

WE MUST DEFEND THE LAND

SINCE LATE AUGUST 2015, THE GITWILGYOOTS HEREDITARY CHIEF AND LAND DEFENDERS HAVE SET UP A CAMP ON LAX U'U'LA (LELU ISLAND). PETRONAS AND PACIFIC NORTHWEST LNG ARE PLANNING ON BUILDING AN \$11 BILLION LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) PLANT AT THE MOUTH OF THE SKEENA RIVER. THIS PLANT WILL BE FED BY 3 LNG PIPELINES, INCLUDING ONE PROPOSED TO CROSS THROUGH GITXSAN TERRITORY, AND WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING RESISTED BY THE GITXSAN PEOPLE AT CAMP MADI LII.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, COMMUNITIES HAVE SUSTAINED THEMSELVES BY THE PLENTIFUL OFFERINGS FROM THE SKEENA RIVER AND SURROUNDING TERRITORIES. THESE PROJECTS THREATEN TO DESTROY ANY ABILITY TO LIVE FREE AND OFF OF THE LAND, AS OPPOSED CONTROLLED BY THE STATE. COLONIZATION BROUGHT THE NEAR EXTINCTION OF THE PRAIRIE BUFFALO, AND IF WE DON'T FIGHT, THE WILD PACIFIC SALMON WILL FOLLOW.

THE CANADIAN STATE IS INVESTING IN RESOURCE EXTRACTION PROJECTS ALL ACROSS SO-CALLED CANADA. THESE PIPELINES, MINES, FRACKED GASLANDS, AND RAILROAD EXPANSIONS ARE NOT INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS—THEY ARE ALL PART OF THE SAME EFFORT TO MAINTAIN A SOCIETY AND LIFESTYLE THAT IS DEPENDENT ON DWINDLING NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONTINUED COLONIZATION.

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AN ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVE OF RESISTANCE TO LNG ON GITWILGYOOTS TERRITORY

IN LATE AUGUST, a crew of women of Tsimshian, Haida, Nisga, and Gitksan bloodlines initiated the defense of Lax U'u'la (Lelu Island) and the Flora Bank¹ from LNG industry destruction. The Gitwilgyoots Tribe Sm'ogyet Yahaan (hereditary chief) and Ligitgyet Gwis Hawaal (hereditary house leader), and their families began a defense camp on Lax U'u'la, which is Gitwilgyoots traditional hunting and fishing territory. They were also joined by various significant hereditary people from other Tsimshian tribes, and a motley crew of native and non-native outside supporters.

This camp has been set up to prevent any further destruction of their land, as Petronas and Pacific North West LNG (PNW LNG) are planning on building a \$11 billion

liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on Lax U'u'la, which is at the mouth of the Skeena river near Prince Rupert, BC. They have been conducting environmental and archaeological assessments since 2012, which have resulted in over a hundred test hole sites and cut blocks, and have in the process cut down several culturally modified trees. This plant would be fed by 3 pipelines, including the recently provincially-approved Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT), owned by Trans Canada, which crosses through multiple indigenous territories, and which is currently being met with resistance from the Gitksan people at the Madii Lii encampment. This proposed LNG plant has been opposed not only by the Sm'ogyet Yahaan, but has also been unanimously refused

1. A lot of the focus of this struggle has been the eelgrass and the Flora Bank, and how this habitat is essential to development of juvenile salmon that run all throughout the Skeena. While we don't want to diminish the importance of this habitat, we also recognize that these crucial areas do not exist in isolation. The Flora Bank can not be separated from Agnew Bank, the surrounding landmasses, and the currents, sediments, and creatures that surround and impact it in more ways than we can possibly imagine. We caution against the strong focus on the Flora Bank—if the LNG processing plant is moved to Ridley Island (a neighboring island not surrounded by the Flora Bank), it will still facilitate a capitalist society and reinforce a colonial state.

by the 9 allied Tsimshian tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, who turned down a \$1.25 billion offer by Petronas at 3 separate meetings in Lax Kw'alaams, Vancouver, and Prince Rupert. Regardless, in preparation for the LNG plant construction, Petronas/PNW LNG have been trying to continue to conduct environmental and engineering assessments around Lax U'u'la, which include test drilling that are actively destroying habitat essential to all the salmon that run throughout the Skeena Watershed.

One of the major rivers that flow into the Skeena is the Wedzin Kwah (so-called Morice/Bulkley), which is the river currently being protected by the Unist'ot'en Clan, grassroots Wet'suwet'en and their supporters. The 'Unist'ot'en Camp' was also started to resist mega petro-infrastructure (including another major pipeline project of the Trans Canada corporation). The Unist'ot'en, Madii Lii, and Lax U'u'la are the first three bold frontlines against LNG development in the Skeena Watershed. At the time of this writing, others are organizing towards opening new action fronts in this bioregion.

The importance of the salmon is not abstract or theoretical. In addition to the negative mental health effects of disconnection and destruction of the land, most communities that live within the Skeena watershed rely on the salmon, oolichan, and other seafood to feed their families. Even if you are broke,

and can't afford food at the grocery store, you can still rely on the river's steady supply of wild salmon to feed your kids and get through the winter. The same can be said of wildlife such as moose, deer, beaver, berries, etc...which would all also be heavily affected if these projects are realized. Many people also maintain a relatively autonomous income within the current capitalist reality by harvesting sustainably from this bounty.

Those who depend on our labour and obedience have always seen people's ability to sustain themselves independently as a threat. Forced state dependence was and is a goal of colonization. Dependence must be created to limit community mobility to bordered areas (such as villages, cities, or reserves). These areas are easily controlled, and any resistance or insurgence can be monitored and mitigated. Those who know how to live with the seasons and off the land are a threat, as they do not need what the state provides to thrive.

The Canadian state and international corporations are investing in resource extraction projects all across so called Canada. The impact of these extraction projects on life-sustaining resources such as clean water, wild game, and medicinal plants is not an unintentional side-effect of capitalism. It's killing



Jan 11: Contractor vessel Active Pass, which transports Stantec surveyors, is turned back to port

Jan 19: Surveillance boat Ty-mac Wave rams skiff, knocking Gitwaalk to deck of boat; the incident is the culmination of a series of on-water escalations by Petronas/Pacific Northwest LNG

Jan 21: Tugboat attempts to ram skiff twice after positioning drill barge

Jan 22-23: Salmon Summit in Prince Rupert; Lelu Island Declaration signed

Jan 24: Wet'suwet'en chiefs visit island in solidarity

Jan 28: First boarding of barge dock by Lax U'u'la Gitwaalk, to lower crab trap in hot spot blocked by drill operations; Glacial Mist rams skiff again

Late Jan: Construction of additional buildings on island commences; regular water patrols continue; many fundraising events; first film on Lax U'u'la/Flora defense is produced

Early Feb: Drill barges pull out of the water and off of Flora and Agnew Banks. All industry work on the water ceases. Construction of house and other shelters on Lax U'u'la continues.

**FOR A LIFE
UNMEDIATED
BY THE STATE,**

Oct 5: Petronas begins to use fortified drill barges in attempt to minimize disruptions by Gitwaalk (Lax U'u'la defenders/warriors)

Early Oct: Evidence is presented to demonstrate that the company is drilling on Flora Bank; in response the company takes out full page propaganda ads; exploration and mapping of island continues

Oct 16: Wet'suwet'en arrive for first of many solidarity visits; Kitsumkalum surveyors in boat intercepted and turned back to port. Cease and desist orders delivered to City Hall, Pacific NorthWest LNG, Prince Rupert LNG, Prince Rupert Port Authority, Glacial Mist, and RCMP.

Oct 28: First ramming of our skiff by Glacial Mist which by this time is primarily being used to transport private security and surveillance personnel

Oct 29: Stantec surveyors escorted off Flora Bank at low tide for third time

Nov: Drilling work has been disrupted to the point that several new contractor boats are required for surveillance; private security is tripled

Nov 5: Gitwaalk investigate activity on Smith Island, proposed site of gravel extraction for LNG project

Mid-Nov: Port Authority is upset after first permanent house on Lax U'u'la (Lelu Island) is built; they hide in the bushes on neighbouring Ridley Island and send a drone over to spy on construction but are chased off by Gitwaalk who confront them on Ridley

Mid-Late Dec: Lax U'u'la divers begin documenting underwater activity of drill barges and damage to Flora Bank; we continue installing our own trail marking on the island

Dec 14: In a three-skiff operation, Gitwaalk turn back Glacial Mist and two other contractor boats.

Mid-Dec: RCMP Tactical Squad, with members from Rupert, Hazelton, Gitanyow and Vancouver assemble in Prince Rupert.

Late Dec: Two drill barges in operation 24/7, far behind schedule, going in and out of port depending on storms; disruptions of contractor boats continues; bear traps installed on island, warning signs posted; large turnover in personnel on boats and barges is noted

Early Jan: Contractor boats become increasingly aggressive on water, ramming and attempting to capsize Lax U'u'la skiffs; Port Authority is less present



two birds with one stone. The pipelines, mines, fracked gaslands, and railroad expansions are not individual projects—they are all part of the same effort to maintain a society and lifestyle that is dependent on dwindling natural resources, while at the same time destroying the potential for any life outside of the state's control.

This struggle is also inextricably connected to indigenous cultural revival, decolonization of the land, our minds and social relationships, anti-patriarchy and genuine reconciliation between natives and non-natives. Of course, this also means the destruction of the state and capitalist economy.

To date, the resistance to Petronas/PNW LNG's project has mainly been on the water. Their project is still in its initial stages, in that there are still some engineering assessments that need to be performed prior to beginning construction on the actual plant. In practice, this has primarily taken the form of trying to prevent the workers from performing any work, and disrupting environmental and engineering assessments. This means escorting environmental surveyors off of the Flora and Agnew Banks, preventing the drill boat from entering and anchoring on the banks, slowing down or turning back charter boats brin-

ging workers to the barges. So far, these efforts have been limited and unfortunately have only temporarily shut down drilling operations. However, with the growing force of warriors and expanding solidarity it is still possible to break Petronas and Christy Clark's dream.

There is also resistance by re-asserting that Lax U'u'la is used as a place of healing and ceremony. Infrastructure is continually being constructed and there are other preparations for defense of the island itself (which also serve to maintain and expand water operations). Several structures have been built, and once there is less consistent confrontation, there is the intention to use these spaces as a place to teach youth about ancestral ways of living off of the land, and to heal from the continued traumas of colonization.

For thousands of years, communities have sustained themselves by the plentiful offerings from the Skeena River and surrounding land-masses. These resource extraction projects threaten to destroy people's ability to live off of the land, as opposed to the state. European colonization brought the near extinction of the prairie buffalo, and if we don't fight, the wild pacific salmon will surely follow.

If we wish to see victory in this struggle against petro-corporations and the Canadian state we must continue to provide solid material support. We also need to proliferate social agitation and disruption of

daily life in the population centers throughout this region and beyond.

There are many ways to show solidarity with this ever-expanding and fierce resistance. Funds are always needed for boat fuel/maintenance, and the camp is specifically trying to raise enough money to buy crab traps, new boats, and fishing line so that they continue to harvest food in and around Lax U'u'la, to provide for their elders and communities. You can also always come and visit the region on your own, with a buddy or with a crew to contribute on the ground of this growing defense

camp. Struggle is always strengthened by a de-centralized and broad approach, solidarity can also include resistance to industrial developments in your own backyard (Site C Dam, the Trans Mountain and Line 9 being just a few examples). These projects are also facilitated by the bureaucrats who work for the governments and companies and who's offices are located in urban centres. In the past, solidarity has been shown through noise demonstrations or protests against these offices and company infrastructures.



You can donate to the Lax U'u'la defense through their GoFundMe page at: www.gofundme.com/lelu_island

Useful websites:

www.laxuula.com

Stop Pacific NorthWest LNG/Petro-
nas on Lelu Island—on Facebook

www.madiilii.com

www.facebook.com/unistoten

www.skeenadefense.com

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TIMELINE 2015-2016

Note: In this timeline, the Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian language) word of Gitwaalk, meaning warriors, is used.

May 13: Lax Kw'alaams as a whole, entirely rejects proposal

Mid-August: Organizing group of women meet to plan occupation

Aug 25: Occupation begins; Petronas, RCMP and government taken by surprise

First week: Clearing ground for infrastructure in heavy wind and rain; patrols of island begin; tripods and flagging are put up around island to deter helicopters; major outpouring of local support

Early Sept: Prince Rupert Port Authority personnel attempt to enter camp and are turned back

Sep 13: First confrontation with Stantec surveyors who are forced to stop work and leave Flora Bank; contractor boat Glacial Mist is prevented from working in the area for first time by a single skiff. PRPA (Prince Rupert Port Authority) attempted to flex their muscle with supposed «authority» over Tsimshian waters.

Mid Sept: Quin Delta drill boat stopped and turned away from drilling on Flora and Agnew Banks.

Late Sept: First visit from Gitxsan hereditary chiefs and Madii Lii camp; Quin Delta returns.

Sep 20: Clumps of eelgrass dislodged by drilling begin to be found floating on surface of water

Late Sept: Daily 2-4 hour shut-downs of the Quin Delta drill boat begin and continue for two weeks by circling small skiffs; Lax Kw'alaams band registers paperwork for Supreme Court title case for Lax U'u'la and Flora Bank

Sep 28: Second confrontation with Stantec surveyors who are marched off Flora Bank; campaign of publishing photos of personnel online begins

Sep 29: Quin Delta issues false Mayday distress call to Coast Guard

Sep 30: Geotech goons flee from Port Edward dock after altercation and call police; Glacial Mist begins dragging high voltage cable across Porpoise Channel and Flora Bank

Oct 3: Quin Delta is prevented from leaving port