



## TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

253 – 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North - Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4 - Phone (250) 392-3918 - Fax (250) 398-5798

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Tsilhqot'in Nation strives to forge new way forward with BC, Canada, 1 year out**

**Tsilhqot'in Territory, BC** (June 24, 2015): One year has passed since the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the Tsilhqot'in Nation holds Aboriginal title to approximately 1900 km<sup>2</sup> of land in British Columbia. Since this time the Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG) has been engaging with the Province to establish a process for negotiations to finally establish a lasting reconciliation for the Tsilhqot'in Nation and to improve the lives of the Tsilhqot'in people.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation is committed to trying to find a positive way forward with the Province, rather than deepening the long history of conflict. However, at this stage, the Tsilhqot'in Chiefs are concerned about major outstanding items in the negotiations that raise questions about whether the Government of British Columbia is truly committed to transforming its relationship with the First Nations of this Province, rather than repeating the mistakes of the past.

Closing in on the anniversary of the declaration of Title, the Nation is more dedicated than ever in the fight for recognition. The Nation calls on the Province to show leadership and work with the Tsilhqot'in from a new foundation of respect and recognition, moving beyond the failed mandates, policies and practices of the past. A history of inaction and mistrust cannot be repeated.

Understanding that Canada is a key player in reconciling these interests, the Nation is also encouraging Canada to come to the table in a respectful and timely way.

The path to reconciliation has been illuminated for Canada through both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Call to Action* and the report by Special Ministerial Representative Doug Eyford. Existing in an era of denial likened to the 1980s, and its tactics of stalling and delay, have seriously damaged Canada's relationship to First Nations in recent years. The Federal Government's failure to show leadership on one of the most pressing issues shaping the future of this nation should be a serious concern for all Canadians.

The *Tsilhqot'in Nation* decision has given First Nations and the people of Canada hope. Hope that the lens by which we view this country will be one of equality – equality built on a foundation of mutual understanding, trust and respect.

#### **Quotes:**

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

“Over the past year we have tried a new approach with the Province and Canada – one that involves trust. With the Province we've stick handled through many of the issues we have in our territory and are hoping for something that will improve the lives of our people. However, there are still major issues that will have to be resolved with BC before we can move forward with any agreement with the Province. Engagement with our membership is our top priority, and we are in our communities now

giving updates and getting direction. We are considering whether the Province is truly committed to moving forward in a positive way. The history of mistrust is still very real for us.”

“Canada is the main player in reconciling our interests and they haven’t come to the table in a respectful way. The Federal Government is ignoring the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada. Their lack of leadership and action is shameful. We respectfully moved through a legal process that was not traditional to us and as Tsilhqot’in people we expect the Federal Government to step forward and honour this judgment from the highest court in this country. The Tsilhqot’in Decision, along with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Call to Action*, is the Federal Government’s opportunity to do something different. We are calling on them to come to the table in good faith, right now, and finally show some leadership on this critical issue.”

**Media Contact:**

Myanna Desaulniers  
Communication Coordinator  
Tsilhqot’in National Government  
778-836-0122