



Wolastoqey Grand Council

Qey - Greetings,

I want to address a vital matter Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal party decline to acknowledge, and that is; our Traditional Governments. The Prime Minister refuses to respect and recognize our Traditional Indigenous Government that has existed here on Turtle Island since Time Immemorial. Before the settlers arrived on our eastern shores, our peoples functioned in profound Government Structures that maintained balance and harmony within all our Homelands from east-to-west and north-to-south. Today, the only government organization Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal party recognize is the Indian Act Chief and Councils which in reality are only an extension/branch of the federal government and the Indian Act Policies in which they are governed. This is a prime example of the federal government dictating within itself by using their federal elected chiefs, under the Indian Act system, to approve pipeline projects initiative by tactically regulating federal funds of each community that is on-route of the pipeline.

This is an unhealthy relationship between us the Indigenous People and the Canadian Government. Remember, Prime Minister Trudeau promised a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship, one that understands that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of First Nations peoples are not an inconvenience but rather a sacred obligation.” Also, Trudeau committed to reset Canada's relationship with Indigenous people. Did he mean only the Indian Act elected chief and council, for in his statement he stated “Indigenous Peoples/First Nations Peoples?

Another promise the Prime Minister vowed was to implement all 94 of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation report, starting with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In *Article 10 of the declaration it states “Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or*

territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return”.

May I also remind you of other statements from Trudeau in his first couple of years as Prime Minister, “We gather here in this moment to reflect on the first year of the journey to build a new relationship, one based on recognition and respect.” Trudeau also said “I do not take my call for a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples lightly. To nurture a nation-to-nation relationship, there has to be trust. Mutual trust.”

Since mutual respect and trust works both ways, how can we rebuild relationships and respect when a leader commands a military strike on Wet’suwet’en People who have occupied their non-ceded homeland since Time Immemorial? To be clear, our Traditional Indigenous Laws have preexisted colonial laws and when colonial laws were eventually drafted, our people were never asked or invited to part-take in the proceedings. So, you ask our people to respect your rule of law when you don’t respect ours. This is insincerity when you claim to promote mutual respect.

During another address, Trudeau stated, “I did not take lightly what I said to each minister when I asked them to be in my Cabinet: no relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples.” How can we accept the Prime Minister’s words as truth when his actions contradict? In Canada, Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer the highest statistics in suicide, communal non-drinkable water, homelessness, poverty, addictions, barbaric child welfare policies, mental health issues, murdered and missing Indigenous women and so on.

Indigenous People only inhabit 0.8% of the total land mass in Canada where non-Indigenous people occupy 99.2%. This is the true reason for our decrepit social, mental, spiritual and emotional conditions running so rampant within our Indigenous Nations.

Prime Minister Trudeau, is your definition of respect, trust, truth-and-reconciliation, nation-to-nation relationship to seize more non-ceded homeland from Wet’suwet’en People who are living within their Traditional Laws and

Governance? To me, in reality this is contrary to all your statements and proclamations.

To be clear, when the federal government uses the term nation or first nations they are not referring to a Nation of citizens who carry a distinct culture, language, tradition, land-base and identity. They are simply including members of a reserve who decide to live on a federal parcel of land governed by Indian Act policies.

According to the United Nations; Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.

Indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their identities, way of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources for years, yet throughout history, their rights have always been violated. Indigenous peoples today, are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now recognizes that special measures are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life.

I strongly advise you to reconsider your position to advance the gas pipeline through the non-ceded homeland of Wet'suwet'en People. By doing so you will demonstrate a true nation-to-nation relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, partnership and fulfil your promise that no relationship is more important to you and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples.

Kci-woliwon – Great Thanks,

Traditional Wolastoq Grand Chief spasaqsit possesom – Ron Tremblay