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## For Immediate Release: Prosecutors Drop All Serious Charges Against Iron Eyes

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**Lakota People's**  
LAW PROJECT

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### North Dakota Prosecutors Drop All Serious Charges Against Former Congressional Candidate Chase Iron Eyes in Standing Rock Case

In what defense attorneys are calling a major victory for their client and for the water protectors of Standing Rock, North Dakota prosecutors have dropped all serious charges against former North Dakota congressional candidate Chase Iron Eyes in his case resulting from protests of the Dakota Access pipeline.

Iron Eyes, an attorney who works for the Lakota People's Law Project, was facing a maximum of six years in state prison after his arrest for alleged criminal trespass and incitement of a riot near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation on February 1, 2017. In exchange for his agreement not to violate any criminal law for 360 days, the state reduced all charges to a minor, Class B misdemeanor of disorderly conduct. Under this agreement, Iron Eyes will walk away without jail time or any risk to his law license.

"The world should know that it's legally impossible for me and other Native people to trespass on treaty land, and I never started a riot. I and the water protectors are not terrorists. We and the US veterans who stood with us to protect Mother Earth are the true patriots," said Iron Eyes. "Now I can be with my family and continue defending the sovereignty of my people. This will allow me to keep working nonstop to protect First Amendment, human and Native rights."

The agreement is pending final approval from Judge Lee Christofferson, expected later today.

Iron Eyes' attorneys filed documents on Monday proving that his arrest occurred on treaty land never ceded by the Sioux tribe. The state of North Dakota ruled weeks ago that this land had never been acquired nor legally owned by pipeline parent company Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) due to a North Dakota law prohibiting corporations from acquiring and owning agricultural parcels.

According to documents uncovered earlier this year by investigative journalists at **The Intercept**, Iron Eyes was identified by the TigerSwan military-style security company as a key leader of the Standing Rock movement. Iron Eyes' attorneys say this led law enforcement to target him for arrest and levy the felony charge of inciting a riot, which carried a potential five years of prison time.

Daniel Sheehan of the Lakota People's Law Project led Iron Eyes' defense team. "Our work to prepare Chase's defense unveiled a racially-motivated criminal conspiracy by oil companies and mercenary security corporations to deny Native Americans and their allies their civil and treaty rights," he said. "Standing Rock focused the attention of the world on the importance of Native sovereignty and the needs to protect water and resist climate change. Chase's willingness to pursue a necessity defense has produced strong legal tools for future protesters."

Iron Eyes' attorneys were asking the court to accept a "necessity defense" on his behalf. At a court hearing that had been scheduled for this Thursday, the defense would have made the case that any action Iron Eyes took was necessary to

prevent a greater harm.

Sheehan said that the defense compiled thousands of pages of documentation demonstrating that ETP and TigerSwan violated the liberties of the people of Standing Rock under the Federal Civil Rights Act and that the pipeline posed an existential threat to the tribe by jeopardizing its primary source of fresh drinking water.

“The oil company demonstrated racial bias by moving the pipeline from a white community to the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation,” Sheehan said. “TigerSwan did the same by launching a military operation and media campaign to racially profile the Lakota people as religiously-driven, Indigenous jihadist terrorists.”

Iron Eyes’ team also charged that prosecutors continually blocked and delayed their attempts to gather and disseminate evidence of what the defense termed “criminal collusion” between law enforcement officials and TigerSwan employees working on behalf of ETP.

“The other side has attempted to quash everything, including affidavits, depositions and all our discovery documentation,” said Iron Eyes. “One of the key reasons to accept this agreement is to ensure that all the evidence, including a recent [160 pages of documentation](#) showing the ties and criminal conduct among law enforcement, the oil industry and their hired guns, is protected in the public record and accessible so people know what really happened at Standing Rock.”

In a just-released video called “[We Are Not Terrorists](#),” Iron Eyes and his team position their anti-pipeline protest in the context of what they assert to be a growing threat posed to civil liberties, embodied by the rise of anti-protest legislation and the burgeoning alliance between the oil companies and the private military security industry. The video is accompanied by an open letter to President Donald Trump.

“My people were the first civilizers of the territory on which I was arrested”, said Iron Eyes. “As a Lakota person, I had a right to practice ceremony there, with the hope of protecting my people’s water. In the 1870s, the US government seized our treaty lands, an act deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1980. In 2016, my people and our land came under attack once again. But today, thanks to my attorneys and to the support of millions around the world, we have another victory for the truth.”

The Lakota People's Law Project exists as part of the 501(c)(3) Romero Institute, a nonprofit law and policy center.