



GIDIMT'EN CHECKPOINT

RESPECTING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
JUNE 13 2023**

Gidimt'en Clan Builds New Balhats (Feast Hall) at Ancient Village Site Near Gidimt'en Checkpoint

Wet'suwet'en Yintah (Territory) June 13, 2022- The Wet'suwet'en people have always asserted jurisdiction on the yintah as set out by the landmark 1997 Delgamuukw v British Columbia case, where the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that the Wet'suwet'en people had never ceded title over their 22,000 km² of land. The testimony and evidence was supported by our traditional governance system that was exercised in our balhats (governance/feast hall).

The Gidimt'en clan has re-occupied an ancient village site where the Gidimt'en Checkpoint now stands. There are permanent homes and Cas Yikh (Grizzly House) members are living full time as our ancestors have since time immemorial. The village site extends to the site where the feast hall is being built at Tsel Kiy Kwa, what is now known as Lamprey Creek. The Province of BC recognizes the clan's right to re-occupy the site as per the 2020 Memorandum of Understanding.

The clan is now asserting our jurisdiction and physically enacting our governance by building a balhats hall on Cas Yikh yintah. This will be available to all Gidimt'en Clan members and other clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation to hold feasts for all things related to our governance system and lands. All the logs used for this build are harvested from the yintah and there are Wet'suwet'en apprentices working on this project.

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As the Delgamuukw decision states, “The most significant evidence of spiritual connection between the Houses and their territory was a feast hall where the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en people tell and retell their stories and identify their territories to remind themselves of the sacred connection that they have with their lands. The feast has a ceremonial purpose but is also used for making important decisions.”

Tsel Kiy Kwa (Lamprey Creek) is where our ancestors harvested lamprey eel, a species now at risk. Wet’suwet’en families are harvesting local medicines and food, rebuilding the food security and community health that colonizers attempted to destroy. This is the critical infrastructure that will help humanity survive climate destabilization, this is the sacred inheritance that is threatened by CGL’s invasion of the yintah.

The feast hall centers our governance practices that were once outlawed by the Canadian Government. The feast hall work continues despite RCMP’s C-IRG officers continuing to harass both Gidimt’en Checkpoint and Tsel Kiy Kwa daily. The United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has issued three warnings and, amongst other direction, told Canada that the RCMP’s C-IRG team must pull out of Wet’suwet’en territory and CGL pipeline must be stopped in accordance with Wet’suwet’en law.

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