

## **GWU Montreal solidarity statement with the Wet'suwet'en**

January 15th, 2020

Game Workers Unite Montreal offers our support and solidarity to defenders of Wet'suwet'en lands against the violence and invasion of their lands by the RCMP at the command of Coastal GasLink. Too often, Indigenous peoples are forced to defend their lands and ways of living from the colonial tactics of resource extraction industries.

As workers in the video game industry, we are intrinsically tied to the energy and mining industries. The technology we use to create and publish our work uses up vast amounts of electricity and is built with materials mined in hazardous, environmentally degrading, and exploitative conditions. It is essential that we remain critical of our own industry and constantly understand the place of our own workplace struggles amongst the broader struggle against extractive capitalism.

Wet'suwet'en lands have never been surrendered to the Crown. Despite settler colonial laws being imposed on the Wet'suwet'en people by the Canadian government through the Indian Act, their governance systems have been sustained since time immemorial and stand in defiance against a colonial policy of assimilation and genocide. The sovereignty of the Wet'suwet'en people was affirmed and their territory recognized as sovereign land by the Canadian Crown in the Nisga'a Treaty in the *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* Supreme Court case of 1997. In 2019, the BC provincial government adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into law. BC premier John Horgan expressed that the conflict imposed by RCMP onto Wet'suwet'en peoples should not be emblematic of the overall legacy of UNDRIP. Furthermore, he stated the hereditary chiefs do not have a right to deny access to their own lands, nor engage in nation-to-nation talks with the Canadian government.

Canadians were appalled at the violence inflicted by the RCMP at the Gidimt'en checkpoint in January of 2019. 14 peaceful demonstrators were needlessly arrested by a heavily armed RCMP task force that intended to tear down the checkpoint. Later in the year, The Guardian reported that in strategy meetings the RCMP argued that "lethal overwatch" was required for the sting. Officers were instructed to "use as much violence towards the gate as you want" and a memo indicated arrests would be necessary to "sterilize the site." Since the Hereditary Chiefs issued their eviction notice to CGL on January 4th 2020, the RCMP has enforced a no-fly zone over Wet'suwet'en territory, and witnesses confirmed on January 12th that 16 RCMP members departed a private jet in Smithers BC. These actions seem to indicate that the RCMP does not think it needs to act in good faith with the Wet'suwet'en.

Game Workers Unite finds violence of any kind towards peaceful demonstrators to be abhorrent. As Mark Hancock, president of CUPE stated, "we would never accept this kind of behaviour towards striking workers on a picket line. Protest is a fundamental right, and the Wet'suwet'en people have a right to protect their unceded territory." Workers in all industries

have an interest in showing solidarity with land defenders; those who want this pipeline built also want lower wages, austerity budgets, back to work legislation, and government bailouts whenever the market crashes. Game workers across Canada and the world have vastly more in common with Wet'suwet'en land defenders than with energy company executives and shareholders.

It is in the interest of the working class to stand together and oppose this and all infrastructure projects that do not have the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples. We encourage all our members to support land protectors at the Gidimt'en access point and Unisto'ten camp. If you are able to, please donate to the Gidimt'en Legal fund, attend demonstrations, [sign petitions](#), and demand that human rights be upheld by those in power.

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