



News Release

May 1, 2019

UBCIC & Wet'suwet'en to the UN: Our Rights Cannot Be Compromised

(Lenape Territory/NYC, NY – May 1, 2019) Indigenous peoples gathered from around the globe at the United Nations headquarters in New York City for the 18th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to discuss issues pertaining to the recognition of their internationally recognized human rights, particularly their rights to languages, traditional knowledge and self-determination.

Representatives from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Leadership travelled to the United Nations to make it clear to the Governments of Canada and BC that there can be no development of natural resource projects or of legislation or policy that affects Indigenous peoples without their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC, stated, "It is crucial that States, when they move to implementing the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, do so meaningfully and as a whole, not selectively based on what is politically convenient. Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project, Site C Dam, and the Mount Polley Mine disaster are all examples of how Canada continues to violate the rights of Indigenous peoples, despite warnings from the international arena. It is clear that Canada is maintaining a pattern of distorting facts and claiming that they are engaged in dialogue with First Nations only as a means to cement their foothold in lucrative corporate projects." Reflecting on the theme of *Traditional knowledge*, Kukpi7 Wilson drew attention to Indigenous languages and stated, "That there is an urgent need for States to support the revitalization of our languages and knowledge systems to the same degree by which they attempted to destroy them, this includes the provision of permanent, on-going, sustainable funding."

Na'Moks, Hereditary Wet'suwet'en Chief, invited UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz to Wet'suwet'en territories, and stated to the Forum that, "We Indigenous peoples have the right to protect and defend our homes and territories. We have the right to free, prior, and informed consent for any industrial activities in, and affecting, our lands and territories, through our own representative institutions. We are the government on our land. We should not be threatened or criminalized for the exercise of these established rights."

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