



Smithers Bridging Committee
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November 1, 2021

Dear Readers,

In light of the events that unfolded on Witsuwit'en territory in 2019 and continue today, the Smithers Bridging Committee would like to express that this booklet is to be used as an educational resource for people wanting to understand these events: it outlines the history, the present moment, and suggests resources for those wanting to learn more.

These events have received international attention and there is much need for education, respectful dialogue and reflection. Our intention for this publication is to provide a stepping off point for those wishing to better understand what is occurring on Witsuwit'en territory. We understand that this document can elicit strong feelings. If you have concerns or you would like to discuss it in more detail, we welcome you to contact us at smithersbridgingcommittee@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Birdy Markert and Nancy Cody, Co-Chairs

About Smithers Bridging Committee

The Smithers Bridging Committee (SBC) was created in 2002 with the hope of encouraging dialogue in the Bulkley Valley to further more harmonious relations among diverse cultures.

We see a vibrant, harmonious community that is respectful of the Witsuwit'en territory and the diversity of all nations and cultures that reside here. We appreciate that we are all connected and enrich ourselves by celebrating each other. We have the ability and responsibility to enhance the health of our community.

The Smithers Bridging Committee supports and facilitates the sharing of cultures and the building of lasting relationships. We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive community between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in the Bulkley Valley. We do this through education, partnership, celebration, dialogue and reflection.

Smithers Bridging Committee

Fall 2021

ALL EYES ON WITSUWIT'EN



Amanda Bailey Hosgood/The Tyee

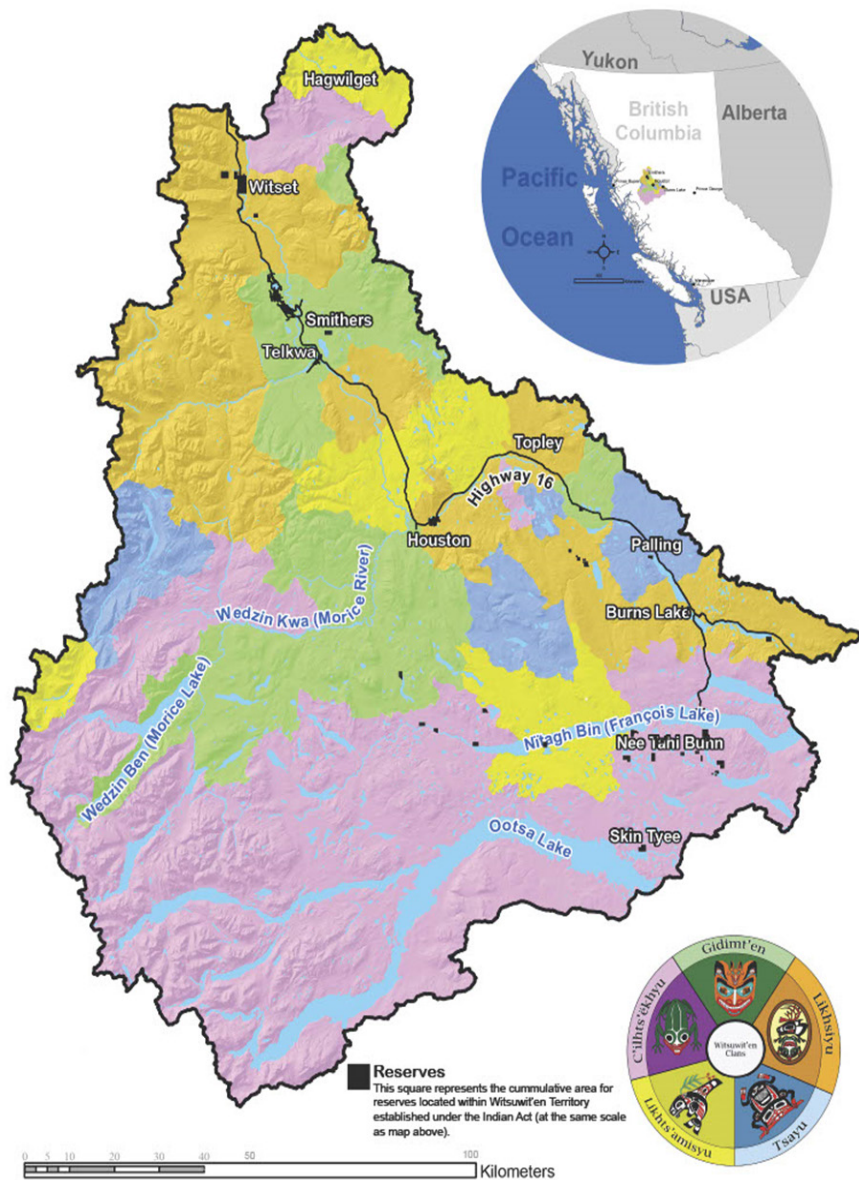
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The Smithers Bridging Committee supports and facilitates the sharing of culture and the building of lasting relationships. Through education, partnerships, celebration, dialogue and reflection we strive to create an inclusive community between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the Bulkley Valley.

During a time when all eyes are suddenly on the Witsuwit'en, and on our small community, there is much need for education, respectful dialogue and reflection. The Bridging Committee's intention for this publication is to provide a stepping off point for those wishing to better understand what is happening on the Witsuwit'en yin tah (territory) through an ongoing anti-racism education framework and practice.



*Courtesy of School District No.54



What is this document? And why the title, 'All Eyes on Witsuwit'en'?

Many Indigenous Nations have a complex relationship with Canada and Canadian provinces/territories, which is largely defined by colonial power-dynamics. For the Witsuwit'en Nation, this relationship reached an international flashpoint in recent years. However, this flashpoint was in no way a new event, nor has it ended. In fact, the events that unfolded on Witsuwit'en territory in 2019 continue today and have been over one hundred years in the making.

This document is an educational resource for people wanting to understand these events: it outlines the history, the present moment, and it suggests more resources for those wanting to learn more. The title 'All Eyes on Witsuwit'en' recognizes the attention, solidarity, and discussions that were catapulted into international media as a result of the armed incursion onto Witsuwit'en territories.

Who are the Witsuwit'en?

The Witsuwit'en Nation is a matrilineal society where family affiliation is passed from mother to child, **regardless of place of residence**. The nation consists of thirteen Houses (within 5 Clans), which are hereditary or cultural groups that allow for political and cultural decision-making. Witsuwit'en House territories encompass a total of approximately 22 000 km² of land in northwestern British Columbia (BC).

"We are part of the land. The land is not separate from us. The land sustains us. And if we don't take care of her, she won't be able to sustain us, and we as a generation of people will die."

Freda Huson, Unist'ot'en Hereditary Spokesperson

The Witsuwit'en Nation has never given up their authority to their yin tah (territory), their legal system that directs how all beings (such as plants and animals) should be related to, and the yin tah is not subject to treaty with Canada or BC. It's because of this that you may hear that the Witsuwit'en Nation has never ceded their authority.



Photo from <http://unistoten.camp>

Freda Huson leads protocol at the bridge over Wedzin Kwa.

Who speaks for the Witsuwit'en?

Witsuwit'en affairs are conducted by two coexisting – often entangled – systems of governance. The first is the Hereditary system, which has existed since time immemorial or beyond when time was known. The second is the elected band council system, which was imposed by the Federal government through the Indian Act in 1876. The Indian Act remains in place today.

Hereditary House Chiefs, whose titles are given and maintained based largely on merit, maintain jurisdiction and authority over the lands associated with their Houses. More detailed information on how Hereditary House Chiefs are chosen, can be found in the textbook, *Niwhts'ide'ni Hibi'it'ën: The Ways of Our Ancestors* available from School District 54.

Combined, these lands total the 22 000 km² of Witsuwit'en yin tah. According to Anuc'nu'at'en (Witsuwit'en law), each House has the right to control access over its territory, including who is allowed to enter and stay on its lands. Houses and Clans take into consideration all forms of life and ecology (present and future) on their yin tah (territory), present and future. Hereditary/House Chiefs make decisions that reflect the positions of their members. Important decisions as well as conflict resolution are formalized in the Balhats (Feast Hall).

Elected band chief and councils are elected by Indian Act bands every two years. These leaders have authority to make decisions only within reserve land—reserve lands and Indian Act bands were created by the federal government in the 1900s. There are six Witsuwit'en reserve communities (Hagwilget, Witset /Moricetown, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Skin Tyee, Ts'il Kaz Koh and Nee Tahi Buhn). The Wet'suwet'en First Nation is a First Nations band located outside of Burns Lake. It was formerly known as the Broman Lake Indian Band and is still usually referred to as

"Anuc'nu'at'en (Wet'suwet'en law) is not a 'belief' or a 'point of view'... It is a way of sustainably managing our territories and relations with one another and the world around us, and it has worked for millennia to keep our territories intact. Our law is central to our identity. The ongoing criminalization of our laws by Canada's courts and industrial police is an attempt at genocide, an attempt to extinguish Wet'suwet'en identity itself."

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, APTN, January 5, 2020

Crest Clan	House Group House Group House Chief		
 Gidim'ten Bear / Wolf Clan	Cas Yikh Grizzly House Wos	Këyikh Winīts House in the Middle of Many Gisdewe	Insggisgĩ Where it Lies Blocking the Trail Midik
 C'ilhts'ëkhyu Big Frog Clan	Yikh Ts'iwit'an' Thin House Gguhlat	Yikh Tsawilhggis Dark House Nedibis	K'iy Yikh Birch House Simuyh
 Likhsilyu Small Frog Clan	Tsë Kal K'iyikh House on Top of the Flat Rock Ut'akhgit	Kwin Begh Yikh House Beside the Fire Ut'akhkw'its	C'inegh Ihay Yikh House of Many Eyes Hagwilnekhli
 Tsayu Beaver Clan	Tsa Kën Yikh Beaver House Kw'is	Namoks Yikh House of Namoks Namoks	
 Likhts'amisyu Fireweed / Killer Whale Clan	Sa Yikh Sun House Smogilhgm	Misdzi Yikh Owl House Lho'imggin	

Figure 1. Witsuwit'en governance structure. Printed with permission from School District 54's textbook,

Niwhts'ide'ní Hibi't'ën: The Ways of Our Ancestors



Photo from <http://unistoten.camp>

Multigenerational Indigenous land defenders at the Unist'ot'en Camp.

Broman Lake although this is no longer its official name. The Wet'suwet'en First Nation was formerly part of the Omineca Band. In 1984, the Omineca Band split into the Broman Lake and Nee Tahi Buhn bands. The Skin Tyee later split from the Nee Tahi Buhn. Do not confuse Wet'suwet'en First Nation (formerly Broman Lake Band - one of the bands within Wet'suwet'en Territory), with the whole Witsuwit'en Nation.

The total land base of these Indian Act band reserve lands are 35 km², a very small percentage of Witsuwit'en's 22,000km² yin tah that is governed by Hereditary House Chiefs. Historically, even on Indian Reserve band lands, the Hereditary Chiefs still hold jurisdiction and have stopped economic projects that would impact their territory negatively. Likhsilyu and Gidimt'en Head Chiefs have met with council about projects on their territory along Moricetown Canyon to discuss prevention of the disturbance of graves.

What legal rights do the Witsuwit'en have?

Although a handful of treaties have been negotiated with Indigenous Nations within BC, the Witsuwit'en have never ceded the rights to their territory or ability to self-govern according to Witsuwit'en Anuc'nu'at'en. Yet, reserve lands were created by Canada and remain in place today without Witsuwit'en consent and without regard for Witsuwit'en laws, governance, and culture. In fact, BC and Canada have claimed jurisdiction over Witsuwit'en land. For a hundred years, Witsuwit'en have sought to have their authority to their yintah recognized by Canada's legal system's notion of 'Aboriginal title'. In 1997, Witsuwit'en and Gitksan people won a landmark court case in the Supreme Court of Canada (*Delgamuukw (& Gisdag wa) v. British Columbia*). The ruling affirmed Witsuwit'en land rights and the roles of Hereditary/House Chiefs as title holders. The case was also ground breaking. For the first time, Hereditary/House Chiefs and Elders' oral history was recognized as 'evidence' in colonial courts, which Canada previously refused to do. However, the case did not affirm where Witsuwit'en Aboriginal title applied, only that it was a legal thing that existed.

After over 10 years in courts, the Witsuwit'en Nation did not have the resources to continue the case. Yet, this case was ground breaking and laid the way for others. For instance, in

2014, *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* strengthened the question of Aboriginal title by building on *Delgamuukw* and for the first time had Aboriginal title granted and applied.

These legal changes are important as they set legal precedent and push for changes that have led to the declarations and promises that the BC and Canadian governments have made in the spirit of 'reconciliation' with Indigenous peoples. Notably, in 2019, the government of BC passed Bill-41 in provincial legislation, which implemented the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Bill-41 implements the 46 articles of UNDRIP and recognizes and reaffirms that:

Indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that Indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples.

It is against this legal backdrop: of Supreme Court of Canada rulings, international declarations that legislate upholding and respecting Indigenous peoples' rights, Indian Act formed band councils, and Witsuwet'en never ceding nor surrendering their yin tah or authority to make decisions for themselves, that what many see as an ongoing invasion of Witsuwit'en territory occurs, which made international headlines in 2019 and 2020.

Wet'suwet'en versus Witsuwit'en

Have you ever wondered why the name is written either as Wet'suwet'en or Witsuwit'en? It can be confusing to people both inside and outside of the community. The Office of the Wet'suwet'en has used Wet'suwet'en since the beginning of land claims. The *Delgamuukw Gisdag Wa* court case was the Gitxsan and Witsuwit'en Chiefs' first attempt at having Aboriginal rights to the traditional territory recognized by Canadian law. To do this, Witsuwit'en Chiefs had to write everything they knew about the land, culture and language. This was the first time Witsuwit'en people had to extensively record and write out the names of the chiefs, clans and place names on the territory. These words were written using the sounds available in the English alphabet. The English alphabet, however, does not contain all of the sounds in the Witsuwit'en alphabet. When linguists started researching the language, they focused on the sounds. Since the 1980s, linguists have been recording many Witsuwit'en words and fine tuning an alphabet that is most appropriate to Witsuwit'en sounds. Linguist Sharon L. Hargus reworked the Hildebrant writing systems. In 1993, Hargus presented the writing system to the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and the Witsuwit'en Language and Culture Authority for approval. The Distinctly Witsuwit'en Orthography was accepted for use in education and the Hereditary Chiefs still retain the spelling of Wet'suwet'en for legal purposes.

On the Land: Intergenerational Threats to Witsuwit'en yin tah

Since time immemorial, the Witsuwit'en Nation has cared for their lands and waters with future generations in mind. With the increased threat over the last century of an economic system that sees lands, waters and living beings as a source of economic gain, Witsuwit'en peoples' care for land and other non-human kin has predominantly come in the form of defense. For generations, colonial systems have forcefully accessed Witsuwit'en yin tah. Yet, for generations, colonial systems have not allowed the Witsuwit'en to seek recourse for the damages caused, not just to the land, but to ways of life now and for future generations. In 1948, the Alcan aluminum company (now Rio Tinto Alcan) had purchased the water rights to 9,500 cubic feet of water per second that would flood the 42 mile long Ootsa Lake. Damming the Nechako River would raise the level of Ootsa Lake by 149 feet. This water power would fuel the Kemano Project to support the aluminum plant in Kitimat. Unfortunately, the lake and its surroundings were a critical source of sustenance for its inhabitants. Consequences from historic attempts to access Witsuwit'en yin tah remain today, such as the flooding of Ootsa Lake by Alcan (mentioned above) in the 1950s, the burning of family homes and appropriation of land to construct Smithers in the 1920s and 1930s, and

On the Land: Intergenerational Threats to Witsuwit'en Yin Tah

No Clear-Cuts Here

K'elikh Mabel (Sam) Critch's Struggle to Protect Her Territory from Logging

Since Euro-Canadians arrived, Wit'suwit'en territory has undergone enormous physical changes resulting from clear-cut logging and the construction of roads, railways and mines. 'Ilh K'it Bin, an area near Topley, is one of the few areas in our territory that has remained relatively undeveloped. Successive holders of the name K'elikh have lived in that territory. The most recent holder of K'elikh, the late Mabel (Sam) Critch, lived out on her traditional territory in Topley until 2009. Being quite elderly, she moved to Houston to be closer to her family. C'oligit Matthew Sam, Mabel's father, had given up his Indian status to pre-empt land in his wife's territory so that the family could remain there without being forced onto reserves, as was happening to most Witsuwit'en people. This allowed them to continue using and protecting the area. Mabel's mother, K'elikh Rose Sam, also registered a trapline there to secure a portion of her territory. In later years, the government took away 160 acres and the Sams were left with only 10 acres. After her parents' passing, Mabel was an active steward of that territory, guarding it from corporations looking to make short-lived profits from the 'resources' it holds.

In 2001, the Ministry of Forests gave out licenses to start logging the area. K'elikh's family uses the Red Top area for berry picking, hunting, fishing, and harvesting plants. As logging was set to begin, the family set up a blockade on Red Top Road, forcing the Ministry of Forests to negotiate with them. Logging in the area was halted and their traditional use rights were recognized. The Ministry of Forests agreed to notify and consult with the family should they decide to log the area.

Nine years later in 2009, without K'elikh's family's knowledge or consent, the Ministry of Forests awarded Canfor—one of Canada's largest logging companies—a permit to clear-cut Red Top. The family found out that Canfor was working in the area. After consulting their house and clan, the family set up a peaceful blockade on the road to Granisle. Canfor sought an injunction against K'elikh and C'inegh Lhay Yikh (House of Many Eyes) to remove the blockade. With the support of House Chief Hagwilnekhilh Ron. A. Mitchell, on behalf of their house, the family launched their own court case to stop Canfor from logging and requiring them to consult with the family in the future. In June 2011, the judge ruled in K'elikh's favour.

Mabel passed away surrounded by family in June 2016.

From Niwhts'ide'ni Hibi'it'en, pg. 352

The Ways of our Ancestors

Melanie H. Morin

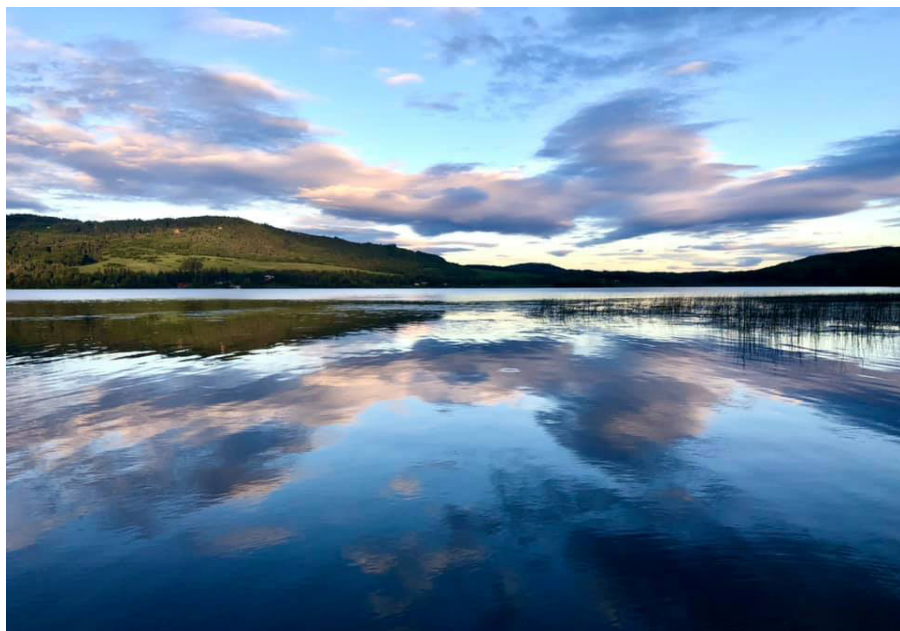


Photo by Nancy Cody

ongoing attempts to run pipeline projects through life giving waters and territories despite no consent by Witsuwit'en. These stories are family histories that remain in present day memories and connect to our collective futures.

When viewed in this light, the recent events on the Witsuwit'en yin tah is one chapter in a long and ongoing story. To understand the plotline of this story, it's helpful to understand who is behind the most recent attempt to access the Witsuwit'en yin tah.

Who is Coastal Gaslink?

Coastal GasLink (CGL) is a natural gas pipeline currently being built through Witsuwit'en territory by an international Calgary-based corporation called TC Energy. To do so, the Province of BC has issued approval permits and developed Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) with five Witsuwit'en band councils. Recall that band councils have say over Indian-Act-formed-reserve-lands only, which accounts for 35 km². Witsuwit'en Hereditary/House Chiefs have never given up their authority to the 22,000km² of territory. In other words, Indian Act band councils have say over 0.15% of Witsuwit'en yin tah, a point that was recognized in the *Delgamuukw* case. However, millions of dollars will flow to Indian Act bands that have few other options for economic and training possibilities through these CBAs. **Despite this flow of funds, no portion of the pipeline is slated to be constructed through reserve lands. All of the pipeline will be laid in the broader yin tah.**

Do the RCMP have the right to move the Witsuwit'en out of the way of the pipeline?

The province of BC issued permits for CGL—an internationally-funded corporation—to construct the pipeline. On December 14th, 2018, an interim injunction, or a legal 'order', was issued by the Supreme Court of BC at the request of CGL, disallowing anyone from impeding industry access to the pipeline route. On January 7, 2019, heavily armed RCMP enforced this order, which was issued by BC courts on behalf of an international company, resulting in the arrest of 14 people who lived on Witsuwit'en yin tah or were there to support those who did.

On December 31, 2019, the Supreme Court of British Columbia again asserted colonial law by issuing an interlocutory (permanent) injunction on behalf of CGL. The injunction stated that the people who had been arrested beforehand were barred from “physically preventing, impeding, restricting or in any other way physically interfering with... any person or vehicle travelling to or accessing the vicinity in and around the Morice River Bridge.” In other words, the BC Supreme Court ordered that an international company had unfettered access to Witsuwit'en lands, and that Witsuwit'en people did not.

The level of force used against unarmed, peaceful land defenders happened first at the Gidimt'en Check Point. The Unist'ot'en have built permanent structures on their territory over the past eleven years. The Unist'ot'en Healing Centre was built through world-wide crowd funding support and volunteer labour under

the education and leadership of the Unist'ot'en Chiefs. First Nations Health Authority funds programming at the Centre through proposal-driven grants.

From February 6-10, 2020, RCMP enforced the interlocutory injunction which included up to 50 RCMP members with military gear and snipers. The RCMP's actions on this date resulted in 28 arrests of unarmed people, including the



Photo from Gidimt'en Checkpoint Facebook page

Sleydo', Molly Wickham

arrest of Hereditary/House Chiefs and the Clinical Director of Unist'ot'en's healing lodge.

The RCMP do have the right to enforce the injunction. However, they have received criticism for a number of reasons. Firstly, the RCMP created an "exclusion zone" – an access control checkpoint – which was not part of the injunction order and which the BC Civil Liberties Association has condemned as being "without legal precedent." This exclusion zone has been

used to deny, at the RCMP's discretion, Witsuwit'en people's access to their own territories, including bringing basic supplies to the healing centre. The RCMP have also regularly harassed Indigenous individuals and supporters in the vicinity, with check points seemingly at random (before the courts). Secondly, the RCMP have also been criticized for removing, detaining and threatening to arrest journalists attempting to cover events within this exclusion zone. Among other concerns surrounding censorship and transparency, preventing media from documenting arrests violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Numerous highly credible bodies have spoken out against the RCMP's violation of Indigenous (collective) and human (individual) rights, among them the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the (BC) First Nations Leadership Council, the Canadian Association of Journalists, Amnesty International, the United Nations Committee to End Racial Discrimination and many others from the legal professions. Finally, the willingness of the RCMP and domestic courts to forcefully ensure an international company has access to Witsuwit'en yin tah by arresting Witsuwit'en people who opposed non-consensual access to their lands by CGL, thus preventing them from accessing their own lands, is extremely dangerous, especially when Witsuwit'en hold a Supreme Court Ruling recognizing the authority of their Hereditary Chiefs (e.g., *Delgamuukw*). The legality and morality of these actions have captured international attention and led to numerous legal actions.

Why are solidarity actions being held all across Canada and the world?

"The Unist'ot'en homestead is not a protest or demonstration. Our clan is occupying and using our traditional territory as it has for centuries... Today all of our Wet'suwet'en territory, including Unist'ot'en territory, is unceded Aboriginal territory. Our traditional Indigenous legal systems remain intact and continue to govern our people and our lands. We recognize the authority of these systems."

Governance Structure, Unist'ot'en Camp, 2020

Many actions have occurred to highlight injustice in the way Witsuwit'en people are being treated by RCMP on their own territory. Experiences of the Witsuwit'en are unique to the Nation; however, many other Indigenous Nations across Canada and the globe have, and are, experiencing force against them for trying to exist under unrelinquished laws. Solidarity actions internationally have highlighted Indigenous sovereignty – disagreements about the government's role in controlling Indigenous land and denying Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination. Some actions are also questioning how industry can trump human rights and environmental concerns, especially in light of the BC government legislating UNDRIP. Common ground among the Witsuwit'en and Indigenous and non-

Indigenous supporters seeks to protect human rights of today's and future generations, and the yin tah (territory), including the water, air, plants, and animals on which we *all* depend for survival.



Photo from www.yintahaccess.com

What is the Impact of Recent Discussions (as of early March 2020) between the Hereditary Chiefs and Federal and BC representatives?

Since the second armed raid by the RCMP, conversations involving the province of BC, Canada, and Witsuwit'en Hereditary Chiefs have focused on Witsuwit'en rights and title. However, **the BC government refused to consider** any changes in plans for the CGL pipeline construction or the heavy, continued presence of RCMP in Witsuwit'en territory along the Morice Forest Service Road. In fact, since these talks have occurred and since the COVID-19 pandemic has begun, RCMP and industry continue to forcefully access Witsuwit'en yin tah. Since September 2020, there have been over ten reported COVID-19 cases in the multiple work camps on Witsuwit'en yin tah, including within close proximity to the Healing Lodge. **The Hereditary House Chiefs continue to oppose the pipeline as well as the patrolling and harassment by the RCMP.** Requests for solidarity and for supporters to stand with Witsuwit'en continue.

How Can I Gather More Information?

Much of the above information was condensed from “Understanding Witsuwit’en Defense of the Yin Tah (Traditional House Territories)” by Melanie Morin (2020), a cultural anthropologist who has worked with the Witsuwit’en for 18 years. She is a program coordinator at the Witsuwit’en Language and Culture Society and is the author of *Niwhts’ide’ni Hibi’it’ën: The Ways of Our Ancestors* (2011, 2016), a textbook about Witsuwit’en history and culture which can be purchased from School District 54. See website below.

Websites:

School District 54 has done tremendous work under the leadership of Birdy Markert creating educational resources and curriculum introducing Witsuwit’en people, their clan system and past, present and future relationships with Witsuwit’en land, spirituality and values. Please see the website for books and videos.

https://www.sd54.bc.ca/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1071531&type=d&pREC_ID=1359212

The Gidimt'en is one of five clans of the Witsuwit'en Nation. The creation of the Gidimt'en Camp was announced in the Witsuwit'en feast hall, with the support of all House Chiefs present. The Gidimt'en Access checkpoint is controlling access to the House territory within the larger Gitimt'en clan territory at 44.5 km on the Morice River FSR. The collective House Chiefs made the decision to support Gidimt'en Yintah Access December 14th, 2018. The five clans ratified the decision in a bahlats (feast) in Witset on December 16th, 2018.

<https://www.yintahaccess.com/>

The Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocol used by the Unist'ot'en is a request of permission to enter the lands of the traditional chiefs and matriarchs. Visitors are asked to identify themselves and their relationship to the hosts, as our ancestors did. Like a border crossing, the protocol questions make Unist'ot'en land a safe place. FPIC ensures peace and security on the territory. In ancient times and even today in canoe journeys, and community resistance building gatherings, there exist Protocols where visiting peoples have shown who they are in relation to asking permission from the Traditional Chiefs and Matriarchs of the hosting lands, to enter the Traditional Lands. This is a living breathing assertion of the Traditional Laws of the Wet'suwet'en, which have been asserted via protocols like this on the lands for thousands of years, and renewed by today's sovereigntists.

<https://unistoten.camp/>

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en is a non-profit society that has been in operation since 1994, and was affiliated with the Gitksan Nation for many years. A lot of information about culture, language, clan system, house groups and governance can be found on this website.

<https://www.wetsuweten.com/>

The mission of the Sovereign Likhts'amisyu is to slow the acceleration of climate change and to restore and protect the biodiversity of our region. We strive to continue to educate and alert people about the affects of oil and gas extraction on our biosphere.

<https://likhtsamisyu.com/>

Videos:

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Unist'ot'en. (2020, December 30). Invasion [video file]. <http://unistoten.camp/media/invasion/>

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Further reading:

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Resources in the Community:

Smithers Bridging Committee on Facebook and Twitter.
Contact: smithersbridgingcommittee@gmail.com
@SmithersBridgi1

Acknowledging Witsuwit'en Territory, created in 2016 by the Smithers Bridging Committee. <http://www.smitherscommunitydirectory.com/files/SpeakingGuide-Oct2016-FINAL.pdf>

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Afterward: All Eyes Remain on the Witsuwit'en

Although the events outlined here are no longer taking up international headlines, Witsuwit'en people and their supporters continue to defend the yin tah; the Unistot'en healing lodge continues to serve as a place for healing; and CGL continues construction on the pipeline without consent by hereditary leaders. As Witsuwit'en peoples persist in their defense of the lands and waters on which we all depend, so too does the RCMP's presence. In 2019, the United Nations called for a withdrawal of RCMP forces and for CGL to stop pipeline construction; yet, pop up check points and constant RCMP surveillance persist amounting to many Witsuwit'en equate to 'localized harassment'. To learn more about ongoing police presence, visit:

Simmons, M. (2021, February 22). 'Localized harassment': RCMP patrol Wet'suwet'en territory despite UN calls for withdrawal. *The Narwhal*.
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The events that unfolded on Witsuwit'en yin tah were over 100 years in the making. Yet, the efforts, energy, and responsibilities of the Witsuwit'en Nation are rooted in sacred and ancestral ties to the yin tah, including lands, waters, and all living beings, that stretch beyond the memory of time.

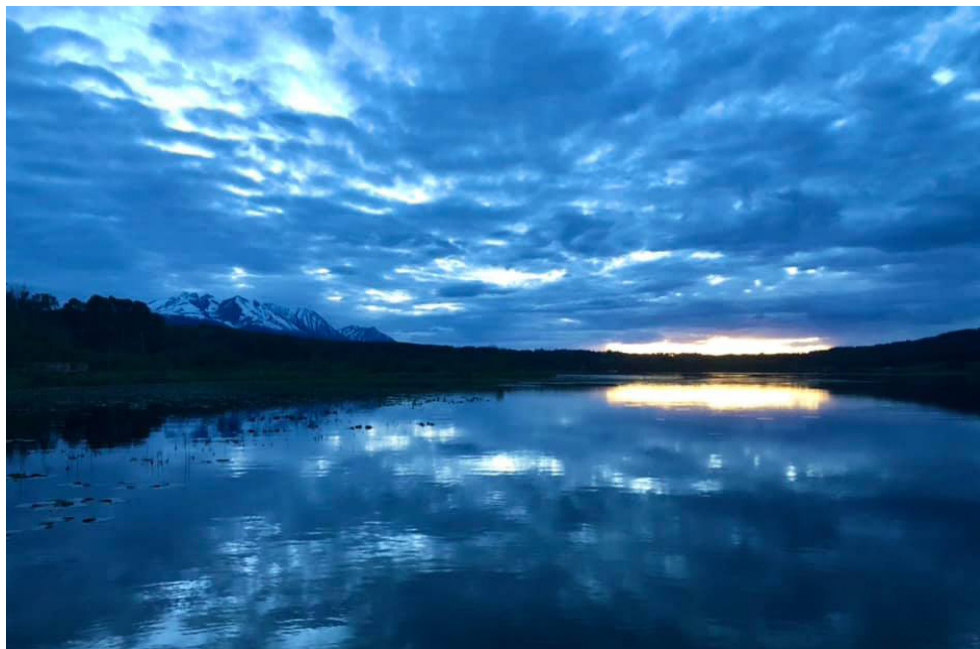


Photo by Nancy Cody