“Currently and historically there hasn’t been any respect for our land, for the Pacheedaht and for all of our Indigenous lands and forests.” – B. Jones

Speaking from the coastal experience, colonial political actors and systems have been attempting to disrupt our sovereignty since their forceful arrival here. The force has taken many forms of violence, targeting the bodies, minds, and spirits of our peoples. As colonialism on the island persisted, the tactics have shifted but the strategy has remained – monetize the patriarchy and misogyny, steal and indoctrinate children, and rape the land.

“This is indeed an oppressive system, whereby governments crush all hope and consciousness of its membership to the benefit of our political elite.” – B. Jones

The Pacheedaht peoples of the territory, in both recent and ancient history, have been able to maintain relations with the lands and relatives of the lands despite the on-going genocide and assimilation from colonial entities. A keeper of stories and familial ties is Elder Bill Jones, son of Walter Jones (Pacheedaht) and Mary Yukum (Tseshahht), paternal grandson of Charlie (Queesto) Jones but raised by the last formally recognized family hereditary chief (speaker) Willy Jones (elder brother to Charlie). Now, the hereditary systems on the coast have also been manipulated by colonial actors, and are not immune to corruption. However, it is our principles of matriarchy, relational-balance, accountability to the laws of the land, and distribution of wealth that brings honour and validity to a leader.

As the direct descendents from the family line that is being claimed as the hereditary decision-makers or speakers for the territory, Elder Bill Jones wanted to correct the error cited in a recent letter written by two other Jones family members – Jeff and Frank Jones.

“The Peters family, as far as our oral history allows, has always been here. They are the governing authority and are responsible for this valley. Frank Jones claiming himself as a heredity chief is false. He is not eligible to make the claim for the Jones family line, and is not informed by the hereditary system amongst our peoples. In fact, the Jones family is not originally from the territory, and have no chief rights to the San Juan valley. We have historically been from Cla-oose. The Jones family is ancestral to this place, through many intermarriages and ties to the land, but that is within the last 400 years.” – B. Jones

Hereditary systems of coastal peoples vary based on our cultures, languages, and gifts from the Creator. However, the fundamental laws of our coastal peoples are based in reciprocity and respect for all relatives, consensual relationships, and honouring all past, present and future generations by protecting the integrity of our shared mother earth. It is not for Western or colonial society to decide who is or what is hereditary, or a non-colonial governance, but it is up to the outside society to understand that it is a tactic to use Indigenous people to fit colonial government agendas. Indigenous peoples are used against our own peoples and families, becoming another resource exploited by colonial actors.
The history of the territory, that is recognized as Pacheedaht today, has too often been ignored or manipulated to suit the needs of the colony and extractivist economy. The british crown is dependent on colonial rule of law, carried out by the federal and provincial governments, policies and police, which all explicitly seek to undermine the inherent rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples. We see this take the form of Indian Band Nations, Indian Residential and Day Schools, Indian Hospitals, Potlatch Bans, and Treaty Negotiations - to name a few.

Federally instituted Indian Band Nations are by design meant to obliterate relationships to land and families, consent and matriarchical decision-making, and international agreements between other Indigenous peoples. Pacheedaht First Nation is no exception to this condition of colonialism.

Also, since its inception, the provincial colonial entities have illegally occupied and exploited the lands on behalf of the crown, and are directly responsible for destruction of our lands. B.C. has an extensive history of using corporations, as early as the Hudson's Bay Company and as recent as Teal Jones, to legitimize land and resource theft and dehumanizing Indigenous peoples.

The letter released by Jeff Jones and Frank Jones, backed by the NDP provincial government, “is putting out information that is contradictory and confusing” that is a deliberate attempt to control Indigenous voices and leadership that do not accept exploitation of the land and dishonest representations of Pacheedaht peoples and territories. It is not only an insult to the survivors of genocide, it is also a dangerous situation where the provincial government is continuing to financially and politically profit off of the “divide-and-conquer” methods of colonialism.

“I will continue standing for the land until I am dead. I feel like an old growth tree is worth the same as my life.” – B. Jones

“I implore people to continue to stand with me to protect our forests from destruction and colonialism because we need allies on the ground to stop old growth logging in my home territory, and for my future generations and relatives.” – B. Jones

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[Statement from an interview of B. Jones]