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## ARRESTED LAND DEFENDERS APPEAR IN COURT TODAY; GIDIMT'EN CONDEMNS UNREASONABLE AND PUNITIVE CONDITIONS OF RELEASE

WET'SUWET'EN TERRITORY, SMITHERS, BC: Twenty people who were arrested in a two-day violent raid on Wet'suwet'en territory are appearing at BC Supreme Court in Prince George today at 11 am. Those arrested include Gidimt'en Checkpoint spokesperson Sleydo' and Dinī ze' Woos's daughter Jocelyn Alec, as well as two journalists.

Those arrested are all facing charges of civil contempt for breaching the terms of a BC Supreme Court injunction granted to Coastal GasLink (CGL). CGL is seeking a number of conditions of release, including denying many arrestees access to a vast area of Wet'suwet'en territories. The proposed 'exclusion zone' is the whole Morice West Forest Service Road or any other areas accessed by the Morice Forest Service Road. Wet'suwet'en people (as determined by CGL) may be exempt from the exclusion zone for "cultural activities" (as defined by the RCMP), while being subjected to 'culture-free zones' around CGL work sites.

CGL is also asking Sleydo' to provide documentation to "prove" she is Wet'suwet'en, and is seeking conditions that would bar her from returning to her home on Wet'suwet'en Yintah where her, her husband Cody Merriman (Haida nation, who was also arrested), and her three children live. CGL is also challenging Chief Woos's daughter Jocelyn Alec's status as a Wet'suwet'en person because she has Indian Act status with her mother's First Nation. The Indian Act is patriarchal and does not determine identity or belonging to a community.

According to **Jen Wickham, media coordinator of Gidimt'en Checkpoint**: "Coastal GasLink's proposed conditions of release are punitive, unreasonable and, in targeting Sleydo' and Jocelyn, completely racist and sexist. Allowing a private corporation to determine two Indigenous womens' identities and allowing this corporation to deny our inherent rights to be Wet'suwet'en on our territory is a very dangerous precedent. This is the colonial gendered violence that is the root of the crisis of MMIWG2S. Even though Coastal GasLink is trying to intimidate us through the colonial court system, we are Wet'suwet'en Strong. Under the governance of our Hereditary Chiefs, there will be no pipeline on our Yintah."

In granting an injunction to Coastal GasLink, Justice Church recognized that the Wet'suwet'en are "posing significant constitutional questions" but said that "this is not the venue for that analysis." However, the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada *Delgamuukw-Gisdaywa* ruling clearly affirmed that Aboriginal title - the right to exclusively use and occupy land - has never been extinguished across 55,000 square kilometers of Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan territories.

States **Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs**: "Industry's reliance on the racist and oppressive legal weapon of injunctions is a way to maintain the continued dispossession and criminalization of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples should not have to comply with industry and government decisions that deny our Indigenous rights. By dragging us through court and using injunctions against us, our Indigenous rights are being violated and are given less consideration than climate-destroying corporations. We are calling for the release of all Wet'suwet'en land defenders, and for BC and Canada to uphold Indigenous Title and Rights and institute a moratorium on fossil fuel expansion in the wake of clear and present climate catastrophe - including LNG which is not clean energy and is a non-renewable fossil fuel."