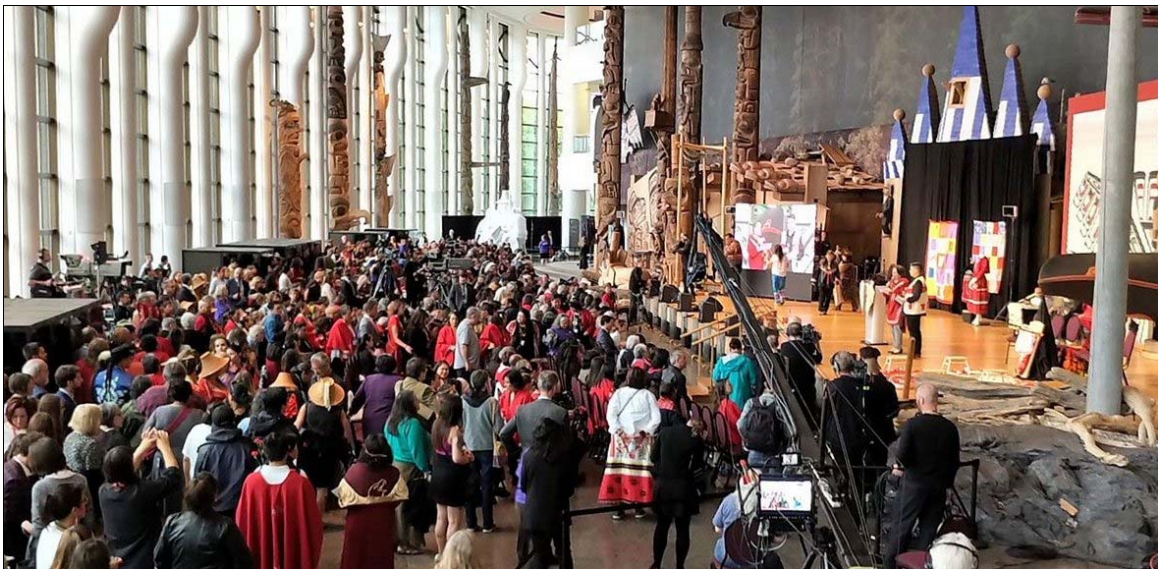


June 8, 2019 - No. 21

### **Matters of Concern to the Polity**

## **Report of National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**



Closing ceremony for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, in Museum of History in Gatineau, June 3, 2019. (P. Palmater)

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- **75th Anniversary of D-Day**
- 

## **Report of National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

### **An Urgent Call for Action**

- *Pauline Easton* -



**Gathering in Vancouver February 14, 2019, at the beginning of this year's Memorial March honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.**

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls said the evidence it gathered led it to conclude that missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls were the victims of a Canadian genocide.

The Introduction to the report said: "This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures

evidenced notably by the *Indian Act*, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death and suicide in Indigenous populations." In the section on Findings, the report said, "Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people continue to experience social and economic marginalization and exclusion as a direct result of colonialism and of racist and sexist government policies. This marginalization and exclusion is the objective of the colonial policies of the Canadian state. Colonial policies violate the social, economic, and political rights of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and jeopardize their rights to human security and, in turn, safety. These colonial policies are tools of genocide."

The inquiry cites contemporary scholarship on genocide to support its finding. It published a supplementary report posted on its website on the legal definition of genocide and its application to Canada.

Not a few media, pundits and politicians have contested this finding. Their response is disturbing on many levels, but none more so than the anxiety it causes because it seeks to divert the discourse into a racist morass which blames the people for their plight. Some media coverage of the release of the National Inquiry's final report highlights the Liberal government's failure to address the historical crimes committed by the Canadian state against the Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, the response of the Trudeau government is also informed by the ongoing colonial relations and decision-making process it imposes on the Indigenous peoples to this day. As its first violation of principle in the relationship with the Indigenous peoples, Canada refuses to give up the prerogative powers usurped by the Crown and establish nation-to-nation relations. It also refuses to provide redress for all the crimes committed against the people and put in place the conditions required for the Indigenous peoples to exercise their right to be.



Thus, the Trudeau government continues to use its rhetoric and takes cosmetic measures which may or may not alleviate the problems but do, in fact, maintain the colonial relations and structures which are the tools of genocide. This is because the narrow private multinational interests governments at this time serve demand that Indigenous title over use of land and resources be extinguished.

As for Conservatives, the record of the Harper government and the "open for business" approach adopted in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and elsewhere shows the business approach they espouse. Anything to do with rights is seen as "bad for business" to be denied altogether and negated through deal-making behind everyone's backs. Bernard Valcourt, who was Aboriginal Affairs Minister from 2013 until the defeat of the Harper government in the fall of 2015, does not even admit that Canada's actions against the Indigenous peoples constitute genocide. He responded to the finding of genocide by the National Inquiry by saying it was "propagandist."

Experience with other parties which form the cartel party system shows that there is no way to hold them to account either as concerns in whose name they will govern. Establishing nation-to-nation relations with the Indigenous peoples and providing the wrongs committed against them with redress is a matter of humanizing the natural and social environments as an expression of people's empowerment. It is the historic necessity facing Canadians and all of humanity today.

The aim of media coverage is to divert attention from this historic necessity. But while media are



busy diverting the issue by debating whether the definition of "genocide" is appropriate in the circumstances, Indigenous peoples' demands for immediate redress by the government that uphold treaty and hereditary rights expose how past reports and commissions of inquiry and promises of action have failed to eliminate the colonial structures that are the source of the problems. These important facts are clearly brought out in the Inquiry's report.

This report is the result of the persistence of the Indigenous peoples to affirm their right to be against centuries-long attempts to manipulate, divert and finally negate their rights, as well as against the direct assault of open negation. It is also the result of the support of the Canadian people and provides Canadians with an opportunity to discuss these matters, take stock of the situation today and find a way forward. Indigenous peoples have not only shown resilience and "patience" throughout the recent history of their affirmation as well as throughout history but have developed a particular aversion to empty words, which is very inspiring and at the heart of the situation right now.

In this regard, a positive feature of the National Inquiry is the extent to which it enabled the expression of the voices of the victims of Canada's colonial, racist, misogynist "justice" system. Very striking also are the calls for justice which are said to be "legal imperatives." It is the voices of the people which must prevail when it comes to defining 1) what constitutes justice and 2) what is meant by a "legal imperative." Here is where it must be the modern definitions as determined by the people which prevail, not those imposed by the colonial legacy where the definitions used by what are called the liberal democratic institutions serve to deprive the people of what belongs to them by right.

A matter of concern to the polity has become how to intervene in the upcoming federal election in a manner that favours the Indigenous peoples along with the interests of working Canadians. It presents Canadians with a perplexing problem precisely because what are called the democratic institutions do not represent them but rather the Crown and the colonial relations it continues to uphold. Take for example the problem of deciding which, if any, of the cartel parties is a better choice when it comes to righting historical wrongs committed against the Indigenous peoples. The people are presented with choices which divide the polity in a manner that does not resolve any problem in their favour. There are those who defend and seek to perfect the defunct liberal democratic institutions for which the conditions no longer exist and those, like Trump and others of his kind in Canada and abroad, whose actions leave little doubt that their aim is the outright destruction of these institutions at the expense of the people. Neither is an option. The peoples must continue to lay the claims on society which they must, as the Indigenous peoples have so valiantly done to the extent they were able through the National Inquiry, and by doing so, the way forward to build the kind of democratic institutions which are so much needed and so much lacking today will continue to emerge.

Using their speech and other forms of action to lay the claims that they must is something the people can count on. The people can count on themselves and this is the way forward today.

### *With Our Deepest Respects*





(Photos: TML, M. Horel, J. Stayshyn, Leveller, I. Wurmann)





# About the National Inquiry and Its Final Report

- Barbara Biley -



**Girls and boys from the 13 provinces and territories hand the report to the provincial representatives during the ceremony.**

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was announced in December 2015, and officially began its work in September 2016. Two-and-a-half years later, despite the resignation of various commissioners and staff persons and lack of cooperation from the federal government to facilitate its work, it released its 1,071-page final report on June 3, in the Grand Hall of the Museum of History in Gatineau. The mandate of the inquiry was "to gather evidence, and to examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA individuals in Canada by looking at patterns and underlying factors."



The inquiry's final report, entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place*, concluded that murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls are part of an overall genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada. The final report is divided into 11 chapters of findings plus 231 recommendations, or "Calls for Justice." There are also two supplemental reports: a 159-page report focused on experiences in Quebec, with 21 recommendations; and a 46-page report focused on the inquiry's genocide analysis.

The key factor in the inquiry coming into being and issuing its final report has been the tenacity of the friends and families of the victims, who refused to permit their sisters, daughters, mothers and aunties to be dismissed and forgotten. Also decisive were the efforts of all those who are fighting to see that there are no more victims and that the Canadian state's colonial outlook, and its refusal to uphold nation-to-nation relations and to fulfill all of its responsibilities to the Indigenous peoples is ended.

Altogether 2,380 people participated in the \$90-million national inquiry, including 468 survivors and families. More than 1,000 hours of testimony from survivors, witnesses, and families informed the inquiry's report. Many others were unable to participate for various reasons, including the Liberal government's denial of the commissioners' request for increased funding and a two-year extension of the inquiry's timeline so more people could be heard.

Even as the inquiry was carrying out its work, more than 130 Indigenous women and girls were reported to be victims of homicide, or whose deaths were deemed suspicious, or who died while

in institutional care, according to two databases -- a rate of at least three deaths per month. The inquiry said it could not determine a count for the number of MMIWG cases over the decades and across the country. However, it considers the 2014 RCMP figures that report 1,181 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls between 1980 and 2012 as likely to be an underestimate. The Native Women's Association of Canada puts the number closer to 3,000. "No one knows an exact number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada," says the report. "Thousands of women's deaths or disappearances have likely gone unrecorded over the decades, and many families likely did not feel ready or safe to share with the National Inquiry before our timelines required us to close registration."

Regardless, the figures show both the indifference of the state authorities to MMIWG, plus the pressing need for immediate action to address these ongoing crimes. The report points out that the genocide of which MMIWG are a part "has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the *Indian Act*, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human and Inuit, Métis and First Nations rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide of Indigenous populations."

The four national inquiry commissioners -- Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, and Commissioners Brian Eyolfson, Qajaq Robinson and Michèle Audette -- presented their report at a ceremony with some 500 people present. Attendees included Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, heads of national and regional Indigenous organizations and many politicians, including leaders of the NDP, the Conservative Party and the Green Party.

At the ceremony, Chief Commissioner Buller said the truths made public in the final report "cannot be unheard," and that the 231 calls for justice in the final report are not mere recommendations but "legal imperatives" which must be implemented. She said, "Although we have been mandated to provide recommendations, it must be understood that these recommendations, which we frame as 'Calls for Justice,' are legal imperatives -- they are not optional. The Calls for Justice arise from international and domestic human and Indigenous rights laws, including the *Charter*, the Constitution, and the Honour of the Crown. As such, Canada has a legal obligation to fully implement these Calls for Justice and to ensure Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people live in dignity."

At a press conference later, Buller pointed out that the source of the ongoing violence against Indigenous women and girls is to be found in the Canadian state and its policies, noting, "The Canadian state has, and continues, to enact laws and enforce policies that perpetuate the violation of human and Indigenous rights. This is colonization. This is discrimination. This is genocide. There needs to be a transformational change in how we build and maintain relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people."

The inquiry's 231 calls for justice include 46 Inuit-specific, 29 Métis-specific, and 32 2SLGBTQQIA-specific calls. Other calls are divided by subject area -- from culture to health and wellness, to human security, to justice. There are industry-specific calls as well, for media and social influencers, attorneys and law societies, educators, health and wellness service providers, social workers, police and transportation services, the hospitality industry, the resource extraction and development industries, and others. There was also calls for all Canadians to read the final report and become informed about the historic violence against Indigenous women and girls and to stand with Indigenous peoples to hold all governments to account and ensure that the recommendations made in the final report are implemented.

For the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice [click here](#).

To read the full report click here: [Volume 1a](#) and [Volume 1b](#).

To read the *Supplementary Report -- Genocide*, [click here](#).

(Photos: National Inquiry into MMIWG, Canadian Women's Foundation)



## We Demand Immediate Action from Canada

- Union of BC Indian Chiefs -



**Women's Memorial March, Vancouver, February 14, 2019.**

Violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people continues to devastate families and communities across Turtle Island. Today, as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls releases its final report, the Coalition on MMIWG2S in BC calls on the federal and provincial governments to take immediate action in implementing the recommendations of this report.

"We have always known this was a genocide; an Indigenous femicide. The violence we face happens in all aspects of our lives -- at every level, in every institution, in every interaction. Canada must immediately respond to all the calls for justice in the National Inquiry report and stop the genocide against Indigenous women and girls," says **Sophie Merasty**, sister of Rose Merasty and member of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

**Kukpi7 Judy Wilson**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, "For too long we have waited for action on this issue, and this report covers much of what we already know. We need safe and accessible housing, transportation, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. We need to address the "Canadian Genocide" -- it's the worst form of discrimination that has continued over hundreds of years and into today with the blatant sexism and racism that is rampant in this country. We need a child welfare system that seeks to reunite families, not to tear them apart in a continuation of the legacy of residential schools. We need this change today, we cannot wait any longer."

**Grand Chief Stewart Phillip**, President of the UBCIC, stated, "The Federal Liberals are ramming through a controversial pipeline expansion whose industrial man-camps will further put Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people at risk, and yet they say they are a feminist government? With the release of this report, we know that we must see a dedicated budget and action plan for the implementation of these recommendations before the Federal election this fall."



**Janice Abbott**, CEO of Atira Women's Resource Society, stated, "We support the strong and necessary language used in the report and call on all Canadians to set aside their stereotypes and fear to embrace the recommendations in support of a kinder, stronger, more inclusive Canada, one that holds close not only the women who have been disappeared and their families and loved ones, but all First Nations, Métis and Inuit women everywhere -- those struggling to survive right now in a climate of profound anti-Indigenous racism and misogyny, whose children continue to be stolen by the State and who continue to be vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. This is not our past. This is our present. Change is already too late. There is no time to waste."

**Laurel McBride**, of Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter stated, "We are pleased to see the call for the state to take all necessary measures to prevent and hold accountable those responsible for violence against Indigenous women, two spirit, gay and transgender people; for the implementation of a guaranteed annual livable income; and for programs and services to promote the safety and security of those in the sex industry. We urge all levels of government to take seriously Reclaiming Power and Place's findings and to make the implementation of these calls for justice an immediate priority."

**Regional Chief Terry Teegee**, of the BC Assembly of First Nations, stated, "The recommendations outlined in this report must be quickly and fully addressed to bring about a prompt end to the ongoing genocide of our people. While many of the social issues have been known for decades, we have continued to experience apathy, and outright hostility at times, as we have worked towards collaboration and progress within the Canadian justice and social services systems -- this must end now."

**Jenny Kwan**, MP for Vancouver East, stated, "The federal government must commit to implementing all the recommendations with dedicated resources and a time line that is publicly accountable. Anything less would be disrespectful to all those who have shared their stories and advocated for justice."

Representatives from the **Neskonlith Indian Band Chief & Council** spoke with unity, noting that "Thousands of MMIWG Survivors & Families across the Nations have shared their stories, now is the time for action!"

*(June 3, 2019. Photo M. Bush)*



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## Supplementary Report on Quebec



As part of its final report, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued a separate supplementary report on Quebec. The report is a product of Quebec's provincial Commission of Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Quebec. The Quebec government of then-Premier Philippe Couillard, announced the creation of the commission on August 9, 2016, six days after the National Inquiry was launched. The National Inquiry decided to issue the report of the Quebec commission "in order to give particular attention to the issue of violence against First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Quebec. This report is a complement to the National Inquiry's Final Report, which includes a more thorough treatment of the realities of Inuit in Canada, including Inuit in Quebec."

The introduction to the supplementary report on Quebec explains a number of differences between the experience in Quebec and the rest of Canada, including the political and socio-historical context, language and cultural barriers, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975, the unique experience of religious institutions' management of health, social and educational services, as well as the treatment of orphans, young offenders and children considered "illegitimate" and their placement in institutions of a religious nature. Another difference cited is the larger number of Indigenous police forces in Quebec to which victims of violence must turn to for support.

The introduction points out:

"Quebec's political and socio-historical context is different from the Canadian context. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) in 1975 and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement in 1978 represent so-called 'modern' treaties concluded between the Crown and First Nations that are applicable in what is now called Quebec, for example the 1760 Huron-British Treaty and the Treaty of Oswegatchie.

"The consequences of colonization and settlement took hold quickly after the arrival of the Europeans, but other genocidal policies sometimes occur in distinct time periods within the history of Quebec, even if they represent many of the same consequences for Indigenous communities in the rest of Canada. One example is the "Indian" residential schools. The first school opened in 1931 in Fort George, and so at least two generations of First Nations in Quebec who spent significant parts of their lives in Indian residential schools are living together to this day.



"Another major difference is the fact that a large proportion of First Nations in Quebec, particularly those who are not signatories to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, use French as a first or second language. This has a significant impact on building solidarity between Indigenous Peoples. The language barrier makes communication more difficult among Indigenous women in Quebec and between them and their sisters elsewhere in Canada. In particular, this can prevent the sharing of culturally adapted practices and resources for preventing violence and ensuring well-being in the communities.

"The institutional context in Quebec is also unique. Until recently, religious congregations managed health and social services and educational services. They played a major role in education, in providing care to the sick and in ensuring child welfare until the 1960s. It was at that



time that the state gradually took control of the institutions that were providing these services. For example, in 1960, religious congregations still operated 104 facilities, or 35 per cent of hospitals in Quebec, and were responsible for the internal governance of 23 secular hospitals.

"Similarly, up until the 1960s orphans, young offenders and children who were considered 'illegitimate' were put in the care of religious congregations, which favoured placements in institutions. Elsewhere in Canada, child welfare has, for a long time, been under the responsibility of secular agencies mandated by the state, with a preference for placing children in foster homes or facilitating their adoption. This specific socio-historical context means that the effects of colonization could have been experienced differently in Quebec.

"In terms of public safety, Quebec has the highest number of independent Indigenous police forces of any province. Thus, when Indigenous women experience violence in Quebec, the Indigenous police forces are often the ones called to act as first responders."

The Quebec report goes into the colonial experience of the particular situation facing Indigenous women and girls in Quebec, presenting the historical and social context in which crimes against them are committed. It also informs of the scope of the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and potential solutions. The cases of various individual victims are also recounted. It concludes with 21 calls to justice addressed to the Quebec government.

To read the complete supplementary report on Quebec, [click here](#).

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#### Defence of Treaty Rights

## Blueberry River First Nations Bring Historic Cumulative-Impacts Lawsuit Back to BC Supreme Court

*The following item reports on the statement from the Blueberry River First Nations' Chief and Council on their decision to bring a historic cumulative-impacts lawsuit back to the BC Supreme Court -- as posted to their website on May 24. The Treaty 8 Cumulative Impacts Trial, Blueberry River First Nations v. Province of British Columbia, began on May 27 in the BC Supreme Court.*

Chief and Council said:

"Blueberry River First Nations has been forced to turn back to the Courts to enforce our treaty rights against the Province of British Columbia. [...] We are going to trial to protect our treaty rights and our future generations against the impacts of further development in our territory.

"Our Nation had been willing to negotiate and work collaboratively with government toward resolution of the cumulative impacts crisis in our territory, however the provincial government has taken a unilateral position on oil and gas development in our territory that has left us with no choice but to go back to litigation.



"Instead of pursuing reconciliation and negotiating a solution, we are forced to seek a court imposed order to protect our treaty rights, which may prohibit any further taking up of land in our territory until our treaty rights are met.

"Under Treaty 8, government has a right to take up land for settlement, but a corresponding duty to protect a way of life. That was the fundamental promise of Treaty 8.

"We have carried on our Dane-Zaa way of life centred on hunting, trapping and fishing for generations, even while our territory was being settled and developed.

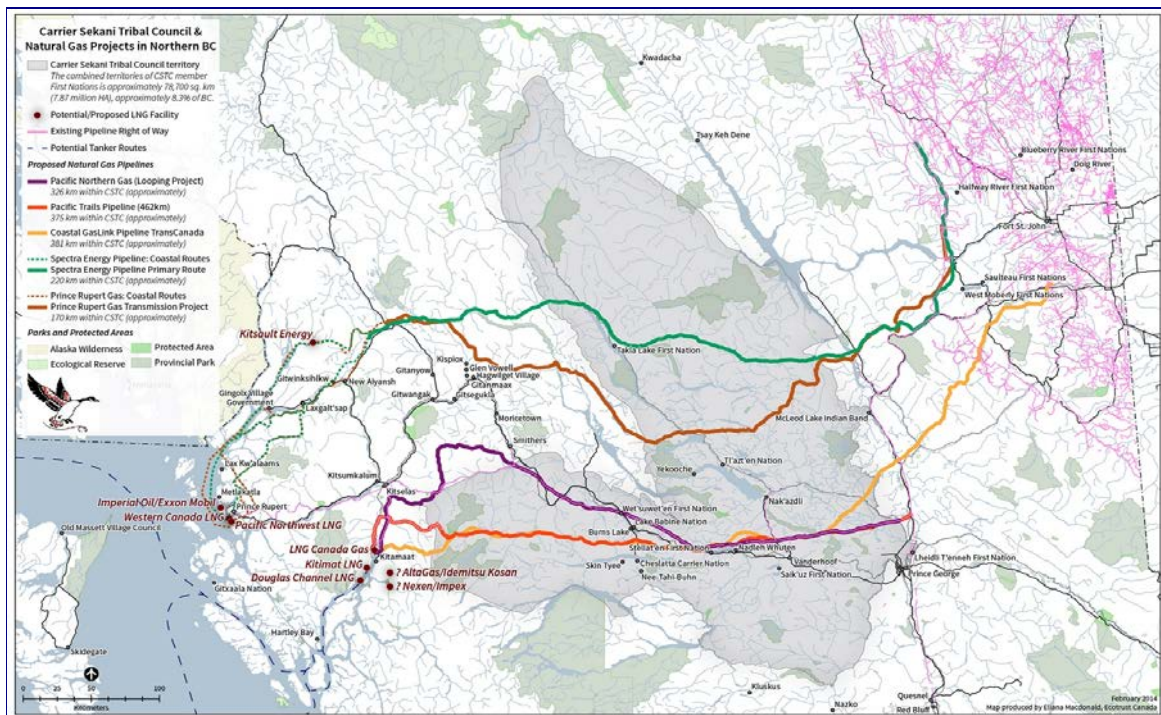
"But the balance has been lost.

"Now more than 73 per cent of our territory is within 250 metres of a clear-cut, oil and gas well, processing plant, road, dam or other industrial infrastructure. The rivers, streams and muskeg are drying up, mineral licks are disappearing. The wildlife we rely on are disappearing. There is almost nowhere left for us to go to hunt, trap, fish and be at peace in the places we have always known as Dane-Zaa people.

"This is not what our elders agreed to in signing Treaty 8.

"This is a historic case to establish that there is a limit to the government's right to take up land in our Treaty 8 territory, and that limit has been breached. We will ask the Court to enforce the limit to the Crown's rights in our territory under Treaty 8."

## Backgrounder on Blueberry River First Nations Cumulative Impacts Case vs. Province of British Columbia



Map of Natural Gas Projects in Northern BC. Blueberry First Nations' territories at top right of map. Click image to enlarge.

## History: British Columbia's Abandoned Corner, and Abandoned Nations

A little over 100 years ago, the Canadian government sought the consent of Blueberry River First Nations' (BRFN) and other Treaty 8 Nations' ancestors to the settlement of the territory which our



people had occupied for many generations. Our ancestors would not consent unless the government promised that our way of life, centered on hunting, fishing and trapping throughout our territory, would be preserved, even amid settlement. The Crown made that solemn promise to us. That promise was the foundation of Treaty 8.

However today, Blueberry River First Nations says that promise has been broken. Through early settlement and development we lost key areas such as the Peace River, Charlie Lake and Montney. Our displacement has increased to today, when our people attempt to continue to practise our promised Treaty Rights surrounded by some of the highest densities of industrial disturbance in British Columbia. Our territory is becoming unrecognizable to us.

Blueberry River First Nations is one of the Treaty 8 Nations that has taken a stand against this unmanaged onslaught of landscape disturbance.

In 2015, we launched a civil claim against the BC government asserting that the scope and scale of industrial development authorized by the BC government has gone too far, that their members can no longer meaningfully carry on their traditional activities as was assured under the treaty -- "for as long as the sun shines and the rivers flow."

We are turning to the Court to enforce Treaty 8 and to prevent the further taking up of land until our Treaty Rights are met.

### **Disturbance Snapshot**

Based on the Atlas of Cumulative Landscape Disturbance in the Traditional Territory of BRFN 2016 there were already:

- 110,300 km of linear features (including roads, transmission lines, seismic lines and pipelines) exist in 38,327 per square kilometre of territory -- or 2.88 kilometres of linear disturbance per square kilometre.
- areas with much higher linear disturbance density (ranging from 6.1 to 12 km per square kilometre with other areas spiking over 24 km per square kilometre.
- 19,974 oil and gas wells of which 36 per cent are active. Many of these wells are now considered 'abandoned' -- with no one on the hook for clean-up and removal, as companies come, make money, or go broke, and leave.
- Overall, 73 per cent of the area inside BRFN traditional territory is within 250 metres of an industrial disturbance, and approximately 84 per cent is within 500 metres of an industrial disturbance.
- On top of this, areas that were once core territory for the Nation are now Agricultural land -- 28 per cent of BRFN's territory is zoned or converted to Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- Plus, two hydro dams, W.A.C. Bennett and Peace Canyon, lie within BRFN traditional territory, and construction on a third dam, Site C, is now underway.

And:

Like much of BC, there is a forest industry in the northeast. But unlike parts of BC, this area has not seen much change in forestry practices since the 1980s. Here, measures to protect wildlife values and old growth have not been implemented, and basic forestry requirements such as green-up are not required. Blueberry's core territory is zoned as a high intensity forestry zone. To make matters even worse, less than 1 per cent of BRFN's territory is protected -- so there are no

core areas to enforce as off-limits to development, or that can provide core habitat for the species and ecosystems that underscore the ability of BRFN to meaningfully practise Treaty Rights.

There are many other signs that all is not well with the land and waters here:

Grizzly bears and boreal caribou are extirpated from their historic range on this southern corner of BC's boreal. The remainder of the caribou in Blueberry's territory are declining rapidly, and without immediate action are likely to disappear completely. Government policies and development are resulting in low numbers of moose, and those we find are often unhealthy and inedible. First Nation members won't drink the water because of a combination of the smell of hydrocarbons in the air, and the intense water use in fracking for gas. There is suspicion of eating animals that may have come into contact with contaminated areas. And Induced Seismicity -- the scientific word for human's creating earthquakes -- is increasing. The special page on BC's Oil and Gas Commission website highlights that during 14 months when monitoring was in place (in 2013/ 2014) there were 231 'induced' seismic events in core Blueberry territory.

Why is BRFN's Traditional Territory being so harshly affected?

Under the boreal forest and muskeg lies one of the world's largest shale gas deposits, and the last 15 years has seen an intense development to see who can corner this market. More than 80 per cent of BRFN's core territory is already tenured -- handing out rights to companies to extract the gas. Recent announcements on LNG development on BC's coast provide the incentive for ongoing future development of this high intensity greenhouse gas fuel, promising that the pace and intensity of gas development will continue over the next decades. Yet, there are still no protected areas and no areas off limits to development. Restoration actions are needed urgently -- the massive footprint that exists already must be dealt with, and faster than new footprint hits the ground, if the land is to be allowed to recover faster than it deteriorates. This work cannot be delayed any longer.

### **Recent Government Reports Confirm the Problem**

British Columbia's Chief Forester has recognized that the core of Blueberry's territory has been disproportionately clear cut over recent years (87 per cent of the regional harvest coming out of the core of Blueberry territory). National Energy Board records show that thousands of new wells and related oil and gas infrastructure are planned for the core of Blueberry's territory, which lays over the North Montney gas basin. That development is on top of the extensive development that has already occurred (see summary of Atlas findings above). British Columbia's Auditor General has recently confirmed the massive environmental and ecological liability sitting in Blueberry's territory and the northeast of the province, with tens of thousands of abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells left unremediated. Government's plan to electrify the gas fields means more infrastructure and development is planned in the region.

### **Background on Negotiations and Trial**

While we are willing and prepared to fight in Court to protect our treaty rights, and those of our future generations, we had hoped to avoid this.

Blueberry has worked hard over the past year to try to collaborate with the Province of British Columbia to begin to address the cumulative impacts of oil and gas, forestry and other development in our territory. As we have reported to our families, positive first steps were being taken on many fronts. Our Nation was hopeful that good faith efforts by both parties could avoid the need for us to ask the Courts to impose measures to enforce our treaty rights.

However, citing pressure from the oil and gas industry, government has hit us with a take it or leave it position, undoing months of hard work to build a collaborative solution that would better



manage new development, to now revert to "business as usual" for fast track approval of extensive further oil and gas development in our territory.

Despite widespread recognition by government, scientists, First Nations and the public that the watersheds in which Blueberry people have lived for generations have been heavily impacted by development, especially over the last twenty years, the Province is forcing our Nation to prove this in Court over many months.

The Crown made our grandparents a fundamental promise in entering into Treaty 8: that our future generations would always be able to carry out our treaty rights on a landscape capable of supporting us and the wildlife and waters upon which we depend. Instead of acknowledging the fundamental promise, the Crown is denying that the Treaty provides us any protection against the cumulative impacts of development.

The territory that we live in, and that we, our parents and grandparents have always relied upon is now so developed, it is becoming unrecognizable to us. We have almost nothing left to pass on to our future generations.

The lands, waters and wildlife that we are fighting to save and restore are essential to the health of our present and future generations.

We do not see how forcing us to this course can meet this provincial government's commitment to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We repeat our disappointment in being forced to spend precious time and money litigating when we would prefer to continue the real work of solving this crisis.

*(watershedsentinel.ca, May 30, 2019. Photos: Blueberry First Nations, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council)*

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## **British People Reject Neo-Liberalism and Imperialism**

### **Mass Demonstrations Express Contempt for U.S. President**



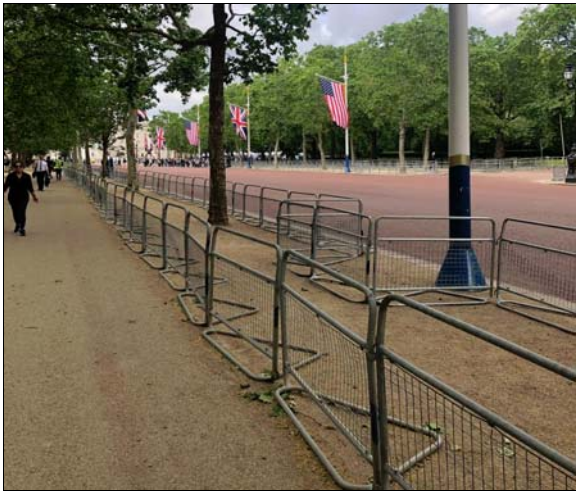
The state visit of U.S. President Donald Trump to Britain June 3-5 was marked by opposition from start to finish.

Not only was the U.S. President pointedly not invited to address the Houses of Parliament, but people from all parts of the country took a stand to say that the state visit was not in their name. The point had been made in July last year that Trump was not welcome here, when 250,000 took part in a mass demonstration in the centre of London. That spirit was a given in 2019. So whether it was the large carnival of resistance in Trafalgar Square which attracted as many as 75,000 who then closely packed Whitehall, or the demonstrations taking place in so many towns and cities, or the stand taken by concerned people in Portsmouth when Trump joined the representatives of the British state in the D-Day commemorations, it was evident that people were speaking in their own name, not proving to some sideline commentator that Donald Trump was opposed and despised.

The demonstration on June 4 assembling in Trafalgar Square, a main focus of events, was called by Together Against Trump, which is a united front of the Stop Trump Coalition and Stand Up To Trump, bringing together a host of campaign groups and trade unions, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Stop the War Coalition, Unite the Union and Unison. In high spirits, the tens of thousands then marched down Whitehall as far as the stage erected as near Downing Street as the authorities would allow. So dense was the crowd that it was almost impossible to move, and as the rally progressed a steady stream of people continued to join.

In fact, the subject of any talks between Trump and the British government, and more, were firmly dealt with in the wide variety of placards and slogans displayed in the demonstration, and in the sectors of Trafalgar Square, the blocs, which dealt with affirming the various rights of the people, showing that the people are indeed capable of setting their own agenda.

The urgent call for an anti-war government itself, carried by activists from the contingent of Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (RCPB(ML)) and other anti-war activists, concentrated the theme of being together against Trump into a task for the present in order to safeguard the future, embodying what the people, in opposing Trump, are aspiring for. Both the British government and the Trump administration can be said to be pro-war governments. Not only that, but the theme of D-Day, June 6, embodies the heroism and striving of the people for peace against darkest reaction for which war and aggression is the first response. It is clear that the people must build their own national and international institutions to this end.



**Crowds gathered to watch Trump motorcade.**

One of the central demands was that Trump and the U.S. multinationals keep their hands off the National Health Service (NHS). Trump declared in his press conference with Prime Minister Theresa May that in any trade deals between the U.S. and Britain, the NHS would be "on the table," along with everything else, before back-tracking on a subsequent occasion. But the cat was out of the bag. Even before this, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and others were hammering on the point, "Our NHS is not for sale!"

In her speech to the rally in Whitehall, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady fiercely declared: "Big pharma corporations can't wait to get their greedy hands on our NHS. And Trump will back these corporate vultures all the way. We must never accept a U.S.-style system where ordinary people are cheated out of healthcare so that super-rich executives can rake in the billions. So let's send a clear message to President Trump and to whoever ends up in Downing Street in a few weeks' time. Our NHS is not for sale."

Frances O'Grady went on to say: "We shouldn't roll out the red carpet for a man who deliberately spreads fear and prejudice. Who takes the side of white supremacists, neo-fascists and women-haters. Who tears families apart and locks children in cages."

There were many other speakers, including the youth, who spoke on their future and the necessity to oppose the irresponsibility of the likes of Trump and May on climate change. Mark Serwotka of the Public and Commercial Services Union made an impassioned defence of the NHS and the staff who hail from so many parts of the world and to whom the NHS owes so much. The speakers represented the passion and commitment of so many sections of the people to oppose what Donald Trump stands for.

As the highlight of the rally, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn spoke, setting the tone for the sentiment of all present. His theme was not to dwell on the outrageously negative and backward characteristics of Donald Trump -- his racism, misogyny, warmongering, and so on, though Corbyn did not mince his words on the agenda that the Trump regime is following.

"Because racism divides, exploitation of minorities divides, brings about hatred, dislike, disdain and a horrible place for individuals to live in," Jeremy Corbyn said. "When you've created that sense of hatred, destroyed people's self-esteem by that form of racism, you haven't built a house, a school, trained a nurse, defended our natural world, [you have] just created a greater sense of hate and hatred that goes with it."

But what brought the cheers of the mass of humanity there to oppose this agenda was the call for the people themselves to affirm their rights, to work together for a better world. "Think on, please, about a world that is aiming for peace and disarmament, that defeats racism and misogyny," he said, before ending his speech with the exhortation for all to join in to create that world.

The demonstration was determined to fulfil the plan to march to Parliament Square, despite the authorities having blocked the road there from Downing Street, so it set off to walk to Parliament via the Embankment. Here another militant rally took place, despite the frequent downpours, and the more open space provided the opportunity for many discussions, including with young people from the U.S. who were adamant that Trump was not their representative. This manifestation of people from all walks of life, with a multitude of creative banners and placards, clearly made the point that Trump was not welcome, and that the people must set their own agenda and build the movement for their empowerment. The many hundreds of copies of the statement of RCPB(ML) distributed were very well received and seriously read.



**Wall in Portsmouth, prevents people from opposing Trump's participation in D-Day commemorations.**



On the following day, June 5, a significant gathering took place in Portsmouth to oppose Trump and his presence at the D-Day commemorations. The authorities went so far as to build a wall to lock out the ordinary people from participating in the 75th anniversary activities. As well as protesting against Trump and raising the issue of the necessity for an anti-war government, many people paid respects also at the cenotaph, with a minute's silence dedicated to the veterans of D-Day.

London, June 4, 2019

















Portsmouth, June 5, 2019



(Workers' Weekly. Photos: Stop Trump, O. Jones, B. Birchall, L. Abravenal, A. Womack, I. Infantis, M. Roberts, M. Saleem)

## The Use of "Diplomatic Means" to Force Regime Change More Desperate Measures from the Lima Group - Margaret Villamizar -



Picket against Ottawa meeting of Lima Group, February 4, 2019.

The Lima Group of countries<sup>[1]</sup>, established to assist the U.S. in its aim of regime change in Venezuela, held its latest meeting on June 6 in Guatemala. The declaration issued at the conclusion of the meeting can be seen as yet another desperate attempt to cover up the litany of failures of the U.S. operating through its puppet Juan Guaidó and the parallel government he allegedly heads. It is full of diatribes echoing the lies emanating from the U.S that attempt to link the Venezuelan government and President Nicolás Maduro with such things as corruption, drug trafficking and "transnational organized crime" and giving protection in Venezuelan territory to "terrorist organizations and illegal armed groups."

The declaration rejects the proposal made by President Maduro on May 20 for early legislative elections to defuse Venezuela's political crisis and find a "political, constitutional and democratic path forward." Instead, the Lima Group is demanding the holding of new presidential elections to replace President Maduro, as if it is their place to dictate such things to the people of Venezuela. Elections for the National Assembly are scheduled for 2020; however for the past three years the body has been declared in contempt by the Supreme Court, and all its decisions "null and void," after it defied a judicial order to remove three deputies accused of electoral fraud in the December 2015 election, among other things. Furthermore several of its members are currently detained, have fled the country or gone into hiding, charged with active participation in the failed coup attempt of April 30.

The declaration goes on to arrogantly call out four countries, including Cuba, "that still support the illegitimate Maduro regime," urging them to become part of the Lima Group's intrigues, which it presents as the solution to the crisis which the Lima Group is itself fuelling.

In what was said to be a secret recording that was leaked to the *Washington Post* and reported on June 5, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, speaking to a group of people in New York behind closed doors, expresses his frustration with trying to work with the divided Venezuelan opposition. Pompeo said the U.S. strategy to get rid of President Maduro is now focused on Cuba and finding a way to "disconnect" it from Venezuela. "We're working our tail off to try and deliver that," he said.



Just before Pompeo's remarks came to light, the U.S. had ratcheted up its punishing blockade of Cuba with an announcement of drastic new restrictions on travel to Cuba from the U.S., with cruise ships prohibited from docking at Cuban ports and a new ban on people-to-people educational and cultural trips, the most popular forms of travel to Cuba for U.S. citizens and those who depart from the U.S.

It is in this context that Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland has been deployed in the role of the good cop to try to convince Cuba that its interests would be best served by "disconnecting" from Venezuela. It is not inconceivable that Canada's suspension of visa processing services in Havana, forcing Cubans to travel to a third country for this purpose, would be used as leverage for this.

On June 7, the day after the Lima Group meeting, Freeland met in Toronto with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla. After the meeting concluded Freeland referred in a press conference to what she called "an international convergence around the need for a peaceful transition in Venezuela resulting in free and fair elections and the return to democracy," and said "Cuba will have a role to play in this." Her words were calculated to make it sound like she had succeeded in getting Cuba to abandon its principled position of upholding the Venezuelan people's sovereign right to determine their own affairs free from foreign interference to join with a gang of governments doing the bidding of the U.S. to try to overthrow the constitutionally elected president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, that the Liberal government terms a "peaceful transition to democracy." This was despite the fact that Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had made it clear in a statement issued just days before that Cuba's principled support for President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution is not negotiable.

No matter how hard the forces fomenting regime change shout that they oppose military intervention and are working for a "peaceful transition to democracy," they are already engaging



in a violent assault on the Venezuelan people in the form of the deadly economic, financial and commercial blockade that is causing people to die for lack of access to medical treatment. They are also pushing for a social explosion that will be used to justify labelling Venezuela a failed state that requires a "humanitarian intervention." It must not pass.

#### **Note**



1. The Lima Group is a minority of countries in the Organization of American states, created for the sole purpose of regime change in Venezuela. It is comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and a representative of U.S. puppet Juan Guaidó claiming to represent Venezuela.

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## **Canada Closes Its Embassy in Venezuela**

**Ottawa Concert**

**Drums for Peace in Venezuela**



**Saturday, June 22 -- 7:00 pm**  
**Quaker Meeting House, 91A Fourth Ave.**  
***Facebook***

On June 2, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that Canada was temporarily closing its embassy in Venezuela. In her statement Freeland said, "Unfortunately at the end of this month, the Canadian diplomats in Venezuela will no longer be in a position to obtain diplomatic accreditation under the Maduro regime, and their visas will expire. Therefore, we are left with no choice but to temporarily suspend our operation at the Embassy of Canada to Venezuela." Freeland also stated that Canada will be "evaluating the status" of Venezuelan diplomats in Canada appointed by President Maduro.

This aggressive action of the Canadian government is a continuation of its participation in the illegal U.S.-led attempt to bring about regime change in Venezuela. During the February 4 meeting of the Lima Group held in Ottawa, Canada put forward a proposal to use diplomatic means to force regime change and overthrow the democratically elected government of President Maduro. To pretend that this is defending democracy in Venezuela is a farce.

To pretend that Canada has no choice is being less than honest. According to information from the Embassy of Venezuela in Canada, Global Affairs began denying visas in January of this year by refusing to renew the visa of the Consul of Venezuela in Vancouver. This is part of a systematic plan to interfere in the legitimate activities of Venezuelan diplomats in Canada by forcing the closure of consulates in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

This new crisis in diplomatic relations between Canada and Venezuela is clearly part of the U.S.-led assault against Venezuela and is a prelude to the use of force. To claim that it is the "Maduro regime that has taken steps to limit the ability of foreign embassies to function in Venezuela" is hypocritical to say the least.

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## **Canadian and Cuban Foreign Ministers Hold Meeting in Toronto**

Cuba's Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, was received this Friday [June 7] by the Honorable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, during a working visit he paid to that country. This meeting follows up on a previous meeting that both foreign ministers had in Havana on May 16 last.

The Foreign Minister of Cuba reiterated to his Canadian counterpart the concern of the Cuban authorities over the suspension of the granting of visas for Cuban citizens at the Canadian Consulate in Havana. He explained that this decision is already affecting exchanges in several areas of bilateral relations and is particularly affecting Cuban families, Canadian families and mixed families, which should go through a cumbersome procedure to get a visa, that includes the requirement to travel to a third country, with the consequent risks for their safety and the higher costs implied. He likewise reiterated that there isn't the least evidence of any risk that may jeopardize the safety of the diplomats of Canada or of any other country based in Havana. He also added that there is no reason whatsoever that may justify the withdrawal or reduction of the staff of the Canadian diplomatic mission in Havana.

During the meeting, in which other aspects related to bilateral relations were also discussed, Rodríguez Parrilla once again expressed his appreciation for the stand adopted by the Canadian government against the implementation of the *Helms-Burton Act* as well as for the traditional support given by Canada to the Resolution against the blockade that is adopted every year by the United Nations General Assembly.

In the meeting, both ministers exchanged on the regional and international situation. The Cuban Foreign Minister reiterated Cuba's firm and unwavering solidarity with Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the civic and military union of its people and called upon the Canadian minister to support the initiative of a respectful dialogue with the Venezuelan Government based on the principles of International Law and the postulates of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, in particular the rejection of the use and the threat of use of force, equal sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the implementation of unilateral coercive measures that cause humanitarian damages.

The Cuban Foreign Minister was accompanied by Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, Cuban ambassador to Canada, and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Also present at the meeting was Michael Douglas Grant, Deputy Foreign Minister of Canada.

*(Cuban Foreign Ministry, June 7, 2019)*

# Cuba Is Not Intimidated by Measures Adopted to Reinforce the Blockade

*- Revolutionary Government of Cuba -*



The Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Cuba repudiates, in the strongest terms, measures announced by the United States government on June 4, 2019, reinforcing the economic blockade imposed on Cuba for more than 60 years, at a cost to the Cuban economy that in 2018 exceeded 134 billion dollars at current prices, or 933 billion dollars, when considering the depreciation of the dollar as compared to the value of gold on the international market. As is known, this new escalation, effective June 5, further strengthens the stringent restrictions U.S. citizens face in order to travel to Cuba, and adds full prohibitions on travel by sea from the United States, of all types, and prohibits cruise ship stops in our country immediately. The objective continues to be pressuring the Cuban nation to make political concessions, by strangling the economy and causing damage at the population's level. In this particular case, the measures also seek to prevent the people of the United States from learning about Cuba's reality, and thus undermining the slanderous propaganda campaigns against our country that are fabricated on a daily basis.

These actions are contrary to the majority opinion of U.S. citizens, whose interest in seeing Cuba, and exercising their right to travel, is made clear by the 650,000 who visited us in 2018, along with half a million Cubans resident in the United States.

This past April 17, National Security Adviser John Bolton, on the occasion of an anti-Cuban show that featured the presence of mercenaries defeated at Playa Girón and relatives of the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship's henchmen, announced that his government would restrict non-family trips to Cuba. It is clear that this individual has managed to take possession of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere, which constitutes the main threat to peace and stability in the entire region. The United States promotes the Monroe Doctrine without reservation, with which it seeks to deny sovereign equality and the right to self-determination of each and every one of the hemisphere's nations.

The recent attacks on Cuba are justified with new pretexts. The most notorious among them is the slanderous accusation that Cuba is intervening militarily in Venezuela, a lie that has been publicly and consistently refuted by the Cuban government.



They go to the unscrupulous extreme of proposing that Cuba betray the convictions and principles that guide the Cuban Revolution's foreign policy, in exchange for promises of negotiations or easing of the draconian and criminal measures that make up the blockade.

Cuba's solidarity with constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros, the Bolivarian Chavista Revolution, and the civic-military union of its people is not negotiable. The more than 20,000 Cuban collaborators, who in a voluntary and disinterested manner offer their social services in the country, the majority in health care, will continue to do so, as long as the Venezuelan people want, cooperating with this sister country.

For Cubans, betrayal is not an option. We are not naive: we have already struggled 150 years for our independence, obliged to confront the hegemonic ambitions of U.S. imperialism since the first day. Cuba will not be intimidated, nor distracted from the essential, urgent tasks of developing our economy and the construction of socialism. Closely united, we will be able to face the most challenging adversities. They cannot asphyxiate us, nor can they stop us.

(June 5, 2019)

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## **Call for Hemispheric Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Conference for Democracy and Against Neo-Liberalism**

**- Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples -**



**International Solidarity Conference, May 2, 2019 in Havana.**

At the International Solidarity Conference for World Peace and Against War, held May 2 in Havana, peoples of the world converged to express their united demand for world peace, condemning the *Helms-Burton Act* and demanding an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba for 60 years by the U.S. government, and for the return of territory illegally occupied by the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo.

It was in this context that Fernando González Llort, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), invited all those present and the Cuba Solidarity Movement as a whole to take part in the Hemispheric Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Conference for Democracy and Against Neo-Liberalism, to be held in Havana, November 1-3. "No matter how dark the path, the response of the Cuban people will be to resist and victory will always be ours," said González. The call states, "Without neglecting or moving away from the specific agendas of the many struggles our organizations and movements are part of, we are aware that it will not be possible to face the enemies of our peoples in isolation, dispersed."

Thus, the call invites "the continent's networks and organizations, popular movements and left-wing political forces, the solidarity movement, campesino movements, women and feminists, trade unionists and excluded workers, environmentalists, youth and students, religious, Indigenous, ethnic, regional, and LGTBI movements... all sectors committed to the struggle to stop the advance of the neo-liberal right, to construct and defend a common emancipatory project." The second call to the Hemispheric Conference is posted in full below.

*TML Weekly* calls on Canadians to organize to take part in this conference that will serve as an important converging point for all those fighting for social change at home and to support those in common struggle abroad.

### **Text of the Call**

When the Continental Day for Democracy and Against Neo-Liberalism was initiated in 2015, social and popular movements and networks of regional organizations promoted the building of links based on ecumenism and pluralism, with the main objectives being consensus, the defence of democracy, sovereignty and integration of the peoples, as well as the fight against free trade and the expansion of transnationals in the region.

Recent years have witnessed an escalation of the restoration of conservative neo-liberalism in the continent, characterized by the plunder of common property; exploitation and the precarization of work; deep indebtedness; dependence on the international financial system; migratory, environmental and food crises; religious fundamentalism; the breakdown and even destruction of formal democracy; the criminalization and judicialization of politics; the assassination of social leaders; the media war; attacks on progressive and popular organizations; hate speech and acts of hatred; racism, xenophobia, discrimination, total disrespect for human rights; and the absolute impunity with which all these abuses occur.

Without neglecting or moving away from the specific agendas of the many struggles our organizations and movements are part of, we are aware that it will not be possible to face the enemies of our peoples in isolation, dispersed.

The organizational expressions that we are fostering today through this process of coming together and of unity is not all that is called for to contribute to this effort of rebuilding links. Therefore, we have convoked networks and organizations of the continent, popular movements and left-wing political forces, the solidarity movement, campesino movements, women and feminists, trade unionists and excluded workers, environmentalists, young people and students, ecumenical, Indigenous, ethnic and territorial movements, the LGTBI and all sectors committed to the struggle to stop the advance of the neo-liberal right-wing, to the meeting in Havana in November of this year, to build and defend a common emancipatory project.

We have called the Anti-Imperialist Hemispheric Solidarity Conference for Democracy and Against Neo-Liberalism, to take place in Havana, Cuba, from November 1 to 3, 2019.

This second call to the Anti-Imperialist Conference for Democracy and Against Neo-Liberalism,

which we convoked last January, is extended to the Movement in Solidarity with Cuba of our hemisphere to support the just causes that it takes up and also to reinforce the unity of struggle and resistance against the aggressive, fascist escalation of the imperialist policy led by the United States government, dragging along with it oligarchies and governments obedient to its interests. Many solidarity activists are also engaged in social struggles, while at the same time there are not a few organizations that participate in our platforms, like the Continental Day for Democracy and Against Neo-liberalism itself, which are very active in Cuba solidarity, which strengthens us both.

We invite you to attend this event and use it as a testimony to our will to fight, our solidarity and our victory; and to strengthen and broaden our links as much as possible with the greatest number and diversity of organizations, movements and social expressions takes root in our countries, at the base of our organizations.

We want to meet in Havana to advance a common strategic agenda and plan of action at the hemispheric level in defence of democracy and social justice for our peoples, where solidarity with all just causes is an essential weapon.

It is necessary to develop communication strategies to participate effectively in the battle of ideas, expand and strengthen the convergence of our organizations' media and ways of waging struggle, overcome differences and commit ourselves to unity in action based on dialogue about traditions, accumulated different experiences and emerging alternatives.

Cuban social, political and mass organizations and the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples once again offer a territory symbolizing rebellion, resistance and alternatives; a space of trust, solidarity and commitment to constructing paths of struggle.

*Continental Day for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism*  
*Cuban Chapter of Social Movements*  
*Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples*

To confirm your participation in the Conference, send a message to the following email addresses:

enc.jornada2019@gmail.com  
icap@icap.cu

*(Edited for style and grammar by TML. Photo: Prensa Latina)*



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**Argentina**

## **Workers' Movement Response to Worsening Neo-Liberal Crisis**

**- Miranda Jolie -**

On Wednesday, May 29 workers in Argentina waged their fifth general strike against the neo-liberal administration of President Mauricio Macri since it took power in 2015. The strike, which lasted 24 hours, was called by the country's largest union central, the General Confederation of Labour.

Public transportation was shut down all day and no domestic or international flights took off or landed at the country's main airports. Classes at elementary and secondary schools and universities were interrupted, as were banking and public health services as workers in all these



sectors joined the strike. Members of social movements and others joined workers from the 70 participating unions in the streets, with some activists giving out free food from big pots to show that people are going hungry because of the harsh austerity measures imposed by the government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



**The streets of Buenos Aires are empty during the May 29, 2019 general strike against the Macri government's neo-liberal anti-social offensive.**

In a country like Argentina, which has such a strong history of trade unionism, general strikes are considered to be a clear warning to incumbent presidents, although a significant reduction in unionization in recent years means the impact is clearly less than it used to be. As well, despite these general strikes, the workers' movement is far from united as a result of divisions and leadership factions with different aims and agendas. Nonetheless, because the situation is so serious, the unions have managed to act in concert and unite to strongly protest the austerity pushed by Macri's government and the IMF. Now the government is looking to negotiate with various leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and the Argentine Workers' Central, the second largest union umbrella organization, to try and head off another general strike before the end of the year.

### **An Unsettling Scenario**



**Demonstration by teachers and students, May 16, 2019, against cuts to education funding.**

Argentina is currently going through an appalling economic situation, with economic activity dropping by 6.8 per cent from March 2018 to March 2019 and there is no sign of recovery or improvement in the foreseeable future. Argentina's public debt already amounts to approximately U.S.\$332 billion and represents 86.2 per cent of the GDP, according to the Foreign Debt Observatory of the Metropolitan University for Education and Work. Foreign debt makes up the lion's share, with over \$187 billion in foreign debt issues having been undertaken since Macri took office in 2015. According to resolutions on the Ministry of Finance's books, the government has shamelessly surrendered sovereignty over the nation's natural resources by putting them up as collateral to guarantee foreign debt holders their pound of flesh -- one way or another.

Meanwhile, there is a general election coming in October and both foreign and local eyes are on Argentina and its debt. There are two main possible outcomes discernible for that election at this stage, according to different polls. One is the re-election of the current administration and continuance of the disastrous economic model Macri and the oligarchs behind him have imposed on the country. The second one would seem to be that the opposition, led by the Peronist movement with the ticket of Alberto Fernandez for President and former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner for Vice-President, takes office and tries to change that model into one more focused on the revival of the domestic market and industrial activity.[1]

The preoccupation of the financial oligarchy is that Argentina will not make its debt payments, despite assurances from prospective candidates that they will be made. In order to get a U.S.\$56 billion IMF bailout, Macri's government committed to achieving a balanced budget in 2019 and a surplus in 2020 by imposing harsh structural adjustment measures. In spite of the rosy scenario painted by the government to try and sell its anti-social, anti-national agenda, economic pundits are predicting that the IMF austerity measures will remain in place for at least ten more years. Of course this assumes that the working people are not going to succeed in organizing to realize their own demands based on their stand that enough is enough, and organize to put an end to the situation whereby all the resources of the nation are appropriated to pay the rich.

## Social Response



**Streets of Buenos Aires during twenty-four hour general strike, April 6, 2017 against neo-liberal policies of Macri government, which coincides with the opening of the World Economic Forum on Latin America being held in the city.**

Since the creation of the Cambiemos (Let's Change) electoral alliance between Macri's Republican Proposal Party and the Radical Civic Union in the lead-up to the 2015 election, the social situation



has grown increasingly worse, as different indicators have shown. For example, in the past year, poverty has risen 32 per cent and employment has decreased by 2.2 per cent.

Another indicator of the worsening situation is the successive large protests and marches, the most recent being the May 29 general strike. Work stoppages and demonstrations are likely to continue in different sectors of the economy.

In recent years, the Argentine people, workers and trade unions have taken to the streets to protest not only the economic model based on austerity followed by Macri and his government, but also to call for the re-establishment of collective bargaining and a reduction in income taxes for workers whose purchasing power has plunged in the face of 54 per cent inflation, unceasing utility rate hikes and strong currency devaluation. To give a broader view of the problem, protests have also extended to sectors like the scientific community, which has been forced to suffer a brutal adjustment, with scholarships and grants for research having dropped dramatically since 2015.



"The [tactic of a general] strike has been followed because there has been no response, no government reaction to our demands," said Hugo Moyano, leader of one of the General Confederation of Labour branches. "There's a huge amount of discontent with the government. Many workers voted for this government because it was going to get rid of income tax. They trusted it but this time they won't make the same mistake," said Moyano, referring to the upcoming elections on October 27.

Other union leaders expressed themselves on this topic as well. Hugo Yasky, General Secretary of the Argentine Workers' Central said that "the [May 29 strike] consolidates the hope that in October we are going to vote and defeat this government that is a testimony to a failed experiment of the Argentine right."

He said Macri's Cambiemos alliance sold itself initially "as an expression of modernism, but ended up taking us back to the same disaster and the same destruction of the neo-liberalism of the '90s."

## Note

1. Peronism refers to the Argentine political movement based on the ideology of former President Juan Domingo Perón, that dates back to 1946, when Perón was elected to office for this first of three tenures. The "three flags" of Peronism are said to be social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty.

*(With files from TeleSUR, Trading Economics, AFP.)*





**Public Forum in Toronto on June 15**

## **For Peace, Security and Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula**

**Toronto**

**Saturday, June 15 -- 2:00-6:00 pm**

TNG Community Centre, 349 Ontario Street

*Organized by: Korea Truth Commission (Canadian Chapter)  
and Korean Federation in Canada*

*For more information call 416-768-1107 or email: [corfedca@yahoo.ca](mailto:corfedca@yahoo.ca)*

**Keynote Speaker: Professor Kiyul Chung, 21st Century  
Institute, Washington, DC; Distinguished Visiting  
Professor, Kim Il Sung University, Pyongyang, DPRK**

Everyone is warmly invited to a public forum on the struggle for peace, security and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the historic June 2000 North-South Joint Declaration signed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

This forum is taking place in the context of recent developments, including the Panmunjom Declaration between the DPRK and ROK in April 2018, and the subsequent DPRK-U.S. Summits in Singapore in June 2018 and in Hanoi in February 2019. These developments have created the potential for a new era of peace on the Korean Peninsula and normalization of relations between the DPRK and the U.S. by establishing a process of reciprocal steps to end the past history of hostility and confrontation. However, progress toward a solution based on mutual interest has been blocked by the insistence of the U.S. side on unilateral demands for the dismantling of the legitimate defence capacity of the DPRK.



**Supplement**

### **75th Anniversary of D-Day**



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