

Vancouver action to support Tyendinaga Mohawks

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* Indigenous People living on Coast Salish Territory Block Major Truck Route in Support of Tyendinaga Mohawks and Six Nations *

On April 28th, 2008, about 70 people, mainly Indigenous people from across Turtle Island gathered at China Creek Park on Coast Salish Territory. Elders armed with medicines and drums led the people while Warriors flew Mohawk Warrior Flags on the parameters of the march. Mothers and fathers, children and youth, Elders and Warriors chanting "OPP out of Tyendinaga" and "OPP out of Six Nations" marched from Clark and Broadway to Clark and 12th Avenue where they blockaded the entire intersection for two and a half hours in rush hour traffic from 3pm-5:30pm.

The blockade was in response to an incident on April 25th, where Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) surrounded the quarries in Tyendinaga, demanding the surrender of the Mohawks. Guns were drawn and violence ensued on the part of the police. News broadcasts failed to report that a young man had both his arms broken by police and that guns were pointed Mohawk children.

This was following the OPP's swarm of Mohawk Territory earlier last week; the OPP's answer to the halting of construction of a development site that encroaches into Mohawk territory that a group of Warriors had reclaimed.

On April 27th six Indigenous People protecting their Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory were imprisoned, bringing the

total number of Indigenous people in Ontario jails for defending their land to 13. Ontario has thus chosen to imprison Indigenous people rather than honour their rightful title to their land. At the centre of the dispute is the Culbertson Tract, land that rightfully belongs to the Mohawks of Tyendinaga. Community members have been occupying a gravel quarry site for over a year.

On Monday April 28th, SWAT teams amassed on the Deseronto and Slash Roads, bordering the Tyendinaga quarry reclamation site. Community spokesperson Jason Maracle was told by the OPP to pull people out of the quarry because they were going in.

In support of the Tyendinaga Mohawks a blockade of Highway 6 was taken by people of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, whom have also faced several arrests, violations and oppression via the KLANadian government for protecting their lands.

On April 28th, the same day the SWAT team surrounded the Mohawks, Indigenous people on Coast Salish Territory, on the west Coast of Turtle Island, also took a stand as a show of Unity for our Brothers and Sisters back east and as a show of force to the KLANadian



government to withdraw their police forces out of Tyendinaga and Six Nations Territories. Clark Street and 12th Avenue was blockaded in the midst of full out rush hour traffic.

The location, known as the Clark-Knight Corridor Whole Route was chosen for its role as the City's primary goods (stolen and exploited from Indigenous lands) movement arterial; blocking it would therefore mean disrupting economic development in KLANada. The 3,000 trucks using the corridor each day make Clark-Knight the most important truck route in the City. The corridor also links the Vancouver Port and industrial areas on the north side of the City with industrial areas in south Vancouver, Richmond, Delta, Surrey, and beyond via Highways 91 and 99. The Port of Vancouver is KLANada's biggest port and trades \$43 billion in goods stolen from Indigenous lands with more than 90 trading economies annually. In addition, trucking is Canada's dominant freight mode, accounting for an estimated 70 percent of domestic shipments by value.

The April 28th blockade was not only symbolically effective, but also economically disruptive. Money and greed is the heart and heartbeat of KLANada, hence it was factored in that such an action would make KLANada listen. Further, some commuters on their way home from work and truck drivers moving [stolen Native] goods were forced to acknowledge that while they were inconvenienced for a few hours, Indigenous people from KLANada who have had their homelands invaded and occupied for over 150 years, have been inconvenienced much longer. Maybe the every ten-minute traffic report on car radios compelled people to ask why the OPP backed by the KLANadian government attacked Tyendinaga and question why Indigenous people are still fighting for their lands.

The blockade was effective. The goal was to impact the economy, create a public awareness of the issue, and show the KLANadian government and the public that Indigenous people are unified and ready to take action to protect our families and our lands when necessary.

Police have backed off of Tyendinaga and Six Nations. Tyendinaga is no longer surrounded by OPP and SWAT teams.

Through a solid grassroots effort, Indigenous people contributed to the pressure put on the KLANadian government and police to back off of Tyendinaga and Six Nations. However, as one Onondaga Woman explained, "We must keep in mind that the government continues to deny their responsibilities to our people and continue to be in denial of our rights to the land and that this situation is far from over".

The OPP has withdrawn its offensive in Tyendinaga and the blockade of Highway 6 at Six Nations has been taken down and rail traffic is being allowed through. For your information, some people from Six Nations who are being charged with criminal offences as a result of land rights stands made the following stand yesterday in solidarity:

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Approximately 1000 leaflets with the following text were handed out to blocked motorists and those passing by:

SUPPORT THE TYENDINAGA MOHAWKS

We are here today as part of emergency actions taking place across Canada in support of the Mohawks of Tyendinaga, who are currently in a stand-off

with the Ontario Provincial Police.

Since Friday, April 25th, there have been ten arrests, with five people currently remaining in custody. This standoff follows two weeks of escalating tensions arising from threats by the police to break-up a blockade erected in protest of a condo development underway on unceded Mohawk territory in the Culbertson Land Tract. Although this land has been under a federal land claims process for over thirteen years, the land itself continues to be exploited by the colonial state and corporate developers.

In March of 2007, the Tyendinaga Mohawks set up a camp at the site of a quarry in the Culbertson Land Tract where a vast mining project was underway, literally trucking away land that the federal government itself admits was never surrendered or sold by the Mohawks.

This reclamation site in defense of Mohawk territory has maintained a constant presence over the last year, and is currently surrounded by SWAT teams and OPP officers, who have their guns pointed on members of the community and have made overt threats of violence.

According to local organizer Lindsay Bomberry the action today "is meant to make a national statement of unity to government and police officials that we will not tolerate this kind of violence inflicted on indigenous people rightfully defending their rights and land."

Actions have already taken place in the communities of Kahnawake, Awkwesasne, a blockade continues to stand in Six Nations, along with solidarity actions in Ottawa, Montreal, Guelph, and Toronto.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Call the Ontario premier's office and demand that the Provincial Government honour Mohawk land, call off the OPP, and release the political prisoners. Premier Dalton McGuinty: 416-325-1941 (phone) 416-325-3745 (fax) dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Visit: www.mohawknationnews.com or www.ocap.ca

More Coverage is also available at <http://intercontinentalcry.org/urgent-help-needed-mohawks-surrounded-by-opp/>

Image from: <http://hammondface.blogspot.com/2008/04/this-didnt-happen.html>