



## TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Tsilhqot'in Nation calls on Province to move beyond treaty mandates**

**Tsilhqot'in Territory, BC** (July 9, 2015): The Tsilhqot'in National Government is calling on the Province to move beyond current treaty mandates during negotiations with the Tsilhqot'in Nation. On September 10, 2014, the Tsilhqot'in Nation and British Columbia entered into a historic *Letter of Understanding* (LOU), agreeing to find a new path to reconciliation and develop a negotiation framework to reconcile Tsilhqot'in rights and title.

Eight months have now passed since the signing the LOU and it has been over one year since the Supreme Court of Canada declared Aboriginal title, for the first time in Canadian history, to the Tsilhqot'in Nation. Yet, the expected Agreement between British Columbia and the Tsilhqot'in Nation still has not been signed.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation has fully committed itself to trying to find a positive path forward with the Province through negotiations in the hope of achieving the most important and urgent goal – improving the quality of life for Tsilhqot'in citizens and the surrounding residents. Only weeks ago, the Nation believed it was close to reaching a historic agreement with the Province.

However, in the final hours, British Columbia backed away from critical commitments in the agreement, leaving the Tsilhqot'in Nation with a lack of confidence that the Province is a committed partner willing to create an innovative and lasting reconciliation agreement.

On July 8, 2015, the Tsilhqot'in National Government called on the Premier to renew the commitment to truly transformative change in British Columbia's approach to dealing with First Nations and to make meaningful steps to move beyond the broken *status quo*. This moment is a critical test of whether the Province is prepared to turn their aspirations into actions.

#### **Quotes:**

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

“On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Premier acknowledged to our people on Title land that the Tsilhqot'in Nation is unique. As a Nation we have inherently and traditionally governed from time immemorial and the Province refuses to acknowledge this – even after the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared Title. Both the provincial and federal systems in place are broken. We had hoped, and still hope, for our people and First Nations across Canada, that these systems could change. We need to see movement from BC on a number of issues – without this we will not be able to proceed.”

“Since June 26, 2014, we have tried to create the best possible transition process for residents, industry and government, but unfortunately the Province is rocking that boat and currently not holding up to their commitments under the LOU.”

**Chief Roger William, Chief of Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government:**

“Our people are waiting to see the Tsilhqot'in Decision be fully realized. This Agreement comes from our people, from their vision. To see BC pull back from their commitments at the last minute is very disheartening and disrespectful to our people and Nation. We have been at the table for long enough. We want to move forward in a positive way. We hope that the Premier and the Province rise to this opportunity, rather than forcing us into further conflict and uncertainty.”

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