

NO MORE PIPELINES!

SOLIDARITY WITH THE
GITXSAN AND GITANYOW

CLIMATE
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NO MORE PIPELINES!

It's simple: we don't want your oil, gas, and mining projects.

Not only are we opposed to them, but we are actively fighting—and will continue to fight—to abolish all colonial extractive projects, wherever they may be. We don't want your oil, gas, and mining projects, and they won't go through, tariffs or not.

Here, as elsewhere, the exploitation of oil, gas, coal, and metals results in the ransacking of ancestral Indigenous territories. When settlers have finished clearing the land of everything that can generate profit, they go further and deeper, causing even more devastation and colonizing more of the territories once stewarded by Indigenous people. As a result, communities are confined to smaller and smaller areas, eventually being placed on 'reserves' as access to their ancestral Land becomes increasingly restricted. The world's mining, oil, and gas companies, along with other extractive industries, are inevitably sacrificing the territories inhabited by the most marginalized communities—Indigenous, racialized, rural, and more.

What's more, these capitalist monsters enjoy the support of their political accomplices and the legislative and legal apparatus. Everywhere, the Canadian state finances, encourages, and supports colonial destruction. For anti-colonial and anti-capitalist activists, there is no shortage of targets today: the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission and Coastal GasLink pipeline projects in so-called British Columbia, Canadian companies financing or producing weapons used in the genocide of Palestinians,

the forestry industry devastating the forests of Nehirowisiw Aski in Haute-Mauricie, mining projects on Indigenous territories in so-called Quebec, hydroelectric dams, forestry, and mining on Nitassinan, Innu ancestral territory, and toxic waste dumping in Kanehsatà:ke. Here, the attacks on Indigenous communities are numerous, as are their mobilizations against these threats. Far from being passive victims, these communities are actively engaged in the fight against extractive industries and the colonial capitalist state.

This journal explores the connections between colonialism and extractivism, from the colonial states of British Columbia and Quebec to occupied Palestine. It will reveal the tactics employed by extractive companies to impose their projects, in complete complicity with the state. We will explain the workings of settler colonialism, through which the Canadian state continues to exploit Indigenous peoples and Land. We will also examine the legal and judicial institutions that legitimize these direct violations of ecosystems and communities. We'll reflect on the struggle in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en against the Coastal GasLink pipeline, highlighting the lessons we can draw from it for current and future struggles. The colonial capitalist forces are aligned—now it's up to us to fight back. Let's respond with solidarity and mount a counter-attack!

A - Anti - Anticolonialiste - Solidarité avec les peuples qui résistent!
A - Anti - Anti-colonialist - Solidarity with the people who resist!

RAGE CLIMATIQUE

Rage Climatique is a group that organises itself in an egalitarian and horizontal way from an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal and anti-oppressive perspective. As an anti-capitalist organisation, we want to go beyond the flat-headed ecology of certain environmental NGOs and that of the big, greenwashing corporations that offer us paper straws. Instead, we propose fundamentally rethinking the organisation of society. We'd love for you to join us!

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5 000 copies of this newspaper were printed by unionised employees in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang. Thanks to **Gord Hill**, Kwakwaka'wakw, for the cover illustration. The texts were compiled by *Rage Climatique*, with contributions from the community. The texts are not signed, as they represent a collective effort. Terminology notes appear here and there throughout the newspaper.

This journal was primarily produced by white folks, with the aim of supporting Indigenous comrades in their anti-colonial struggles. Given the situated positions of the journal's design team, all thoughts, remarks and suggestions are welcome at rageclimatique@riseup.net. With the aim of deconstructing colonial ideology, the team welcomes any constructive criticism to this end.

Tous les textes sont disponibles en français sur [rageclimatique.org](https://www.rageclimatique.org).

WHAT IS THE PRGT?

What is the PRGT? It is a new pipeline project in British Columbia. The Gitxsan and Gitanyow people are actively fighting to protect their ancestral territories.

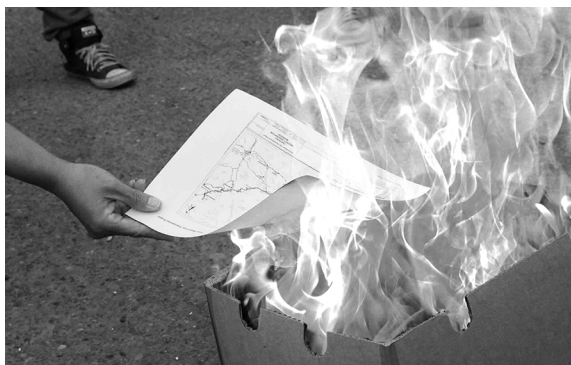
The Canadian and British Columbia governments are attempting to push through the construction of the **Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT)** pipeline on the **ancestral territories** of several Indigenous Nations in the northern part of the province, including the **Gitxsan** people. The Gitxsan Nation consists of 64 Wilps (or houses), which are the basic units of community organization and are grouped into Huwilps. Among the Gitxsan, the **Gitanyow** Huwilp is strongly opposed to the PRGT.

In addition to destroying the region's ecosystems, the PRGT threatens the livelihoods of the province's Indigenous communities. This new extractivist project is part of a long history of territorial dispossession and the progressive genocide of the Indigenous peoples of so-called Canada. Despite the ongoing climate crisis, fossil fuel development in so-called British Columbia continues to expand, as evidenced by the proliferation of pipeline projects in recent years: Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT), Coastal GasLink (CGL), Westcoast Connector Gas Transmission (WCGT), Trans Mountain Pipeline (TMP), Pacific Trail Pipeline (PTP), and others.

The planned route of the PRGT spans 750 kilometers, **including 120 kilometers through Gitxsan territory**. It would transport **natural gas** from north-eastern British Columbia to the West Coast, near Prince Rupert, at the **Ksi Lisims terminal**. The natural gas would then be liquefied and exported by ship to Asia.

The origins of the pipeline go back to 2014, when the provincial government issued an environmental permit for the project. After the project was abandoned by one of its former contractors, PETRONAS, in 2017, the pipeline and terminal projects were put on hold. Today, **the project bears little resemblance to the original**: it has changed ownership, the route has shifted, the export terminal is no longer in the same location, and more. Similarly, the climate situation has worsened over the past decade. Industrial projects in the north of so-called British Columbia have weakened ecosystems, particularly salmon populations in the region's rivers (including the Nass river), and caribou populations, which have declined alarmingly.

Despite this, the ten-year-old environmental permit was considered valid until November 25, 2024, in the eyes of the colonial authorities. This allowed the company to begin work a few months before the permit's expiry date, even though the overall project and context had changed. In the spring of 2025, the British Columbian government could renew the environmental permit, enabling the project to continue in its current form without having to undergo the environmental assessment process again.



On August 22, the hereditary chiefs burned copies of an agreement signed in 2015 with TC Energy.

10 Years of Resistance Against the PRGT

The Gitxsan and the Gitanyow Huwilp are currently fighting for the complete abolition of the project. These communities, neighbors of the Wet'suwet'en, are pursuing **legal challenges**, and erecting **blockades** and **encampments**.

When the PRGT project was first announced in 2014, members of Luutkudziiwus, a Gitxsan community, established the **Madii Lii encampment** to oppose the construction of the pipeline, 35 kilometers of which would run through their Land. More than 200 people from the **Nisga'a Nation** also set up a **blockade**, which lasted several hours before being dismantled by the police.

More recently, on August 21, 2024, the Gitanyow began a **new blockade** of an access road to the site. On August 22, the hereditary chiefs burned copies of an agreement signed in 2015 with TC Energy, the former owner of the PRGT, as a symbolic demonstration of their withdrawal.

Since October 15, the Gitanyow have been pursuing a parallel **legal challenge** against the proposed Ksi Lisims terminal. Their legal action, before the Supreme Court of British Columbia, focuses on the **salmon of the Nass**

River, which are threatened by pollution from the natural gas terminal. The terminal is planned for Pearse Island, at the mouth of the Nass River, a crucial salmon migration habitat. Since the salmon of the Nass River are essential to the food and survival of the Gitanyow people, they are demanding to be included in the consultations for the Ksi Lisims project. The Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition, the Kispiox Valley Community Centre Association, and the Gitxsan Kispiox community are also suing the BC Energy Regulator (BCER) for **negligence** in conducting an **environmental impact assessment** and **consulting the communities affected** by the industrial project. The government is disregarding its own obligations by failing to address the concerns of local residents and their fundamental rights:

"In bypassing the permit requirement to assess the cumulative effects of the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission pipeline, the BC Energy Regulator is demonstrating a dangerous disregard for both the rule of law and the well-being of our communities."

— Kolin Sutherland Wilson, Chief Councillor, Kispiox Band Council, Gitxsan Nation

There have also been several calls for **solidarity and awareness-raising actions**. Across so-called Canada, various activist groups are already mobilizing to support Land defenders in so-called British Columbia.

The project is vulnerable, as construction has barely begun and is already facing strong opposition. In 2020, the powerful *Shut Down Canada* movement arose across the country to oppose the Coastal GasLink pipeline on Wet'suwet'en territory. Five years later, the fight against colonial and ecocidal extractivism continues. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to mount a pan-Canadian resistance to the PRGT and the dispossession of Indigenous lands.

Solidarity with the Gitxsan and Gitanyow!



Follow Gitanyow: <https://www.instagram.com/gitanyowchiefs/>

Photos of the Madii Lii encampment against the PRGT: <https://www.madiilii.com/photos>

Press release on the legal challenge against Ksi Lisims: <https://www.gitanyowchiefs.com/news/for-immediate-release-gitanyow-hereditary-chiefs-file-legal-action-on-ksi-lisims-lng-project/>

Donations by bank transfer for the Gitanyow camp: landbackcc@gmail.com

PRGT: ANOTHER PREDATORY STRATEGY

Floating down the Nass River Valley on a balmy July day, perched on a glaringly-yellow catamaran, we huddle around a coveted pair of binoculars, desperate to catch a glimpse of the passing humpback whales and grizzly bears loping along on the beach shore. It's an idyllic tableau clouded with grief: this salmon-bearing estuary is the precise construction location for the proposed project terminal of BC's latest colonial mega-project, phase 2 of LNG Canada: the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT) pipeline.

Awash with *déjà-vu*, hereditary leaders recount their initial defeat of this zombie pipeline back in 2017 and the harrowing battle against the nearby Coastal Gaslink pipeline. The new proposed PRGT line is close neighbour to Coastal Gaslink, in more ways than one. Both initially established by the nefarious TC Energy, these projects, rather incestuously, share a revolving door of personnel, including their head lobbyist and “Indigenous issue” manager, and along with it, a finely-tuned strategic playbook to ram projects through opposed Indigenous communities.

Coastal Gaslink and the proposed PRGT pipeline are not isolated examples—the global fossil fuel industry has carefully developed a coordinated playbook to greenlight and lock-in new carbon bomb infrastructure, in their desperate rush to drain the last drops of oil. Faced with fierce public scrutiny, companies are now forced to level beyond routine greenwashing, and deploy even more shrewd strategies to maintain their social license to operate, squash opposition and leech taxpayer dollars. These are tried and true tactics used to force fossil mega-projects, abused countless times by major oil companies worldwide, from Nigeria to Ireland. If we are to bring this death industry to its knees, we must attack from all sides, wrenching holes in their entire petro-playbook.

At a bird's eye view, this predatory petro-playbook is unfolding with three major strategic prongs:

1. **Sell** communities on short-term benefits, greenwash, divide opposition and poorly communicate the real risks;
2. **Squeeze** governments for project financing, policing of Land defenders and regulatory loopholes, to make the project viable;
3. **Shape-shift** to protect CEOs and shareholders, offloading costs onto communities and taxpayers, particularly when the project goes poorly.

Before delving into this playbook's application to the proposed PRGT pipeline, the next major affront to climate and Indigenous rights, I'll share a brief history of this project and surrounding resistance. The B.C. government approved this TC Energy pipeline more than 10 years ago, under Conservative leadership, but the project was immediately blockaded by Gitxsan leaders and Land defenders. Land defense boiled to a fever pitch in 2017, resulting in the project's cancellation. However,



in the intervening years, industry has conspired to revive this zombie pipeline. The project's Environmental Assessment Certificate expired on November 25, 2024. The B.C. government must now decide whether to revive PRGT's 10 year-old certificate, or let the project expire. Indigenous leaders and allied organizations along the pipeline route are calling on the B.C. government to reject PRGT—or at least put this pipeline through a modern Environmental Assessment. While this project stands at a crossroad, awaiting the certificate decision, much is unfolding behind the scenes to fast-track this mega-pipeline.

Sell

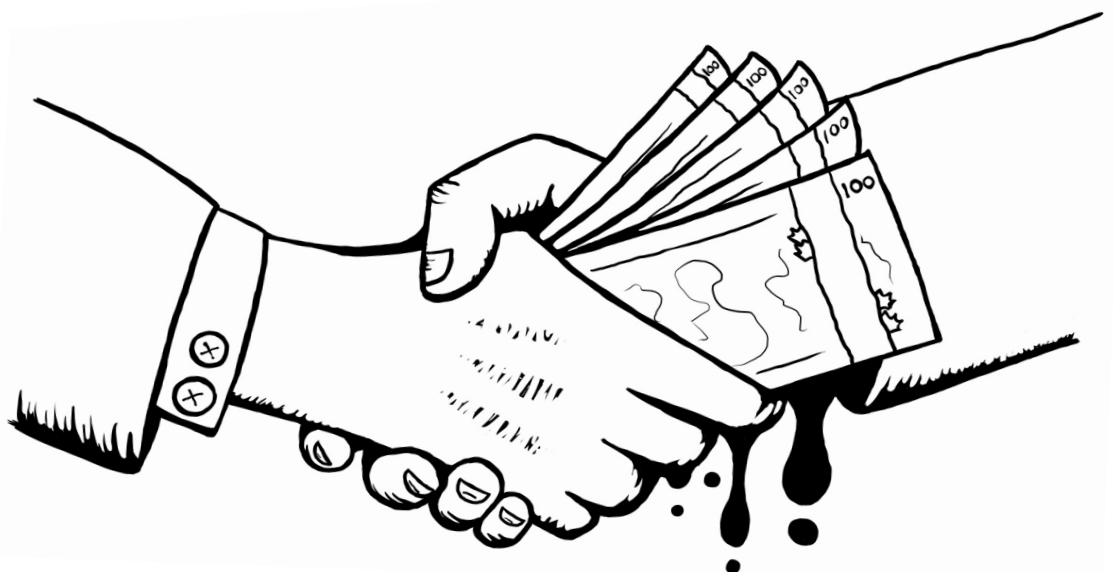
While Western LNG have boasted the benefits, some short-term construction jobs and revenue, they have purposely failed to communicate all the ecological, social and financial risks to the Nisga'a nation, an equity partner.

To date, community members have been kept in the dark about project risks, potential loans, cost to nation members and the source of project financing. Consequently, there is growing dissent within the Nisga'a nation on PRGT's harms, potential costs and liabilities. Richard Cecil Mercer, a Nisga'a nation member, organized a petition with over 200 Nisga'a signatures to explore an injunction against PRGT, and later escalated action with another PRGT construction blockade on Nisga'a territories. As equity owners with a 50% stake in the project, the Nisga'a nation are now exposed to a range of liabilities. The global LNG market faces a supply glut in the medium-term, around 2030, when these projects would go online. These market risks and construction cost overruns will result in higher operating costs, dragging profit margins into a negative debt spiral. LNG exports also mean higher bills for everyone in BC, increasing the price of hydro and natural gas. To fast-track and greenlight this colonial mega-project, Western LNG and the BC government will attempt to divide communities with short-term benefits, under the guise of “economic reconciliation.”

Squeeze

To make this project viable, TC Energy and Western LNG have been hard at work to squeeze governments for project financing and loopholes. In a bombshell investigation from *The Narwhal*, leaked recordings revealed how a TC Energy exec claimed to influence the B.C. government on climate policy. During a Zoom “Lunch and Learn” for executives, TC Energy's Liam Iliffe boasted about the company's relentless lobbying tactics—ranging from a wine-and-dine strategy, jetsetting the Premier to Asia on ambassador lobby trips, to “coincidental” meetings with Ministers in airport terminals and the Costco cooler section. And it appears their nefarious lobbying has already paid off. As of April 2023, TC Energy's lobbying activities reshaped B.C.'s carbon tax policies, cutting TC Energy's liability by 50%. TC Energy can also be credited for the Premier's marked change of tune on LNG.

When elected in 2022, Premier Eby famously stated that “we cannot continue to expand fossil fuel infrastructure and hit our climate goals.” Two short years later, Eby revealed that



“We’re at the table with [LNG Canada] about how we can achieve both of our goals.” This is the stupefying effect of dogged, well-funded lobbying on public officials. It’s far from over, these corporations are furiously preparing their wishlists, rumbling and ready to accost the newly elected NDP government.

Shape-shift

In this death-rattle era of the fossil industry, it’s more important to approve new projects and display growth for investors, than actually extract and execute a profitable project. Fossil companies will morph and contort themselves—shape-shift—into the configuration needed to ram a project through. PRGT, formerly owned by controversial TC Energy (2014-2024), was offloaded to Western LNG and Nisga’a Nation in June 2024. Western

LNG is a new company with no previous project experience and murky private financing—a risky bet, shell company partnership. These fossil shape-shifters are notoriously skilled at puncturing regulatory loopholes to fast-track projects. PRGT is attempting to immortalize its ancient decade-old environmental permit, without any new assessment. This is baffling on several accounts. The revived project is practically unrecognizable, with a new route and terminal. BC climate and Indigenous law has changed. And the science has changed too. We now know that LNG is actually worse than coal and displaces renewables—a far cry from being a “bridge” in the energy transition. If the BC LNG boom materializes, these projects would cause more than \$1 trillion in climate damage.¹

In March, newly-appointed Environment Minister, Tamara Davidson, must decide whether the PRGT pipeline can move forward or if it needs to begin all over again in a new environmental assessment process. However, we cannot trust colonial governments to respect Indigenous rights and order a new environmental assessment. As a movement, we need to prepare for this project to be rubber-stamped and fast-tracked in early spring. **To face industry’s predatory petro-playbook head-on, we need to get educated, organized and prepare for the tumultuous months ahead.**

Notes

- 1. https://cleanenergycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Report_LNG-Macrh2024.pdf
Visit <https://stopprgt.ca/> for more information.

THE NAMING OF THINGS IS POLITICAL

While it may not be as harmful as constructing a pipeline, the use of colonial names plays a role in the erasure of Indigenous peoples. The power of naming lies in the ability to shape what exists—or does not exist—in the collective imagination. This is why we prefer the terms that communities use to describe themselves (endonyms) over colonial labels. On the right is a list of endonyms.

Endonym	Colonial name
Eeyouch	Cree
Kanien ’kehá:ka	Mohawk
Nehirowisiw	Atikamekw
Innu	French: “Montagnais”

When we refer to colonial territories, we are specifying that these names were self-designated by the settlers. For example, the territory legally controlled by the Canadian state is called “so-called Canada.” Some Indigenous territories do not appear on the maps in this journal. Indigenous territories do not align exactly with colonial territories, as the settlers divided the land without considering how First Nations shared it. Unlike colonial territories, the territories of various Indigenous families are not defined by fixed, arbitrary boundaries, but by toponyms (place names) that designate mountains, islands, rivers, and other landmarks. However, here are some imprecise equivalents between the two:

Territorial name	Definition
Lax’Yip	Territory of the Gitxsan and Gitanyow Nations
Yintah	Territory of the Wet’suwet’en Nation
Turtle Island	North America
Tiohtià:ke	Island of Montreal (in the language of the Kanien’ká:ka)
Moonyang	Island of Montreal (in the Anishinaabe language)
Kanehsatà:ke	Enclave reserve in the municipality of Oka
Nitassinan	‘Our land’ in Innu-aimun, the Innu language
Nitaskinan	Territory of the Nehirowisiwok, also known as Nehirowisiw Aski

Some terms from the Gitxsan language (Sim Algyax, also known as Gitxsanimx or Gitksenimx), used by both the Gitxsan and Gitanyow peoples, are also present in the texts. For more information, visit <https://www.firstvoices.com/gitksenimx>.

Word	Definition
Wilp	The basic unit of social organization among the Gitxsan, which could be translated as “house.”
Huwilp	A grouping of several wilps, each with its own governance structure.

REDWASHING EXTRACTIVE PROJECTS

The fossil fuel industry, along with the politicians across the political spectrum who continue to support it, and right-wing think tanks, understand that the increased power of Indigenous nations asserting their sovereignty over their lands poses a threat to the expansion of the extractive industry. This is why companies and governments are actively working to establish social acceptability for their projects on Indigenous lands. Their new strategy is to adopt the concepts of “economic reconciliation” and partnership with Indigenous communities. But don’t be fooled: pretending to be an ally of Indigenous people while simultaneously profiting from the exploitation of their territories, is nothing more than *redwashing*.

Of course, the extractive industry cannot carry out all this propaganda on its own, so it has found allies in band councils to defend these positions. Just as anti-feminist men rely on anti-feminist women to legitimize their discourse (Denise Bombardier comes to mind, for example), colonial elites seek the approval of Indigenous peoples to further their activities. In the case of the fracked and liquefied natural gas industry, there is the First Nations LNG Alliance which was formed in 2015 to unite communities that have signed benefit agreements with the natural gas industry, backing projects like CGL and PRGT. The goal of the “Reconciliation through Economic Development” strategy is to set an example and raise the profile of Indigenous communities that support the fossil fuel industry. In the case of the PRGT, the Nisga’a Nation took the bait and became a co-owner of the project.

Sibo Chen, a scholar and critical communications policy analyst of the British Columbian government, argues that “improved relations between Indigenous nations, the state, and extractive industries often result in the social legitimization of further extractivist activities on Indigenous lands”.¹ These colonial elites make no secret of their efforts to influence communities in favor of their projects, with pro-industry research consistently

using the term “social license to operate.” Economic reconciliation has become a key phrase for the industry as it seeks to continue its century-old strategies of extraction, this time under the guise of partnership with Indigenous communities. After the fur trade, logging, and fishing, natural gas is the next target.

Meanwhile, big banks finance oil, gas, and mining companies to the tune of billions, then polish their image by participating in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, hiring a few Indigenous individuals, financing the education of some young Indigenous people, or sponsoring Indigenous museums. These financial capital giants use the same colonial redwashing strategy as extractive corporations.

Janelle Lapointe, an Afro-Indigenous activist from the Stellat’en Nation, has written extensively on this industry and the State’s discursive strategy. She explains how the new language of economic reconciliation is a way of evading the deeper issue of returning land and sovereignty to Indigenous communities. Lapointe echoes the argument of Arthur Manuel, a well-known Indigenous author, who asserts that Indigenous populations have long suffered from impoverishment due to colonization. Indigenous people are not poor because of any biological or cultural defect, but because they have been confined to reserves that represent only 0.2% of Canadian territory—the source of all the country’s wealth.

Communities are presented with a binary choice with natural gas projects, one which emphasizes that integrating their community into the capitalist system is the only way to end the suffering of their people. Therefore, it’s important not to blame the communities that buy into economic reconciliation, as this is ultimately a reflection of the ongoing colonial process.

The history of communities buying into economic reconciliation will, and already is, serving to silence opposition to the PRGT pipeline. Certain left-wing identity politics have fostered a fear of opposing anything Indigenous-led. Politicians and business

leaders have recognized this and are exploiting it to their full advantage by trying to secure as many Indigenous partnerships as possible. Liberals, Conservatives, extractive companies, and the Indigenous people who work with them are all too eager to argue that Indigenous leadership is being centered in order to dissuade opposition to the project. Indeed, many who would otherwise oppose this new project are discouraged from doing so simply because it has the backing of Indigenous communities. This redwashing is nothing more than smoke and mirrors: whether carried out by non-Indigenous or Indigenous people, the devastation of Indigenous territories always has colonial roots!

Notes

1. Chen, Sibio, “Promoting BC LNG”, in *Energy politics and discourse in Canada: Probing progressive extractivism*. Routledge.



THE COLONIZERS, THE SETTLERS, AND THE COLONIZED.

The colonial dynamic is not limited to the first settlers on Indigenous lands but continues after the transfer of territory to the Dominion of Canada in 1868, right up to the present day. In the modern context of colonialism, it is the new use of land by settlers that constitutes colonization—whether for hydro-electric dams, golf courses, oil pipelines, or cookie-cutter suburbs. This colonization always benefits the settlers, at the expense of Indigenous populations. Therefore, there are no innocent settlers: even if the bosses take the lion’s share of everything produced, we all benefit collectively from the ongoing pillaging of Indigenous lands. And this will continue until we abolish the State and the corporations that drain us... What are we waiting for?

THE INNER WORKINGS OF SO-CALLED CANADA: SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE LOGIC OF ELIMINATION

The conflict between the Gitxsan and so-called Canada highlights the State's inherently colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples. In 1868, Queen Victoria transferred the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada, making the Canadian government the owner of lands already populated by hundreds of thousands of people. Since then, colonial authorities have continued to suppress the inhabitants of these lands, who resist and fight to preserve their traditional way of life. In an effort to undermine this presence that challenges it, the Canadian State has implemented a series of measures. These actions reveal the deeply ingrained nature of "Canada" as a State that perpetuates settler colonialism. This article will first define the term before outlining its three main characteristics.

Settler Colonialism: A Definition

Colonialism is the process by which a colonizer invades a territory, occupies it, and exploits its resources and population—the colonized. This is happening right here in so-called Canada, where the land is increasingly used to develop capitalist industry. This domination is also sustained by a system of justifications. For example, the principle of *terra nullius* was used by colonizers to legitimize the occupation of the land. According to this doctrine, since many Indigenous peoples were nomadic, Europeans considered the land uninhabited because it was not cultivated. This rationale allowed them to claim the land as their own. Later, with the rise of modernity in Europe, racist ideologies—falsely asserting that races exist and that they determine the hierarchy of human beings—were used to naturalize the "dominated" status of Indigenous peoples.

The concept of settler colonialism characterizes the relationship between the so-called Canadian state and Indigenous peoples. It helps to specify the type of colonization occurring on this territory (Dabin, 2021, p. 18). Unlike exploitative colonialism, where the goal is to profit from Indigenous labour, settler colonialism has a different aim. It is defined as *the set of practices and structures employed by colonizers to eliminate the Indigenous population in order to permanently settle the land*.

The Logic of Elimination

Firstly, one of the defining characteristics of settler colonialism is that it constitutes a perpetual invasion. Its underlying *logic* is to *eliminate* the colonized population—Indigenous peoples—culturally, politically, or physically, in order to fully establish the dominance of the colonizers—the Canadians. As a result, so-called Canada has consistently

implemented, and continues to implement, policies aligned with this logic of elimination. Historically, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the federal government established residential schools to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the white population. Today, various political and economic measures reflect this ongoing invasion and elimination: forced sterilizations, the extinguishment of ancestral rights and titles during treaty negotiations, the imposition of colonial infrastructures such as the construction of Coastal GasLink and its terminal despite opposition from traditional Wet'suwet'en chiefs, and more.

Moreover, a report commissioned by *the Canadian government itself*—the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, published in 2019—asserts that Indigenous peoples are suffering *genocide* at the hands of the Canadian state. This report, denouncing the horrors committed, will, however, be added to the pile of others, while authorizations for more projects on stolen land continue to be signed, as growth remains the priority for the capitalist state.

Settlers Are Here to Stay

Secondly, the settlers are here to stay, establishing state and colonial institutions to which the colonized population is subjected under the threat of repression and violence. This repression manifests not only through incarceration but also through recurring disputes over fishing rights and territorial occupation.

More symbolic forms of violence are also having a devastating impact on communities, particularly as the Indian Act, which seeks to bring Indigenous populations under federal authority, has imposed band councils and their elected representatives. This system disregards the traditional decision-making processes of various communities. In an attempt to solidify its colonial structures, the State continues to enforce this governance system, positioning band councils as the legitimate form of representation for Indigenous peoples. Consequently, so-called Canada turns to the elected officials of these councils when it wishes to address Indigenous peoples. Under the Indian Act, these individuals are recognized as the legitimate interlocutors in the eyes of the State.

However, within these communities, the colonial structure of band councils and the elected officials who sit on them lack legitimacy. Some Nations, such as the Wet'suwet'en, maintain their own traditional governance systems alongside the colonial structure. For instance, before the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, elected band council members supported the project, while traditional Wet'suwet'en chiefs, with greater internal legitimacy, opposed it. Despite this



opposition, the colonial State chose to listen only to the elected representatives of the band councils and proceeded with the project, violently repressing Wet'suwet'en members who occupied the territory to block the pipeline's construction. In short, to consolidate its presence, so-called Canada imposes its State and colonial institutions on Indigenous peoples, under the threat of violent repression in the event of dissent.

The Art of Concealing Its True Nature

Thirdly, the colonial State seeks to monopolize sovereignty over territory. In other words, it aims to assimilate Indigenous nations into Canadian citizenship without granting collective rights. The existence of Indigenous nations within the "Canadian nation" challenges the colonial State, as it reveals that its sovereignty is incomplete and fundamentally illegitimate. While so-called Canada claims exclusive control over the territory it asserts as its own, the reality is that much of its surface area has never been ceded. Even when certain parcels of land were subject to signed treaties, the consent was often falsified. Frequently, the terms written on these treaties did not reflect the agreements made orally. For instance, the territory where the Gitksan people live, called Lax'yip, was never ceded. As a result, the Canadian State, *in theory*, cannot carry out projects on lands that do not belong to it. Its claim to sovereignty rests on a piece of paper signed by the Queen of England in the late 19th century—a document of such little consequence that the government itself sought to negotiate further treaties afterwards. In short, the presence of Indigenous peoples within the territory the Canadian State claims as its own exposes its colonial nature. No wonder it seeks to eliminate this evidence, namely the Indigenous communities.

Consequently, to conceal its status as a settler colony, the "Canadian State" develops a narrative and associated policies. This narrative creates a stereotypical image of the "Indian" frozen in time, while the discourse presents colonization as a thing

of the past and reconciliation as a current concern (Government of Canada, 2024, para. 1). In 1969, the White Paper attempted to implement "egalitarian" policies that removed the specific legal recognition of Indigenous peoples within Canadian law, and similar efforts have followed. Furthermore, the Canadian state produces statistics, data, and reports to document its relations with Indigenous peoples, thereby diluting the Indigenous perspective on their own history. The "knowledge" created by the Canadian state, which favours its own position, generates a "non-knowledge" that ignores Indigenous perspectives on the history of colonization. This phenomenon has been termed by some people as "epistemicide." Moreover, when implementing economic development projects such as Coastal Gaslink, so-called Canada claims to have consulted with the Indigenous peoples affected by them. However, in reality, these consultations are often insufficient and take place with individuals whose views are hardly representative of the broader community. In short, these performative policies promote a façade of "reconciliation," but in no way disrupt the colonial structure that underpins the Canadian State.

Conclusion

This article has sought to define settler colonialism and explore how a State imposes itself on an ever-expanding share of territory by defending harmful and polluting projects while pushing back communities that stand in its way. In its attempt to establish itself definitively on the land it claims, the State must eliminate, whether culturally, politically, or physically, the population that it perceives as an obstacle. Thus, the logic of elimination is the primary characteristic of settler colonialism. Secondly, it involves a continuous invasion of the territory by the settlers, who impose their structures and way of life on the Indigenous peoples. Finally, the Canadian State attempts to conceal its colonial nature and incomplete sovereignty by crafting a positive narrative about itself: colonization is a thing of the past, the State

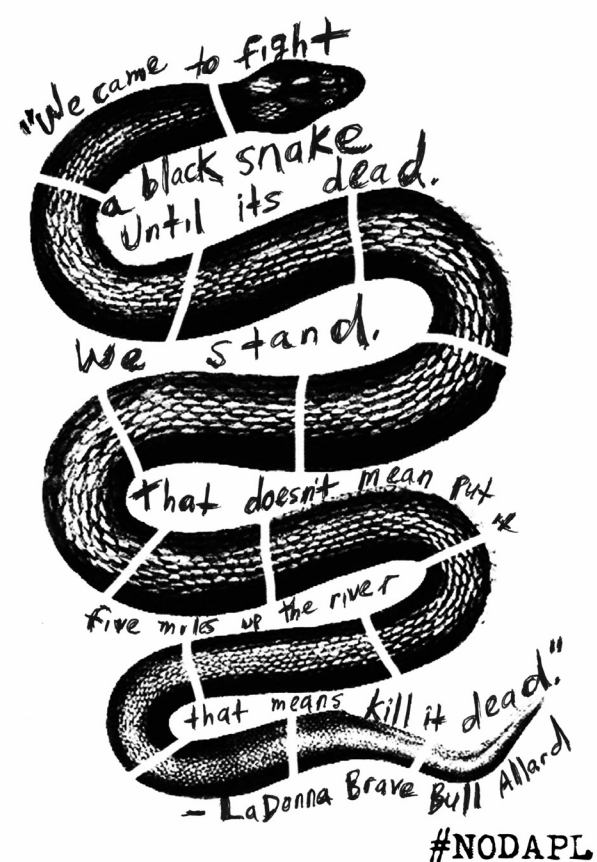
now consults with Indigenous peoples, and so on. However, as demonstrated by the imposition of the colonial PRGT pipeline project on unceded Gitksan territory, such rhetoric is nothing more than a sham.

Further information

Fanon, Frantz, 1992, *Les damnés de la terre*. Gallimard.

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Government of Canada, 2019, *Reclaiming our power and our place: the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.



BAND COUNCIL vs. HEREDITARY CHIEFS

Before the arrival of Jacques Cartier and his crew, the Indigenous communities of Turtle Island had—and still maintain—varied forms of governance that are difficult to reconcile with the practices of the settlers who continue to encroach upon them. In 1876, the Indian Act [*sic.*] was passed, establishing elected band councils. The aim was to create Indigenous chiefs with whom the state could make agreements, bypassing the traditional decision-making processes of the various communities. Indeed, the traditional decision-making processes of hereditary chiefs may appear limited when the territory is considered private property. Hereditary chiefs are primarily responsible for preserving Land, to ensure it continues to sustain the community. When non-native development projects—which view the territory as a resource to be exploited—are proposed and sometimes even defended by band councils, it is unsurprising that these councils often find themselves in conflict with hereditary chiefs.

Furthermore, the Indian Act [*sic.*] also imposes strict limits on those officially recognized by the State as Indigenous people (who would only gain the right to vote without losing their "Indian status" in 1960). It also defines the concept of a reserve, managed by the band council, thus restricting the territories that are officially recognized as Indigenous by the Canadian state. As a result, band councils manage separate territories and populations, distinct from traditional governance, which contradicts traditional practices. Above all, the State uses band councils to grant itself a form of illegitimate consent, manipulating colonial law to bypass traditional Indigenous governance.

In short, hereditary chiefs—not band councils—represent the legitimate means of Indigenous governance !

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND DISPOSSESSION IN SO-CALLED CANADA

The aim of this article is to critically examine developments in Canadian law regarding the definition of “Indigenous title” (a collective right to land, sometimes referred to as “Aboriginal title”), placing them within the broader history of dispossession. This history has been shaped as much by the economic objectives of the colonial State as by the complicity of its justice system. While acknowledging the progress made by First Nations in the legal arena, it is important to recognize its limits. Today, as in the past, control and possession of land remain central to conflicts involving the extractive industry. In this sense, analyzing history through the lens of ownership provides a clearer understanding of what is at stake today in so-called British Columbia.

Indigenous Conceptions of Territory

The imposition of a European conception of land ownership is one of the foundations upon which colonization was—and still is—based. In many respects, the ideas of absolute, exclusive, and perpetual private ownership¹ of land, particularly the notion that a forest, a lake, or a mountain could be traded, were foreign to Indigenous people. While hereditary rights to hunting territories were (and still are) held by families or clans, rules of reciprocity and kinship systems regulated access to neighbouring territories and their resources. Sometimes, a right of passage had to be paid. Despite this, people did not “own” the land—at least not in the way that a real estate speculator claims possession of land today, or a min-

ing company purchases rights to it. Among the Innu, for example, the verbs used to express the connection to Land convey the ideas of “control”, “management” (*tipeinitam*), “guardianship,” and “responsibility” (*kanauenitam*).² In other words, one cannot claim a territory as one’s own unless one knows it, travels through it, and watches over it.³

This equation between knowledge and control also exists among the Gitksan. Traditionally, rights to the land are derived from kinship relationships, which extend to other-than-human spirits, such as those of animals, plants, and Land itself.⁴ As Richard Overstall, a lawyer and ally of the Nation, writes, these relationships cannot be understood as “property,” just as one does not own their partner or their children: “Yet, in a sense, they are ours, and we are theirs.”

In Gitksan society, “possession” of a territory exists through what might be described as a “marriage” between the chief and Land. Each chief, at the head of a lineage, inherits a power (the *daxgyet*) that comes from their ancestors’ relationship with the territory and the spirit that presides over it. According to the story of the Gitsegyukla (one of the four Gitksan clans), their ancestor, Chief Mool’xan, received the territory from a spirit (*naxnox*) who appeared to him in the form of frogs. An ethnographer visiting the Gitsegyukla reported the chief’s words:

“I grew up in my uncle’s house, and my duties and responsibilities were always whispered in my ear while I was still a child. I can now speak from that knowledge. As for my hunting territories, they will be passed on to my successors so that knowledge of

them does not escape us. My berry lands will also be used by my successors, and by those who currently have the privilege of visiting them.”

This union between chief and Land is reaffirmed at feasts, which feature song and dance, along with the display of clan regalia. *Adaawks*, the stories that form the basis of the bond with Land, are also told. Each member of a House (*Wilp*), through its chief, inherits the right to access the territory and its resources. This right is formalized by the adoption of a name from the *Wilp* register. In addition to the prestige associated with the name, bearing it also confers fishing, hunting, and gathering rights over part of the common territory.

This example illustrates that, before the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous Nations had their own legal systems that allocated rights and responsibilities. Yet for a long time, settlers denied this reality, either because they were unable or unwilling to recognize the complexity of Indigenous societies. In mainstream thought, private property was regarded as one of the hallmarks of “civilization,” and its absence relegated Indigenous peoples to the “infancy of humanity,” to the status of “primitives.”

Colonial Expansion in Western so-called Canada

Under English rule, the westward advance of the frontier and the establishment of settlers were achieved through force, trickery, or both. Between 1871 and 1921, eleven treaties, known as the “Numbered Treaties,” were signed between various First Nations and the

article continues on page 12.



5. Affected communities

The ecological risks associated with pipelines are transferred to the people most dependent on their land for their livelihoods, whether through fishing, hunting or gathering. In addition to construction, which entails a major disturbance for wildlife, pipeline maintenance involves a trade-off between permanent accessibility in the event of an incident and the costs of this accessibility: snow removal, and road and bridge maintenance. The pipeline is a permanent violation of unceded territory.

1. Natural gas reserves

Across Canada, the vast majority of natural gas reserves are located in Alberta. British Columbia's natural gas production was 1.1 Bcf/d in 2023, while provincial consumption was 0.8 Bcf/d. Natural gas production has peaked at nearly 11 Bcf/d in 2012, the energy used to extract the oil sands.

Most of British Columbia's natural gas unit straddling British Columbia and Alberta. Columbia's natural gas reserves: 385 trillion cubic feet. Other natural gas reserves, the market value of over \$2,174 billion. The polluting techniques such as hydraulic fracturing.

The combustion of these 685 Tcf of natural gas releases 1.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of 1.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide remain in the ground.

4. Pipelines

The Coast GasLink pipeline, scheduled to be built, will transport natural gas per day to the coast. With increasing demand at this rate, it would take 355 years to empty the reserves. Bcf/d to the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission. This is extremely problematic:

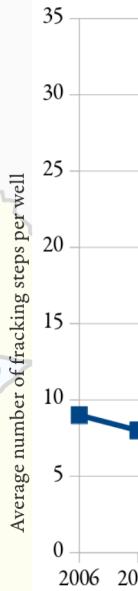
- Firstly, pipelines are budgeted for 50 years of use over those 50 years, and if, for example, hydraulic fracturing, they would have no revenue.
- Finally, pipelines are rigid structures in the ground and floods. Ruptures are very common and rarely sufficient to guarantee real decommissioning.

6. Ports

Natural gas is then brought to export terminals, where it is shipped to international markets. The Kitimat plant, owned by LNG Canada, which is mainly owned by Shell, cost almost \$40 billion to build. The plant is scheduled to come online in 2025, exporting 14 million tonnes of natural gas per year. Construction of a similar plant is planned for Pearse Island, near Prince Rupert. Transporting liquefied natural gas requires maintaining it at a temperature of -162 degrees Celsius. This is an energy-intensive process, and in the event of a problem, the natural gas reverts to its gaseous form. The effects of such an event will be disastrous, given natural gas is 95% methane, which has 28 times the global warming impact of CO₂.

3. Hydraulic fracking: a vicious cycle

As resources are depleted, extraction processes become increasingly polluting. In fact, natural gas is first extracted from accessible areas where extraction requires the least amount of effort. Over time, natural gas resources become increasingly difficult to access. This is particularly true for hydraulic fracking, where an ever-greater number of processing steps are required for each well. This increases the quantity of chemicals pumped into the environment, the amount of polluted water to be treated, and therefore the potential for waste. Such is the vicious cycle of extraction: the more we extract, the scarcer the resource becomes, and the higher its price, making ever-dirtier forms of extraction increasingly profitable. The only limits to extraction are the ones we set ourselves.

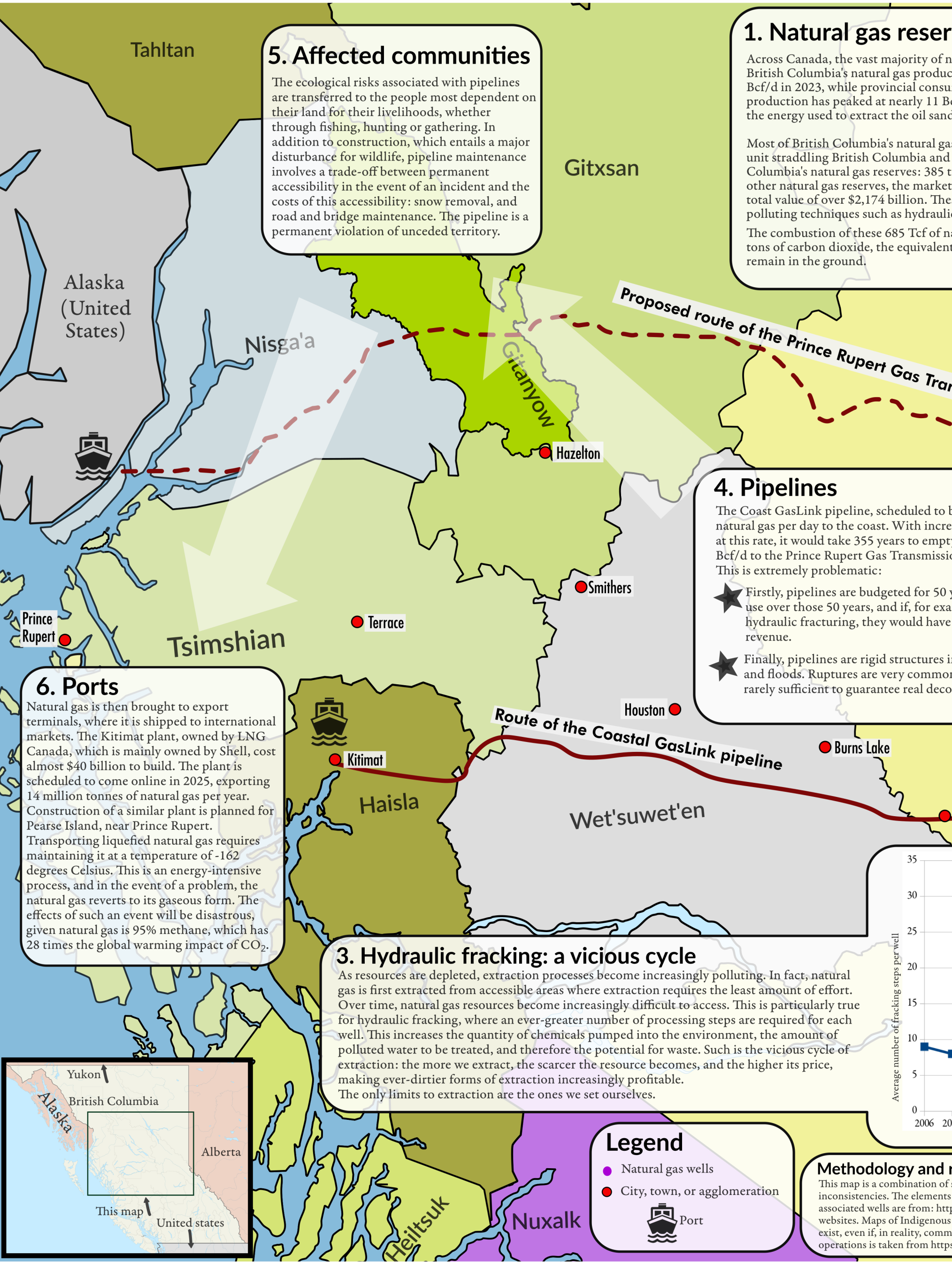


Legend

- Natural gas wells
- City, town, or agglomeration
- Port

Methodology and

This map is a combination of various sources. The elements associated with wells are from: <http://www.naturalgas.ca>. Maps of Indigenous territories exist, even if, in reality, community operations is taken from <https://www.territories.ca>



ves

natural gas for export comes from British Columbia. Production rose from 3.6 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) in 2013, to 6.7 Bcf/d in 2016. Consumption is 0.58 Bcf/d. By comparison, Alberta's natural gas production is 0.58 Bcf/d, but with an internal consumption of 6.9 Bcf/d, since most of its production is derived from this natural gas.

Gas production comes from the Montney Formation, a geological formation in Alberta. This formation contains the vast majority of British Columbia's natural gas reserves (Tcf). Adding the value of British Columbia's natural gas reserves (at the current price of \$3.28/Kcf) suggests a value of the resource (at the current price of \$3.28/Kcf) suggests a value of the resource (at the current price of \$3.28/Kcf) suggests a value of the resource are considered non-conventional, meaning they require hydraulic fracturing to extract them.

Natural gas alone would produce the equivalent of 36 billion metric tonnes of the world's CO2 production for one year. These resources must be managed responsibly.

Transmission pipeline

begin operation in 2025, already brings 2.1 Bcf of natural gas under increased pressure, it could eventually reach 5 Bcf/d. Even with the reserves. A proposal has been made to add 2 Bcf to the province's natural gas transport capacity.

years. This means that funding depends on continued investment. In the meantime, governments were to ban practices such as hydraulic fracturing to compensate pipeline owners for the loss of revenue.

in the earth's crust, prone to avalanches, landslides, and in the majority of cases, pipeline insurance is not available, not to mention unreported spills.

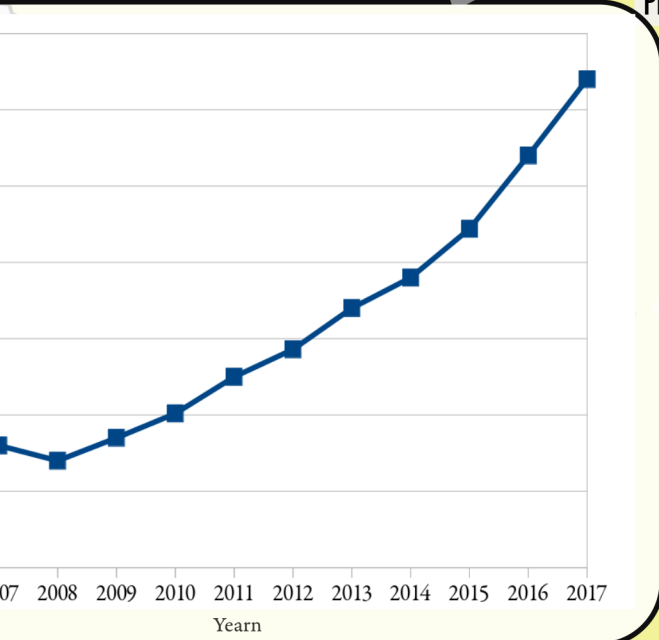
Fort St James

Fraser Lake

Vanderhoof

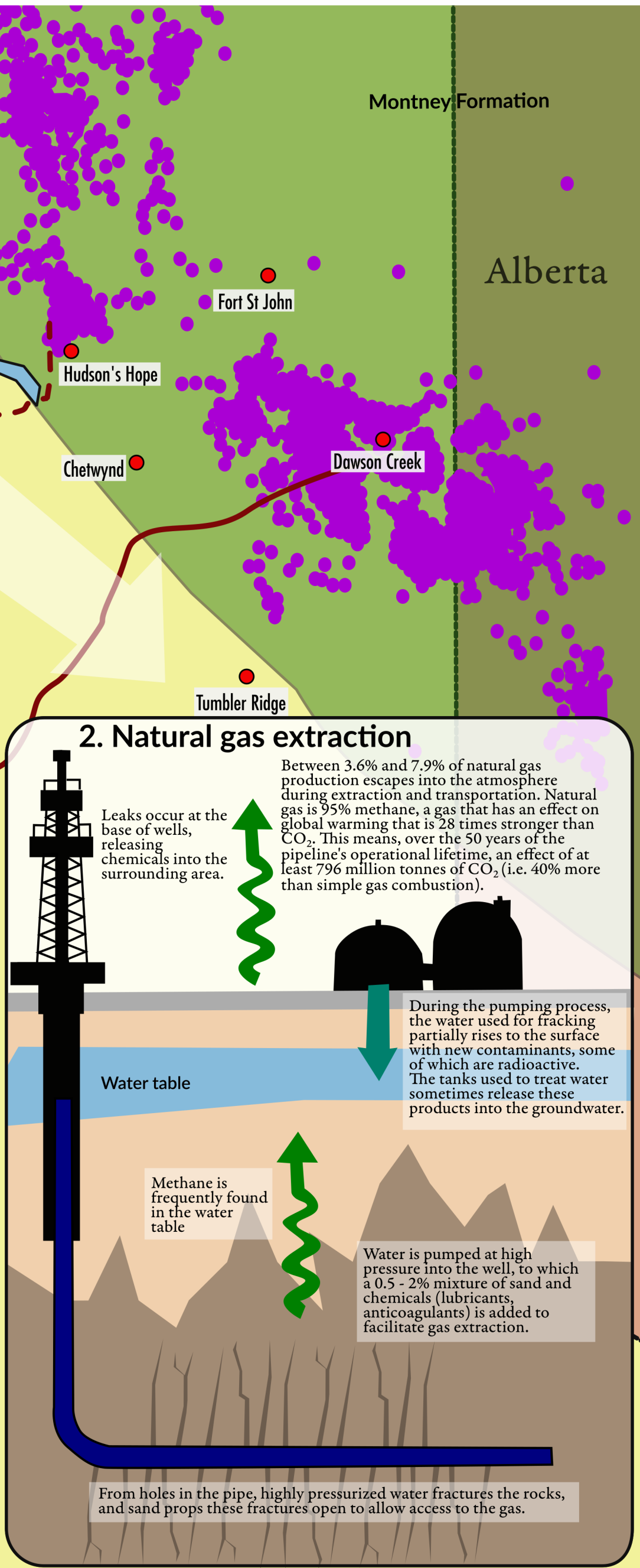
Prince George

Quesnel



References

Several elements taken from other maps. Different projections are combined, leading to inaccuracies. The map is provided for information purposes only. The Montney formation and its location are taken from this map <https://s.42l.fr/UixA6EvX>. Information on pipelines is taken from the companies' own maps. The boundaries of the territories are taken from this map <https://s.42l.fr/u7WuEgDI>; but "official" delineations do not define their territories with precise boundaries. The number of fracking wells is taken from this map <https://s.42l.fr/Y4kCeM85>. The mini-map was taken from Wikipedia.



continued from page 9.

British Crown. Through this process, the British Crown took possession of vast tracts of land, subdivided it, and distributed it to white farmers who settled in what would become Ontario and the Canadian Prairies.⁵ At the same time, Indigenous peoples were confined to reserves, over which they held no land rights—the Crown was the sole trustee.⁶ Today, it is clear that these agreements were not signed with the full knowledge of the First Nations, that the quid pro quos were largely insufficient, and that many viewed them as a sharing of land rather than a transfer. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Canadian law, these territories were considered “ceded.” Such treaties were never signed in so-called British Columbia (or in so-called Quebec, for that matter). For this reason, Nations such as the Wet’suwet’en and the Gitksan inhabit territories designated as “unceded.” This gives their claims particular weight in Canadian courts. We’ll come back to this.

What happened on Turtle Island is similar in some respects to the enclosure movement that began in England at the end of the 16th century. Landowners monopolized land that had previously been set aside for collective use, depriving peasants of their source of subsistence—the land, such as what was done to Indigenous people. “They conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, incorporated the soil into capital,” writes Marx in Book I of Capital.⁷ As for reserves, they were created to control and contain Indigenous populations once colonial expansion reached the entire continent. Settlers held the belief that it was only a matter of time before Indigenous people would individually choose to “emancipate” themselves, privatize their portion of the reserve, “civilize” themselves, and thus eventually solve the “Indian problem.” Indeed, the Gradual Civilization Act promised them full access to citizenship in exchange for converting their parcel of reserve land into private property.⁸



First Nations Struggles for Territorial Rights

This is not to say that all of this has gone smoothly. Indigenous peoples have consistently defended their collective rights to the land. In fact, the Gitksan played a central role in one of the first recorded territorial conflicts in so-called British Columbia. In 1872, they blocked the flow of goods along the Skeena River to protest the destruction of the village of Gitsegukla, which had been burned by traders and miners. The resistance paid off, and the Gitksan succeeded in obtaining compensation for the families. Then, in 1908, the Gitksan chiefs, who had long opposed mining development on the Lax’yip, secured a meeting with Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, during which their right to ownership of their ancestral territory was discussed. However, in 1927, the Canadian government prohibited Indigenous people from organizing politically to assert their territorial rights, as well as from hiring lawyers to take legal action.

A few decades later, in 1969, the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau introduced a new policy known as the White Paper. This policy refuted the idea that Indigenous peoples possessed inherent rights, including land rights, while simultaneously attempting to abolish “Indian status.” The stated aim was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society, which, among other things, involved imposing private property and government economic development programs on them. The publication of the White Paper sparked an unprecedented wave of mobilization, forcing the government to back down two years later.

At the same time, Indigenous peoples were engaged in a legal battle with the government, led by Nisga’a hereditary chief Frank Calder. White settlement in so-called British Columbia, from the 19th century onward, had forced many First Nations, including the Nisga’a, to abandon their traditional territories in favor of life on reserves. This displacement occurred against their will, without any treaty or compensation. The Nisga’a decided to take the province to court, accusing it of violating their rights to their traditional territory.⁹ They maintained that their land rights had “never been legally extinguished.” However, the first challenge was to obtain recognition of the very existence of such a right, which judges had reserved for so-called “civilized” peoples. In 1911, Lord Summer, sitting on the highest court of the British Empire, made the following declaration:

“Assessing the rights of Aboriginal tribes [*sic.*] is always difficult. Some tribes are so far down the ladder of social organization that it is impossible to reconcile their customs, conceptions, and representations of law with the institutions and spirit of a civilized society. Such a gap cannot be bridged.”

In Canada, *St. Catherine’s Milling and Lumber Co. v. The Queen* (1888) legitimized the colonial claim that Indigenous territorial rights were limited to usufruct rights (i.e., the right to use the property of another) and depended on the goodwill of the Crown. As a result, the Nisga’a were required to demonstrate, firstly, that they

had indeed “owned” the territory prior to the arrival of settlers, and secondly, that these land rights had not been extinguished or modified by Canadian legislation. Although these remedies run counter to the overt ethnocentrism of the colonial court system, they remain asymmetrical:

It is up to the First Nations to translate their relationship to Land into the legal language of the colonizers—the language of the Canadian state. In other words, Indigenous land claims are forced to be expressed through foreign and imposed categories or... remain mute.

The Calder case finally reached the Supreme Court in 1969. At the end of the trial, three judges ruled that Indigenous title to land had been abolished (or abandoned) before British Columbia joined Confederation, while an equal number supported the Nisga’a view that they had never been the subject of a treaty or statute of any kind. In the end, the scales tipped against the Nisga’a when the seventh judge invoked a procedural defect and dismissed the case.

For our purposes, it is important to remember that from Calder onwards, and in all subsequent judgments, it is property (*dominium* in Roman law) that is at issue, and not sovereignty (*imperium*). The legitimacy of the Canadian state is never questioned, and it remains sovereign over Indigenous lands. As we have seen, the concept of ownership fails to capture the multiplicity and complexity of the relationships Indigenous people have with their territory and the other human beings with whom they share it.

Despite this defeat, the Calder case, concluded in 1973, sent shockwaves through the legal landscape, as it was the first time the Court recognized the possibility that Indigenous Nations might have a right to unceded lands. As a result, the federal government modified its approach to First Nations’ territorial interests. “Perhaps you had more rights than we thought,” Pierre Elliott Trudeau admitted to Indigenous chiefs.

Post-Calder and the Mirage of Reconciliation

This period was also marked by the Oil Crisis and the expansion of extractive activities (oil, natural gas, and ore) in the north of so-called Canada. In response to the growing anti-colonial nationalism among Indigenous peoples (with *Red Power* in full swing during the 1970s), the government opted for policies of recognition and accommodation, without undermining the colonial structure of so-called Canada. In 1982, when the Constitution was repatriated, Indigenous rights were enshrined within it. “The existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada [Indian, Inuits and Métis people of Canada] are hereby recognized and affirmed.” stipulates Section 35(1). In 1990, the Sparrow case put these new provisions to the test, confirming the Musqueam’s Indigenous right to fish on the Fraser River. At the same time, the court outlined a set of criteria aimed at clarifying the content of Indigenous rights. This victory,

however, was only half-hearted, as the court also defined various grounds on which governments could justify violating these rights. These criteria would continue to be debated in subsequent judgments.¹⁰ Indeed, the B.C. government's refusal to enter into negotiations with First Nations to determine the content of Indigenous title would lead to a number of legal conflicts.

Resistance has continued outside the courts as well. Between 1984 and 1993, the Tla-o-qui-aht and their allies fought relentlessly to protect old-growth forests and prevent the logging industry from gaining access to their territory on western Vancouver Island. The mobilizations culminated in the summer of 1993 with the arrest of 856 people, marking what would be considered the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history until the Fairy Creek blockades in 2021.

During the same period, in response to the provincial government's failure to recognize the "ownership" of ancestral territories, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Nations launched a lawsuit known as the "Delgamuukw case," named after Earl Muldoe,¹¹ a master carver from the Gitksan Nation renowned for his bentwood masks, totems, and boxes. The dispute concerned ownership of over 58,000 km² of land in northwestern British Columbia, land threatened by logging operations. In 1997, the case was heard in the Supreme Court, where, for the first time, oral histories were accepted as admissible evidence of ancestral occupation of the land. In the end, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en won the case.

However, in line with previous rulings, the Court established various criteria that restrict Indigenous control over their territory. The judges ruled that "Constitutionally recognized Aboriginal rights are not absolute and may be infringed by the federal and provincial governments if the infringement furthers a compelling and substantial legislative objective."

These "compelling and substantial" objectives are none other than the continuation of the economic activities on which the Canadian economy has always relied: "the development of agriculture, forestry, mining and hydroelectric power." Not without irony, it also includes the "protection of the environment or endangered species."

Another weakness of the Delgamuukw ruling is that Nations must claim exclusive occupation of the territory. However, the territories of various Nations often overlapped, making the European conception of borders somewhat irrelevant. Finally, the Delgamuukw decision did not grant constitutional protection to titles considered "extinguished" under Canadian law prior to 1982. In other words, only areas left vacant (undeveloped) by the Crown or third parties could be claimed.

Today, in the absence of a clear definition in the Constitution, the question of Indigenous rights remains unresolved and continues to evolve through the decisions handed down by the Supreme Court.

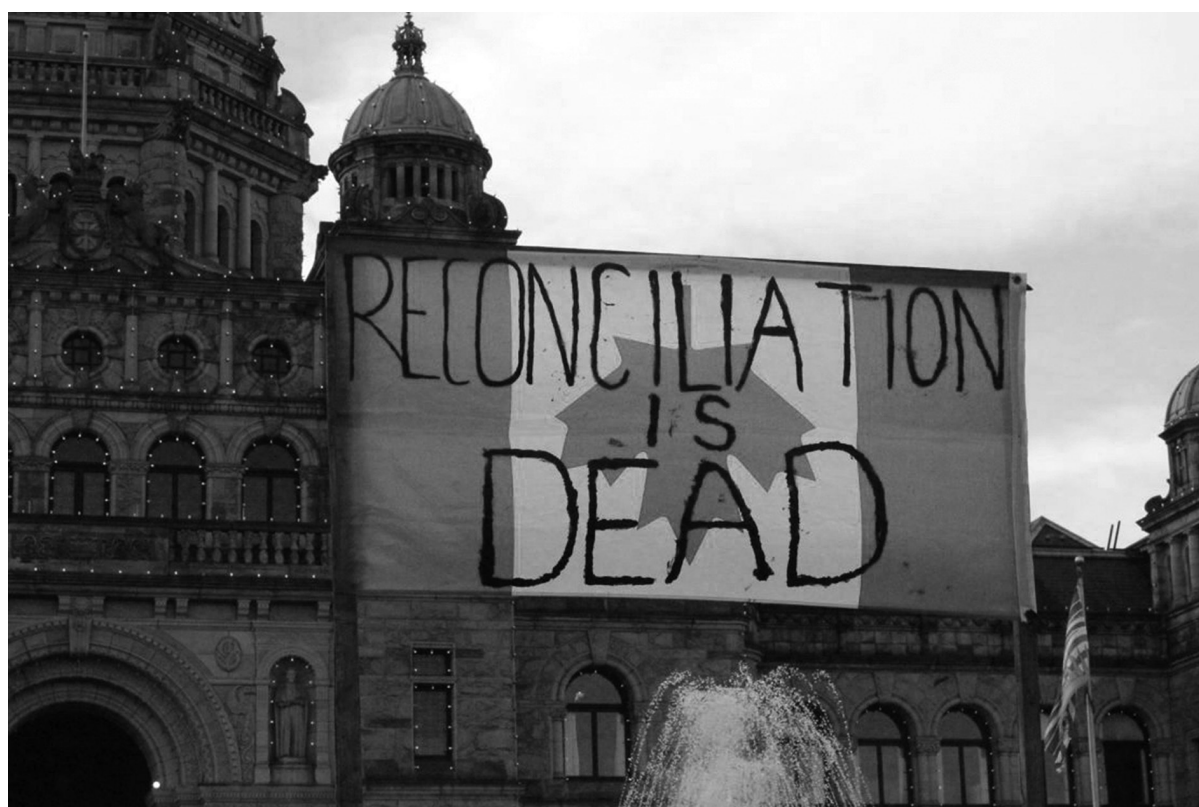
The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

In 2000, after 25 years of negotiations following the Calder affair, the Nisga'a Nation and so-called British Columbia ratified an agreement that granted the Nation self-government and control of 2,000 km² of its traditional territories. This marked the first modern treaty signed in the province. Reserve lands were returned to the Nisga'a as collective property and placed under the governance of the Nisga'a Lisims, the Nation's central authority.¹² Then, in 2013, the Nisga'a Nation became the only First Nation in the country to privatize its lands, allowing its members to purchase land within its territory. In the context of this newspaper's main subject, it should be noted that the Nisga'a are co-owners of the Ksi Lisims marine terminal, which exports natural gas

to Asia. This is where the PRGT pipeline is to terminate, with the Nisga'a Nation partnering with Texas-based Western LNG in the project. While there are dissenting voices within the Nisga'a, it is hard not to be cynical and see in these developments the culmination of successive efforts by colonial governments to eliminate Indigenous exceptionalism and clear the way for extractive industries.

In so-called Quebec, the James Bay Agreement, involving the Eeyouch, Naskapi, and Inuit, was the first modern treaty. Legal action was taken against the provincial government in the 1973 Malouf ruling to halt the construction of the La Grande hydroelectric complex and force negotiations. Additionally, for the past four decades, the Inuit (see the text *Band Council vs. Hereditary Chiefs*) of Essipit, Mashteuiatsh, and Nutashkuan have been negotiating with both levels of government to define their territorial rights in an agreement known as the "Petapan Treaty." The exact contents of this treaty remain unclear, as discussions are being held behind closed doors, but all indications suggest that the government's objective is to eliminate or at least suspend Indigenous title. For the Mashk Assi collective, which is mobilizing against the treaty and the hold of band councils in local politics, "self-government" and promises of "co-management" serve as a façade for the ongoing dispossession by the Canadian state. The State's objective remains, as always, to secure access to territory and the exploitation of "natural resources," which necessitates the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty. In Innu law, Land is inalienable and constitutes a legacy for future generations. Moreover, signing the treaty would lead to the "municipalization" of Innu reserves, consolidating the authority of band councils—an imposed governance model—at the expense of the traditional political structures that the collective is striving to revalorize.

The same debates are unfolding in Indigenous communities across Canada. Over the past two decades, the Tsawwassen and Maa-nulth First Nations have reached agreements with the British Columbia government, while the Gitksan are still negotiating with the province. The new chapter of resistance that is emerging with the fight against the PRGT serves as a reminder that, without a balance of power built by Indigenous activists, these negotiations often favor the State, which, in the process, disguises its colonial nature under the guise of reconciliation and partnership. As for the Canadian justice system, when it has deviated from the status quo, it has always preserved the interests of the State—whether by reducing Indigenous political claims to matters of land interests, or by introducing various conditions that allow companies and governments to continue business as usual. It remains unproven that "consultation" processes and other compromises serve anything beyond the interests of those who exploit the land. Given the inadequacy of legal strategies, do we have any choice but to rely on our own resources?



Two upside-down Canadian flags were flown at the fountain of the British Columbia Legislative Building, in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en, in response to the illegal RCMP raid at Unist'ot'en camp. Photo by Emily Fagan, Editor-in-Chief of *Martlet*, February 2020. [martlet.ca]

Notes

1. Unrestricted, unshared, and not extinguished by the passage of time.

2. As Mailhot and Vincent put it, “The link to the land is thus conceived as one aspect of the relations of power and control that exist in the universe [e.g., between animal masters and the species they control, or between a boss and his employees]. It is therefore a political concept [...] [which] corresponds, not to our concept of property, but to that of *sovereignty*.” This clarification is important, as it emphasizes the Innu’s right to their territory, Nitassinan. What is crucial to remember, however, is that Western legal concepts often fail to accurately describe the nature of the ties between Indigenous peoples and Land.

3. In contrast, Canadian liberal inheritance law grants full owners three prerogatives: 1) *usus*, the right to use the property as one sees fit (in accordance with the law); 2) *fructus*, the right to enjoy the property, i.e., to earn income from it; and 3) *abusus*, the right to dispose of the property, by selling it, giving it away, transforming it, or even destroying it.

4. As Overstall explains, Gitxsan kinship can be understood as a system for ordering, interpreting, and relating to the world. Like science, it is a form of knowledge. It is this rationality inherent in kinship systems that allows it to serve as the foundation for legal relations within the Nation.

5. Greer points out that this process goes hand in hand with the development of the State: courts and governments create and administer property titles, while these new property relations necessitate the creation of courts and governments.

6. In private law, the term “fiduciary” refers to a person responsible for the custody and management of property belonging to another. Based on the paternalistic Indian Act, the Supreme Court has ruled that the Crown has a “fiduciary duty” towards Indigenous people and the lands “ceded” to it. In other words, under Canadian law, Indigenous peoples are considered “wards” of the State. One of the ways in which the State “watches over” Indigenous people is by granting them residency rights on its lands, namely on reserves. Legal language is filled with such far-fetched concepts, which obscure the colonial nature of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state.

7. For a more in-depth discussion of the parallels between primitive accumulation in Europe and America, see the introduction to *Peau rouge, masques blancs* by Glen S. Coulthard, and W. C. Roberts’ article, “What Was Primitive Accumulation? Reconstructing the Origins of a Critical Concept,” published in the *European Journal of Political Theory* (2020).

8. It was the Bagot Commission (1884) that recommended allowing Indigenous peoples to participate in the land market. The underlying idea was that collective ownership hindered the development of an entrepreneurial spirit and a sense of responsibility, arguing that individuals would value what they owned more. Today, we can see just how misguided this view was.

9. The Nisga’a live in the Nass River Valley in northwestern British Columbia, a territory that overlaps with that of the Gitxsan. The two Nations share many traditions, and their languages are closely related.

10. For example, in the Van de Peet case (1996), which was criticized for its narrow—and arguably backward-looking—definition of Indigenous rights, limited to cultural practices that predate contact with Europeans, the Supreme Court ruling stated that an Indigenous right “is determined through the process of determining whether a particular practice, custom or tradition is integral to the distinctive culture of the Aboriginal group.”

11. Delgamuukw is one of the names passed down through generations to hereditary Gitxsan chiefs. Three different chiefs bore this name during the 13 years the trial lasted. When the claim was filed, Albert Tait was Delgamuukw. Upon his death, Ken Muldoe succeeded him. Ken was the hereditary chief when the initial trial began in 1987. After Ken’s death, Earl Muldoe carried on the name until the Supreme Court proceedings were completed.

12. These lands, which do not encompass the entire ancestral territory (and whose boundaries are disputed by the Gitanyow), are held by the Nisga’a in “fee simple,” a common law category that bears little resemblance to their traditional relationship with Land. This ownership status also implies that the federal and provincial governments retain certain legal authorities. For instance, it remains the responsibility of the federal government to decide whether or not to issue environmental permits for the construction of infrastructure, such as the gas terminal at Ksi Lisims.

For those who wish to explore further, here are a few suggested texts that were used to document this article:

- *Red Skin, White Masks: Against the Colonial Politics of Recognition* by G. S. Coulthard (2018)
- *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires, and Land in Early Modern North America* by A. Greer (2018)

For shorter texts, consider the following:

- *‘Property’ and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Considerations* by P. Nadasdy (2002)
- *Le discours montagnais sur le territoire* by J. Mailhot and S. Vincent (1980)
- *Encountering the Spirit in the Land: ‘Property’ in a Kinship-Based Legal Order* by R. Overstall (2005)
- *Colonial Reading of Recent Jurisprudence: Sparrow, Delgamuukw, and Haida Nation* by G. Christie (2005)

Numerous articles in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (a bilingual online resource) were also invaluable. The encyclopedia covers Indigenous issues extensively, and we highly recommend it!



**NO PIPELINES
ON INDIGENOUS LAND**

LAND IS MORE THAN JUST A CAPITAL IDEA

Throughout this newspaper, you may observe that the word “Land” is sometimes capitalized and sometimes not. As explained by Liboiron in *Pollution Is Colonialism* and following the approach of Styres and Zinga, capitalization is used to signify a deeper relationship. The lowercase form refers to landscapes as fixed geographical and physical spaces, including earth, rocks, and waterways. In contrast, the capitalized form represents something beyond a material space—an entity infused with spirit, grounded in interconnected relationships, cultural significance, and context. Similarly, when “Land” is capitalized in this newspaper, it denotes the distinct, living essence composed of plants, animals, air, water, humans, histories, and events, as understood by many Indigenous communities. When written in lowercase, it reflects a colonial perspective in which landscapes are seen as common, universal, and interchangeable despite their variations.

FROM TURTLE ISLAND TO PALESTINE

OCCUPATION IS A CRIME

As the movement for Palestine has grown exponentially since late 2023, it is important to understand where part of Israel's model of occupation comes from: right here in so-called Canada.

As Gabor Maté, a Holocaust survivor, explains: “They’re both countries founded on the extirpation of Indigenous cultures and the displacement of Indigenous people.”

As Azeezah Kanji, jurist and journalist critical of international law from an anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective, states in her Yellowhead Institute (Indigenous-led research and education center) report: “In states like Canada and Israel, there is also a settler colonial contract: in which land, wealth, and political rights for colonizers require the dispossession and eradication of the colonized.”

Indeed, the colonial plan of so-called Canada was to brutally push First Peoples onto reserves and impose a pass system to control their comings and goings until the 1940s. Pursuing this genocidal aim, as demonstrated in the article “Private property and dispossession in so-called Canada,” the Indian Act dictated First Nations’ status and, until recently, forced “enfranchisement”¹ to deny treaty rights, in addition to marginalizing women by preventing them from occupying roles of power within imposed structures.

Evidence exists to show that the reserve system implemented by so-called Canada was a model for the South African *bantustans*,² which also served as inspiration for Israeli apartheid. British land law and title regis-

tration regimes were transplanted to the colonies, from Australia to Canada to Palestine, reaffirming the myth of *terra nullius* and enabling the conversion of Indigenous territories into colonial “property.” This process made it so that Indigenous peoples became “illegal occupiers” of their own lands.

Colonial repression, from Kanehsatà:ke to Gaza

The fate of the Kanien'kehá:ka people from 1717 to the siege of Kanehsatà:ke (the so-called Oka Crisis³) in 1990 and beyond, is an example of colonial oppression that bears many similarities to the current genocide in Palestine: "In 1717, Louis XIV, the King of France, granted the Sulpician missionaries title to the land of Kanehsatà:ke. Two centuries later, in 1917, the British government gave its support to the World Zionist Organization's project of establishing a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was then under British occupation. In the late 1800s, the Sulpicians established the town of Oka by forcibly expelling Ellen Gabriel's ancestors from their homes, leaving them with nothing but the clothes on their back. In 1948, the Zionists did the same across most of Palestine, forcing 750 000 people from their homes during the Nakba."

This comparison is also shared by Kanien'kehá:ka artist and activist Ellen Gabriel who was a community spokesperson during the siege of Kanehsatà:ke in 1990. Indeed, she argues that the parallels between the two states are manifold. In particular, the 1990 siege

revealed the links between the repression of Kanehsatà:ke and Palestinian activists.

During the 1990 Siege of Kanehsatà:ke, the Kanien'kehá:ka land resistance became a standoff between the Sûreté du Québec and the Canadian military over unceded land, land that some wanted to expand a golf course.

The police and the army used all kinds of techniques to abuse, dissuade and discourage Kanien'kehaka activists: "We were denied food, medicine, free passage for our people," said Gabriel.

“They tortured men. The Canadian army and the SQ [Sûreté du Québec] tortured Mohawk men, and for what? For a golf course.”

Moreover, the dominant institutions have tried to legitimize, even invisibilize, the violence of the colonial authorities by stigmatizing the tactics used by the Kanien'kehá:ka, such as blockades. Gabriel, as well as other members of Land defence organizations such as the Mohawk Warrior Society were labelled as terrorists.

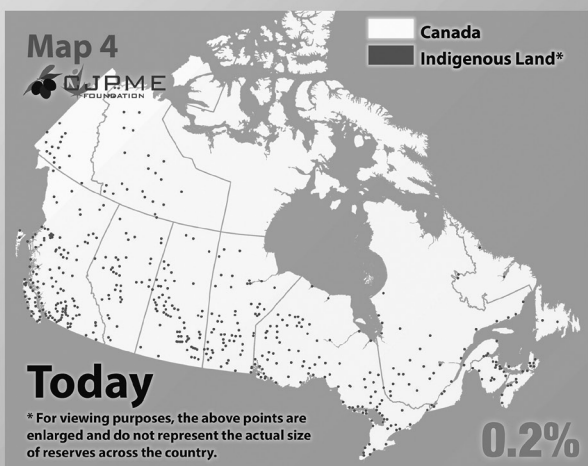
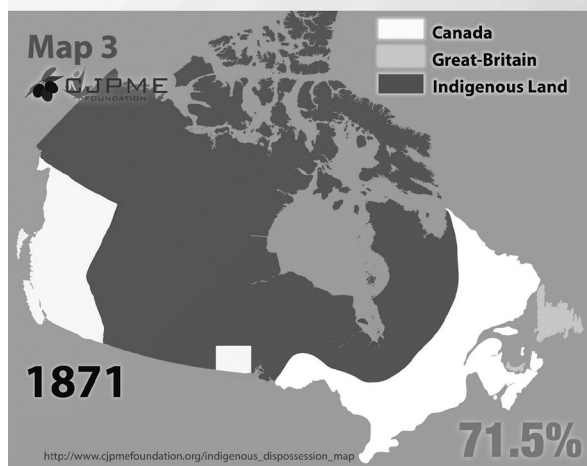
According to Gabriel, the paramilitary police force that invaded Kanehsatà:ke in 1990 was the first in North America to have trained in Israel (they even carried Israeli-made weapons).

To this day, exchange programs between police departments and the Israeli military maintain a cycle of violence that allows for tactics developed over the course of decades, if not centuries, to be incubated, innovated and tested out on Palestinians by the Israeli Occupation Force (IOF). These tactics are then sent back to Turtle Island for the cops to use against Black, Indigenous and accomplice bodies. Standing Rock's water cannons and Ferguson's heavy-handed use of tear gas were two examples of this.

As was seen in and around Unist’ot’en Camp, erected to block the construction of the CGL pipeline, as well as in many cities across Turtle Island and through the devastating photos of Gaza and the West Bank, the denial, displacement and destruction of encampments, homes and shelters is a searing example of “domicide,” the destruction of Indigenous peoples’ homes to expell them from their homeland.

Turtle Island and Palestine - same struggle

The genocide in Palestine is often played off as a “foreign policy” issue, far removed from us. But, *“it is as close as the stolen words of justice on our tongues, the stolen lives mourned in our hearts, and the stolen land beneath our feet.”* -Azeezah Kanji. A blatant example of this is Canadian companies exporting weapons, components and military technology to Israel. So-called Canada also buys military technology from Israel and authorizes its import, which was tested in Gaza and the West Bank.



Another element that oppresses colonized people is the imposition of colonial borders. In the case of Palestine, we can think of the armed border of Gaza or the West Bank. For the Kanien'kehà:ka, borders serve to separate the communities of Kahnawá:ke, Tyindenega, Kanehsatà:ke and Akwesasne, while making Akwesasne, part of which falls under the jurisdiction of the so-called United States, one of the most closely watched communities in all of Turtle Island. Kanien'kehà community members often report being profiled, questioned, and detained by border agents with no explanation, or having their property searched and confiscated. This is a well-publicized parallel with life in occupied Palestine.

We can see a clear parallel between the continuous colonial violence of removal of Palestinians from their ancestral relationships with wild olive and akoub trees in Gaza and the artificial border that separates the Kanien'kehà:ka of Akwesasne from their material, traditional, inter-generational and cultural link to the St. Lawrence River. Colonial efforts to add a cultural aspect to the genocide are worldwide.

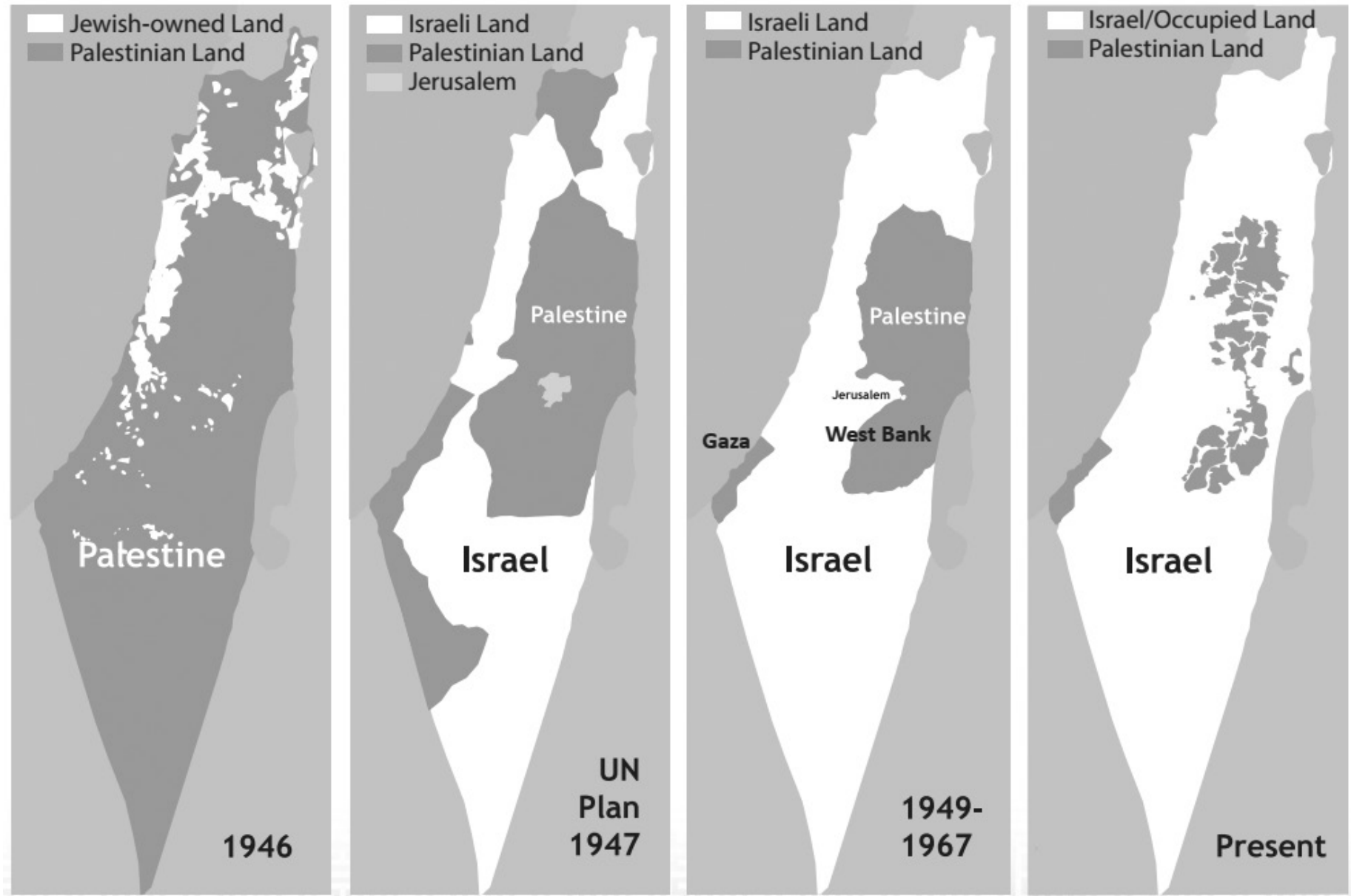
Indigenous peoples from Turtle Island to Palestine have and continue to put their lives on the line to expose and lay bare the injustices and dehumanization caused by colonial domination, as well as to obtain and insure their freedom and safety. As with the liberation movements emerging through solidarity work, they have also shown the possible beauty of a world built on mutual aid. When-

ever we hear, feel or repeat that these situations are too “complex” or “unclear” for us to act in solidarity, we are once again falling into the colonial innocence trap.

“Palestine’s freeing is simultaneously entwined with the freeing of Indigenous and Black people in Turtle Island. To end Palestinian occupation, the bewitched American/Canadian false dream must fall and be replaced by a genuinely ‘decolonial enchanting else.’” - Mohamed Abdou

Notes

1. The process of ending a person’s legal status as an “Indian” under the Indian Act.
2. Bantustans were territories set aside for Black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia) as part of the apartheid policy. The term “Bantustan” is a combination of the Bantu word *Bantu*, meaning “people,” and the Persian word *-stan*, meaning “land.” Source: Kanji, Azeezah. *Canada and Israel: Partners in the “Settler Colonial Contract.”* Yellowhead Institute. May 21, 2021. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2021/05/21/canada-andisrael-partners-in-the-settler-colonial-contract/>
3. Although many Canadians perceived this as a “crisis,” for the Kanien'kehà:ka, “Oka” was only the most recent event in a nearly 300-year struggle to protect their lands from colonial and capitalist development. In 1990, the Kanien'kehà:ka erected barricades on a secondary road to prevent the Oka Golf Club from expanding its 9-hole golf course and building luxury condominiums on unceded territory, including a cemetery and pine forest. On July 11, a paramilitary squad from the Sûreté du Québec attacked the peaceful blockade, triggering a 78-day siege, commonly known as the Oka Crisis. Fundamental human rights were violated by the SQ and the Canadian army, with the approval of all levels of government. While the pine forest was saved, the question of Kanehsatà:ke’s historic lands was never resolved. The struggle continues.



WHY WE SUPPORT INDIGENOUS ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

Many people wonder why non-Indigenous environmental struggles often align with those of Indigenous comrades fighting against colonialism. These include the *Shut Down Canada* movement in 2019-2020 against the CGL pipeline on Wet'suwet'en territory, the #NoDAPL movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline, the protests against Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline in Minnesota, and the ongoing struggle against the PRGT pipeline project on Gitksan territory. It's worth reflecting on the relevance, scope, and objectives of these struggles—not because we want to give up, but because a deeper understanding of why we're fighting keeps us motivated and better equips us to respond to opponents. So, here are four arguments to help you hold your ground against your uncle at family dinners, have fun!

Non-Natives Benefit from the Colonial System

As non-Indigenous people, we benefit from the current system, which has been, and continues to be, enriched by the colonization and exploitation of Indigenous populations and territories. This explains, in part, the economic disparities that still exist today between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. We, therefore, have a responsibility to act against this system of oppression from which we derive privileges, whether we acknowledge it or not. Oppressed and marginalized populations should not have to bear the burden of their collective liberation alone.

As Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang assert in their paper *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, acknowledging colonial oppression is not enough. To avoid falling into the trap of “white innocence,” it is crucial to actively combat colonialism while informing and educating ourselves about the issue. **As privileged members of the colonial system, settlers on Turtle Island should contribute to the anti-colonial struggle to the best of their ability.** Given that their privileges provide access to greater resources than those available to communities oppressed by the colonial state, these additional resources could be redirected towards supporting anti-colonial resistance movements.

Moreover, collective liberation depends on the dismantling of all systems of oppression. In other words, white people will not be free as long as their Indigenous comrades are repressed. Similarly, white women will not be liberated from the yoke of patriarchy as long as misogynoir persists. The destruction of capitalism will not automatically bring an end to colonialism, and vice versa. In short, the liberation of all is intertwined with the liberation of each individual.

The State is a Common Enemy

Not only will Indigenous and non-Indigenous people not achieve liberation without each other, but they are also fighting a common enemy. The Canadian colonial state is problematic not only for Indigenous peoples but for non-Indigenous people as well.

When we speak of the nation-state, we are referring to a colonial structure built on an economic system—capitalism—that is characterized by a growing wealth gap between the richest and the poorest. While some believe that a strong state is the only thing capable of protecting us from big business, we have seen, as exemplified in the Northvolt case, how the political class is, in fact, subservient to large corporations. This is the very logic of the capitalist State: for the system to appear functional, it must sustain economic growth. To achieve this, the State facilitates growth by courting investment from the world's billionaires. However, capital only invests where it can make a profit—where union culture is weak, where minorities are oppressed and desperate for work, and where injustice is the law.



Indigenous communities, in turn, have suffered the violence of the State and capital in distinct ways, as shown in the many articles discussed earlier. While the relentless thirst for profit by the State and capital destroys the lives of non-Indigenous people in a manner different from that of Indigenous people, the source of their resistance remains the same. Our movements have much to gain by amplifying their voices, as we share a common enemy. Land back initiatives, in essence, are about

reclaiming land from the control of the Canadian State. This is why anti-colonial mobilizations present incredible opportunities for building alliances against both the State and big business.

The State oppresses both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. It is also the enemy of anti-colonial, anti-authoritarian, anti-oppressive, and anti-capitalist activists. **An alliance and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists against this common enemy—the oppressive capitalist colonial State—would significantly enhance our collective capacity to resist.**

However, non-Indigenous accomplices must pay particular attention to both interpersonal and collective dynamics within this type of alliance. There are three key points to consider regarding these anti-colonial struggles:

Firstly, it must be recognized that the communities involved in the struggle should determine the parameters and forms of action. This does not limit non-Indigenous activists: they can still target mining and oil companies, as well as Hydro-Québec and the Quebec state, for their roles in exploitation. It is important not to claim anti-colonial solidarity if such mobilizations have not been specifically called for.

The second observation builds on the first: as non-Indigenous, we must reflect on how our presence influences and transforms these struggles, ensuring that this influence does not reproduce colonial dynamics. In other words, non-Indigenous people must not position themselves as saviours; Indigenous communities do not need saving. An anti-colonial movement that is appropriated, co-opted, and led by settlers is merely a reproduction of colonialism within the resistance itself.

Thirdly, it is essential to establish and maintain reciprocal relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous activists, ensuring that we give more than we take in these relationships.

Indigenous Activists Have a Rich History of Anti-Colonial Resistance

Since the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous peoples have been systematically targeted by colonial extractivism. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the profound injustice and unsustainability of colonial capitalism and its connection to the climate crisis. Given their history of resistance against the colonial State, Indigenous communities also possess significant experience and strategies for fighting the system. It is therefore important to draw inspiration from them, collaborate with them, and/or support their efforts. By building these bridges, we can strengthen the bonds between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activist communities, sharing tactics and legal strategies

to enrich and co-construct our knowledge. This collaboration will also pave the way for future alliances, ultimately increasing our collective capacity for struggle.

Indigenous communities are among the most mobilized in so-called Canada. They are already organizing blockades, running information campaigns, and building alliances. There is little to be gained collectively if NGOs (such as Greenpeace, David Suzuki, etc.), which often work hand-in-hand with multinationals and politicians, take over these struggles. It is more beneficial for people to develop their own capacity to resist big business and colonial authority by learning community organizing practices.

The aim here would not be to copy or follow the orientations of Indigenous struggles as they are, but to listen to and take note of their political choices in order to benefit from their knowledge and experience. Indeed, to submit uncritically to the decisions of Indigenous people simply because they are Indigenous is a form of essentialization that reproduces

colonial dynamics. Such behaviour would reduce Indigenous activists to their identity, instead of considering them as people in their own right, with agency and critical reflexivity. Drawing inspiration from Indigenous activists solely because they are Indigenous would imply that, apart from their ethnicity, they have nothing to contribute to the movement, which is excessively paternalistic and colonial. On the contrary, we would benefit from taking into account the point of view of Indigenous activists, given the knowledge and skills their communities have acquired through their particular experiences.

You Can't Destroy the Colonial Capitalist System with the Same Tools That Created It!

Finally, there is a stark contrast between the actions of European colonizing nation-states on Turtle Island, which, in just a few hundred years, have brought us to the brink of ecological and climatic collapse, and the Indigenous communities here and elsewhere on Mother Earth, who have developed powerful, inspiring, and time-tested relationships with Land

and water. The imperialist capitalist system of nation-states, as imposed by Western colonial forces, can only lead to the outright destruction of ecosystems and people. Alternatives to the current multiple crises must emerge from outside the existing structures, exploiting the interstices and breaches in the system. We need to bring another world into being to render the old structures obsolete and replace them.

*"We cannot solve the climate crisis using the same industry-driven infrastructures and concepts that created it in the first place. **The systems and ideas that led us to this point are incapable of providing the solutions we need.** True progress requires a transition to Indigenous-led approaches and a decolonized perspective, recognizing that Indigenous knowledge and stewardship are essential to restoring balance and achieving real climate justice."*

These words are from Onagoshi-Lila Haymond, paraphrasing her Indigenous Climate Action colleague Carole Monture.

CGL PIPELINE UPDATE

For a decade, Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and Land defenders have been fighting the construction of Phase 1 of the Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline. A hyper-militarized unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the C-IRG (now renamed the Critical Response Unit), has repeatedly invaded the Yintah, Wet'suwet'en ancestral territory, arresting defenders with weapons, police dogs, and even subjecting them to torture sessions. Activists are currently suing the RCMP for violating their rights.

In the years leading up to the opposition against Phase 1 of the CGL pipeline, Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and territorial guardians worked to establish and strengthen ties with allied Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. Thanks to this groundwork, when the RCMP invaded Yintah in 2020, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies retaliated by blocking rail infrastructure. This became a pivotal moment in the Land Back movement, particularly for white Canadian activists who, for the first time, were mobilized to take risks in solidarity with an Indigenous movement. Thanks to the sustained and widespread resistance to the CGL pipeline, the project faced significant delays, resulting in billions of dollars in additional costs.

Despite the staggering operating costs imposed on TC Energy, KKR, and AIMCo (the owners and operators of the CGL), these companies recently launched Phase 2 of the CGL project, which will double the pipeline's capacity. This new phase involves adding several compressor stations along the CGL route, clearing more areas for worker encampments, burning methane for energy, and causing further harm to Indigenous communities and the environment through increased noise and pollution. If the CGL pipeline proceeds, an incident could poison several rivers that are home to salmon populations and disrupt complex forest, riparian, and marine ecosystems—ecosystems that are central to millennia-old Indigenous lifestyles and cultures. Wet'suwet'en communities are now calling on their supporters and allies to prepare for actions in solidarity with their struggle.



Ghosts of Gidimt'en, by Gord Hill: A painting commemorating the February 17, 2022, sabotage attack on a Coastal GasLink pipeline construction site by 20 masked persons, resulting in millions of dollars in damages to heavy equipment and trailers in Wet'suwet'en territory.

BACK TO CGL: RESISTING ECOCIDE

Despite more than a decade of fierce resistance and sustained struggles against Coastal GasLink (CGL) and TC Energy—the predecessor to PRGT on unceded Wet’suwet’en territory—the fall of 2022 marked a tragic turning point for the Yintah and the fragile ecosystem that depends on it. The start of construction under the Wedzin Kwa, the sacred river, dealt a heavy blow to defenders of this ancestral Land and to those fighting to preserve the ecological balance of the area. This act of irreversible land and water degradation represents much more than the advancement of industrial projects; it is a direct assault on the culture, traditions, and future of local Indigenous communities. As the ecological crisis deepens and pipeline projects persist, these experiences of resilience and sacrifice compel us to draw important lessons. We must refine our strategies, strengthen our organizational capacities, and amplify our efforts to maximize the impact of our resistance in the face of an ongoing threat. We will provide an overview of the extractive and colonial offensives we face, followed by some ideas to consider for future struggles.

Ecological Disaster: The Case of the Sockeye Salmon

In the fall of 2022, under the watchful eyes of Wet’suwet’en defenders occupying the territory, TC Energy began work beneath the river using a state-of-the-art pipe installation technique. Instead of the usual method of digging a trench, they chose to drive the pipes in with a hydraulic hammer. This technique was touted as being safer for the environment, as it allegedly prevents disturbances to the surface and surrounding ecosystems.¹

Despite using this “state-of-the-art” trenchless crossing technique, the equipment and other infrastructure sank into the wetlands during flooding. These wetlands, which sur-

round the federally protected river, are a vital part of the region’s ecosystems.

As if ravaging sacred lands wasn’t problematic enough, TC Energy carries out this destruction in the middle of the salmon spawning season, near a population of salmon that spawns downstream from the passage.² Historically, the Sockeye salmon species numbered in the millions; however, in recent years, only a few thousand have been counted. This type of work directly impacts the spawning grounds of an endangered species that serves as an essential food source for the Indigenous peoples around the Skeena River, including the Wet’suwet’en. A few years ago, several Nations along the river and its tributaries decided to halt salmon fishing to prevent the population from dwin-

dling to a level where it could no longer reproduce. Meanwhile, commercial fishermen at the mouth of the river, where it meets the Pacific, continue to fiercely fight to preserve unsustainable fishing quotas.

However, what primarily endangers the breeding sites in this case is not domestic fishing, but rather the erosion of sediment from various construction sites supporting the project, including the demand for rapid access during repairs. These particles suffocate fish and eggs by reducing oxygen levels in the water. The consequences of these actions invariably fall on those who were not responsible for the initial damage, perpetuating various systems of oppression.

By November 2023, when TC Energy completed the first phase of the project, making the pipeline operational but not yet at full capacity, the penalties and fines imposed by the provincial government for non-compliance with environmental standards had reached \$346 000,³ rising to \$590 000 by September 2024.⁴ These fines were primarily due to the failure to properly manage land erosion, as well as the degradation and destruction of wetlands. These areas provide shelter for beavers and caribou, refuge for birds, and habitats for several species of edible plants used by the Yintah’s Indigenous communities.

These numerous environmental violations result in penalties that are insignificant compared to the federal subsidy for the project, which amounts to around \$200 million.⁵ The fines seem even more absurd and ridiculous when you consider that these are companies whose wealth exceeds that of some countries. In the face of such destruction and an insatiable drive for growth, the First Peoples continue to fight these larger-than-life entities largely on their own.

A (Large) Consolation Prize

On a slightly more positive note, the total cost of the project will eventually reach \$8.3 billion⁶ above initial estimates,⁷ bringing the overall project cost to over \$14 billion.⁸ This substantial cost overrun is certainly due, in part, to the various mobilizations and actions taken against the Coastal GasLink (CGL). Among the challenges faced by TC Energy was the nighttime sabotage⁹ in winter 2022, which caused millions of dollars in damage to equipment.



The equipment and other infrastructure sank into the wetlands during flooding.

True to their capitalist nature, TC Energy refinanced the project by an additional \$7.1 billion in June 2024. Refinancing is a technique that, through the sale of bonds to private investors, allows for the deferral of debt payments. Yes, the bad news is that corporations can issue bonds just like governments can, a mechanism that garners significant confidence from a large number of investors (primarily banks and asset management companies), based on the idea of “Too Big To Fail.” However, this trust is increasingly under threat. In 2017, TC Energy decided to sell the PRGT project to new owners, signaling waning confidence in the company’s ability to bring a similar project to market.

In this context, enormous damage can be inflicted on the company in various ways, limited only by the imagination of those who carry out these actions. Spectacular direct actions can cause physical damage, but it is also possible to tarnish the company’s reputation or increase pressure on the governments that authorize these projects. To reduce the appeal of Canada’s so-called energy resources to international investors, it only takes introducing a healthy dose of risk and instability—along with increasing operating costs.

About Shut Down Canada

In 2020, the militant communities of so-called Canada responded strongly to the Wet’suwet’en call for solidarity, targeting the railroad tracks in an attempt to put the brakes—at least temporarily—on the Canadian economy. The aim was to force the government’s hand by hitting them where it hurts: in the wallet. This was not the first time, nor will it be the last, that such strategies are employed, with varying results. However, any effort at anti-colonial resistance in a capitalist environment will eventually be erased by time, much like a sandcastle washed away by an unexpected tide, which will inevitably come and take us by surprise. A decolonized society can only truly exist when capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, ableism, and other systems of domination cease their hegemonic grip on our lives.

If we find ourselves trapped by expectation and uncertainty, let’s draw inspiration from the courage and tactics of oppressed communities and show solidarity with them. Let’s create sincere bonds of trust based on listening to and respecting their needs.

The goal is to take actions that both hurt the wallets of the powerful and increase popular support for the defenders of the territories. However, resistance to an unjust system cannot be limited to oppositional actions; it must also include prefiguration. In this sense, the Wet’suwet’en example is inspiring, as they show us that it is possible to occupy territory in ways that address the diverse needs of its inhabitants, cultivate egalitarian personal relationships, and create spaces for autonomy and resistance. This is not simply a struggle for more rights within the current system but, above all, for the overthrow of the colonial and genocidal structure of so-called Canada. In this context, solidarity takes on

a radical form. It is not merely symbolic but manifests in concrete practices of resistance and prefiguration.

Prefiguring locally, working to build convivial communities free from capitalist, colonial, and oppressive constraints, is a weapon that, on one hand, weakens the power of capital by reducing our dependence on the economic system, and, on the other, frees us to focus our energies on the things that matter to us, while serving as an inspiring example to others who wish to follow our path.

When it comes to resistance, different strategies will have different impacts. Hitting the shapeless blob of capital at random raises awareness, radicalizes the collective imagination, broadens the pool of activists, and strengthens our collective capacity for struggle in the long term. On the other hand, if the goal is to eradicate a colonial capitalist project, it’s better to adopt a precise, even surgical resistance, which targets a particular, defined agent—such as a company and its production chain, a government and its infrastructure, or a bank and its investments. We’re dealing with a powerful machine, certainly hegemonic in the present moment, but fragmentable and attackable, piece by piece. Our collective strength will come both from our ability to cast a wide net through decentralized organization and from a multitude of resistances to concrete, more easily deconstructed projects.



In the case of Shut Down Canada in 2020, the rail attack failed to achieve its objective of preventing pipeline construction. The fact that the target of the militant tactics was distant from the enemy, CGL, likely contributed to this failure. It’s conceivable that attacks directed more directly at TC Energy and its production line might have had different effects. However, the heavy losses caused by the rail blockade in 2020 should not be minimized. The social movements of recent years have rarely had such an impact on the Canadian economy, largely due to the prolonged rail blockades in Ontario by local Indigenous communities.

In short, whether engaged in building alternatives to capitalism or in resistance, it is diffi-

cult to propose such radical change, especially when the risks are high. The forces of the colonial system comfort settlers in their privileges and constantly neutralize their will to push beyond concrete reformist actions. It is important to consider the impact of these choices on the lives of the oppressed, and, in the context of the climate crisis, on the lives of future generations. For non-Indigenous activists, being truly anti-colonial means adopting, within one’s means, a way of life that challenges the current dominant culture and its instruments of control. It’s an arduous path, but a necessary one.

Conclusion

TC Energy’s claims of “environmental conservation” and “reconciliation,” along with those of our governments, are predictably hollow: they are nothing more than greenwashing and redwashing. Every act of resistance, every strategy of sabotage, and every effort at organizing solidarity aims at weakening this system and its propaganda. At the same time, the strength of resistance lies in our ability to envision another future, far removed from the grip of the economic machine. It is by building autonomous communities that anti-oppressive alternatives can emerge, allowing the tentacles of colonial capitalism to wither away one by one. Thus, the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and Land preservation is not simply a reaction to ongoing oppression; it is an affirmation of a future in which these lands, cultures, and ways of life are not only protected but also respected and nurtured.

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