

Failure to Consent – Proposed Trans Mountain Pipeline at the Headwaters of the Fraser River

**by Dawn Morrison, Secwepemc
Founder, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty**

February 20, 2017

“We are the people of the land, where the water flows from the highest mountains, through the rivers, on its way to the ocean”. The *late Bill Arnouse, Adams Lake, Secwepemc*

My name is Dawn Morrison, and I am member of the Neskonlith Secwepemc. I am also the Founder and Chair of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty that recently celebrated 10 years of raising awareness on Indigenous food sovereignty within the rapidly expanding food systems networks. My Secwepemc ancestry comes from a long lineage of hunters, fishers and gatherers whom have persisted over thousands of years in some of the most sustainable adaptation strategies of humanity.

On December 19, 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau approved the Trans Mountain Pipeline. The owner, Kinder Morgan is threatening to transport diluted bitumen (dil-bit), a highly explosive neurotoxin, across the Fraser River, less than 400 metres near the headwaters. If we allow it, would travel along the entire length of the Thompson in some places as little as 50 metres from the shoreline.

This letter outlines the concerns I share with many in the rapidly expanding food systems networks, with regards to the threats posed by Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Pipeline. The pipeline poses serious social and environmental impacts on the forests, fields and waterways in my ancestral Secwepemc territory where some of largest sockeye spawning grounds in the world exist.

Our complex system of Secwepemc bio-cultural heritage has been adapted over thousands of years of hunting, fishing, farming and gathering our Indigenous foods in the largest Indigenous territory the pipeline threatens to travel along 518 km of the Fraser and Thompson River systems. The Fraser River and its tributaries are an important part of our identity that is linked to our complex system of bio-cultural heritage where we are witnessing first hand the devastating impacts of extractive “resource” based economic activities.

The Canadian government, together with the energy company Kinder Morgan, and elected band council of Simpcw, Whispering Pines, Canim Lake and T'Kemplups, are in a conflict of interest and have ***failed to gain adequate prior informed consent*** from the grassroots Secwepemc hunters, fishers, farmers and gatherers who depend on the health and integrity of our watersheds for our food and livelihoods.

The Fraser Basin is the largest salmon bearing river system in the world. The river and its 6000 – 9000 tributaries are home to highly diverse gene pool of rapidly disappearing wild salmon, our most important Secwepemc food - not just for our people, but also for the bears, the eagles, and the trees. The Fraser River has also been designated special status in the federal government Canadian Heritage Rivers Management System.

If we allow the construction of the pipeline which is scheduled to start in September of 2017, Kinder Morgan would ship up to 900,000 barrels per day of diluted bitumen (dil-bit). This amount would triple the capacity of the old pipeline, and would carry the deadly toxic dil-bit to the Metro Vancouver

port in Coast Salish territories for export to China, the world's largest contributor of global carbon emissions accelerating climate change at increasingly alarming rates.

The land and food is our job and we cannot risk the contamination of the headwaters and all those downstream for the sake of the jobs Kinder Morgan is promising to local workers. In actuality, the building of the pipeline will mostly require technical and specialized construction migrant workers and will not benefit the Secwepemc or local economies in a deep and meaningful way.

The heavy bureaucracy and the environmental impact assessment act lacks the ability to adequately assess the cumulative impacts, and the cultural, spiritual, and economic threats to our wild salmon habitat and land and food system as a whole. It is our sacred responsibility, to protect forest ecosystems that provide shade and shelter for riparian areas where wild salmon spawn and migrate on their ways to the ocean and back to complete their amazing life cycle as they have done for thousands of years.

Social and Environmental Threats – No Risk is Too Small!

Kinder Morgan has a poor safety record with over 1800 violations in 19 years, and 500 of them related to pipelines. There has been an average of 8 oil spills per year in the last 10 years. Increased oil, means increase in spills.

The Kinder Morgan Pipeline will disrupt sensitive forest ecosystems that are necessary for the health and integrity of riparian areas on or near the shores of the Fraser and Thompson rivers. The opening of corridors for construction of the pipeline will disrupt the sensitive mountain ecosystems and the predator prey balance necessary for the conservation of Woodland Caribou, a species at risk in northern Secwepemcul'ecw (traditional Secwepemc territory).

There is a correlation between the violence against murdered and missing Indigenous women, and the high rates of addiction and poor mental health of workers in “resource” extraction industries such as oil and pipelines.

Call for Corporate Social Responsibility - Stop the pipeline at the headwaters!

All energy plans must take into account our ancient knowledge, values and wisdom encoded in our Secwepemc ancestry that teach about the ways in which our ancestors understand food as the basis of our economy and energy plans.

The global climate movement is our audience and we have infinite potential to develop alternative energy plans and community based economic strategies that would increase health outcomes and provide more meaningful jobs than pipelines.

Exercise the precautionary principle. We feel that *no risk is too small* to protect wild salmon, and our forests, fields, waterways, and our women, children and families.

Kinder Morgan and the Canadian government along with the northern elected band councils must be held responsible for the social disharmony in Secwepemc communities resulting from their failure to consent with our STOP - Secwepemc Trans Mountain Oversight Plenary.

Never underestimate spiritual strength, and join the rapidly expanding networks of youth, children, families who are mobilizing from Standing Rock to Secwepemcul'ecw to resist Kinder Morgan and the Trans Mountain Pipeline! (21 cities, 17 Indigenous tribes, and counting!)

To view the map of the proposed route of the pipeline threatening the Fraser River and Thompson river watersheds visit Wilderness Committee website address:

https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/kinder_morgan_pipeline_route_maps

For more detailed information on climate change view the National Geographic Movie titled: Before the Flood with Leonardo DiCaprio, OR

You can view the youtube video titled Disobedience by 350.org here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tdtc7ltYB8E>