

Decolonial Solidarity Gatineau-Ottawa

Noons for Now, 20 October 2022

I like the climate here.

Oops! I just said the 'C' word.

Climate.

But it's nice here in October with maple trees turning crazy orange and red colours.

In Ottawa people mostly complain about the climate: it's too cold or too hot. Last May, it was too windy, with hundreds of trees getting knocked down all over the city.

Storms like this are cited as evidence of the kind of weather derangement typical of the global phenomenon called climate chaos.

Scientists who examine this problem attribute it to us burning way too much fossil fuel, but if you go to websites like Canada Action, set up to defend the usefulness of, for example, the Coastal Gas Link pipeline currently being forced through the Yintah of the Wet'suwet'en people in British Columbia, you're unlikely to find the word climate mentioned.

The 'C' word.

It gets in the way of some people's plans, so best not mention it.

In 2010 the Unist'ot'en camp was established in the Yintah to block a pipeline project called Northern Gateway, which would have carried dilbit from the tar sands of Alberta to the BC coast at Kitimat.

Northern Gateway was cancelled in 2016, but in 2012 the Coastal Gas Link was proposed, following a similar route through unceded Wet'suwet'en territory, and opposition to this pipeline has never stopped.

The multiple crises this pipeline escalates are too serious for the protests to cease.

Canada opposed the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, then endorsed it in 2016, but the 2019 UN directive to the governments of Canada and British Columbia to stop work on the Coastal Gas Link - which is in violation of UNDRIP –continues to be ignored. Despite federal claims that it's working towards both reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and addressing the climate crisis, the RCMP still behave like corporate-hireling mercenaries in Wet'suwet'en territory, and greenhouse gas emissions from fossil industry expansion continue steeply rising.

Methane released from the fracked-gas fields which the Coastal Gas Link serves make this kind of fossil fuel as dangerous to the climate as coal. Investments today from Canada's largest banks are financing about 1.9 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, more than twice the total carbon footprint of the rest of Canada.

Enthusiasm for expanding Canada's export trade of fossil hydrocarbons is intense, with the same banks moving \$911 billion dollars of loans and investments into this industry since the Paris Agreement in 2015, when most national governments publicly made their famously welcome declaration to get serious about climate chaos.

The effect Canada's banks are having on this endeavour, as compellingly described by science and as endured by millions of people in droughts, floods and wildfires around the world, is reinforced by the Royal Bank of Canada only last year increasing its commitment to the fossil sector by another \$23 billion, twice as much as the year before, with immediate impacts most of us never hear about, as well as the ones we already know and dread.

As Melina Laboucan-Massimo of Indigenous Climate Action says: "In my community, we can't drink the water because of RBC's investments. We want to make sure communities elsewhere still can."

Think about what Melina says.

What I notice is how unfamiliar her attitude is, in contrast to the culture I'm used to, here in Ottawa.

The corporate culture which dominates this society considers the harsh side-effects of progress, like undrinkable water, as externalities, the bad stuff which affected communities have little or no legal way to protect themselves from, so whoever causes the damage has little or no responsibility for it either.

That's the plan anyway, so if some people like the Wet'suwet'en prefer to remain living within industry's sacrifice zones, it's their own problem, right?

The fact that the entire planet is now in the big banker's sacrifice zone is why they prefer to spin a different story. Greenwashing is epidemic, and the Royal Bank of Canada is now being investigated by Competition Bureau Canada for misleading advertising about their own environmental record. Because the

deliberate deceptions by RBC regarding its contributions to climate chaos need to be understood by everyone who banks with them.

The logic which they use to make their business model work means their accounting cannot include such disruptive elements as the very real possibility of Earth's global mean temperature going up another 4 to 6 degrees, because the big pipelines being financed now require decades of operation to break even.

The epic amounts of money going to nurture a business so existentially desolating as oil and gas is today means so much carbon will be pumped into the atmosphere in the next two decades that we don't stand a chance of making net-zero by 2050.

The damage being inflicted by the Coastal Gas Link in the Yintah of the Wet'suwet'en people, is a microcosm of what is happening globally as resource extraction financiers continue colonizing the planet, making many more communities' water undrinkable, their land uninhabitable and their lives untenable.

I'm told Canadians are nice people, but how nice are we if we don't stand up against this ecocide and genocide deliberately inflicted for short-term monetary profit? It's like Pizarro, looting the Inca kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of every scrap of gold he could find, and not minding who suffered or died as a consequence.

That's how far we've come.

The stand the Wet'suwet'en take against the Royal Bank of Canada and the Coastal Gas Link is a stand which honours a way of living which does not destroy what life needs to keep living.

But activism and public protest are marginal activities in Canada.

Why would anyone risk losing career advancement by opposing the power of the Royal Bank of Canada, the fifth largest backer of fossil fuel industry expansion in the world?

And while one activist with StandEarth, Sarah Beuhler can say, "We are incredibly disappointed that RBC is choosing to light our future on fire instead of being a climate champion," many other people have taken the bait offered by fossil interests and prefer to deny that climate chaos is a problem.

Don't even mention it.

The 'C' word.

Take the money and shut up.

This colonization of our hearts and minds is even more insidious than the colonization of the land, because once hearts and minds have been bought, what chance has the land?

I hear sometimes that we have lost.

That both justice for the oppressed of the Earth, and a chance of stopping catastrophic climate change are impossible.

The facts add up, the numbers don't lie, and the conclusion, dismal.

But activism of the kind Decolonial Solidarity is engaged in is an information culture a little different from the ones most of us are used to in media, science, education, politics, economics or history. For me anyway, it's not about what's already known in the algorithms of the end game RBC is playing, but about what cannot yet be even guessed at within the nexus of two complex and still only partly revealed quantities: the human mind and spirit, and its matrix, Earth's biosphere.

The cataclysmic conditions which the Royal Bank of Canada's actions invite are not inevitable. As Freda Huson of the Unist'ot'en Dark House Clan said to a reporter about a year or so ago: "What are you going to tell your grandchildren you did to prevent this from happening?"

David Beddoe, 15 October 2022