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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs Demand Coastal GasLink Cease Work Due to Destruction of Cultural Sites

SMITHERS, BC, October 4, 2019 - The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs demands that a Cease and Desist Order be immediately issued to the Coastal GasLink Ltd (CGL) pipeline project due to the ongoing destruction of Wet'suwet'en cultural heritage and archaeological sites, and non-compliance with Wet'suwet'en and BC Provincial law.

The destruction of Wet'suwet'en cultural heritage including archaeological sites by CGL crews amounts to cultural genocide, as it erases Wet'suwet'en cultural information from the land and destroys evidence of use and occupation for Aboriginal rights and title.

Since February 2019, CGL has destroyed numerous archaeological heritage sites in Wet'suwet'en territory. In addition to potential village sites, portions of the ancient Kweese War Trail, accompanying culturally modified trees (CMTs), and potential burial sites have been altered and destroyed by CGL work crews. These sites were previously identified to both the Province and CGL, and flagged for CGL's consulting archaeologists and construction crews. Several "cultural heritage resource" ribbons that were placed along the Kweese War Trail in 2011 by representatives of the Wet'suwet'en were removed by CGL contractors, and replaced with ribbons indicating CGL's road center-line.

On July 31, 2019, Coastal GasLink [acknowledged](#) that construction activities have occurred in areas where no archaeological impact assessments were ever conducted, in stark violation of their permits to operate under Provincial law. The Province has yet to investigate or justify why Wet'suwet'en cultural heritage is being decimated by CGL. The destruction of archaeological sites contravenes BC Provincial law under the Heritage Conservation Act.

The Kweese War Trail is central to Wet'suwet'en cultural identity, traversing several House territories and reaching over the Coast Mountains into Haisla territory. It was in the Kweese War that the Wet'suwet'en received many of the names and crests that are symbols of who we are as a people. Many of those who fought in that war were wounded and where they died along the trail is where their spirits were released. Their bodies traveled no further. The spiritual connection of the Kweese Trail is unique and should not be disturbed.

As Minister of FLNROD, Doug Donaldson has the ability to issue a stop work order for damage caused to the Kweese war trail under the new provisions of the Heritage Conservation Act. A stop work order of up to 120 days can be issued when something of heritage value "is likely to be altered, is being altered, or has been altered." (HCA 1996, Section 16.1)

The Kweese Trail has been and continues to be irreparably altered. CGL has disclosed non-compliance in several areas to BCOGC archaeological conditions, yet has faced no repercussions from regulatory authorities. The Office of Wet'suwet'en has not been informed of any existing dispute mechanisms or appeals processes available to Indigenous groups regarding BCOGC permitting and non-compliance.

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs believe that a stop-work order must be enacted immediately to prevent further loss of Wet'suwet'en heritage by the negligence of Coastal GasLink. The OW takes the loss of Wet'suwet'en cultural heritage and archaeological sites very seriously, as should any company or government agency working within Wet'suwet'en territories.

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VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OFnANtjZSY>