Statement in Support of Wet'suwet'en

CUPE 3906 stands in solidarity with the land defenders of Wet'suwet'en, the hereditary chiefs of this sovereign Nation, and all other Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island fighting to protect the land from unwanted degradation and militarized police intervention. We understand that extractive industries, environmental devastation, and police violence against Indigenous peoples are all inextricably linked as pillars of the settler colonial project that requires the continuous dispossession of Indigenous lands.

Earlier this month, RCMP trespassed further into Wet'suwet'en territory and began arresting both members of this sovereign Nation and (settler) legal observers, forcibly removing women in ceremony, and tearing down the gates that that had been set up for their protection – all while denying journalists the access to record such illegal acts.

Indeed, these acts fly in the face of Wet'suwet'en, Canadian, and international law. Most importantly, under Wet'suwet'en law, authority over the Nation's territory remains with the hereditary chiefs of five clans, all of whom oppose the pipeline. While elected band councils may or may not have jurisdiction over reserve lands (at least under Canadian law, which forcibly imposed the band council system on Indigenous peoples in the first place), they absolutely do not have jurisdiction over the territories closest to the pipeline. The jurisdiction of hereditary chiefs over these lands was further confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada's 1997 Delgamuuk'w decision. In that case, the Court sided with the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en and neighbouring Gitxsan nations, finding that both retained title to their territories. Furthermore, the evictions of land defenders from Wet'suwet'en constitute blatant violations of Article 10 ("No Forced Removals") in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which clearly states that "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories." We would like to remind the federal government that in their quest for so-called "reconciliation," they agreed to abide by the UNDRIP in 2017. The violation of Indigenous people's territorial sovereignty has been the norm in Canada for well over a century, yet somehow our government continues to frame this country as a progressive global leader on matters relating to Indigenous issues and the climate.

This week, OPP officers violently arrested several Tyendinaga Mohawk land defenders who had occupied a rail line in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en. As tensions continue to escalate and blockades increase in strength and numbers, we know that the only way to end the stand-

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offs in a peaceful manner will be to ensure the demands of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs are met. We unequivocally support these demands, which are listed below:

- **That the province cease construction of the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline project and suspend permits.**

- **That the UNDRIP and the Wet'suwet'en right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are respected by the state and RCMP.**

- **That the RCMP and associated security and policing services be withdrawn from Wet'suwet'en lands, in agreement with the most recent letter provided by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's (CERD) request.**

- **That the provincial and federal government, RCMP and private industry employed by CGL respect our laws and our governance system, and refrain from using any force to access Wet'suwet'en lands or remove Wet'suwet'en people.**

We also call on other labour unions and progressive organizations to make similar statements of support, not just in words but also in action. As of now, our Local has plans to send a substantial donation to the 2020 Unist'ot'en Legal Defence Fund, and many of our members stand ready to answer the call of Indigenous land defenders nearby, on the Haudenosaunee and Mississauga territories on which we live.

ALL EYES ON WET'SUWET'EN

passed by majority vote on February 25, 2020 at a General Membership Meeting

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