



GIDIMT'EN CHECKPOINT

RESPECTING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 8, 2020,**

**RCMP ARREST FOUR INDIGENOUS LAND DEFENDERS IN INVASION
ON GIDIMT'EN TERRITORY. CHIEF WOOS' CABIN REMAINS
OCCUPIED.**

February 8th, 2020 (Wet'suwet'en Territory) - Yesterday, dozens of heavily armed tactical RCMP raided the Gidimt'en Checkpoint, a permanent Wet'suwet'en homesite and arrested four Indigenous land defenders from the Wet'suwet'en, Gitxsan, Mohawk, and Tlingit nations.

In violation of Anuk nu'at'en (Wet'suwet'en law) and the right enshrined in UNDRIP to seek free, prior, and informed consent for any projects occurring on unceded Gidimt'en lands, RCMP escorted heavy machinery and tore down two gates controlling access to Gidimt'en territory. While dozens of officers breached the gates, four waves of helicopters dropped off tactical officers to surround the homesite with assault rifles and police dogs. A number of RCMP officers covered their faces with masks throughout the operation, and refused to supply any identifying information to legal observers. Commander Rob Pikola, who took part in discussions authorizing "lethal overwatch" against unarmed Wet'suwet'en in 2019, was seen on the ground during the operation.

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The Gidimt'en Checkpoint is a permanent Wet'suwet'en homesite with dwelling structures including a trapping cabin owned by Chief Woos' (Frank Alec) of the Gidimt'en Cas Yikh house. RCMP officers tried to evacuate the cabin of Chief Woos, which is located well outside of the injunction area. RCMP stated that the cabin fell within an "exclusion zone" that unilaterally puts all Wet'suwet'en structures behind 27km in danger (including numerous cabins, recreation and ceremonial sites and harvesting areas). When attempting to force supporters of the Wet'suwet'en to exit the cabin, RCMP noted they did not have a warrant. Woos' cabin currently remains occupied by supporters of the Wet'suwet'en, but RCMP have refused to let Chief Woos' return to his cabin or to his territory. Police are denying Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs access to unceded Wet'suwet'en lands.

The RCMP repeatedly detained press on site, limiting press freedom and impeding the ability of media professionals to properly witness and document police conduct. Jerome Turner, a journalist with Ricochet media, was able to capture video as RCMP held land defenders at gunpoint as they tried to clear the camp. The four land defenders arrested during the Gidimt'en invasion are still in custody. They have refused to sign conditions of release that will prohibit them from visiting homesites on unceded Wet'suwet'en territory.

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Among those arrested are Gidimt'en Chief Woos' daughter Eve Saint, Anne Spice of the Tlingit nation, Denzel Sutherland-Wilson of the Gitxsan nation, and a Mohawk supporter.

As the RCMP drove the arrested land defenders out of the territory, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs held ceremony on the road while over a dozen Wet'suwet'en and supporter vehicles blocked the road so that RCMP could not remove the land defenders from Gidimt'en territory. 30 RCMP officers surrounded the Chiefs and supporters at 27km and towed their vehicles away to an unknown location further in the territory, and then demanded the supporters leave or be arrested.

The RCMP exclusion zone has now been moved to the 4 km mark on the Morice Forest Service Road resulting in the blockage of multiple other Wet'suwet'en house territories. RCMP has demanded that the support camp at 27km on Gisday'wa house territory be evacuated by 11 am today.

More police violence is expected as tactical RCMP continue to press forward into Wet'suwet'en territory with what appears to be the intention to "sterilize" the entire area rather than following their own injunction. Today they continue to inch further toward the Unist'ot'en camp - a Wet'suwet'en village site established in 2009, where a three story Healing Center stands at the headwaters of Wet'suwet'en yintah (land).

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