

First Nations Cheer as Court Quashes Canada Tar Sands Pipeline



Ottawa, July 5 (RHC)-- In a major victory for environmental and Indigenous movements, a Canadian court has overturned the government's approval of Enbridge's controversial \$6.5 billion Northern Gateway pipeline project, over 10 years in the making, due to a lack of consultation with First Nations communities along the oil pipeline's path from the Alberta tar sands to the Pacific coast.

The Federal Appeals Court canceled the green light Ottawa gave to Enbridge for the project in 2014 on the basis that "Canada offered only a brief, hurried and inadequate opportunity" for First Nations to give input on the proposed pipeline and did not fulfill its obligations to make "reasonable efforts to inform and consult."

At least seven First Nations communities in the western coastal province of British Columbia would be significantly impacted if the Northern Gateway pipeline was completed, according to the ruling. "We're all celebrating a victory for the oceans and our way of life," said Peter Lantin, president of the council of the Haida Nation, in a statement in response to the ruling.

The Haida and seven other First Nations, four environmental organizations and one labor union challenged the government's approval of Northern Gateway and presented their appeal to the court last October to try to block the pipeline.

Northern Gateway is a proposed 731 mile (1,177 km) pipeline project that would carry 525,000 barrels of diluted bitumen tar sands oil per day across mountains, waterways and temperate rainforest en route from the heart of Alberta's oil sands to the northern British Columbia town of Kitimat. Once at the coast, the crude would be loaded onto huge tankers to be navigated through narrow Pacific channels and storm-prone waters.

Opponents argue that the traditional First Nations way of life, economy and food sovereignty — reliant on the bio-regional ecosystem — would be severely damaged by an oil spill, which could wreak widespread environmental havoc on pristine forest and marine ecosystems.

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