

News release

GREENPEACE

Shell Arctic Drill Rig Confronted at Sea by First Nations activists and Greenpeace Canada

17 June 2015 (Canadian EEZ in the Pacific Ocean) – First Nations artist and activist Audrey Siegl is directly confronting the ship carrying Shell’s massive Arctic drilling platform through Canadian coastal waters on its way to the Alaskan Arctic today. Siegl approached the 300-foot-tall Polar Pioneer drill rig in an inflatable boat launched from the Greenpeace ship MY Esperanza, while Greenpeace swimmers spread out in the water behind her to put their bodies in the way of the rig heading to the Arctic to drill for oil. The Polar Pioneer sped on towards them, refusing to slow down as it approached the swimmers.

Siegl, dressed in the traditional regalia of the Musqueam people, stood at the front of the boat with her drum and feather out in front of her, signaling the Polar Pioneer to stop. Speaking from the action, she said:

“Facing such a massive machine from a tiny boat is terrifying, but I believe that we all have a duty to do whatever we can to protect our sacred lands and waters,” said Siegl, who sang and drummed as she approached the Shell vessel. Siegl has been travelling with the Greenpeace ship Esperanza to connect Indigenous communities along the coast of British Columbia already opposing extreme oil from Canada’s tar sands, with the seven-million-strong global movement to save the Arctic.

“My message to Shell is that you may have money and massive machines, but the people united are more powerful,” added Siegl. “Together, we will stop Arctic drilling to defend our coast and our climate.”

The Esperanza intercepted Shell’s Polar Pioneer drill rig as it headed to the Alaskan Arctic, where it plans to begin exploratory drilling early July. Shell’s Arctic drilling plans have been the source of global controversy since they announced their intention to drill in Alaska’s icy waters more than three years ago. Since then, they have sunk more than \$7 billion U.S. into this project. It has been plagued by a litany of mistakes and accidents, which have resulted in their contractors being convicted of criminal offences related to the drilling operation.

The plans to drill have already faced massive global opposition, including six Greenpeace activists who boarded and occupied the Polar Pioneer on April 6th [1], and hundreds of kayaktivists who gathered in Seattle to protest Shell’s Arctic drilling fleet during its arrival both in May [2] and as the rig prepared to depart for the Arctic on Monday June 15. [3]

Keith Stewart, head of Greenpeace Canada’s climate and energy campaign, stressed that the risk posed by Arctic drilling is simply too high. Research recently published in the science journal Nature found that development of any oil and gas resources in the Arctic is incommensurate with efforts to limit average global warming to 2 °C. [4] In addition to the global climate impacts, Arctic drilling would also mean increased oil tanker traffic along B.C.’s already threatened coast.

“Shell is ignoring the voices of seven million people around the world who have said yes to Arctic protection and no to Arctic drilling,” said Stewart from onboard the Esperanza. “We won’t sit idly by while Shell ignores the scientific research showing that we can’t afford to burn Arctic oil if we hope to avoid extreme levels of global warming.”

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NOTES:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/Global/canada/pr/2015/04/SixGreenpeaceclimbers-scale-Shells-Arctic-bound-oil-rig.pdf>

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