

Wet'suwet'en Solidarity Statement

February 27/2020

The Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) stands in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en land and water protectors, who oppose the construction of the Coastal GasLink Pipeline on their traditional and unceded territory.

We make this statement as the leadership of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) concludes two days of meetings at the AOM office in Toronto/Tkaronto. The work of Indigenous midwives is sacred work that is returning the ceremony of birth to communities. Midwives know the value of clean waters and lands. Indigenous midwives tell us clean waters and lands are of utmost importance to pregnant people and babies because the birth waters and breast waters are vital to the health of the coming generations. Indigenous communities have been robbed of this inheritance by Canadian settler colonialism and its policies of assimilation and genocide. The presence of Indigenous midwifery leadership at the AOM this week reminds us of our profound obligation as treaty peoples and our obligation to speak out in support of the Wet'suwet'en land and water protectors.

We believe it is imperative for health workers to speak out against ongoing violations of Wet'suwet'en sovereignty, and in support of the rights of their people to self-governance, health and a clean and safe environment.

The Canadian Government and the Government of British Columbia have committed to observing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), as well as fulfilling obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Article 19 of UNDRIP notes that "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them."

We call on federal and provincial governments to honour their commitments to the reconciliation process and UNDRIP regarding proper consultation. We urge governments to meet with Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, as they have requested. We demand the Canadian government respect the Wet'suwet'en nation's right to protect their land and water.

We urge all health workers to take a stand in support of the rights and sovereignty of the Wet'suwet'en nation, in coherence with our commitment to health, both for individuals and communities. As the TRC states in its call

to action, the current state of Indigenous health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and we must recognize, implement and prioritize the self-determination and health-care rights of Aboriginal people as an antidote to this historical legacy.