



Mission Matters !!

*A newsheet connecting the North Bay & Area Mission Cluster
with United Church people of faith
Issue #2– June 2020*

GREETINGS ... from the North Bay & Area UCC Mission Cluster! This is our second **MISSION MATTERS**. In the first issue, Donna Sinclair responded to the question: Why should the United Church be in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en First Nation? In this issue, Teresa Jones reflects on how our UC New Creed directs us to join the Wet'suwet'en people in caring for the Creation.
- Kay Heuer, Cluster Chair

"TO LIVE WITH RESPECT IN CREATION..."

In 1995, as a result of growing environmental consciousness within The United Church, this phrase was inserted in our NEW CREED. Amidst struggles over resource extraction and pipeline construction such as on Wet'suwet'en land, this confessional phrase, 25 years later, commits us, just as much as ever, to the care of God's Creation.

First, some background. The Wet'suwet'en have lived on their unceded traditional lands for 10,000 years. In 1997, the Canadian Supreme Court recognized in the Delgamuukw decision that Aboriginal title had'nt been extinguished because they had never entered into a treaty. But another step was needed to legally recognize Wet'suwet'en title. After the protests last winter, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, and the BC and Federal Governments, signed a memorandum of understanding, setting out a path toward this legal recognition.

What galvanized the Wet'suwet'en in their quest for the legal recognition of their rights and title, is the appropriation of their land as a corridor for fracked gas by the Coastal Gas Link (CGL) pipeline. This is why the Wet'suwet'en tried to evict CGL from their land last winter, and allies across the country, blocked railways to support them when the RCMP arrested those defending their land. The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, on behalf of their House Clans, have consistently opposed any pipeline from crossing their territory.

So what is the objection to fracked gas? Everyone wanting to "live with respect in Creation," should

know! Hydraulic fracturing, known as "fracking," is a process used to extract natural gas or oil from the earth. Fracking uses millions of litres of water, thousands of litres of undisclosed chemicals, and thousands of kilograms of sand to blast apart rock formations to capture natural gas or oil trapped in shale formations or coal beds. Despite natural gas being promoted as a "clean, green fuel," studies show natural gas wells leak methane that can produce as many greenhouse gas emissions, or more, than coal.

The Wet'suwet'en are well aware of the escalation of industrial development that happens after it enters First Nation land. The fracked land of their neighbours—the Blueberry River First Nation in NE BC, has become littered with gas wells, industry roads, tailings ponds and pipelines. It is gas from these wells that will pass through the CGL pipelines about to be laid in Wet'suwet'en territory.

In their 2014 Report to the BC Environment Assessment Office and CGL, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en detail the impact the construction of the pipeline will have on their land and waters, their livelihood and culture, that they understand as all being interconnected. They are worried about the salmon and their habitat. They fear for the safety of their women and girls who will be made vulnerable by the workers from the "man camps" now being built on their traditional lands. They are concerned about the health and well-being of future generations of Wet'suwet'en.

So 25 years on, what does it mean "to live with respect in Creation"? What I'm learning from the Wet'suwet'en is that it's about the past, present and future: cherishing the land—the Creator's greatest gift, and fighting for it now with all of one's heart and soul, to ensure that future generations will be able to simply live. ✨ - Teresa Jones, North Bay

For more information, go to:

<https://unistoten.camp/supportertoolkit2020/>
http://www.wetsuweten.com/files/Wetsuweten_Title_and_Rights_report_to_EAO_for_Coastal_GasLink_Application.pdf