



There's only one way in and out of a small Wet'suwet'en camp located in a remote part of British Columbia's Interior — a logging road and a single lane bridge.

Right now, though, a truck is parked in front of the bridge, blocking access to the rugged territory. The move is meant to keep out a host of unwanted visitors — including anyone who works for Enbridge Inc.

Natural gas or oil pipelines built in the area would threaten bear, moose and salmon populations, says Freda Huson, a leader of the Unist'ot'en — a “resistance camp” established by members of her clan — a small part of northern B.C.'s Wet'suwet'en people. To clearly stake their claim on the land, her group has built and occupied a camp and pit homes on the proposed route of Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline south of Houston, B.C.

Canada's federal cabinet is set to rule on the controversial project some time in June. If the government gives its blessing, as many expect it will, Ms. Huson's response will be clear.

“We'll just say ‘you don't have jurisdiction. We never ceded or surrendered our land,’” she said. “We don't need permission to be out there. It's ours and we've never given it up.”

Enbridge has worked for years to plan the pipeline and earn the necessary approvals. But even if the federal government gives it the go-ahead, the battle over Northern Gateway is just beginning. Whether it be on the land or in the courts, wrangling

Enbridge has worked for years. The opposition has vowed that it will never give up. Ottawa is ready to weigh in. **Kelly Cryderman** and **Brent Jang** report on a \$7.9-billion pipeline fight that isn't likely to end any time soon

over the \$7.9-billion conduit for oil sands bitumen to Asian markets promises to turn into a tangled conflict that is likely to delay development for years, if it's ever built.

Enbridge says construction on the project won't begin for a year or more, no matter what, but a complicated amalgam of First Nation claims and environmental concerns threaten to bog the project down much longer. Aboriginal communities opposed to Enbridge's proposed project — whether coastal First Nations who fear a tanker spill, or inland bands concerned about a pipeline break into a river — along with environmental groups are promising to keep up the fight. Although the challenges will go through a new streamlined legal process for challenging National Energy Board and cabinet decisions, a number of First Nations are promising to be unwavering in their opposition.

“We will bring you to court. We will be there for over 20 years,” said John Ridsdale, hereditary chief of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation. He promised Enbridge chief executive officer Al Monaco at the company's annual general meeting earlier this month that his First Nation will “use all means at our disposal” to block the Northern Gateway project.

“The money that is invested in the Northern Gateway project will not be used,” he warned shareholders.

In December, a National Energy Board joint review panel gave a tentative blessing to the project. It determined that if the

project was built and operated in compliance with 209 conditions set out in its report, Northern Gateway would be in the public interest.

The project would see two 1,177-kilometre pipelines built between Bruderheim, Alta., and a crude supertanker terminal to be built in Kitimat, B.C. Heading west, the pipeline would deliver 520,000 barrels a day of oil sands bitumen and other types of oil to be shipped to thirsty Asian markets. Supporters argue that the project is a nation-building exercise, and bringing Western Canadian crude to tide-water is critical to the health of both the oil industry and the Canadian economy. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said resource development projects offer First Nations “an unprecedented opportunity” for economic benefits and resolution of social issues in their communities.

However, opposition to the project on environmental grounds — and concern about both spills and the pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from oil sands production in Alberta — is fierce. First Nations are already arguing that the NEB has been remiss in its constitutional duty to consult and accommodate their concerns, and that line of argument is expected to continue if the cabinet gives its blessing to the project. Adding to the legal confusion, most First Nations in B.C. have not signed treaty or comprehensive land claims with the Canadian government.

The strong likelihood of pro-