



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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T̂silhqot'in National Government Disappointed by Lack of Recognition by Williams Lake First Nation

Williams Lake, B.C.: The T̂silhqot'in National Government (TNG) is withdrawing from a current partnership on cultural awareness with the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) due to WLFN's failure to recognize the cultural importance of neighbouring First Nation's languages.

WLFN has objected to having welcome signs in T̂silhqot'in and Dakelh languages, in addition to their own Secwepmec language, at the entry of the main government building in Williams Lake, B.C. The government building serves numerous surrounding First Nations, including T̂silhqot'in, Dakelh and Secwepmec peoples.

In response to this decision by WLFN, TNG will no longer be in partnership with WLFN on a project meant to bring cultural sensitivity training to the Cariboo region. TNG recognizes the importance of trust and cooperation in being able to offer this type of training and hopes WLFN reconsiders their objection to a project intended to make government services less intimidating and more welcoming for members of all local First Nations living in Williams Lake and surrounding communities.

Quotes:

Nits'il'in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair, T̂silhqot'in National Government

"Recent racist actions and remarks by Williams Lake Mayor, Walt Cobb, demonstrate the need for cultural sensitivity training in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region. Our Nation was ready to partner with the Williams Lake First Nation to promote cultural awareness in the region. However, the decision by WLFN Council to boycott the use of other surrounding Indigenous languages on a welcome sign to the main government building has left us no choice but to withdraw from that partnership. It is an insult to the cultural fabric of this area to not recognize other languages on this type of signage. By visually representing the other languages we are building awareness among the public while also creating a welcoming environment for First Nations. Our people should feel a sense of belonging wherever they are. We call on the local government and WLFN to do the right thing and allow for the representation of both T̂silhqot'in and Dakelh languages on this entry signage. In my mind, WLFN is acting similar to Mayor Cobb by not recognizing the cultural importance of languages."

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Nits'il?in (Chief) Otis Guichon, Vice-Chair, Tsilhqot'in National Government

"Williams Lake is a central city for many First Nations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Many of our members live in town, and other members drive over four hours from our community to access government services – like getting a driver's license. Part of educating the public about First Nations includes building awareness about who we are today, as well as in the past. Right now, we routinely find ourselves out of place having to access services and education in Williams Lake, rather than in our own territory. One day, we hope for this to change. But for now, we have to do all that we can as leaders to make members feel at home in places where they have very little choice in accessing. I am very disappointed by this decision by WLFN. All of us First Nations need to work together."

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