

13 February 2020

RE: Statement of Solidarity with Wet'suwet'en

We, the Department of Social Justice & Community Studies at Saint Mary's University stand in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation, and all land and water protectors across Turtle Island. We recognize that we live, work, and build relations in K'jipuktuk, in the district of Sipekne'katik, within Mi'kma'ki as ancestral, unceded and unsurrendered territory. We recognize that we all live as treaty people within the Peace & Friendship Treaties of this land signed by representatives of the Crown and the L'nu, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Passamaquoddy peoples, and that K'jipuktuk and Mi'kma'ki are home as well to the Penobscot, and Abenaki Peoples, and to people of multiple other Indigenous Nations. We affirm the Peace & Friendship Treaties, and broader Indigenous understandings of treaty, as requiring the centering of practices of shared responsibility to all peoples, creatures, and non-animal kin in land, waters, and other life forces in territories across Turtle Island.

Central to these treaty relationships is the affirmation of Indigenous Peoples as foundational and ongoing title holders of these territories, and sovereign nations. Indigenous treaties with settler governments did not negate Indigenous sovereignties; rather, they extended Indigenous constitutional orders. It is from this understanding that we lend our voices to the chorus in support of the Wet'suwet'en people, their clan governance systems, their matriarchs and hereditary chiefs. We call on the colonial Canadian and British Columbia governments, to uphold Wet'suwet'en law, and condemn RCMP actions against the Wet'suwet'en and all Indigenous peoples defending their traditional territories. In doing so, we point to the United Nation's Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states clearly in Article 10: "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories." Indeed, we call on colonial governments across this place called Canada to recognize and bring into governing practices, through the guidance of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous law and understanding of treaty as reciprocal responsibility for well-being, at this moment of building climate emergency that imperils all life on this planet.

We thank the multiple crafters of academic expressions of solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en from which we adapted this statement and call on others across Turtle Island to join in condemning state violence against Indigenous nations.

In solidarity,

Department of Social Justice & Community Studies
Saint Mary's University