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## **Summit targets Gateway pipeline's environmental risks**

**By Josh Massey June 8, 2009 05:11 pm**

MORICETOWN – Members from communities along the proposed Enbridge pipeline met on Saturday to voice their environmental concerns and strengthen opposition to the Northern Gateway project.

“We can only protect our lands and waters if we stand together,” said Wet’suwet’en hereditary chief Alphonse Gagnon in a press release. “This Energy Summit was a reminder that the tar sands affects us all – from Fort Chipewan to Haida Gwaii and beyond,” he said.

The summit was organized and hosted by the Wet’suwet’en and drew over 200 environmentalists and First Nations community members from along the proposed 1,170-kilometre pipeline, which would carry tar sands oil from Alberta to a tanker port in Kitimat on the northern coast of B.C.

Albertan First Nations leaders warned of the social and medical troubles already caused by tar sands development, which they said have been ignored by other leaders who support the project.

“If only they could see past the dollar sign,” said Lionel Lepine from Fort Chipewyan, a Northern Alberta community.

Other speakers cautioned about the risks of a serious oil spill due to increased tanker traffic and the environmental concerns about the oil itself.

“The tar sands are a substandard source of oil,” said Merran Smith of ForestEthics, one of several environmental organizations opposing the pipeline.

“It is a sign of our desperate addiction to fossil fuels. We need an immediate transition to clean green energy sources. B.C. needs to be a leader.”

Over 500 residents have signed a statement calling for a moratorium on the transport of tar sands oil and a public inquiry into the project.

So far, the provincial and federal governments haven’t listened to these concerns, said Smith.

“Right now, Ottawa and Victoria are not hearing 'no',” she said.

Resistance to the project has received the support of several local opposition politicians. New Democrat MLAs Doug Donaldson, Gary Coons and Robin Austin attended the event and Nathan Cullen, NDP MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley also offered his support via a recorded message.

According to the Enbridge website, public and government review processes are expected to last through 2011, with construction slated to begin the following year if the project receives regulatory approval.

Josh Massey reports from Telkwa.

