

Audrey Huntley speaking at demonstration on Feb 22, 2020 (posted on Facebook)

Thank you for your patience - I was just talking to some folks about our numbers - there are over 5000 people here!!

All across this land people have been showing up in the streets to show their support and love for the Wet'suwet'en. Peaceful rallies and marches have taken place almost daily in small towns and cities from east to west.

Indigenous youth even shut down entry to the BC parliamentary building in Victoria and for the first time ever caused disruption and delay of the throne speech which is a ridiculous spectacle of colonial pageantry on unceded Indigenous lands.

This was a huge accomplishment especially after several of them had been violently arrested on January 22, in the lobby of a government ministry building where they were articulating their demand that premier Horgan meet with hereditary chiefs.

They were in ceremony when this happened. Praying! They were shouting: "We are unarmed, they have guns"

There have also been over 20 (24 at last count) peaceful disruptions of railways -effectively targeting the settler economy! The Tyendinaga have been holding down for over two weeks – this is the longest standing blockade in Canadian history!

In fact, the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en are visiting Mohawk territory and held a media conference with their relations yesterday showing their thanks and consulting on actions going forward. They all agreed that despite the PMs calls for the 'barricades' to go down, no trains will pass through their lands until the RCMP are out of Wet'suwet'en and Coastal Gas Link ceases its illegal work!

Honestly, I feel incredibly grateful to be alive today, in a time when Indigenous people have come together in such an incredible show of strength that demonstrates we will not stand by Idle while matriarchs are interrupted in ceremony, Indigenous nations are invaded and land protectors arrested. We truly are Idle No More!

What is perhaps most striking is that for the first time ever, there are huge huge numbers of non-Indigenous people taking the initiative to show massive support for Wet'suwet'en sovereignty and opposition to pipelines. This makes my heart soar.

The past weeks have reminded me of when I first started organizing as a young activist in the 80s and how the stand-off at Kanesatake, often referred to as Oka in 1990 impacted me deeply.

Indigenous people across the land have walked taller ever since. The solidarity with Mohawk communities standing for their land and facing off with the Canadian military was as wide-spread then as today's with Wet'suwet'en.

With some 30 years of healing and recovery from colonial violence in the mix, our communities are so much stronger now.

We have built power and the matriarchs have regained strength and are in leadership roles as are the youth. Two-Spirit people are challenging the internalized homo and transphobia of colonization and resuming their rightful place in the community. Our relationships with allies and accomplices are strong. We are not to be messed with anymore!

I am particularly grateful to the Wet'suwet'en and all who stand with them because of the work I'm involved in around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, trans and Two-Spirit people. This form of femicide/genocide is inextricably linked to land theft and particularly to resource extraction.

It was intrinsic to the founding of this country as women, children and Two-Spirit people are the centres of our communities and nations and they were particularly targeted to get access to the land.

When Indigenous people are driven off their land or their land base is drastically reduced through illegal grabs it means they can no longer thrive on their home territories. Community members inevitably have to leave to find work or schooling in urban centres where they are often met with racism and violence. They can end up on skid row where they are preyed on, as predators know that the police will do nothing. Think Vancouver's DTES and the pig farm where a serial killer murdered vulnerable women for years, 60 percent of whom were Indigenous.

The link between resource extraction and destruction of the land/violence on the land and violence against vulnerable community members of that land is even more obvious when it comes to the massive man camps that come with these projects. The rates of violence against women spike in surrounding lands as soon as they are established.

Work on pipelines means death to pristine eco-systems and more deaths of Indigenous women, girls, trans and two-spirit people on those lands.

In the case of the Coastal Gas Link pipeline, it hasn't even met the criteria for approval by the Environment Assessment office as reported not long after Trudeau's announcement yesterday.

How dare they allow an invasion and this work to continue?

The attack on Wet'suwet'en sovereignty and government approval of a pipeline that they did not agree to also fly in the face of recommendations that came out of a national inquiry into the violent disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, trans and two-spirit people

Millions spent to hear the stories of community members with missing and murdered loved ones only to once again ignore the calls to action. These included access to ceremony and healing!

One of the most painful moments over the last weeks was when the RCMP entered Unistoten and arrested the matriarchs. They were in the middle of a ceremony for the missing and murdered women. This ceremony was interrupted and they were dragged away. The red dresses they had hung up to hold the spirits of the women ripped down.

This does not bode well for those who committed this violent act nor those who ordered it. Mark my words, interrupting ceremony in this way will have consequences.

We can't stop the ongoing disappearance of women, girls, trans and two-spirit people without access to ceremony and land. Solidarity with land protectors and land defence struggles is a given.

I'm so proud that one of our long time members, Two-Spirit warrior woman, Doreen Silversmith, was part of the land reclamation at Six Nations in 2006. 14 years ago, Kanonhstaton or The Protected Place was expropriated and there were plans to build 750 homes on it.

That development was stopped and we're coming up to the anniversary of this hard-won victory on February 28! On that day in 2006, a small group of women took their drums, built a fire and said stop!

This is one of the longest-standing land reclamations in the country.

We must stand with Wet'suwet'en so they can also protect the land for all of us and future generations!

We are at a pivotal moment in time – a time when we all must choose whose side are we on??

When Indigenous land is under attack, what do we do??  
Stand Up Fight Back!

We must keep up the pressure - Eyes on the Front Line and Feet in the Street!

Wet'suwet'en will be free! From the mountains to the sea Wet'suwet'en will be free!

Miigwetch!