

Wild Resistance



Insurgent Subsistence

The following interview was done for Black and Green Review #3. It was taken in the form you read here from itsgoingdown.org

Fracking, tar sands, sour gas, liquefied natural gas (LNG) conversion stations and pipelines; in all cases, it would appear that our native friends up north have been trail blazing persistent resistance to the new wave of resource extraction and distribution. As they seem to typify it, it's just the new face of colonization, but an old enemy.

I had the pleasure of speaking to non-native green anarchists from British Columbia who have been involved with and supporting these encampments and have been able to give us some more details about the encampments, the challenges that they expose for anarchists and as non-natives, the contexts of decolonization and effective forms of resistance, and, most importantly, the role of community and subsistence.

This brings out a lot of vital questions and I greatly anticipate the furthering of this discussion and hearing more native voices on the matter (hopefully in BAGR no 4).

-Kevin Tucker

BGR: Can you give me an overview of some of the native energy extraction and distribution struggles going on up there?

The area we are talking about is the northwestern portion of so called British Columbia. It is home to many different indigenous nations (Gitksan, Tsimshian, Wet'suwet'en to name a few) who have been living here for thousands of years before the colonial forces arrived. Most of these territories are "un-ceded" which means the people have never surrendered or signed over their lands to the invaders. There are no treaties here. Part of the ongoing process of colonization in Canada has been the settler state institution of the 1876 Indian Act and with it, the Band Council system. This system was and continues to be used to subvert hereditary systems of governance, ones that existed prior to and in opposition in value to capitalist colonial society. Despite this, hereditary systems and cultures are still largely practised outside of the constraints imposed by the colonial government.

This region has a long history of resistance to resource extraction projects. We are mainly talking about 3 of the more active camps in our area; the Unist'ot'en Camp, Madii Lii and Lax U'u'la. The views expressed here are not representations of the camps but are based on our individual experiences. Also each of these camps is unique and quite different from each other.

The Unist'ot'en Camp

Probably the most well-known of the mounting northern indigenous resistance, the Unist'ot'en define themselves as "a non-violent occupation of Unceded Unist'ot'en territory. FPIC (free, prior and informed consent) protocol is conducted with visitors to show their complete jurisdiction" (unistotencamp.com). This manifestation, as a physical block to industrial encroachment on their territory, began in 2010 with the Pacific Trails Pipeline (PTP) proposing to cross their territory (along with 16 other nations) to connect fracked gas in the north east of the province via a 480 km pipeline with a yet to be approved export terminal on the northern coast.

The support for the Unist'ot'en has grown exponentially over the years due to a variety of factors including their fierce dedication and savvy social media use, but the largest contributing factor in my opinion has been their annual Action Camp which invited and introduces people to their struggle as they define it, and offers an opportunity for people to challenge themselves within a serious experience of decolonization and re-connection with the land.

Although the space is often referred to as the 'Unist'ot'en Camp,' they do not see themselves as a "protest or a demonstration," but as occupying and using their traditional territory as their clan has for centuries. This point is essential to understanding their approach: it is not activism, these are their lives and they are challenging the entire colonial state of Canada.

Madii Lii

Madii Lii is a traditional territory of the Luutkudziiwus House group which is part of the Gitksan nation. The Madii Lii camp was setup in August of 2014 to permanently close the territory to industrial resource extraction and to implement their Territorial Management Plan. It is situated in the Suskwa River valley about 35 km's outside the town of Hazelton. A base camp has been established there, consisting of a large permanent cabin with greenhouses and a garden space. A heavy-duty metal gate was installed on the bridge crossing the Suskwa River. This bridge is the only road into the territory and is now fully controlled by family and friends of the house group.

The current proposal that Madii Lii is fighting is the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission project which is owned by TransCanada. It would be a 900km fracked gas (LNG) pipeline stemming from the fracking wells in northeastern BC, which will be powered by the proposed "Site C" dam on the Peace River, and will lead to the proposed LNG terminal on Lelu Island. As of now, the PRGT pipeline has been granted federal approval on the condition that the PNW LNG facility on Lelu Island gets approved.

At the beginning, pipeline surveyors were kicked out of the territory and since then, the camp has been successful at preventing industry from entering or conducting work on the territory. With the absence of industry "knocking at the door", the camp has been able to focus on hunting, trapping, fishing and wild foraging. As well as hosting events aimed at reconnecting youth with their territory. Another focus has been on infrastructure like more cabins, a large smokehouse for processing salmon and moose as well as plans to install a small scale water wheel to generate power for the cabin. Members are currently pursuing a court battle as well by filing a judicial review of the project.

Lax U'u'la

In late August 2015, a crew of women of Tsimshian, Haida, Nisga'a, and Gitksan bloodlines initiated the defense of Lax U'u'la (Lelu Island) and the Flora Bank from LNG industry destruction. The Gitwilgyoots Tribe Sm'ogyet Yahaan (hereditary chief) and Ligitgyet Gwis Hawaal (hereditary house leader), and their families began a defense camp on Lax U'u'la, which is Gitwilgyoots traditional hunting and fishing territory. They were also joined by various significant hereditary people from other Tsimshian tribes, and a diverse crew of native and non-native outside supporters.

This camp has been set up to prevent any further destruction of their land, as Petronas and Pacific North West LNG (PNW LNG) are planning on building an \$11 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on Lax U'u'la, which is at the mouth of the Skeena river near Prince Rupert, BC. They have been conducting environmental and archaeological assessments since 2012, which have resulted in over a hundred test hole sites and cut blocks, and have in the process

cut down numerous culturally modified trees. This facility would be fed by 3 pipelines, including the recently provincially-approved Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT), owned by Trans Canada, which crosses through multiple indigenous territories, and which is currently being met with resistance from the Gitksan people at the Madii Lii camp. This proposed LNG plant has been opposed not only by the Sm'ogyet Yahaan, but was unanimously refused by the 9 allied Tsimshian tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, who turned down a \$1.25 billion offer by Petronas at 3 separate meetings in Lax Kw'alaams, Vancouver, and Prince Rupert. Regardless, in preparation for the LNG plant construction, Petronas/PNW LNG have been trying to conduct environmental and engineering assessments around Lax U'u'la, which includes test drilling that are actively destroying habitat essential to all the salmon that run throughout the Skeena Watershed.

The proposed project is still under review by the Federal Government, who have until late June 2016 to make a decision as to whether or not it will be approved. The Lax Kw'alaams band council, without consultation with or approval from any of the Lax Kw'alaams village members, have recently stated their support for the project. In response to this statement of support, the Gitwilgyoots hereditary chief, has said: "We have been betrayed by our elected leader. Elected band councils have no jurisdiction off of reserve land. Legal precedents in the Supreme Court of Canada are all in our favour as hereditary chiefs, and we will fight this to the end, whether the band council is on our side or not."

To date, the resistance to Petronas/PNW LNG's project has mainly been on the water. In practice, this has primarily taken the form of trying to prevent the workers from performing any work, and disrupting environmental and engineering assessments. This means escorting environmental surveyors off of the Flora and Agnew Banks, preventing the drill ships from entering and anchoring on the banks, and slowing down or turning back charter boats transporting workers to the barges. In early February 2016, the last drilling barges pulled off the Banks, allegedly 7 test holes short of their goal.

There is also resistance by re-asserting that Lax U'u'la is used as a place of healing and ceremony. Infrastructure is continually being constructed and there are other preparations for defense of the island itself (which also serve to maintain and expand water operations). Several structures have been built, and once there is less consistent confrontation, there is the intention to use these spaces as a place to teach youth about ancestral ways of living off of the land, and to heal from the continued traumas of colonization.

Although 100s of kilometers apart, these camps are all part of the same watershed. Madii Lii is defending the headwaters of the Suskwa River on which the camp is situated, as are the Unist'ot'en who are located along the Wedzin Kwa (Morice River). There have also been defense camps set up by the Tahltan people in an area of their territory commonly known as "The Sacred Headwaters" which is where the Skeena river originates. All of these are tributaries that flow

into the Skeena River which runs to the coast and meets the ocean at the Lax U'u'la defense camp. Juvenile salmon feed and mature on the Flora Bank and then eventually return to spawn in their place of origin swimming back up stream past these camps.

A common thread at these indigenous defense camps is not only defending a territory, but a way of life and we, as non-native anarchists (who have also been subject to colonization) are invested in learning and creating a nurturing way of life through insurgent subsistence.

BGR: What has the non-native anarchist involvement and support looked like?

Anarchist involvement and support has been varied in both its approach and form, from organized groups, to informal crews and individuals to fund raising, solidarity actions, and physical presence at the camps. The location of the camps is remote to many people in Canada, who live close to the 49th parallel and have little experience outside of urban environments/struggle. One of the bigger hurdles we are experiencing is in learning how to interact with integrity with people of a social system that challenges some core Anarchist values. For the most part, West Coast Indigenous societies are quite hierarchical, for example historically slave holding was common practice. So our cultural references and understandings are different, yet not, and can be challenging to navigate.

Supporting these camps has created some interesting situations in regards to personal safety and security. Often, as anarchists, we engage in activities or actions with people we know and trust and close affinity is commonly a requirement for carrying out certain plans. However, in the heat of the moment, these personal protocols are sometimes thrown out the window in a sudden conflict that must be dealt with. Gut instinct takes over and you hope for the best. These struggles are not exempt from common debates found in other movements. For example, debating violence vs. non-violence, differences on tactics or long term strategy and disagreements on working with the cops or the legal system are all present at times, but these camps are made up of many different individuals with a variety of ideas and many affinities are discovered through working with folks and building connections and trust.

BGR: Can you talk a bit about the methods used in these struggles? In particular, can you speak about the use of encampments and communities literally supporting each other and the land while potentially revitalizing traditional aspects of their societies?

Resistance to resource extraction projects have largely been led by indigenous communities in this region. It is often based on defending a

traditional territory that the hereditary system has not treated or given away. A common method has been to build a camp or a small village directly in the path of the proposed project and then reassert traditional social systems, putting it in the face of the colonial system. When you set your life up around resistance, it is no longer this separate activity that you do in your spare time. It becomes an inseparable part of you.

At the Unist'ot'en camp for example, people have been living there for years now asserting ownership of their traditional lands. The infrastructure that has been built there has allowed for folks to live there year round growing and gathering food. At the same time, industry has been making constant attempts to enter the territory via road or helicopter and only because of the permanent occupation of the camp are folks able to kick out industry at every attempted entry. At Lax U'u'la, folks staying there day and night were able to implement a routine patrol of the island and surrounding waters. The company's attempts were regularly intercepted and delayed if not completely shut down. The companies are unsure of how to proceed with these situations when it is so clearly the traditional home of a group of people. The cops are also uncertain about how to deal with these camps which we talk further about later.

These types of resistance camps also offer opportunities which other struggles don't necessarily have. The down time in between confrontations with industry offer the potential for focusing on learning traditional and non-traditional skills that folks might not otherwise have the time for, or at least, intentionally, put the time into. At Lax U'u'la, methods involving fishing and setting crab traps have been used to stop industrial drilling operations. At the Unist'ot'en camp, a trap line is in operation on the proposed path of the pipeline. There's also some very interesting opportunities for non-natives as well as natives to learn about the hereditary systems and cultures that colonization has so strongly tried to erase.

BGR: What has involvement and support of these struggles taught you about the importance and nature of decolonization as a non-native anarchist?

Basically, show me a colonizing people that hasn't been dispossessed and colonized in the first place. In the fight against resource extraction in BC, I hear a lot of people expressing the idea that it's up to native people to stop these projects because on the one hand they have legal rights to these lands whereas non-natives don't have any say or rights, and on the other hand there's a recognition, especially here up north amongst pipeline opponents, that the indigenous are a sovereign people who can act on their self-determination.

The daily lives and minds of non-natives are so deeply colonized that to talk of self-determination, self-organization, autonomy and freedom for ourselves is seen as an abstraction not worth considering. Fear of consequences reigns.

From my perspective, a movement towards decolonization coming from indigenous people will never succeed if there isn't a parallel thrust on the part of the majority population, i.e., non-natives.

To think that natives can become free and self determined on the land while the rest of us are kept in a state of obedient wage slaves getting our food and tools at Walmart and Home Depot, buying private property or renting from landlords, being ruled by police, prisons and political parties and swearing allegiance to the Canadian state, is purely delusional.

Now, we are going to have to start sharing in a real way, both the resistance to the industrial onslaught, the shit of repression and the beauty and bounty of subsistence. So in a way we have already begun. We have already been invited to share the salmon, the moose, the berries and we are offering our help on concrete decolonization projects and strategizing and tactical discussions.

But lets not paint a rosy picture of how things are. In leviathanic times, things are always messy and complicated. An enormous amount of healing has to happen before a force can be created with which the state has to contend with. And I mean on both sides of the divide.

The reserves beside where I live have the highest rate of suicide in BC. I think one place where we are most needed is to help in the creation of a welcoming infrastructure (trails, shelter, funds, outdoor equipment, skills workshops, etc.) to get the youth out of the dead end misery that prevails on the res. and back on the land. As non-natives, we need the same.

More than ever we all need to experience situations where we can practice our individual and collective power and have a taste of what an existence outside of and against the state feels like. A rediscovery of our fighting spirit and a capacity for mutual aid.

And, by the way, we do need hope and love and to build respect, understanding and trust. Too many times I find both sides using each other as cannon fodder, media images and legal shields. We've got to stop using each other as objects and commodities and start treating each other as human individuals, as people, each with our own strength and weaknesses, our insights and blind spots, each having different contexts and different stories to share. Smaller scale, face to face, long term interactions enables this in a big way.

Together and separately, both new comers and indigenous can ignite the embers of community and conspire, breathe together, to fan the flames that will eventually reduce civilized ways to cold ashes, blown by the winds of our desires.

BGR: What has the response to these encampments been? Can you talk a bit about the repression and backlash?

So far, compared to other situations like Oka and Gustafsen Lake, the repression has been fairly minimal. Confrontations are usually verbal but there is always the threat of escalation. Last summer for example, 2 RCMP officers

attempted to enter the Unis'tot'en camp and were strongly turned around by the defenders. Soon after, it was leaked that the RCMP were planning a massive raid of the Camp. Hotels in the nearby towns of Smithers, Houston and Burns Lake were booked up by cops and military vehicles were spotted in numerous areas. The RCMP setup their own roadblock harassing anyone on their way in or out of the Unis'tot'en territory. A huge call out for support went out, the camp swelled with supporters and preparations for defending the camp intensified. Solidarity actions took place across the country and just when folks thought it was going down, the cops fully withdrew. As of now the raid still hasn't happened and support is only growing.

At Lax U'u'la, the police would threaten to "move in" and make arrests every time conflict heated up on the water but so far no arrests have been made although it has been reported that there are many open files being investigated. Industrial ships and security vessels would frequently use their boats to ram the defenders on the water. Numerous attempts were made on their part to flip defenders canoes and high speed boat chases were a common occurrence. They would essentially be physical defense for the industrial drilling barges. Heavy surveillance is present and comes in the form of people getting followed and having house visits by the RCMP trying to obtain information about individuals or events. This also creates psychological and financial stress like in the case of one participant losing their job for supporting a camp. People have also had visits from authorities out at remote bush camps. They always want to let you know they are watching.

It's common practice now for most industry workers to either be escorted by private security who film and record every interaction, or for the workers themselves to be wearing chest cameras for surveillance purposes. A question that security or industry personnel are using constantly and at multiple camps, is asking if they are in danger or if their personal safety is at risk being on the territory. They are trying to find and to justify a reason to move in with force.

Aside from the mostly positive response from locals, there are a number of people pissed off about these camps. Certain misguided individuals feel entitled to have unobstructed access to these territories because "This is Canada!" or "I pay taxes and its a free country!" Largely, folks are supportive but there have been quite a few aggressive confrontations with locals. At Madii Lii there has been at least one attempt to cut down the gate and a few people threatening to burn the cabin down. At the Unis'tot'en camp a few signs at the bridge checkpoint have been firebombed and just recently someone smashed out the windows in the checkpoint building. At Lax U'u'la, its gone as far as fist fights from pro-industry locals and death threats from an individual armed with a knife. When an area or territory is reclaimed it really puts the colonial situation in peoples face.

BGR: What future do you see as intensifications around resource

extraction methods are met with this communal resistance?

The infinite demands of civilization require industrial resource extraction to expand to the point of complete domestication of the earth. The potential for an indigenous uprising in Canada has been reported on by the authorities for years now and as industry and development smother more and more traditional lands, we are quickly approaching the boiling point.

In response to similar pipeline projects, this summer we are expecting 2 more resistance camps to emerge in the region. This is something I think we are going to see more frequently. Little pockets of resistance popping up all over the place, eventually saturating an area to the point where resistance camps border other resistance camps. Entire defended territories neighboring other defended territories effectively become liberated autonomous zones. When you cross the blockade, there is such a clear and inspiring feeling that you aren't in Canada anymore. The laws and rules of the state are not recognized. You've got folks defending the entry point, ready to stand up to intruding authority. Some folks are building infrastructure, some are out hunting and some are preparing food.

These, and more, are all necessary activities to create and defend a healthy community. It gives you a taste of what freedom might actually feel like in an autonomous pocket of resistance outside of colonial law. The ability to determine your own way of life based on a healthy habitat in which we live and which we defend.

BGR: Why do you think these methods haven't extended beyond native resistance struggles?

The tactic of roadblocking and setting up camps to protect and re-occupy the land has a long rich history in native resistance to the Canadian state. So when direct action is called for, there is a tradition to fall back on. "Hey lets do what Grandma did!", or "Remember when Auntie and Uncle blocked that railroad?". It shows the value of setting precedents. At the time, a lot of these actions were brutally repressed after a few days or weeks of negotiations.

What's happening now in BC is that there is a legal "grey zone" about who owns this land. Apart from Treaty 8 in northeastern BC, most of the province sits on un-ceded, un-surrendered, un-treated native land according to British Law. Both The British North America Act and The Royal Proclamation documents, are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution.

For 150 years, the provincial government denied the need for any treaty to legally own the land. BC is officially 92% provincial crown land, 1% Federal Crown land and 7% fee simple private property.

This created a climate of uncertainty for investors who actually want a solid legal deed for their business. In order to create a "climate of certainty" for investors, the BC government created the BC Treaty process in 1992, designed

to extinguish legal “aboriginal title”, turn the reserves into municipalities and business corporations (the so-called “First Nations”) and move on with capitalist resource extraction and development.

Needless to say the process hasn't been smooth and even across the board. After 23 years of negotiations and millions in legal fees, only a few bands have come to treaty agreements.

Anyway to cut short a long, manipulative, boring legal process, there is now a recognized “Aboriginal Title”, similar to the ownership of private property where an “estate”, an abstract entity, is owned and the actual real existing land is owned through Allodial Title of the nation state to which it belongs, independent of any superior landlord. Again this interpretation of native title is being challenged by indigenous people in Canadian and International courts.

So as the “First Nations” are invited to dialogue at the table of power as property owners and shareholders, they legally have to be consulted and compensated for any business happening on their traditional territories. That is the official line anyway. The reality on the ground is more about being conned and insulted and given a few thousand bucks per band member in exchange for their land and resources.

Sorry for this long legal and historical background but this is the official reality corner that indigenous people have been pushed into in BC, and apart from the people's own determined stance, it helps to understand why camps like the Unist'ot'en clan have established can still exist 6 years later.

The state is biding its time, negotiating, creating and finding its business partners within the assimilated strata of the native population. Don't we all need jobs? They are working hard on creating an image of support by dangling a financial carrot so they can confuse the population and remove the non-compliant natives who don't have a price tag.

In regard to non-native roadblocks or camps, there is no legal eggshells or negotiations to be had. It is simply considered trespassing or blocking a public road and the law moves in swiftly. There is more of a self image of the good, law abiding, reasonable citizen in the non-native population and a history of pacifist and civil-disobedience practice in the environmental movement. Add to this an aesthetic and intrinsic value approach to nature (creating parks and protected areas), instead of, or in tandem with, a subsistence approach in which humans have an active relationship to nature, the tactics that are risky and demanding don't gain as much popularity on this side of land defense.

This said, over the years there have been a few non-native tree sits and camps to stop development. Some were removed with SWAT teams armed with automatic weapons and there have been native blockades that were met with heavy repression too.

At this point our approach has been to take advantage of that legal grey zone, to promote decolonization on both sides of the divide, to dig our heels and get ready both socially and tactically to defend the land, our autonomy and our subsistence. We have to set new precedents for non-native resistance.

BGR: In advocating "primal war", it's been essential for me to emphasize that resistance and re-wilding must go hand-in-hand. This seems the way to break out of this philosophical and revolutionary mentality where we take care of one problem (theoretically) and then we go onto the next. That break for me came through understanding why native resistance movements fought to the death and revolutionaries turned to gallows: people kill for ideas, but they are willing to fight to their death for community, for something they know and feel.

This kind of encampment and community-based resistance echoes eternally as indigenous societies are met with civilizations, as they are forced to confront perpetual growth and consumption. Is there a conception or feeling of resistance tied to community here? Are the encampments and the like seen as an extension of community or simply a response to occupation and ecocide?

We must view each of these camps as completely unique from one to the next and the involvement of a community varies quite a bit. I would say that it's a full spectrum ranging from very limited participation (down to a few individuals), to the full creation of a community. We have seen communities coming together to resist as well as communities being born out of resistance. However this brings the question; "what is community?" We must not idealize native communities or resistance. Colonization has severely impacted natives and non-natives and these movements are far from flawless. They are made up of a wide range of people from all different backgrounds and beliefs.

At most, we hope these struggles will lead to the permanent reclamation and occupation of traditional lands outside of the colonial state. At the very least, we hope these struggles will strengthen certain aspects of local existing communities and promote the fighting spirit necessary for resisting decolonization and civilization. But, the approach of insurgent subsistence is just this, rebuilding/discovering the connection between ourselves and the land. For some people, this was never lost, for others we are beginning from scratch and we are building our confidences and abilities through this struggle.

BGR: What can we, as non-native anarchists, learn from this? Is "insurgent subsistence" a necessary part of resistance to civilization?

What these struggles have reinforced for me, as a non-native anarchist, is the importance of having a community connected to such battles. And, although this is not always possible, planting roots with others in a familial way (not necessarily based on blood but based on affinity and connection) can build a

resilient foundation for the fight against civilization.

The process of civilization and domestication starts with colonization, dispossession, the annihilation of culture and the eradication of autonomy by removing us from the land and creating dependence through waging war against subsistence. This undeclared war has been going on for centuries and the idea of “insurgent subsistence” is not only resisting this process but reversing it. When the totality of the land base is private property or state-owned, when berries are sprayed with chemicals by logging companies, when hunting or fishing is policed by armed goons of the government, when every tree is owned by “the Crown”, regaining a certain level of freedom and subsistence definitely goes against this state of affairs, an insurgent spirit is inevitable.

We practice subsistence and resistance as one and the same. One cannot sustain itself without the other and through implementing these ideas, we can build a culture of resilience. Also, by embracing and practicing these ideas, we frequently find ourselves in situations that build community. Every region will have different methods of resisting civilization that work best for them. Although the need for autonomy in food, shelter, medicine and tools, including the need to share, is universal, we can only speak about and develop methods for our own context.

Wild subsistence is largely dependent on a healthy undomesticated land base. However it is not only about harvesting food and materials from the wild but about building a deep relationship with our surroundings and this can be done anywhere. The quality of this relationship is most important because it determines how we interact with our surroundings. Without it, materials or food available for harvest, can be seen simply as just resources for exploitation.

Not only do civilization, capitalism and colonization thrive on the lack of nurturing relationships, but they perpetuate and enforce negative and harmful interactions with all surroundings. The continuous implementation of this dynamic and the stifling effects it has on ourselves and our habitats, brings the ever increasing need for a fierce insurgency to put an end to the onslaught against subsistence and freedom.

BGR: Do you find elements of hope within these struggles that are missing in the larger anarchist milieu? Not in terms of naivety, but in the sense that removed of community, it seems so much easier to just go with the flow of civilized life, to get entrapped in the hollowness of this hyper-technological non-reality and just feel like giving up?

I've felt fulfillment and inspiration in these struggles that I haven't experienced in other anarchist projects. Being engaged in subsistence practices or conflict at a blockade camp has such a strong feeling of experiencing something “real”. Where as returning home, to the dreary routine of our pretend reality, really throws it in your face that, within civilization and capitalism, our

existence is meaningless.

The intense feeling of unquestionable purpose behind what you are fighting for creates the experience of finally being alive with actual clarity. Knowing that these battles will go beyond just stopping a pipeline, creates a sense of longevity that is lacking in similar anarchist struggles. Once these industrial projects are defeated, the camps will remain, not only to keep future proposals at bay, but to provide an avenue for people to get back on the land and an opportunity to realize and remember life outside of the colonial system.

I find it incredible that one of the most effective ways of resisting these land destroying, resource extraction projects is by learning or remembering how to live off of these lands again. In order to fight these projects, we need to be living on the land, and in order to live on the land we need to be fighting these projects. Life becomes resistance and resistance becomes life.

BGR: So much of the anarchist milieu has embraced rhetoric over struggle, deeming anything that stands for something other than the cherished "Self" as moralistic or delusional. It's easy to see how that idea prevails within Modernity, but I see no path ahead there and these struggles are a reminder that outside of our own reality that the earth is still here, communities are struggling to exist outside of and along the peripheries of civilization, and that as monumental as civilization's impact has been, it is still reliant upon acting as though all resources are finite and all actions are without consequence.

Is there a reflection here of what a rooted and grounded resistance to civilization can look like? To what barriers to perception we carry, having been indoctrinated with the rhetoric of individualism?

When I read "outside of and along the peripheries of civilization" I feel, I have to bring minor corrections as to how an outsider might see daily life in those camps. As was pointed out earlier, regular contacts and meetings with state agents are arranged by some of the leaders and most material needs are met by buying stuff at stores, like the rest of us. Decolonization is a complex and messy learning process and we should render ourselves a disservice by creating idealized images (spectacles) which have little to do with the reality on the ground.

Having said this, there is a lot to be inspired from. As was discussed earlier the methods of coupling determined resistance to industrial destruction and the state with the creation of communal relations which had never completely disappeared in their communities, rooted in the history of this land and on the land itself is really powerful.

It is a pleasure to see people who have been stomped on and humiliated by disease, Christianity, schools, racism, alcohol and the British/Canadian

empire to empower themselves, to again redefine who they are and where they stand, on their own terms.

As non-natives, this is the question we have to ask ourselves; who are we and where are we? By grounding ourselves in our personal histories and in the history of the land we stand on, on the actual ground, we root ourselves in real space and time. By doing this we multiply our powers of understanding and acting on our predicament. I have a hard time to explain this with words but I feel it and see it in my own life. Although what lies ahead is open ended, we cannot deny that we are our histories.

Which brings me to this individualist polemic. It is easy to build straw men and I want to acknowledge the diverse approaches to the same goal or even different goals, but when you mention the primacy of rhetoric over struggle in some circles, I see an all too familiar pattern where theoretical purity becomes a paralyzing agent. So everything becomes morality, activism, vanguardism, causes etc. And, like some are saying, the best thing is to do nothing and point fingers.

My problem with individualist ideology is that it stands, for some people, in opposition and isolation to others. An intellectual vacuum constructed around the self, a wall with a moat built around ones own identity. It is a denial of relationships and contexts which create individual living organisms, and flowing the other way, individual (indivisible) living organisms creating relationship and sometimes contexts.

In a sense (narrow) individualism is similar to modern science which puts life on a chopping block, ready to be dissected. Historically a lot of individualist and nihilists have been enamored with science and technology and lets be honest, a lot of anarchists too. The flows and swirls of life are way more complex than these reductionist concepts, where the "Self" has become the new specter.

In one way, we can say that individuals are made up of their relations with others and the world and relations are made up of and by individuals. The point is to remember that living individual organisms are the ones experiencing life. "Relationships" in themselves don't. This is one aspect of anarchist thinking that has always been attractive to me; the centering on the freedom and authenticity of the actual living person, on the free initiative and creativity of individuals and the mutuality it implies.

But it seems that nowadays this point of convergence has become an ingrown toenail. Instead of becoming expansive and generous, it has become narrow and poor, it has adopted a miser attitude that sees others as instruments and tools to be used and discarded like any other commodity on the market. A logical conclusion to an extreme liberal and instrumental ideology of property ownership but totally out of whack from an anarchist perspective which is striving to create a context of freedom for everybody.

I guess a deep feeling of defeat is prevalent in the devastated landscape of modernity. Given the miserable submissive slave mentality of most of my contemporaries surrounding me, sometimes it does feel that I am encircled by

enemies, hence the wall built around oneself. But I know that determinism has never done any of us any good. Dream crushing is the main goal of this system and miserabilism, its main industrial output.

For myself a dip in an ice cold creek, putting in my mouth a handful of sweet huckleberries that were picked with friends, or listening to the wind, amongst other things, blows away these feelings of loss. To get the fuck out of our heads and fully into our bodies is really beneficial. And finally, to fight back, to keep the powerful of this world from sleeping peacefully at night, to plot, to conspire, to dream, practicing mutual aid as we go, reinvigorates the will to live full lives in spite of and against this freedom, individuality/ community and wildness devouring machine.

Our children are beginning to learn a different way to walk and learn. As an anarchist I strive for my relations to be intentional, deep and honest. These things matter to me so I will fight from where I am standing, by positioning myself to the best advantage. Building these relationships not only with the people but with the spaces, the rivers that flow from the Unist'ot'en past Madii Lii, past where I live to the Flora Banks, we are only getting a glimpse of what this connection and rootedness could be. I am still working out where I fall within this whole thing, but to fight is to have integrity and humbleness for the gifts of the world that my family eats and drinks more and more every day.

BGR: There's a tendency to say that anarcho-primitivists and green anarchists both romanticize and overly critique indigenous communities and structures. As you point out, you are working with indigenous societies that do have hierarchy as central elements within them. I see the need to be honest in our assessments about the impacts of domestication, but there's a difference in framing the consequences of domestication to expose the roots and origins of civilization and equating any instance of domestication with civilization. That was never the point.

Having an idea about the societies and communities that we chose to build and foster doesn't mean that sedentary hunter-gatherers in the Pacific Northwest don't deserve support in their struggles and their want to not be killed by civilization. There's a line between critique and condemnation, between personal aspirations and solidarity. As you point out, that certainly applies here. Do you find that a difficult line to walk or does the reality of colonization just keep the perspective pretty clear?

As anarchists we're always dealing with the question of how to work, fight and play with non-anarchists and traditional cultures. I've got to admit that over the years I've found more reciprocity and anarchistic relations with

indigenous people who come from a more nomadic, small band, cultural background in the interior than in the more sedentary and slave/commoner/nobility ranked coastal cultures. This is a generalization, as I have met coastal folks who share our desires, but the feeling and experience of a more rigid culture stands.

In any solidarity and decolonization efforts with traditional cultures, we are asking ourselves; are we helping to revive traditions that are diametrically opposed to our desire for free relationships instead of institutionalized, coercive ones? Are we enabling a revamped version of older national liberation schemes, where the mythical golden age of a heavenly past before the devil appeared, is to be re-established, lock, stock, and barrel? I think those are complex questions, given the transformative capacity and diversity of individuals and cultures involved, and the legacy of colonization.

It is a difficult line to walk and at the same time it is really clear that we are guests and/or invaders, that there is an ongoing history of genocide. My approach has been to avoid becoming a servant, and instead to offer solid support and search for affinities with different individuals, some becoming actual friends. At the same time, to stay open, honest, and understanding, to listen to those I disagree with on their approach and practice.

Both we, anarchists and traditionalists, share a disgust and opposition to the poisoning and destruction of the land and both stand for self-determination against the state. This is where we act in solidarity.

But only by being physically present can we start sharing personal aspirations of horizontal relations.

I actually have seen instances of native warriors feeling envious of the anarchist's freedom to act as they see fit, uncontrolled by leadership and traditions but, ideally, still humble and aware of consequences. Subversion takes many forms.

In all human cultures, the question of leadership has always been a thorny one, especially for us as anarchists. I am told by some indigenous folks that in pre-colonial times, the hereditary chiefs were actually close to the ideal of leadership. They didn't boss people around, didn't have command power but had speech power with which they summed up the feelings and desires of the group, convinced through well-reasoned arguments, not through coercion, listened and took into account the diversity of views, were the poorest and the hardest working and were removed or even killed if they became haughty or out of touch with their community.

Now, is this an accurate account of the past? Or is it an ideal construct, like the ones for Progress, Democracy, Civilization? What I see on the ground today is a diversity of individual hereditary leaders, some behaving with the best intentions towards the health and freedom of their people and territory, some are fence-sitters or contradictory, some are being outright sell-outs or dictatorial kings and queens. Are these last instances only a by-product of colonization? I don't think so, but I can imagine that in the past removal and replacement procedures were well established compared to today.

All this reminds me how little I know about the cultures that were born on this land. It is an ongoing learning process and I find it fascinating and exciting. I want to thank you for this interview, as it made us work hard to put on paper what is it exactly that we are thinking and doing.



Blockade at Madii Lii camp. Photo: Idle No More.



Lax U'u'la defenders and Wet'suwet'en chiefs standing together



Constructing a pit house at the Unistoten camp. Photo from Warrior Publications.

"To think that natives can become free and self determined on the land while the rest of us are kept in a state of obedient wage slaves getting our food and tools at Walmart and Home Depot, buying private property or renting from landlords, being ruled by police, prisons and political parties and swearing allegiance to the Canadian state, is purely delusional.

Now, we are going to have to start sharing in a real way, both the resistance to the industrial onslaught, the shit of repression and the beauty and bounty of subsistence. So in a way we have already begun. We have already been invited to share the salmon, the moose, the berries and we are offering our help on concrete decolonization projects and strategizing and tactical discussions.

But lets not paint a rosy picture of how things are. In leviathanic times, things are always messy and complicated. An enormous amount of healing has to happen before a force can be created with which the state has to contend with. And I mean on both sides of the divide."



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