



Hartley Bay Band Council

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MEDIA ADVISORY ATTENTION ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

Enbridge Promise to Protect Down for the Count.

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For Immediate Release.

The ship currently docked at Kitimat looking like a prizefighter with a broken nose is an ugly reminder of the threat posed by proposed pipelines and tanker traffic to the territory of the Gitga'at First Nation and the Great Bear Rainforest.

A freighter is never pretty but The Petersfield looked a lot better before she took a sucker punch in the treacherous waters of the Douglas Channel.

Details are sketchy, but we have been told the ship was involved in a collision about 40 kilometres (26 miles) South of Kitimat.

Ernie Hill, whose feast name is Snaxeed, is the Hereditary Eagle Chief of the Gitga'at First Nation. Chief Snaxeed says, "This ship was likely being guided by Pacific pilots who are the best navigators and seafarers in the entire world. But even with them onboard and other sophisticated safety precautions, these shipping accidents still occur. Mechanical failure or human error, the outcomes are the same for our culture and our territory. The oil spills over our Elders, our children, our Spirit bears and killer whales".

Judging by the damage done, a whale strike seems unlikely. Running into a chunk of First Nation's Territory seems more likely and that prospect causes flashbacks to the Queen of the North disaster. Over three years ago, the ferry struck Gil Island and sank about an hour after impact. The vessel and vehicles within her are decaying and threatening traditional food harvesting areas.

Gitga'at spokesman Cameron Hill says, "The Gitga'at are of the sea and we have always known that oil & gas tankers in these waters were a horrible and frightening idea. Hopefully the Petersfield incident will help Canada and the world understand that too."

If the Petersfield were a boxer she'd be a light flyweight and the infamous Exxon Valdez would be a middleweight. The supertankers or VLCCs (Very Large Cargo Carriers) that are proposed to haul tar sands oil from Kitimat through Gitga'at territory are the super-heavyweights being twice the size of the Exxon Valdez. Even at its relatively small size, the Petersfield came close to causing environmental damage because she was likely carrying thousands of barrels of fuel. If, for whatever reason, a ferry or a smaller freighter cannot successfully navigate our precarious waterways, what assurances can be offered that a VLCC will never hit a submerged pinnacle or unfamiliar islet and deliver the knockout punch to the Gitga'at people living in the Great Bear Rainforest.

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For more information about the Gitga'at – www.gitgaat.net
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