



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 7, 2019

BCAFN Concerned about the RCMP Injunction Enforcement

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – Jan. 7, 2019) – The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is expressing concern, along with a growing number of leaders and citizens, regarding the increasingly volatile situation developing in northern BC between the RCMP and First Nations protesting the TransCanada Coastal GasLink project. First Nations citizens, as all Canadian citizens, have a right to protest in a peaceful and safe manner. First Nations and the RCMP have a long history of mistrust as the RCMP have been tasked with enforcing Crown jurisdiction on First Nations lands. With the current situation, and that of the Kinder Morgan TransMountain Project, we will see 2019 as a potentially volatile year of protests as questions of jurisdiction and reconciliation between Aboriginal title and Crown title progresses.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, “The BCAFN is very concerned that the RCMP are questioning the ownership of Aboriginal title, and they continue to assume jurisdiction for policing in unceded First Nations territories. This is a major problem which requires political intervention from both Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Horgan in order to protect the advances that have been made in the reconciliation process. The RCMP cannot be allowed to hold discretion or discuss the legal interests and rights of First Nations peoples in BC.”

In the recent RCMP news release (2019/01/06) regarding the enforcement of an interim BC Supreme Court injunction order against the protestors at the Coastal GasLink project, they have stated: “The Supreme Court of Canada decided that a new trial was required to determine whether Aboriginal title had been established for these lands, and to hear from other Indigenous nations which have a stake in the territory claimed. The new trial has never been held, meaning that Aboriginal title to this land, and which Indigenous nation holds it, has not been determined. Regardless of the outcome of any such trial in the future, the RCMP is the police agency with jurisdiction.” Regional Chief Teegee noted, “It is extremely inappropriate that the RCMP make such statements in an era of political, legal and legislative changes that seek to improve the relationship between First Nations governments and the Crown. As Regional Chief of the BCAFN, I take direction from the Chiefs in BC – we will also discuss this with other Regional Chiefs across Canada and the AFN National Chief, as this is a national justice issue and one related to the recognition, implementation and affirmation of First Nations rights and title.”

During this time the BCAFN calls for everyone involved to be peaceful and respectful. The Coastal GasLink project is one that is broadly supported by First Nations governments in BC, and there exists solutions to resolve everyone’s concerns. First Nations in BC have unique governance systems and authorities that have existed before colonization, and they continue today. These rights are protected under the Canadian law and are recognized under international law. Both Canada and BC are supportive of the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. First Nations governments in BC require further support for the implementation and affirmation of their rights and jurisdiction.

“First Nations Chiefs in BC are seeking resolution to the land question. Premier Horgan and Prime Minister Trudeau must intensify their reconciliation work in 2019 as progress will require leadership

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and courage. Let's get to solutions between the Crown and First Nations regarding jurisdiction and legal orders otherwise we'll see our volatile history repeated yet again," stated Regional Chief Teegee.

More Information

Link to RCMP Press Release:

<http://bc.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodId=2087&languageId=1&contentId=57805>

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