

## Statement of Support for the Wet'suwet'en from Nipissing First Nation's Chief & Council

GARDEN VILLAGE, ON (February 27, 2020) - Nipissing First Nation stands in solidarity with the people of Wet'suwet'en who are protecting their traditional territory from infringement. We must show support not only for the rights of the Wet'suwet'en people, but also to affirm our own rights to govern and protect our lands.

With the barrage of information coming through social media, and the way mainstream media has been (mis)representing Indigenous nations and voices in the process, it can be difficult to distinguish facts from rhetoric and truth from hidden agendas.

The fact is that the Wet'suwet'en, as represented by their hereditary leaders, never gave up rights nor title to their 22,000 square kilometer territory. They fought for many years to have their sovereignty recognized and affirmed by Canadian Law, and it was – by a Supreme Court of Canada ruling over 20 years ago (in 1997).

And yet here we are... watching Canada break its own "Rule of Law". Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised – Canada has yet to ratify the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), which it opposed, then finally signed almost a decade after it was adopted by the General Assembly.

What happened to the doctrine of "free, prior and informed consent" about any developments on or near aboriginal title lands? Why are Indigenous people being forcefully removed from their own lands? How many Canadians understand the longstanding issues that continue to act as barriers and systematically discriminate against Indigenous people?

As the Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Glen Hare stated, "these aren't just First Nation issues – these are human rights issues." Issues, he adds, that include decades-long boil water advisories and Canada's decision to challenge the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal compensation ruling in favour of First Nations children, youth and families – a case that was filed 13 years ago to address Canada's discrimination towards First Nations kids.

Many people who have taken the time to inform themselves do understand the injustices Indigenous people face, as evidenced by the support shown across the country and even globally. This support comes from a place of shared values, and a desire to protect our precious lands and waters from exploitation before it's too late.

Nipissing First Nation's leadership supports our Wet'suwet'en family's sovereign right to self-determination, including the right to govern and protect their lands. They need the time and space to move forward with a unified voice in whatever direction they choose to take. What we've seen from mainstream media and Canada's leadership is alarming and distressing. It's an example of reconciliation at its worst, and colonization at its best.

This is not just about pipelines. Indigenous people deserve better.

- 30 -

### Contacts:

Chief Scott McLeod  
Nipissing First Nation  
(705) 753-2050

Gen Couchie, Communications Officer  
Nipissing First Nation  
(705) 753-2050 ext. 1270 | [genc@nfn.ca](mailto:genc@nfn.ca)