



## Letter in Solidarity with Wet'suwet'en land defenders

The Xinka Parliament and the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network (BTS) support and stand in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en land defenders, who are resisting the incursion of the Coastal Gaslink (CGL) pipeline on their unceded territory.

We - Xinka people and Xinka Parliament in Guatemala - have been engaged in a similar struggle against the Escobal mine, in opposition to the BC-based company Pan-American Silver (previously Tahoe Resources) in our territory. Through numerous municipal consultations, we've voiced our opposition to the project. For defending our territory, our people have been met with violence, including murder and the shooting of peaceful protesters, military occupation, threats, intimidation, as well as criminalization.

Through direct action such as 24/7 encampments, we've been able to stop materials related to the mine from entering and to bring the mine operation to a halt. In 2017, we won a Constitutional Court order to suspend the project pending a process to ascertain the free, prior, informed consultation of affected communities. We're still engaged in that process, which the Guatemalan state and Pan-American Silver haven't been acting in good faith.

Since 2004, BTS has provided human rights accompaniment to communities throughout Guatemala with a similar story and called for the Canadian state to hold Canadian mining companies accountable.

We know full well the risks faced by Indigenous land defenders when state forces and the legal system are mobilized in defense of resource extraction. We've seen this throughout Guatemala and we're seeing this today in Wet'suwet'en territory.

Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs representing all five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation have continuously rejected all pipeline proposals in their territory, including the CGL project. They have never given their free, prior and informed consent for the CGL project. Nevertheless, on

December 31<sup>st</sup>, BC Supreme Court Justice Marguerite Church issued a permanent injunction in CGL's favour, as well as an RCMP enforcement order.

In a series of heavily militarized raids beginning on February 6th, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) began forcibly removing Wet'suwet'en land defenders and legal observers from two camps, as well as the Unist'ot'en village, which are on unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. In total, [28 people were arrested in these raids.](#)

We are deeply concerned by the RCMP's actions and ongoing presence in Wet'suwet'en territory. We condemn the criminalization of Wet'suwet'en land defenders and legal observers, as well as the RCMP's efforts to block media coverage of the raids.

We know that these struggles in defense of territory are connected and that we're all part of the same fight.

We stand with Wet'suwet'en land defenders, just as we stand with Mi'kmaq water protectors resisting the Alton Gas project and Wolastoqiyik grandmothers opposing the Sisson Mine.

In closing, we echo the calls of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs:

- That the province of BC cease construction of the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline project and suspend permits.
- That the UNDRIP and 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 Wet'suwet'en laws and their governance system, and refrain from using any force to access their lands or remove their people.

We also urge the Canadian state to ensure that Canadian mining companies operating globally respect the right to free, prior and informed consent, and that they're held finally accountable. This includes ensuring that Canada has an independent Ombudsperson with the power to investigate harms associated with Canadian mining projects, [which has not been the case to date.](#)

*The Xinka Parliament is the ancestral authority of the Xinka people, residing in the departments of Jalapa, Jutiapa and Santa Rosa.*

*BTS is a solidarity network that has been working with Guatemalans seeking justice since the 1980s. Since 2004, BTS has been providing human rights accompaniment in communities throughout Guatemala who've been harmed by Canadian mining projects owned by companies like Goldcorp, Hudbay and Tahoe Resources (now owned by Pan-American Silver).*