

# *F.E.N.F.C.*

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## *Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre*

February 28, 2020

The Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre is a leader in providing a collective voice for its members in the Niagara Community on a host of issues. We believe it is an act of good citizenship to actively engage in setting honest collective practices that serve our people. This serves as the formal position taken by the Fort Native Friendship Centre Board of Directors on the Indigenous Protests across Canada and recognizes our inherent responsibilities to Turtle Island and her people.

During the earliest days of contact the Peoples of this area made treaties with settlers, treaties that promised peace and friendship, offered a path forward. In the centuries after these treaties the British Crown and then the state of Canada broke faith and later treaties were made at gunpoint.

Much has been stated in the media about the government's call to adhere to the rule of law, however in their lack of recognition for treaties, UNDRIP, and the 1997 Delgamuukw decision indicates that the federal and provincial governments of Canada are selective about which laws they will enforce.

The Wet'suwet'en have never relinquished rights to their territory and the 1997 Delgamuukw decision in the Supreme Court of Canada recognized and affirmed their sovereignty. They have offered alternative routes and the Coastal Gas Link project's environmental assessment was rejected, meaning that there can be no construction for the time being, (Coastal GasLink environmental report rejected, published in *Richochet Media*, Feb 21, 2020). That the government persists with a one-sided application of the rule of law in favour of corporate interests should concern all people living in Canada.

Canada's actions clearly demonstrate how Government continues to devalue Indigenous citizens and has learned little from the past by perpetration of continued state violence toward Indigenous people and nations.

We commend and thank the settler and legal professions from across Canada who expressed and exposed in their open letter to the Prime Minister the inherent deficiency in the Prime Minister's "Rule of Law Claims". Namely, the Constitution, Supreme Court Decisions, the Laws of Indigenous people, which predate those of Canada and are equally authoritative and entitled to respect.

The Fort Erie Native Friendship Center supports and affirms the inherent right of Indigenous people to govern and protect their lands.