



TŚILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

Tsilhqot'in Nation affirms law for Title land

Tsilhqot'in Title Land, BC (March 20, 2015): Following the first declaration of Aboriginal title in Canadian history, the Tsilhqot'in Nation has enacted its first Tsilhqot'in law, setting out the rules for how the Tsilhqot'in Nation will govern these lands and manage access to the area and its resources.

On June 26, 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada granted Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation, in the caretaker area of the Xeni Gwet'in community. Aboriginal title includes the right to exclusive use and occupation of the land, as well as the right to the economic benefit of the land, and the ability to determine the uses to which the land will be put.

The *Xeni Nits'egugheni?an* (Nemiah Declaration) was first declared by the Xeni Gwet'in on August 23, 1989, in response to the threat of widespread clear-cut logging. That threat prompted over two decades of litigation, culminating in a favourable Supreme Court of Canada judgment recognizing Aboriginal title to approximately 1900 km² of land in the central interior of British Columbia.

Exercising their newly recognized right to proactively manage these lands, the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Xeni Gwet'in have now enacted the Nemiah Declaration as the law governing the Aboriginal title lands and the broader territory over which the courts declared Aboriginal hunting, trapping and trading rights.

Now enacted as law, the Nemiah Declaration outlines specific uses of the land that will not be authorized, along with how future laws, regulations and policies may be developed. Exceptions may be made to the Nemiah Declaration only with the prior informed consent of Xeni Gwet'in and the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Quotes:

Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman of the Tsilhqot'in National Government and Chief of Tl'etinqox:

"As Tsilhqot'in people, we have our own laws and responsibilities to our lands. It is an honour for us as Tsilhqot'in leadership to enact the Nemiah Declaration as law – a law that comes straight from our people and our elders. There will be many more laws and policies to come as we strive as a nation to express our values, our culture and our vision for the future on our declared Aboriginal title lands and throughout our territory. This has been a long time coming. We firmly believe that recognizing and empowering the laws and values of the First Nations of this province will lead to better decisions and greater opportunities for everyone."

Chief Roger William, Vice-Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government and Chief of Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government:

"The Nemiah Declaration was created by the people of Xeni in 1989 while we were acting to protect our

lands from large scale industrial clear-cutting. The Declaration is the voice of our elders. It comes directly from our community. Our traditions, laws and practices have been around for centuries. We are proud to say that this is our first law on Title land. Our goal has always been to be able to enact those in today's world. With this comes challenges, but setting the stage for our governance, for good governance, is one of our first priorities."

To access the Nemiah Declaration go to: <http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/About/Governance.htm>
For more information about the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Rights and Title go to:
www.tsilhqotin.ca/Lands/RightsTitle.htm

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