak for themselves and thus have been to our prejudice used against the Wet'suwet'en to say what they were never meant to say.

Because of formality and the importance of the JRP process, the Wet'suwet'en wish to communicate much of our evidence in our traditional way, which includes our language with the speakers standing behind those words. You have heard from our people about their house territories and their experiences.

That was only a small portion of our people who have come before you to speak of our connection to our Yintah, our lands, our waters and Wet'suwet'en Title. There's many more who want to tell their stories so that you can know our strength, our history, our Wet'suwet'en Title and our governance system for decision-making and our relationship to their lands and waters.

### Enbridge cont..

We have let you know over the last two days how we felt, how we felt on our territory. You've experienced that with us. Please take those words and heed them well. Your decision will make all the difference in this process.

This is a significant time for the Wet'suwet'en, as our traditional laws and decision to "Stop the proposed Enbridge project" has been shared not only with the government, but with community members. Together we stand to defend our lands. The power within our laws, and Wet'suwet'en authority will create a better future for all in generations to come.



Singers of the Anti-Enbridge Song



On Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 there was an assembly held at Lake Kathyln school where numerous students were rewarded for their spirit, improvement, strength and courage.

Ten year old Tieasha Pierre who attends Lake Kathyln was one of the speakers at the Joint Review Panel on the proposed Enbridge Project in Smithers, B.C. Tieasha was very courageous, strong and confident in here speech she prepared for the Joint Review Panel.

Tieasha was recognized by her peers and teachers at her school assembly. Chief Namoks (John Ridsdale) stood with her and gave a speech. Tieasha's mentor and Aunt Debbie Pierre also stood with Tieasha to support her.

Tieasha's family and all Wet'suwet'en are very proud of Tieasha and want to say **CONGRATULATIONS!**



# Wet'suwet'en set to launch child welfare services

By Andrew Hudson—Smithers Interior News—Published February 8, 2012

A new child welfare program run by the Office of the Wet'suwet'en will start supporting aboriginal families in Smithers, Moricetown and Hagwilget this March. Rooted in Wet'suwet'en traditions, staff say the program will serve the community better than the Western-orientated services run by the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development.

"I feel that we've gone as far as we can," says Gretchen Woodman, an MCFD social worker who has been working with Wet'suwet'en families for 11 years. "It's not about social workers trying to be nicer—we have structural flaws in a system that don't enable good community practice."

John Ridsdale agrees. A member of the Tsayu clan and a long-time director at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Ridsdale said it's key that Wet'suwet'en run their own child and family services. "Our laws are simple, straight to the heart," he said. "When you put too much of a Eurocentric view into it, then you forget what you're there for."



Wet'suwet'en Child Welfare working group—2010

Called Anuk Nu'At'en Ba' glgh'iyi z'ilhdic, or ANABIP, the program starts with a small peace-tea ceremony that gathers the maternal grandmother, aunts and other members of a family's mother clan. Guided by a support worker, members of the mother clan will begin talking through what are often tough family conversations—the toughest of which centre around foster care.

When it comes to foster care, both Woodman and Ridsdale said they know the stakes are high. Of the 989 children who are currently in northern B.C. foster homes, 78 per cent are aboriginal. And in her years as a social worker, Woodman said that are typically more Wet'suwet'en children in care homes down south than there are in their traditional territory.

"We strongly believe that there are many healthy Wet'suwet'en people who could become foster parents," she said. "We feel that we're better positioned to find those people."

Although the ministry has improved in recent years by allowing "kith and kin" agreements that let relatives or even close family friends become foster parents, Woodman said ANABIP will cast a wider net. If a peace tea gathering needs extra help, for example, they can call on the family's father clan, who are related by marriage.

"ANABIP belongs to the Wet'suwet'en," Ridsdale said. "We need to drop that shield and let people know they have the power to step forward."

Although foster care is a high priority, ANABIP gatherings can also be used to simply reconnect Wet'suwet'en youth with their land and culture.

Ridsdale is himself an example of someone whose upbringing doesn't fit with Western ideas of child rearing. When he was 16 years old, Ridsdale and another boy his age were left to live alone through a whole winter, camping and trapping between the Nadina and Tsalit mountains. "That was probably one of the greatest winters of my life, and the first month was very uncomfortable," he said with a smile. Ridsdale said that although the winter camp was a key part of growing up Wet'suwet'en, his test was one of the last to happen here. Today, Ridsdale parents might be accused of negligence for sending their sons out alone that long. But his family knew exactly where he was, he said, and in fact many people in the community bent the rules by dropping off goodie boxes in the boys' camp whenever they went out snowshoeing.

Three years ago, Ridsdale said he was ready to take on the hereditary chief name, Na'moks. "If you're not ready to take the name, they won't give it to you—you've got to prove yourself," he explained. "Every day is a test." Learning to live on the territory that winter was one reason Ridsdale said he felt ready.

Although he is well aware what a challenge it will be, Ridsdale hopes ANABIP and future Wet'suwet'en child services will give more young Wet'suwet'en that same connection to the land. "If you don't have land, you don't have connection," he said. "If you don't have connection, you don't have history. If you don't have history, you don't know where you come from."



# CHILD CARE PROGRAMS THROUGH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



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## Consequences

### Children will learn from the consequence

#### CONSEQUENCES.....

- SHOULD ENFORCE LIMITS ON CHILDREN
- SHOULD MOTIVATE CHILDREN TO BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY.
- SHOULD HOLD CHILDREN RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR BEHAVIOR.

A consequence is not a punishment or retaliation. Punishments come from emotional over-reaction to a child's behavior. Punishment creates anger and resentment in the child and can make them act out even more! Think of consequences as results. There are good consequences and bad consequences for our decisions. A good consequence is a pay raise. A bad consequence is a speeding ticket. In this workshop you will learn to teach and coach your child in problem solving skills that he/she will need to succeed in life.

## Total Focus Program

### Improves Attention, concentration and self-control in children

### March 14, 1-3pm to April 18—6 weeks

#### YOU WILL LEARN A TEAM APPROACH TO....

- IMPROVE ATTENTION
- IMPROVE CONCENTRATION
- TEACH SELF-CONTROL

Using a system of behavior modification, bio-feedback, and relaxation techniques and including cognitive rehabilitation or "brain training" exercise. It is a simple program that you can do with your child in just minutes a day. You will be able to identify the behaviors that are issues with your child. If you are being contacted by the school to come in to talk about your child because of arguing, fighting, your child being inattentive and losing their tempers, this workshop will give you some tools to help your child overcome some of their struggles so that life is more manageable for them and for you.

## PARENTING WORKSHOPS

### CHANGING THE NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

### IN YOUR CHILDREN

**TOTAL FOCUS PROGRAM—EVERY WEDNESDAY—March 14 to April 18th, 2012**  
**1:00 P.M. TO 3:00 P.M. (6 WEEKS)**

**IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING CALLED TO THE PRINCIPLE, BEING SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL—THIS WORKSHOP IS FOR YOU**

Lots of prizes & fun. Come enjoy connecting with other parents and build a relationship of understanding knowing that you are not alone in some of those negative parenting dilemmas.

## OUR FUTURE CHEF

Submitted by: Phillistine Olson

My son Brandon Michell is currently taking a Culinary Arts Program in Kamloops at the Thompson River University.

Both myself and Auntie Saraphine had moved him down mid August 2011.

He is not being sponsored for living allowances and extra-ordinary expenses...so myself and family have been (whenever possible) trying to fund raise to help him offset costs of living (including his dorm fees).

Would also like to say thanks to his brother Alastair for helping out when we asked him. With perseverance and dedication from both of us, Brandon is able to "go for his dreams". I have told him at his graduation and going away BBQ, not to believe in barriers...we will go through it together as a family! No matter what, we have accomplished everything together and won't stop.

Brandon has the opportunity to cook along side do the prep work for the top chefs of Canada. This event "**Top Chefs Going For Gold**" is taking place in Kelowna on February 11, 2012. Some of the Culinary Arts students from the TRU campus is given the opportunity to be a part of this event. It is a Canadian Culinary Competition to raise money for the Canada Olympics Athletes.

We are all very proud of his pure determination and ambition....keep up the awesome work Brandon :)



to



## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
February 01, 2012

### **Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Town of Smithers Re-Sign Protocol Agreement**

SMITHERS – The Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Town of Smithers are pleased to announce the re-signing of a Protocol Agreement at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en on January 27, 2012. The re-signing marks the second year of the agreement focused on improving information sharing and communication between the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Town of Smithers.

The agreement commits both organizations to regular meetings of both senior administration and political leaders over the next year and includes guiding principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and the importance of good communication in building trust between the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Town of Smithers.

Over the course of 2011, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Town of Smithers jointly presented to the Provincial Union of B.C. Municipalities Community to Community Forum and the Laxaltsap Government on working together with local government and First Nations communities. The Town of Smithers and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en have had several discussions regarding Crown lands within the Town of Smithers boundaries and their potential future development. Wet'suwet'en Chiefs have welcomed the newly elected Council to their territory and played an active role in the inaugural meeting of Council held in December of 2011.

*First, the Wet'suwet'en Chiefs' welcome the newly elected Mayor and Council and thank the previous council for their endeavours in working with the Wet'suwet'en Chiefs and Office of the Wet'suwet'en, albeit the signing of the second year protocol agreement with the Town of Smithers is a good start to the work to be undertaken in the upcoming year. And, emphasize on the importance of communication between the Town of Smithers and the Wet'suwet'en on matters of Mutual Interest. The Wet'suwet'en endeavour to bring forward the importance to work collaboratively while respecting each others mandates and jurisdictions. We look forward to another progressive year ahead.*

"Re-signing the protocol agreement provides an important opportunity for us to deepen our relationship with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs," said Smithers' Mayor Taylor Bachrach. "I believe we will achieve our greatest success when we work together from a place of trust and respect, and I'm happy that the protocol has set us on that course."

Both parties look forward to strengthening the relationship over the next year and continuing the dialogue that encourages mutual understanding.

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## **BOARD OF DIRECTOR Motions Carried** **Nov. & Dec.2011 & January 2012**

### **November 29th, 2011**

**Motion #2011-068:** Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs endorse the "Save the Fraser Declaration" and will sign petition. Namoks will attend the signing in Vancouver and sign on behalf of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs.

**Motion #2011-069:** Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs appoint T'sek'ot to sit on the Headwaters Initiative Steering Committee and report to the Chiefs table after each meeting.

**Motion # 2011-070:** Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs support OW management to pursue discussions with Summit Camps on potential Joint Venture relationship. Final terms and conditions will be presented to the Chiefs table for final approval, if the venture proves feasible.

**Motion 2011-71:** Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs accept the invitation to attend the December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Inaugural Meeting of Council at the Town of Smithers.

### **December 14, 2011**

**Motion #2011-076:** The Hereditary Chiefs approve the request for the Office of the Wet'suwet'en to be the Sponsor Agency for Gretchen Woodman's Master's research study and that Debbie Pierre will be the identified Agency Supervisor for this research study.

### **December 15, 2011**

**Motion 2011-078:** The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs support the release of Wet'suwet'en Trail information as per the map titled Wet'suwet'en Trail & Cultural Heritage Resources in the context of the proposed Enbridge Pipeline.

**Motion 2011-079:** The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs approve the Wet'suwet'en written submission for the Enbridge Joint Review Panel.



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**January 24, 2012**

**Motion 2012-001:** The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs will renew the 2012/13 protocol agreement with the Town of Smithers.

**Motion 2012-004:** Motion to accept November/December, 2011 FN Summit Report as presented.

**Motion 2012-005:** Motion for Namoks to attend the February 29<sup>th</sup>, March 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 FN Summit meeting in Vancouver.

**January 25, 2012**

**Motion 2012-006:** Motion to release the 2010/2011 Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office Society Annual Report to the public.

**Motion 2012:007:** The WHC secure funding for the 2012 culture camps.

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**Upcoming Chief Meetings**

**February 27 & 28, 2012**

**March 27 & 28, 2012**

**April 24 & 25, 2012**

**May 29 & 30, 2012**

**June 26 & 27, 2012**

**July 24 & 25, 2012**

**No chief meetings scheduled in August**

**September 25 & 26, 2012**

**October 30 & 31, 2012**

**November 27 & 28, 2012**

**December 11 & 12, 2012**

**All members are welcome to participate in the chief meetings. The meetings are held at the OW and are from 9:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m. Minutes of meetings are available upon request.**

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