

# SOLIDARITY WITH THE WET'SUWET'EN

INFORMATION BOOKLET

ABOUT THE ANTIPIPELINE STRUGGLES  
OF THE WET'SUWET'EN PEOPLE



#AllOutForWedzinKwa

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“*Cas Yikh of the Gidimt'en Clan are counting on supporters to go ALL OUT in a mobilization for the biggest battle yet to protect our sacred headwaters, Wedzin Kwa. We have remained steadfast in our fight for self-determination, and we are still unceded, undefeated, sovereign and victorious.*”  
<https://www.yintahaccess.com/news/calltoaction>

By producing this booklet, we are answering the call of Indigenous communities and aim to provide a general context to lay the foundations for a future police intervention and a broad mobilization in support of water and land defenders.

We recognize that all of Canada's territory has been stolen from various Indigenous communities. The names of places are those used by local Indigenous communities where possible. However, in some places, the colonial names of the territories have been used to make it easier to understand for the reader

## COLONIAL EXTRACTIVISM AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

The spring of 2020 saw one of the largest Indigenous mobilizations since the Kanehsatà:ke resistance in 1990. The Wet'suwet'en nation's opposition to the Coastal GasLink project currently being built on their territory has inspired many other communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to take direct action across Canada, thereby blocking the national rail system, the backbone of Canadian colonial capitalism. The brutality of the military deployment by the various Canadian police forces used to repress these mobilizations and defend colonial capitalist interests is a testament to the fear and fragility of the colonial state. The struggle for self-determination of Indigenous peoples is today one of the most important threats to the unbridled capitalist exploitation of territories.

While these struggles, radically challenging the extractive and colonial mode of exploitation, have been largely erased by the colonial media in the context of the health crisis, they are now being rekindled. Indeed, in the last few months alone, several communities have had to deal with the resumption of extraction on their territories, with the massive arrival of workers from the cities threatening the local population with an outbreak of Covid in Indigenous communities, historically neglected by public health services. From the Inuit communities mobilized against the Baffinland mine, to the opposition of the Algonquin of Barriere Lake and the Anishinabeg of Kitigan Zibi against sport hunting on their territories, to the mobilization of Mi'kmaq fishermen (and the racist and colonialist reaction that followed), Indigenous peoples are regularly at the forefront of struggles to protect the environment, in order to address the imperatives of capital. The mainstream society thus periodically watches



unresponsively as the colonial state does violence to Indigenous peoples in its name, in the interests of big capitalist corporations.

As we speak, the Wet'suwet'en Nation is facing another invasion of its territory by CGL and the RCMP. Activists from the Gidimt'en camp are once again calling for the disruption of the Canadian economy in order to stop the colonial invasion of the Yintah. It is necessary to recall that the presence of extractive companies on their territory has been identified as a major risk factor for the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls. The man camps where white workers from the south come to exploit the territory are indeed places marked by toxic masculinity and patriarchal violence, racism and complacency in the face of gender and racial violence. Thus, the presence of these companies threatens not only the territories of Indigenous communities, but also the physical integrity of their members.

While it is not up to us, as non-Indigenous people, to determine the path of decolonization in so-called Canada, we believe that it is imperative to fight against the colonial state and to stand in solidarity with Land defenders in order to ensure the abolition of the colonial and capitalist state that does violence to all of us!

## WEDZIN WHAT?

### Glossary of the Wet'suwet'en struggle

**Wet'suwet'en :** The Wet'suwet'en are an Indigenous people living in a territory which they call the Yintah, located north of what is known as "British Columbia" (see map in this newspaper). The traditional language spoken by the Wet'suwet'en is Witsuwit'en. The Wet'suwet'en are divided into five clans: Gilseyhu (Big Frog), Laksilyu (Small Frog), Gidimt'en (Wolf/Bear), Laksamshu (Fireweed) and Tsayu (Beaver Clan). Wet'suwet'en clans are groups of people belonging to a particular Tribe or House and are used to identify families and territories.

## THE WET'SUWET'EN STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

The struggle for self-determination of the Wetsu'wet'en people is not a new one. Since the late 1990s, the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan peoples have been waging a legal and political battle for recognition of their territorial rights. In 1997, these two peoples obtained recognition from the colonial legal system that their territory had never been ceded, and that their hereditary system of governance had never been extinguished. Thus, since the late 1990s, the colonial legal system itself has recognized the sovereignty of the Wet'suwet'en people over their territory, as well as the validity of their system of governance which predates European colonization.



In 2008, the Wet'suwet'en decided to withdraw from the treaty process with British Columbia, while asserting their inherent right to their unceded ancestral territory. In 2010, the hereditary chiefs formed the Unist'ot'en camp to protect their territory while establishing governance practices based on their legal system. This allows the community to have a say in all projects being considered on their territory through free and informed consent, as opposed to the sham "consultation" processes offered by the Canadian colonial state. Since 2010, community members have notably built a healing center on the site of the camp, where healing care inspired by ancestral methods was offered to the community.

A second camp, Camp Gidimt'en, was erected in December 2018, and controls access to Gidimt'en clan territory. The Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs made the decision to support this move at a feast held on December 16, 2018. At the same time, the Canadian court granted an injunction to the CGL company, allowing the RCMP to clear a route for the company to pass through the Yintah, passing through various Wet'suwet'en roadblocks, and near the healing center

established at Camp Unist'ot'en. In January 2019, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police intruded into the unceded territory of the Wet'suwet'en in order to violently arrest 14 people defending their rights to self-determination, and to the free and informed consent of their people. The intrusion and subsequent arrests were carried out in a particularly violent and repressive manner, with documents showing that the RCMP were prepared to use snipers and assault rifles on the Indigenous activists [1].

In October 2019, the hereditary chiefs of the Wetsu'wet'en people asked CGL to immediately cease work on their territory because it was destroying Wetsu'wet'en territory and cultural heritage. Indeed, the company was carrying out work that endangered the conservation of archaeological sites containing traces of the occupation, since time immemorial, of the Wetsu'wet'en in these territories. The hereditary chiefs' request was also based on the fact that the company did not respect the traditional law of the people, nor the colonial law of the province. Rather than force the company to comply with their own laws, the Canadian courts decided to grant a permanent injunction to CGL, thereby criminalizing all defenders of the Wet'suwet'en territories.

The large mobilization movement we witnessed last year was a direct result of this conflict. In January 2020, the hereditary chiefs sent an eviction notice to the CGL company, evicted all of the company's workers, set up a new roadblock at KM 39, still in the territory of the Gidimt'en clan, with the various camps set up all along the road leading to the Wetsu'wet'en territories, acting as a roadblock to prevent both CGL and the RCMP from entering the territory. A few days later the RCMP set up their own roadblock to prevent access to camp supporters and community territories.

During this period, activists were harassed daily by RCMP officers, despite the state's promise not to intervene while discussions were taking place between the hereditary chiefs and the province. Between January 31 and February 10, 2020, over 25 activists were arrested by the RCMP. In response to this violent repression, Wetsu'wet'en activists called on their Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies to take action under the slogan #SHUTDOWNCANADA, to which many Indigenous communities and some non-Indigenous groups responded by erecting barricades on railroad tracks across the country. In particular, the Gitksan people, neighbors and allies of the Wet'suwet'en, organized a railroad blockade on

their territory, as did many Indigenous communities across so-called Canada.

The onset of the pandemic last year quickly took the still vibrant struggle for self-determination of the Wetsu'wet'en people off the public radar. In recent weeks, CGL's work has resumed in earnest, once again in the vicinity of an archaeological site of great importance to the Wetsu'wet'en people, threatening to destroy evidence of their millennia-long occupation of their territory, and thereby jeopardizing their ability to "prove" to the Canadian colonial state the legitimacy of their land claims. The company's current work also threatens the Wedzin Kwa, the main river and source of life and sustenance through the Yintah. CGL plans to run its pipeline under the Wedzin Kwa, which originates much further north, and whose water was until recently clean enough to drink directly from the river. In recent weeks, Chief Dsta'hyl, the hereditary chief of the Likhts'amisyu clan, and a Gitksan ally were arrested by the RCMP while exercising their sovereignty over the clan's ancestral territory. The RCMP also took the opportunity to vandalize the clan's camp on their territory.

To this day, the Wet'suwet'en continue to exercise their right to govern and occupy their territory in accordance with their system of governance, which is organized around hereditary chiefs of the various clans that make up the people. By virtue of the Wet'suwet'en's Indigenous right, clans have the right and responsibility to control access to their territory. The Wet'suwet'en's current struggle against CGL and the Canadian colonial state is a direct result of this right being put into practice.

### Sources :

[1] Exclusive: Canada police prepared to shoot Indigenous activists, documents show, The Guardian, Decembre 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/20/canada-indigenous-land-defenders-police-documents>

### To know more :

-<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/unceded-land-case-wetsuweten-sovereignty>  
-<https://www.yintahaccess.com/historyandtimeline>



## Glossary of the Wet'suwet'en struggle

**Wedzin Kwa:** Also known by the colonial name "Morice River", the **Wedzin Kwa** is a river that flows through the Yintah. Currently, the Wedzin Kwa is threatened by TC Energy's **Coastal GasLink** (CGL) pipeline, as they plan to run the pipeline under the river. In addition to infringing on the sovereignty of indigenous communities, TC Energy's project threatens the long-standing salmon population which is a staple of the Wet'suwet'en diet. This pipeline would also be a disaster from an environmental point of view (see the text Grenhouse Gas and Pipelines).

**Gidimt'en and Unist'ot'en camps:** Gidimt'en is one of the five Wet'suwet'en clans. After the injunction sent by CGL in December 2018 to **Camp Unist'ot'en** (affiliated to the Dark House, a house of the Gilseyhu clan), which has been defending the Wedzin Kwa for years by preventing the RCMP and CGL workers from entering their territory with a roadblock, the Gidimt'en clan set up a checkpoint on the road leading to Camp Unist'ot'en. This strategic choice by the Gidimt'en clan was made to show support for the Unist'ot'en clan and to strengthen the resistance to the colonial oil companies and the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police** (RCMP).

## WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM COASTAL GASLINK?

The royal Bank of Canada is at the head of a group of 27 banks who lend the 6.8 billions that are needed for the construction of Coastal Gaslink. In Canada, the banks taking part in the agreement are ATB Financial, Bank of Montreal, Scotia Bank, CIBC, the Canadian Western Bank, Export Development Canada, the National bank and the Toronto Dominion. In short, the whole banking sector is supporting pipelines.

In addition, Coastal GasLink is being developed not only by TransCanada, which brought us the Energy East pipeline, but also 65% by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co (KKR) and AIMCo, an Alberta state corporation that manages pension funds. Also, the insurance companies doing business with the Canadian pipeline companies are American, be it Liberty Mutual, AEGIS or the Energy Insurance Mutual.

Finally, the Canadian government has made a \$500 million loan to TransCanada for the Coastal GasLink project [1]. In general, the government has invested or supported pipeline projects in Western Canada for a total of nearly \$23 billions [2]. There is no hope that governments will stop supporting these projects in which they have already invested billions. It is up to the general public to make their voices heard and demand that these projects be stopped for good, and that the oil remains in the ground.

### Sources:

[1] <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2021-07/oil-gas-pipelines-green-recovery-canada.pdf>

[2] Ibid



*For an overall portrait of the investments of the major Canadian banks in the oil sector, see page 18.*

## Glossary of the Wet'suwet'en struggle

**Band Councils :** Band Councils are a decision-making body resulting from colonialism and imposed on Indigenous communities by the Canadian government in 1876 in the Indian Act. Band Council elections are governed by the Government of Canada and the Indian Act. The people sitting on the Band Council of their reservation govern and have the legal legitimacy to legislate on different subjects. It is important to remember that this management model is not at all consistent with the way the Indigenous communities on Turtle Island organized themselves before colonization.

**Hereditary chiefs :** Historically, unlike the band councils which have only existed since colonization, it is the hereditary chiefs who are the holders of the territorial sovereignty of the different clans and are therefore responsible for the protection of their territories. These chiefs can be chosen by the elders of a community or by being descendants of other chiefs. Hereditary chiefs have difficulty being recognized by the Canadian government, which, in most cases, deals with band councils.

## MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT INDIGENOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLES

*People who oppose the Wet'suwet'en struggle often bring back the same opinions, which do not always reflect reality. The purpose of this article is to provide a rationale for addressing these opinions.*

### Myth #1: Indigenous people signed treaties, so they surrendered their land

**Many of these treaties were not signed by the people themselves.** Indigenous people were under tutelage for a very long time, often by the Catholic Church. For example, the territory of Kanehsatà:ke was given to the Sulpician Fathers in 1717 by the Governor of New France, with the mission of managing the land for the benefit of the indigenous people. This land, initially 165 square kilometers, was sold off parcel by parcel over the years, sometimes in the face of great resistance from the local Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) Nation. By 1956, only 6 square kilometers remained of the original territory granted by the French Governor [1]. The people of Kanehsatà:ke got nothing from the multiple sales of these lands and received no compensation. In the end, the sales only served to enrich the church.

**Canada is not complying to some of the treaties that it signed itself.** For example, the Haldimand Proclamation is a treaty between the British Crown and the Kanyen'kehà:ka people in compensation for their support during the American War of Independence and their subsequent expulsion from the United States. Signed by the Governor of Quebec in 1784, the treaty gave the Kanyen'kehà:ka over 2200 square kilometers of land around the Kenhionhata:tie River (known by its colonial name of Grand River) [2].

The Canadian government's non-compliance with this treaty culminated in the mobilization of 1492 Landback

Lane, a blockade of a proposed housing development in the Haldimand Tract, the space granted to the Kanyen'kehà:ka under the Haldimand Treaty [3].

**The Wet'suwet'en have not signed any treaty with the government.** The 1997 Delgamuukw decision of the Supreme Court of Canada determined that the Canadian colonial government had no rights to the Wet'suwet'en territory. The Canadian colonial government argued that Indigenous rights were unilaterally abolished with the founding of the Canadian confederation in 1867, which the court invalidated [4]. Wet'suwet'en children, however, were forced to attend residential school like the children of other Indigenous peoples, despite the fact that the nation had never signed a treaty regarding the surrender of their territory or political autonomy.

### Sources:

[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oka\\_Crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oka_Crisis)

[2] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haldimand\\_Proclamation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haldimand_Proclamation)

[3] <https://thewalrus.ca/standoff-at-1492-land-back-lane/>

[4] <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/delgamuukw-case>

[5] <https://theyeopener.com/2020/02/wetsuweten-whats-going-on-and-how-to-support/>



## Myth #2: The majority of Wet'suwet'en Band Council Chiefs have signed an agreement with CGL



**Band Councils are the structure imposed by the Canadian colonial state on Indigenous people.** Band Council elections are restricted to those with “Indian” status, as defined by the Canadian colonial state. For example, women who married non-Indigenous people lost their “Indian” status, as did their children. Band council elections are also controlled by the Canadian colonial state, which can, for example, refuse the candidacy of a person who opposes its politics [1].

**In reality, the will of an Indigenous people is reflected by their hereditary chiefs.** Prior to the arrival of settlers, Indigenous people had their own systems of governance. These systems were much more democratic than the colonial hereditary monarchy of the time, and even much more democratic than many of our current elections. It is notable, for example, that the Wet'suwet'en band council chiefs approve of the pipeline, but the hereditary chiefs oppose it [2]. This strongly suggests that the imposed band council structure is designed to carry out the decisions of the Canadian colonial government, not the will of the land rights holders.

**There is no consent in an unequal power relationship.** Recent discussions surrounding the #MeToo movement have demonstrated that in a situation of power, consent is not valid. In a relationship where Indigenous peoples have been forced onto tiny reservations in often barren lands, the only option left is either to leave the reservation and lose their legal “Indian” status, or to sign unfavorable agreements to avoid starvation [3]. Until 1960, government agents could refuse to allow an “Indian” to leave the reservation [4], even temporarily. Even today, the last wills and testaments of Indigenous people must be approved by the Ministry [5].

### Sources :

- [1] <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/fra/lois/i-5/page-11.html#h-324338>
- [2] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/wetsuweten-whos-who-guide-1.5471898> and <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/02/24/the-myth-of-band-councils-as-first-nations.html>
- [3] <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/when-canada-used-hunger-to-clear-the-west/article13316877/>
- [4] <https://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/storage/app/media/publications/Mythes-Realites.pdf>, page 35, top box.
- [5] Ibid., pages 46-47.

### Glossary of the Wet'suwet'en struggle

**Delgamuukw and Red Top Decisions :** Delgamuukw and Red Top Decisions is a 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision recognizing the legitimacy of the Wet'suwet'en clan system and the authority of hereditary chiefs on the Yintah, the Wet'suwet'en territory. This ruling is of great importance to the Wet'suwet'en struggle for self-determination because: 1) it gives legal validity to the oral narratives of indigenous peoples in court judgments; 2) it contributes to the definition of the concept of “indigenous title”, i.e., a communal land right granted to indigenous communities in their territory ; and 3) it recognizes the legitimacy and importance of hereditary Chiefs in Wet'suwet'en territory. Which in theory forces the Government of Canada to negotiate with these Chiefs, although in practice the Canadian state sends the police to beat and arrest the protectors of the territory who do not comply with its demands.



## Myth #3: Blockades are unnecessary because they hurt workers more than governments

**The oil industry must essentially disappear.** Within a few years, it is imperative that most of our energy come from renewable sources that do not produce greenhouse gases. By refusing to act, governments are forcing affected populations, often indigenous, to react. And workers who see their jobs threatened are blaming indigenous people rather than governments. Eventually, we will have to figure out how to feed everyone without the need for fossil fuels [1].

**Legal remedies take decades to achieve.** The Delgamuukw decision is a good example. The Wet'suwet'en people filed a court case in 1984, denouncing the British Columbia government's clear-cutting of Wet'suwet'en territory. The Wet'suwet'en people had to wait until 1997, thirteen years later, before the Supreme Court ruled in their favour [2]. Thirteen years is a long time, especially when you see your forests being cut down constantly. And for a pipeline, the situation is even more urgent: it only takes a fraction of a second for an accident to occur and have irreversible consequences.

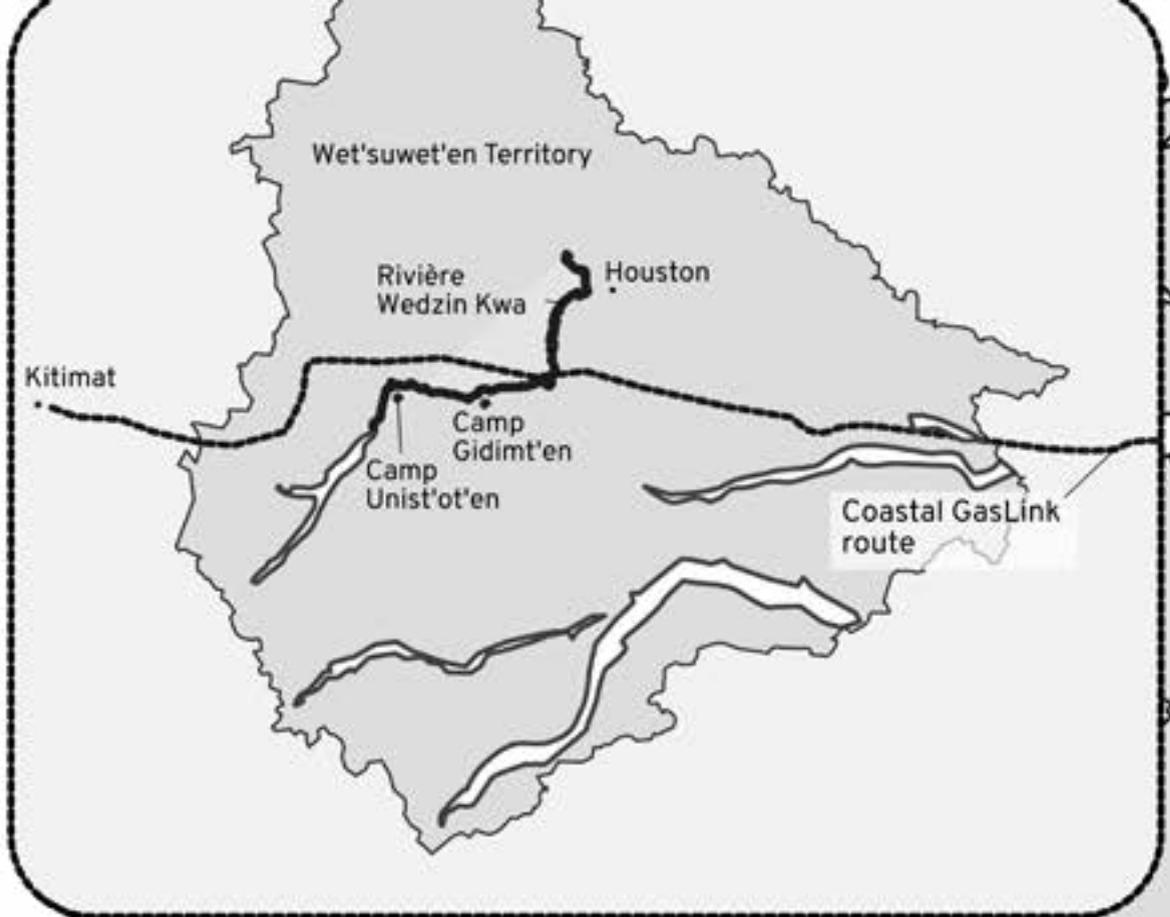
**Governments do not keep their promises.** A good example is the Restigouche raid in 1981. The government gave the Mi'kmaw a right to fish for their livelihood, but when overfishing by white settlers began to threaten salmon stocks, the government cracked down... on indigenous people [3]. It was not until 1999, eighteen years later, that the Marshall decision finally ruled that the Mi'kmaw have the right to do... what the government had promised them

they would be allowed to do [4]. The same can be said for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975. Indigenous people accepted a loss of sovereignty in exchange for more power over decisions made in their territories: this promise proved to be meaningless when Indigenous people realized that the promised decision-making positions were symbolic and without real power [5].

**It is difficult for a minority forced to live in a tiny territory to make its voice heard in the public square.** No one likes to do these blockades: it is hard and draining work, resulting in multiple arrests with long-term legal, mental and physical consequences. It is therefore a mechanism of last resort for a minority that has little voice in the media, that struggles to be heard, and especially to be understood [6].

### Sources :

- [1] <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/fossil-fuel-jobs-will-disappear-so-now-what/>
- [2] <https://thediscourse.ca/urban-nation/twenty-years-historic-delgamuukw-land-claims-case-pipeline-divides-gitxsan-nation>
- [3] [https://www.nfb.ca/film/incident\\_at\\_restigouche/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/incident_at_restigouche/)
- [4] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/40-years-listuguj-salmon-raids-leads-to-fishing-agreements-1.6062729>
- [5] <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cgq/1997-v41-n113-cgq2685/022639ar/>, page 160.
- [6] <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/we-are-indigenous-breaking-media-stereotypes-indigenous-storytelling>



## Pipelines: A Struggle to End

As can be seen on the map, projects to transport hydrocarbons from central Canada to ports on the east and west coasts have multiplied in recent years. Indeed, the only limit to the extraction of tar sands is the transportation capacity. The more projects are blocked, the more greenhouse gas production is limited.

### Westward

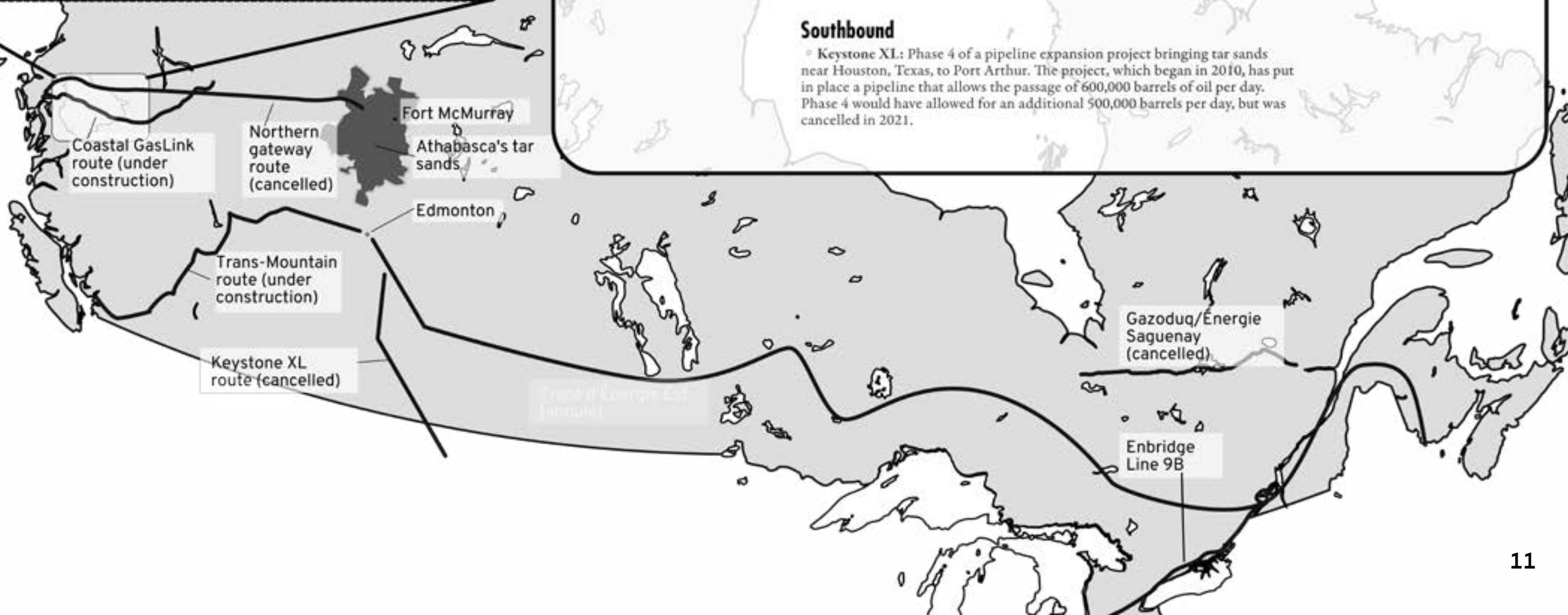
- Northern Gateway : A project announced since the mid-2000s that was finally abandoned in 2016
- Trans-Mountain : An active pipeline since 1953. In 2013, it was announced that a second pipeline would be added to it, doubling the total transportation capacity. The federal government purchased the original pipeline from Kinder Morgan for \$4.5 billion. The cost of expanding the pipeline is now estimated at \$12.6 billion, up from \$7.4 billion. Construction is underway.
- Coastal GasLink : Construction began in 2019. It must not go through!

### Eastward

- The reversal of Line 9B: For a long time, Canada imported oil. Line 9B was used to bring oil from the Port of Montreal to refineries in Toronto. However, in 2012, Enbridge announced that it would reverse the 9B pipeline in order to export oil sands from the Port of Montreal. This reversal was carried out in 2019.
- Energy East Pipeline: The project was officially announced in 2013. The \$12 billion project was officially cancelled in 2017.
- Quebec LNG (Gazoduq): Announced in 2018, this is a project to bring natural gas from northern Ontario for export through the Port of Saguenay. The project was rejected by the Quebec government in 2021, but it is possible that it will come back since it is a federal project.

### Southbound

- Keystone XL: Phase 4 of a pipeline expansion project bringing tar sands near Houston, Texas, to Port Arthur. The project, which began in 2010, has put in place a pipeline that allows the passage of 600,000 barrels of oil per day. Phase 4 would have allowed for an additional 500,000 barrels per day, but was cancelled in 2021.



**Myth #4: Natural gas is needed to transition away from coal**

The entire life cycle of natural gas must be analyzed. It is true that burning natural gas produces fewer greenhouse gases than burning coal. However, the natural gas that CGL is trying to move into Wet'suwet'en territory comes from hydraulic fracturing ("fracking"). This approach involves injecting a large amount of liquid under the ground, forcing the gas to escape. Some of the gas is captured and transported, but a significant proportion escapes from other fractures. Natural gas has a stronger greenhouse potential than CO2. Recent analyses indicate that natural gas obtained by hydraulic fracturing is up to 20% worse than coal, when looking at its full life cycle [1].

There is no guarantee that this gas will replace a coal-fired power plant. While wealthier Western countries are gradually closing down their coal-fired power plants, this is not the case elsewhere in the world. The explosion in the need for electricity to run today's capitalist economy is forcing developing countries to expand their electricity production, which unfortunately often involves coal [2]. It is therefore highly likely that the gas transported by CGL will not replace a coal-fired power plant, but rather adds to the world's production of greenhouse gases.

Why make indigenous people pay for our environmental mistakes? It is clear that the actions of the colonial powers in the last century will lead us straight into a wall. It is inevitable that we will soon have to make radical changes in our lifestyles, if we want to ensure our survival. But these changes must be made by EVERYONE: It would be unacceptable to make the less fortunate, or the indigenous populations, pay for our energy transition [3].

Sources:  
 [1] <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-13053040>  
 [2] <https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-worlds-coal-power-plants>  
 [3] <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-56941979>



**Myth #5: Indigenous people receive a lot of money from the government and should not bite the hand that feeds them**

First and foremost, the amounts that are paid are insignificant compared to the value that has been stolen from them since the beginning of colonization and that has allowed the accumulation of so-called national wealth.

The amounts paid are not as high as one might think. The monetary compensations related to the various treaties are often very modest, have not been indexed over the years, or are limited to a specific period of time. For example, Treaty #8, signed in 1899 with the Eeyou (Cree), Dane-zaa and Chipewyan populations, pays a compensation amount of \$1 per year per family [1]. Not even enough to ride the bus!

Many compensations are not paid at all. The various levels of government tend to challenge to the end any court decision that asks for compensation to be paid to an indigenous people. The most recent case is the government's refusal to compensate victims of residential schools [2]. Similarly, the Catholic Church, which is involved in the residential school system and in the tutelage of many indigenous peoples, refuses to pay court-imposed compensation and prefers to pursue legal action against them [3].

Much of the money does not reach the affected populations, but is instead diverted by the colonial band councils. The best example is the formation of the

band council on the Akwesasne reservation in 1899 by the RCMP. When the reservation rose up against the annexation of its territory, the police occupied it, murdered one of the traditional leaders, and forcibly imposed their own pro-annexation band council [4]. This situation has not improved today, as several colonial band councils are suspected or even charged in court with corruption [5].

The cost of living on reservations is often much higher than it is in settler towns and villages. While there is a lot of misleading propaganda about "doing too much for the Indians" [6], one must remember that everything costs more in remote areas. For example, to bring a teacher, to lodge them, and to bring them back home costs more in Nunavut than in Montreal. Similarly, \$1 paid in Montreal does not have the same purchasing power as \$1 paid in Kuujjuaq. As a result, food in Nunavut costs three times as much as in the rest of the country, a fact that is not taken into account when compensatory amounts are paid [7]. In addition, the multiple moratoria imposed on traditional means of survival, such as hunting and fishing means that many communities are dependent on food sent from the south.



Sources:  
 [1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbered\\_Treaties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbered_Treaties)  
 [2] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-59098305>  
 [3] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/residential-school-survivors-catholic-church-millions-1.6121678>  
 [4] <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/02/24/the-myth-of-band-councils-as-first-nations.html>  
 [5] <https://globalnews.ca/news/7867345/alberta-based-non-profit-fights-to-hold-first-nation-chiefs-and-band-councils-accountable/>  
 [6] For example, the Fraser Institute, with its extreme right-wing economic tendencies, publishes many publications that are highly critical of the amounts paid to indigenous peoples. This institute is very often quoted in the mainstream media.  
 [7] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-food-price-survey-2016-1.3650637>

The current wave of construction is occurring at a time of particularly high gas prices. Oil sands and shale gas were long considered uneconomic to extract. This is the vicious circle of extractivism: the more resources are extracted, the more scarce they become, which in turn drives up prices and makes it more profitable to extract, even while using inefficient techniques. Indeed, it is only with the turn of the century and the scarcity of oil resources that shale gas and oil sands have become economically viable to exploit. This profitability is expressed, among other things, by the ratio of the amount of energy required to extract one unit of energy from these resources. Thus, the extraction of traditional gas required 1 unit of energy (to power the pumps) to extract 25 units of energy in the 1970s [1]. In the case of shale gas and oil sands, estimates of energy consumption vary between 1 unit of energy for 4 or 7 extracted. It is therefore much more polluting. Not only will that oil and gas pollute, but they pollute by the very fact of their extraction.

It is also important to keep in mind that this oil is not for local consumption. Indeed, the reason why the pipeline issue is so important is that CGL's goal is to export the gas to Asia. Not only is there a higher risk of spills at sea, but this transport is also polluting. In short, it is not for nothing that even the Quebec government has put a moratorium on shale gas: this oil must stay in the ground!

Some will object that the Canadian government commits to greenhouse gas emissions at the annual COPs, and that there is no problem since it respects its commitments. However, the only thing that makes up for the increase in oil sands and shale gas extraction for now is the shift from coal-

fired to natural gas-fired power plants outside of Quebec [2]. In doing so, the Canadian government is postponing the transition to renewable energy (or a reduction in energy consumption) until the end of the life of these new plants in 30 to 40 years.

Moreover, if pipelines can greatly speed up the extraction of oil, Coastal GasLink will transport 1.7 to 5 billion cubic feet of oil per day [3]. Once the pipeline is built, it is a definite commitment to maintain the production of fuels that are just as polluting to produce. Indeed, with the pipeline estimated to cost \$4 billion, each day of the pipeline's useful life costs over \$350,000. Thus, once built, the pipeline must absolutely be used if it is to be profitable. This utilization implies a massive increase in shale gas production, which will far exceed Canada's greenhouse gas commitments. The longer the extraction of these fuels continues, the greater the energy required to extract it, given the need to go deeper and use more damaging techniques.

**Sources :**

- [1] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421513003856>
- [2] <https://thenarwhal.ca/canada-replacing-coal-natural-gas-and-s-huge-problem/>
- [3] <https://iaac-acic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80020>



One might think that pipelines are safer than other ways of transporting these fuels. The value of human lives cannot be quantified, but for the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the Quebec government requests nearly \$400 million from the railway company. Of course, the insurance owned by the railroad company responsible for this section only covered up to 25 million in damages and therefore it went bankrupt. These same dynamics, where insurance premiums are requested by governments for risky projects, are also present in the pipeline. For example, Enbridge's 6B pipeline in the US had a leak in 2010 that cost over \$1.2 billion to clean up [1]. While new pipelines are reporting ever higher flows, the insurance required for construction remains minimal, and it is the general public that will end up footing the bill. Since no company which transports oil and gas seems to be able to manage the consequences of potential spills, these fuels should remain in the ground.

Moreover, this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of decontamination, since it is only the consequences associated with the transportation of oil and gas. Shipping is a major concern as well, as spills will be much more numerous when billions of liters of natural gas are transshipped daily. Mining operations are notorious for leaving behind significant cleanup costs for communities. Think of the radon-contaminated slag heaps in Thetford Mines or the holes left behind by the old iron mines in Schefferville. Mining companies have always left behind devastated spaces that will never be the same. Not only is mining slowed down by blocking the pipelines, but the development of new mining sites is also put on hold.

**Source :**

- [1] [https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/2014/11/2010\\_oil\\_spill\\_cost\\_enbridge\\_1.html](https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/2014/11/2010_oil_spill_cost_enbridge_1.html)



**“ The earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses. ”**  
 -Utah Philips

## THE FIGHT FOR ADA'ITSX (FAIRY CREEK)

The area known as Ada'itsx, better known as Fairy Creek, is located near the southwest coast of Vancouver Island, about a two-hour drive from Victoria. Originally composed of the watershed of the creek of the same name, the area has come to encompass a collection of pristine forests in the region. The originally defended watershed is in Pacheedaht territory, but the area now touches a larger forest complex, including Ditidaht territory [1].

These ancient forests are virgin, and thus have never been cut down. They are made up of very old trees, the oldest of which could be more than two thousand years old and three meters in diameter. These forests are mostly made up of Nootka Cypress [2], a tree that can reach 40 meters in height. These ancient trees form a unique layered ecosystem, with different plants and animals living in the different heights of the forest.

These forests are an essential part of the Pacheedaht culture, which relies on the large cedars to make traditional sea-going canoes [4]. Yet the majority of the Pacheedaht people do not support the blockades initiated by the white settlers. What is happening?

### The Pacheedaht People

The Pacheedaht people's reserve, near the town of Port Renfrew, currently consists of approximately 290 people. Like many Indigenous peoples, the Pacheedaht have suffered greatly from the colonial policies of the Canadian government.

Their traditional food source, whales, is no longer available to them [5]. For decades, the Pacheedaht have seen the forests around their reserve cut down and sent away, without compensation. In order to facilitate the transportation of the cut giant trees, the Vancouver Island shoreline in their area was dredged, destroying the refuges used by young salmon to feed. Their situation is not to be envied!

However, the Pacheedaht are slowly regaining control of their territory. They are working to rebuild the riverbanks that were destroyed during decades of logging. The salmon are beginning to return and give hope that there will be more fishing in the future.

Since almost a decade, the Pacheedaht have also won against the logging industry and are now receiving royalties from logging on their land. The Pacheedaht have also built a small sawmill, providing some employment on the reserve, and a space for traditional sea canoe making.

The Pacheedaht are trying to ensure that they have a forestry operation that will allow them to maintain their traditions, considering that it takes about 400 years for a cedar tree to grow to a size where it can be used to make a canoe.



### Protecting the rainforests

British Columbia's non-native activist community has a long history of protecting virgin forests. Multiple actions against clearcutting in old growth forests during the 1980s culminated in the summer of 1993 with the "War of the Woods", a massive blockade in Clayoquot Sound. Clayoquot Sound is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, north of Ada'itsx (Fairy Creek). These actions led to over 800 arrests, the largest civil disobedience movement in Canada at the time. This sad record has been broken by the current Ada'itsx (Fairy Creek) blockades [6].

The need to permanently protect the rainforests pushed many former Clayoquot activists into political action. These former activists turned to lobbying to force governments to protect the region's forests. And at first sight, it looks like this approach worked, and new laws to protect the forests have been enacted.

The problem is that these laws have not had any concrete

effect. In the 1990s, during the Clayoquot struggles, 30% of Vancouver Island was covered by forest. Today, the coverage is only 20% [7]. And the proportion of forest with the oldest trees, such as those found in Ada'itsx (Fairy Creek), is estimated to be between 1% and 3% of the island's surface. The current NDP provincial government, supposedly of the left, is being blamed for its horrible environmental record [8].

### Ada'itsx's (Fairy Creek) blockade

As its name suggests, the area called Fairy Creek is absolutely magical. Not far from Victoria, it is a popular spot for tourists from the region and beyond. When word got out that the old growth forest in the area was going to be cut down, the news quickly went viral on social media. The logging was to be done by the Teal Jones Group, a private company based in British Columbia.

As a result, a group of non-natives met in Port Renfrew to discuss what to do. After discussion, the group decided that urgency should dictate their actions: they would block the road, even though they had not yet discussed it with the Pacheedaht people.

So the blockade was initially a settler affair. Things have changed, however: the blockade has now been going on for over a year, and since then several indigenous people have joined the camps. The majority of the Pacheedaht people still do not support the blockades, but some community members have joined them. The Indigenous people who joined the blockades have been setting the record straight and trying to form links with the Indigenous communities in the area to repair some of the damage.

### Sources:

- [1] <https://ricochet.media/en/3690/at-fairy-creek-indigenous-settler-allyships-are-complicated-but-theyre-working>
- [2] <https://ancientforestalliance.org/photos/fairy-creek-headwaters/>
- [3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cupressus\\_nootkatensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cupressus_nootkatensis)
- [4] <https://thenarwhal.ca/pacheedaht-fairy-creek-bc-logging/>
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- [6] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayoquot\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayoquot_protests)
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- [8] <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/province-failing-to-protect-old-growth-forests-environmental-groups-say-1.24293449>
- [9] <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1827821/fairy-creek-arbres-anciens-contestation-cour-supreme-grc-decision>
- [10] <https://thenarwhal.ca/fairy-creek-blockades-august-arrests/>

### Between A Rock and a Hard Place

The region is certainly worth protecting, but it must be understood that this protection comes at a cost to the local people. The actions of the Canadian colonial government have already taken away the whales and the salmon from the Pacheedaht, should the forest be taken away as well?

So the situation is not ideal, but are there perfect situations? The struggle for Ada'itsx (Fairy Creek) has exposed the lies and hypocrisy of governments. The supposedly left-wing provincial NDP government recently claimed to have protected 353,000 hectares of forest, but a quick analysis showed that

1. Much of this space had already been protected for many years,
2. Another portion had already been completely cut down.

The struggle is also shaping a whole generation ready to fight for what they believe in, and they are gradually learning to do so in a way that respects the indigenous people. Very strong bonds are formed between non-indigenous and indigenous people, which will be precious in the coming struggles.

The struggle has also humiliated the "all-powerful" RCMP, forcing a judge to drop the injunctions against the activists [9], following multiple abuses by the police [10]. The inability of the police to stop the blockades despite a massive deployment demonstrates the limits of the police apparatus in the face of an organized mass struggle.

To paraphrase Madeleine Parent, a Quebec union activist: Each struggle teaches the activist how to fight. Nothing is ever completely lost.

**THEY SELL OUR FUTURE  
SO THEY CAN KEEP LIVING IN THE PAST**

Source: Annual financial reports

Amounts at October 31st, 2019

Bank	Amounts loaned (canadian dollars)	Increase in one year
 Bank of Montreal	<b>26.5 billions</b>	<b>+24.1%</b>
 Toronto Dominion	<b>24.4 billions</b>	<b>+12.8%</b>
 Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce	<b>21.8 billions</b>	<b>+7.6%</b>
 Royal Bank of Canada	<b>21.7 billions</b>	<b>+8.3%</b>
 National Bank	<b>8.2 billions</b>	<b>+5.8%</b>
 Desjardins Group	<b>0.9 billions</b>	<b>+11.0%</b>

**BECAUSE THIS NEEDS TO END!**

Convergence des luttes anticapitalistes (CLAC-"Montreal")

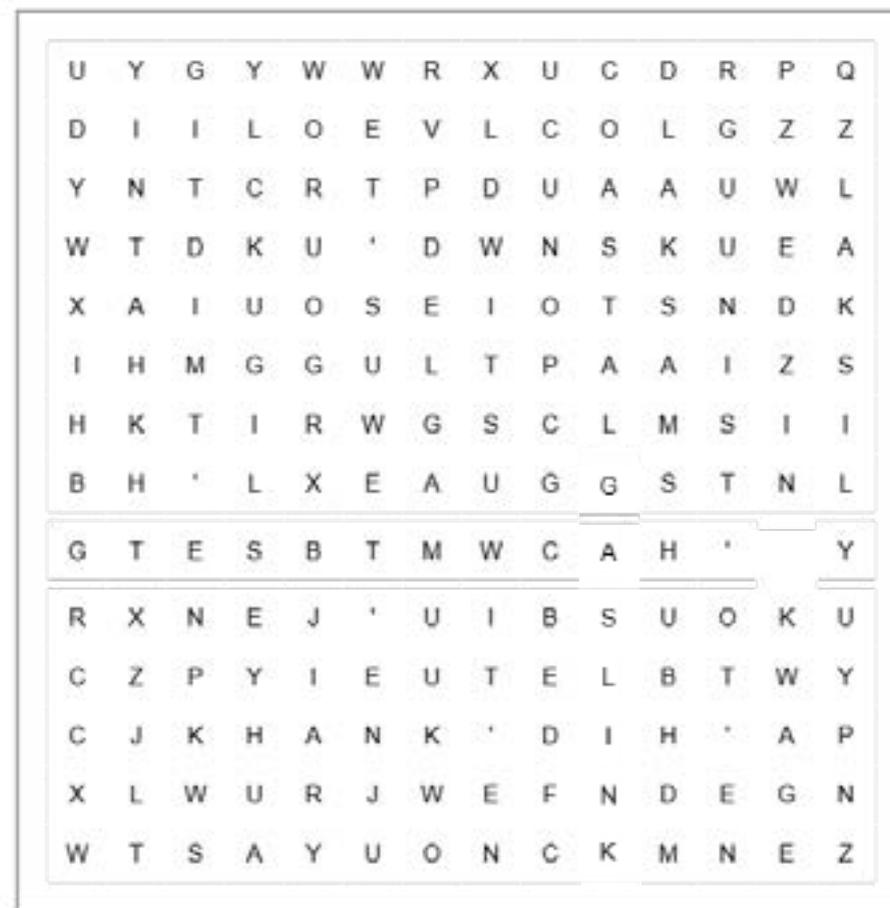
www.clac-montreal.net - info@clac-montreal.net



## WEDZIN WHAT? WET'SUWET'EN SOLIDARITY CROSSWORD

With the media blackout surrounding the resistance to the Coastal Gas Link pipeline in **the Yintah**, Wet'suwet'en territory, it can be difficult to see clearly as non-Indigenous people. So we've put together a little crossword puzzle to playfully test your knowledge of the **Wet'suwet'en** struggle. As a non-indigenous collective, we get our knowledge from activist websites, books and other publications written strictly by indigenous people. We believe that as non-indigenous, while it is essential to listen to indigenous communities and keep them at the forefront of the struggle, it is also important to educate ourselves among non-indigenous so that this task does not systematically fall on the shoulders of the same people. Throughout this little journal, you may have come across boxes aimed at defining some of the terms used in it.

You think you know well the content of this article? We have prepared a hidden word for you to test your knowledge in a fun way!



Coastal GasLink  
GRC  
Gitdim't'en  
Laksilyu  
Unist'ot'en  
Wet'suwet'ten  
Yintah  
Delgamuukw  
Gilseyhu  
Laksamshu  
Tsayu  
Wedzin Kwa  
Witsuwit'en

**Additional resources :**  
-<https://unistoten.camp/>  
-<https://www.yintahaccess.com/>

