

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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Press Statement

December 5, 2018

We Must Respect the Rights of Unist'ot'en Land Defenders

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, B.C. – December 5, 2018) On November 26th, Coastal GasLink, a subsidiary of the TransCanada Corporation, applied for an injunction and served the Unist'ot'en camp with notice for a civil lawsuit.

The Unist'ot'en camp is a non-violent gathering of Indigenous land defenders and members of the Unist'ot'en house group in Wet'suwet'en territory in northern BC. Under the authority of Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, these land defenders are actively practicing their inherent Indigenous Title and Rights to protect the land and pursue their right to self-determination. Coastal GasLink is seeking an interim, interlocutory or permanent injunction, as well as financial damages against the Unist'ot'en land defenders for "occupying, obstructing, blocking, physically impeding or delaying access" to their proposed project site.

A central tenant to the standards and rights affirmed within the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which both Canada and BC have endorsed and committed to implement, is the right of Indigenous peoples to protect their lands and territories, to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with the lands and to own, use, develop and control those lands. Article 8 of the UN Declaration calls on States to provide effective mechanisms for prevention of any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing indigenous peoples of their lands, territories or resources.

UBCIC calls upon the Canadian Justice system to uphold the human rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous land defenders must be treated with respect and must have their right to defend their lands and territories from the impacts of industry and climate change recognized and protected. The federal and provincial governments, industry and the various policing agencies have the responsibility to uphold the principles and standards of the UN Declaration and to respect the inherent Title and Rights of Indigenous Land Defenders.

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