



Press Release

September 8, 2021

Spirit Fast for the Fraser: Indigenous Ceremony calls on Canada to cancel Trans Mountain Expansion

Unceded kwikwə́łəm Territory (Coquitlam, BC) — Yesterday at noon, two Indigenous women began a 4-day traditional ceremonial fast on the banks of the Fraser River. Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Chief of Neskonlith and Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and Sara Cadeau, Anishinaabe Kwe, Community Organizer and Traditional Wellness Practitioner, are sitting at the site where Trans Mountain proposes to drill under the Fraser River, along with a sacred fire and a community of supporters.

After a summer of deadly heat waves and smoke-filled skies, the Indigenous fasters are calling for cancellation of the Trans Mountain expansion (TMX) pipeline. The project has become a hot button issue during the federal election, as a symbol of the contradiction between heavily biased government/oil industry pro-pipeline rhetoric and grassroots-led defensive climate crisis actions on the ground. The fasters have requested river-side meetings with local election candidates from all parties.

Fasters are bringing prayers and taking action now because Trans Mountain has [received a permit](#) to divert 26 million litres of Fraser river water. This is addition to drilling a 1.5-kilometre tunnel underneath the river to build the tar sands pipeline.

“Trans Mountain’s plan to drill beneath the Fraser River represents a violent assault upon a sacred waterway that is the heart of our culture heritage— the largest salmon bearing river in the country that sustains life and strengthens our vital connections to the water, lands, and ecosystems that we have stewarded over since time immemorial,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson. “There are already approximately 84,000 kms of oil and gas pipelines in Canada, and the TMX pipelines are being placed along the Fraser River and other key waterways. Time and time again, Canada and Trans Mountain have infringed upon and disregarded the Title, Rights, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent of First Nations, choosing to instead prioritize an unwanted, environmentally destructive

pipeline that will only push us closer to the brink of our dire global climate crisis. Without our rivers, life will not exist. Oil extraction has a considerable impact upon all people, and spills of diluted bitumen pose particular challenges when they reach our rivers and water bodies. In addition, man camps on these sites pose a serious and real threat to our women, our children, and our lands. Our four-day ceremonial fast allows us to fulfill our critical, sacred responsibility to ourselves, our ancestors, and our descendants to honour and protect our lands and waters. We offer our prayers for healing, for change, and for governments and industries to realize that they also share an inherent responsibility to protect our salmons, whales, ecosystems, and ways of life. Water is like our grandmother, and she sustains all life. Trans Mountain, if allowed to continue, will have devastating and irreversible impacts on water, salmon, Indigenous culture, and the future of all life on earth. We are asking Canada to cancel TMX now, while it is less than [one third complete](#), and before it is too late.”

The Spirit Fast site is adjacent to Colony Farms Regional Park, where [11 acres](#) of wildlife habitat were recently destroyed in order to lay out the pipe horizontally before the drilling. In spite of the large-scale [public and municipal opposition](#), Trans Mountain was granted permission under “Federal Paramountcy.”

“Call it Federal Paramountcy, call it what you want, it is the continued destruction of our only home for the profit of a few and with danger to all. Putting this pipeline through parks, communities, and Indigenous territories where it is unwanted is a precise example of ongoing colonial State Violence against the land and its people,” states Sara Cadeau. “We have lost our way, and this is so evident in our relationship with water. Water is not a resource. It is THE SOURCE of all life and is by far our most valuable collective, and finite, treasure. The Fraser River didn’t give consent for this pipeline, nor did the hereditary and traditional governance systems of all the lands this river moves through. Neither did the ocean this river flows into, nor the whales or the salmon who depend on this river’s good life cycles to survive. It is our job as two-leggeds -- as people who live by this river -- to ensure her continued safety and protection. I will be following Anishinaabe teachings on the importance of water and the importance of prayer. We are fasting to bring your attention to sacred water, and to bring our love and prayers, and to work together to protect her. Our request? Colonial Canada: cancel TMX.”

Further to concerns over the [permit](#) to divert millions of litres of water, land protectors are outraged that horizontal drilling under one of the greatest salmon rivers in the world is permitted during the autumn migration. The Fraser River is known as one the greatest salmon rivers in the world, and the Trans Mountain project poses a profound threat to the health of the river and the ecosystems, culture and economies that rely upon it.

The Spirit Fast began at noon on Tuesday, September 7 with a traditional Indigenous Ceremony at [Maguabeak Park](#). The fasters will be in silence after noon on Tuesday until noon on Friday.

The Spirit Fast is supported by a traditional Sacred Fire, as well as a large network of supporters, including Dogwood, BROKE, Protect the Planet STOP TMX, and others. Hearts and minds will be united in prayers for the waters, and for all of life. The event follows on from the Save the Fraser Water Ceremony led by Elder Minnie Kenoras in May of this year at the same location, in partnership with Dogwood.

BIOS:

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson [Red Hummingbird Woman]: Kukpi7 Judy Wilson has served her community of Neskonlith for 13 years as Kukpi7 (Chief), and for 8 years as a council member. She is a strong advocate for recognition of inherent Title and Rights and self-determination and for the fundamental shifts needed for the survival of all Peoples.

Sara Cadeau: Community Organiser, Aunty and Traditional Wellness Practitioner. Sara is a mixed race and Anishinaabe Kwe. Traditionally known as Woman Who Makes Knees Shake, Badger Clan. Raised in full colonial erasure from Indigenous culture, her family is registered to Garden River, Ojibway first nation Ontario.

Media contacts:

For Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, contact Grand Chief Stewart Phillip: 250-490-5314

For Sara Cadeau, or for logistics and questions, contact Sara Ross: 778-898-0464

Updates: <https://fb.me/e/Oz7RF1Lz>; See [Spirit Fast for the Fraser](#) on Facebook

BACKGROUND

DOCUMENTS FROM TRANS MOUNTAIN:

Trans Mountain's permit to divert 26 million litres of Fraser River water:

https://www.bcogc.ca/files/projects/trans-mountain-expansion-project/WATR_100113326_TMP-Sec10-12-07-21.pdf

From [TMX's own sworn affidavit](#): "This construction area includes a high risk HDD under the Fraser River, which is the longest HDD section of the entire TMEP (approximately 1,470 linear meters). This is one of the highest risk HDD sections for the entire TMEP due to the length, the geotechnical conditions that may be encountered and the limited availability of HDD rigs that are required for an HDD of this length.