



PROTECT THE PLANET

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Tsleil-Waututh Land Defender Will George Sentenced to 28 Days in Jail for Breaching Trans Mountain Injunction**

*In Front of a Packed Courtroom of Supporters, Will George Was Taken Into Custody After BC Supreme Court Justice Fitzpatrick Imposed Her Sentence*

**xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Territories/ Vancouver, BC** – Before a courtroom packed with supporters, Tsleil-Waututh Land Defender Will George was sentenced to 28 days in jail for breaching the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) pipeline injunction and was immediately taken into custody. BC Supreme Court Justice Shelley Fitzpatrick deferred to the Crown's recommended sentence and all but ignored arguments from defence counsel for why George should instead be sentenced to community service hours and probation.

Today was Day 2 of George's sentencing hearing. Yesterday, Justice Fitzpatrick stated in the morning that she had not read George's 16-page Gladue report, which lays out his childhood history and cultural background, and gives reasons why the court should consider non-custodial sentencing options. Although Fitzpatrick has had the report for months, she took only a 15-minute break to scan it, after which she was ready to sentence George the same day. "It was clear from Fitzpatrick's tone and attitude in court that Will George's Gladue report, and the principles on which it's based, don't matter to her," said Rita Wong, a supporter of Will George.

George was targeted and charged by the Crown in January 2021 with criminal contempt despite never being arrested, and during a period when pipeline work had been suspended. George—who was tried last fall—is the first Tsleil-Waututh member to be convicted for resisting the TMX pipeline while on his own ancestral, unceded land. Despite George being present with several others on the day he was accused of breaching the TMX injunction, the Crown only brought charges against George.

"This is yet another example of the Crown continuing its long history of systemic racism and colonial violence, as it tries to separate Indigenous people from their land and criminalize them for defending it from harmful resource extraction," continued Wong. "The Crown is meant to represent the public interest, yet it wilfully obstructs those trying

to address the climate crisis, and instead pushes oil and gas projects that go against everything humanity is being called to do. Criminalizing indigenous land defenders is racist and unjust.”

The Crown prosecutor sought a stiff jail sentence for George even though the BC Prosecution Services has a [policy of seeking non-custodial sentences](#) for Indigenous defendants, with jail time being a “sanction of last resort.”

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