



FUNDACION SEMILLA WARUNKWA

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18th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item No. 11 Dialogue with Special Rapporteur + EMRIP

**Intervention by: Freda Huson – Spokesperson for the Unistoten (Dark House)
People of the Headwaters**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I am Freda Huson of Unist'ot'en – Wet'suwet'en People of Canada

I am here today to express concerns with Human Rights Violations happening to my people. Since time immemorial, my people have lived in a balanced relationship with our lands. We depend on the land to survive, and we are responsible for protecting it. Since Canada began settling on our territories, we have been forced onto reservations and away from our traditional land base. There are fewer and fewer animals to hunt, the salmon run is diminishing, and the water in the river is low. In order to protect what we have left; my family has been reoccupying one of our territories at Talbeetskwa which is along the Morice River in northern British Columbia. My ancestors have lived there since time immemorial, and I have been living there permanently for the last ten years. In these ten years we have constructed a cabin, a healing center for members of our community who are healing from colonial trauma and addiction, a traditional Pithouse and permaculture garden. We re-occupied our lands to prevent industry from invading and polluting them for pipeline projects. We have practiced free prior and informed consent to determine who is given access to the territory. We make decisions about our lands through our system of hereditary leadership and participation in our feast hall. Our hereditary chiefs have said “no” to pipelines on Wet'suwet'en territory. This year, a pipeline company forced a court injunction on us. If we stop them from entering our territory because they don't have consent, we face arrest. We have not been able to hunt or gather our traditional foods. The company has security and police force to keep us from exercising our Indigenous rights. Elders, women, and healing center clients have been threatened with arrest for accessing our own territory. The pipeline company is violating Wet'suwet'en law, trespassing on our territory, and starting to destroy the land. They have already destroyed a heritage site. After they bulldozed part of the forest, we searched through the piles of dirt for evidence of my people. We found artifacts. The archaeology branch of the government with police assistance came in and took the artifacts, and then released a news bulletin claiming the artifacts were not from their original place. They are trying to erase us from our own land. All these acts that continue are acts of genocide. They want to extinguish our rights to our lands. My people depend on our territory for berries, medicines, meat and healing on the land. I am here today to make UN aware of the continued genocide happening in Canada, and to demand that our Indigenous rights and laws are respected.

We extend an invitation to the United Nations Special Rapporteur to come and help record these violations currently happening, Thank you.