

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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## News Release

June 14, 2020

### Stop TMX: Devastating Trans Mountain Pipeline Spill Reinforces Urgency to Halt Further Expansion

(Sema:th Territory/ Abbotsford– June 14, 2020) Indigenous leaders are demanding answers and raising alarm following another Trans Mountain pipeline spill, which took place early yesterday morning in Abbotsford.

The spill occurred at the Sumas Station which pumps up to the tank farm on Sumas Mountain and where the line intersects south to Washington. Oil was released within the Station and migrated to the adjacent field which is owned by Trans Mountain and is apparently leased for agricultural uses as a pasture for grazing cows, who have all been moved. Trans Mountain issued a statement that the spill has been contained, although it is not releasing the volume of the spill yet and has shut down the pipeline.

Chief Dalton Silver, Sumas First Nation, stated, “Our main concern is for the clean-up of this spill and preventing further impacts to our territory. We need to have our monitors on the ground immediately. We need to understand what is going on from our point of view, how much oil spilled, what has been impacted, and what needs to be done to clean it up. We cannot continue to have our land desecrated by oil spills. This is the fourth time in 15 years that this pipeline has had a spill on our land. The proposed Trans Mountain expansion route would see an additional pipeline crossing one of our sacred sites, Lightning Rock, at two spots. We will do absolutely everything we can to prevent this from happening- an oil spill at Lightning Rock would be horrific for our people.”

The June 13<sup>th</sup> spill occurred just south of the Lightning Rock site - a cultural site and burial grounds of great significance to the Sema:th First Nation and Stó:lō Coast Salish Peoples. The existing pipeline and planned expansion route run directly adjacent to the east of the site, which overlooks the old Sumas Lake basin and TM’s Sumas Station. The Station itself is located near an ancestral Sema:th village site previously located near the confluence of Sumas River and the shore of Sumas Lake.

"The broken and aging Trans Mountain pipeline is a potent symbol of economic uncertainty at a time when Canadians are desperate for recovery from COVID-19. Justin Trudeau, you bought a lemon," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). "This is a pivotal moment demanding strong leadership that understands the need for a drastic shift to clean energy development. It is an absolute waste of taxpayer money to keep investing in old technology for a fossil fuel product that is toxic to our environment."

"We conducted our own assessment of Trans Mountain using leading science and Tsleil-Waututh's Indigenous law that concluded that oil spills are inevitable, can't be fully cleaned up, and have devastating effects," said Chief Leah George-Wilson, Chief of Tsleil-Waututh Nation. "This most recent spill is another reminder that the risk is too great to accept. The Trans Mountain pipeline has already spilled more than 80 times since it began operating. This is why we continue to fight the Trans Mountain Expansion in the courts."

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC continued "Trans Mountain put in the existing line without the consent of impacted First Nations and we have said no countless times to the proposed expansion. As Indigenous peoples we are stewards of our lands and waters. We have jurisdiction over activities that happen in our territories, and we don't want them ruined by oil spills. As Chief of Neskonlith, the path of the proposed Trans Mountain expansion crosses over 500 km of unceded Secwépemc territory; our people continue to say no to Trans Mountain and our answer will not change."

"The price of oil has plummeted due to decreased demand caused by COVID-19, and yet another pipeline spill is like a nail in the coffin for investors," concluded Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of the UBCIC. "The ongoing demonstrations across Turtle Island right now show that people are ready to stand up and defend their beliefs including upholding Indigenous Title and Rights. I have no doubt this will extend to the widespread opposition that already exists to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We are getting tired of having to constantly remind Canada and BC of their commitment to uphold and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which clearly articulates that Indigenous peoples impacted by a project must provide their free, prior and informed consent before the project can proceed."

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*UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.*

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