



Hartley Bay Band Council

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MEDIA ADVISORY ATTENTION ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

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Promise To Protect The Great Bear Rainforest A Cruel Joke. Where Is The Outrage?

The Campbell Government did not consult or include the Gitga'at before inking a deal with 15 First Nations in Northern BC that in essence green lights a massive natural gas pipeline. The deal, which does not include the Gitga'at, will provide 35 million dollars of incentives to support a project to move natural gas through the Port of Kitimat. This, coupled with The Northern Gateway Pipeline Project proposed by Enbridge, would bring some of the world's largest tankers, through Gitga'at Territory in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest. Condensate tankers are already traversing the narrow and treacherous Douglas Channel to Kitimat. The cumulative impacts from all of these projects could be devastating.

Chris Picard, of the Gitga'at Whale Monitoring Program says whale encounters in the area have increased in recent years but he has "grave concerns for the immediate future". Some of the most important whale habitats are Caamano Sound and Squally Channel, waterways that are poised to become increasingly busy shipping lanes.

The science is in from the Exxon Valdez: oil spills kill whales, and their populations recover very slowly, if at all. An oil spill is only one threat to species such as Orcas, Humpbacks and Fin Whales that are already threatened and are supposed to be protected by Canada's Species at Risk Act. It's certain they would face increasing risk of collisions with ships or harm from engine noise if the government allows large oil tankers to pass through their habitat.

The wake generated by these massive vessels can erode shorelines and wipe out sensitive clam beds harvested sustainably for centuries by Gitga'at Ancestors. The pristine air will be fouled. Ships burn a low quality, tar-like fuel and belch nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxides, creators of acid rain.

The Gitga'at share their ecologically rich territory with sprit bears, wolves, grizzlies, and abundant sea life but they fear irreparable harm to their way of life and the waters and lands within their territory.

The Gitga'at ask the question, "What happened to the moratorium on tankers?"

The Supreme Court of Canada has left responsibility for consultation and accommodation squarely in the hands of the federal and provincial governments. Yet to date, neither the federal nor provincial government has engaged in any form of meaningful consultation with the Gitga'at. As elected Councilor Cam Hill put it, in oil and gas pipeline and tanker projects like the LNG and Enbridge projects the Gitga'at see "only impact and risk; there are no benefits."

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For more information about the Gitga'at – www.gitgaat.net

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