



To: House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women Committee

From: Betty Patrick (FPA Manager, Natural Resources Portfolio), and Bernadette Lacerte (Team Gooze Manager), Lake Babine Nation

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RE: Resource Development and Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

Issue

Since 2019, Lake Babine Nation (LBN) and Team Gooze have been working to respond to increased violence against Indigenous women and girls in the Burns Lake region. Team Gooze was created by the C3 Initiative, "Construction Camps and Communities", as an Indigenous-led response to the rise in gendered violence associated with resource development in LBN and operates as the Nation's coordinated social and cultural emergency response service.

Background

The C3 Initiative arose roughly a decade ago, when many industrial projects and camps began to operate in LBN. During that time, LBN's women, youth, and other vulnerable members were experiencing the brunt of the negative impacts including increased rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, and an increased incidence of sexual transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS due to rape, prostitution, and sex trafficking.¹ LBN created Team Gooze as an Indigenous and community-led response team to address these issues. The small team consists of local, well-connected service providers who respond to hundreds of calls throughout their territory and beyond for incidents including sexual harassment and assault, sex trafficking, mental health crises, and domestic violence, among others.

Team Gooze is effectively addressing the issue of resource development and violence against Indigenous women and girls in their community by providing community-based and culturally relevant services to their community. As an Indigenous-led and culturally relevant service, Team Gooze has been able to successfully build trust with their community. This is something the RCMP, government, and industry have failed to do in LBN and the surrounding region.

LBN and Team Gooze have also organized and facilitated bi-monthly Inter-Agency meetings that bring together representatives from local communities within Northern British Columbia, along with governments, agencies, and Coastal GasLink (CGL). The purpose of the Inter-Agency is to collaborate, prevent and respond to issues that arise within Northern BC communities during CGL pipeline construction. The Inter-Agency network strengthens relationships between affected communities, local governments, regional agencies, and

¹ The Firelight Group, Lake Babine Nation, and Nak'azdli Whut'en. (2017).



industry. The meetings involve an exchange of information and resources that aim to support the implementation of preventative and responsive actions to protect Indigenous women, youth, and other vulnerable groups from harm. Recently, LBN and Team Gooze have also started working with Indigenous communities in Southwestern British Columbia and Alberta through the Indigenous Advisory and Monitoring Committee to discuss how their communities can collaborate and address these issues on a larger scale.

Analysis²

- Team Gooze provided more than 2000 hours of community patrol and responded to 177 calls throughout their territory and beyond from October 2021-March 2022.
- 12% of Team Gooze calls were pipeline related from October 2021-March 2022. Team Gooze actions related to calls about intoxicated camp workers in the community; camp workers luring young women from local high schools; camp workers seeking drugs in the community; camp workers offering drugs to young women, among others. Indigenous women and girls underreport incidents of sexual assault, violence, and trafficking, and therefore these figures are likely underestimated.
- 85% of Team Gooze clients identified as First Nations or Indigenous from October 2021-March 2022.
- Team Gooze primarily responded to calls for emotional support, safety planning, crisis support, accompaniments to the police or health services, and cultural connection between October 2021 and March 2022.
- The relationships strengthened by the Inter-Agency in addition to Team Gooze's work in the community have led to many important outcomes. For example, when Inter-Agency members voiced concerns of workers luring women and girls into their hotel rooms, the RCMP responded by adding hotel monitoring to their weekend rounds, and Team Gooze began offering safe rides home for women and girls in the region.
- Team Gooze's work is extensive and far reaching. They regularly serve Indigenous and non-Indigenous living outside of LBN, including Burns Lake Band, Skin Tyee Band, Cesslatta Carrier Nation, Nee Tahi Band, and Wet'suwet'en First Nation, and they have even served clients as far as Calgary, Alberta.

Recommendations

The Government of Canada can support LBN, Team Gooze, and other service providers to minimize the negative impacts of resource development on Indigenous women and girls by:

² Team Gooze. (October 2021-March 2022). Client Tracking Data.



- Sending federal government representatives to Inter-Agency meetings to improve connectivity and collaboration between service providers and government agencies;
- Allocating federal funds to support the services required in communities near resource extraction projects to strengthen relationships with community-based service providers and ensuring they are accessible to community members;
- Providing long-term funding to services such as Team Gooze to continue operating in LBN. These programs often operate with limited funding and for very short time frames. This is not a sustainable model for protection of vulnerable populations.
- Funding similar initiatives in all Indigenous communities experiencing an influx of transient workers and construction camps in their territory.

References

The Firelight Group, Lake Babine Nation, and Nak'azdli Whut'en. (2017). Indigenous Communities and Industrial Camps: Promoting healthy communities in settings of industrial change. Victoria, B.C.: The Firelight Group. https://firelight.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Firelight-work-camps-Feb-8-2017_FINAL.pdf

Team Gooze. (October 2021-March 2022). Client Tracking Data.