

OCTOBER 26th 2024

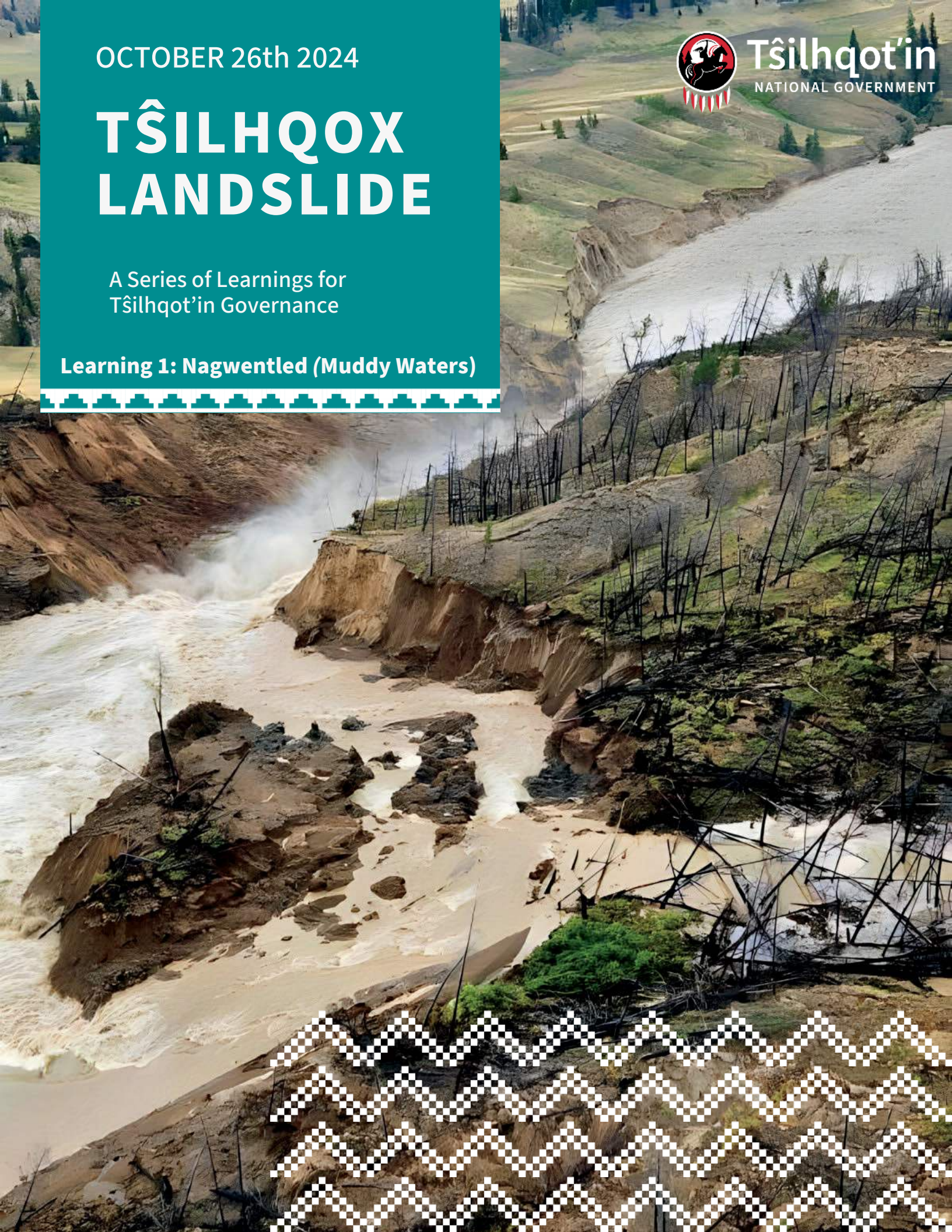
TÎLHQOX LANDSLIDE

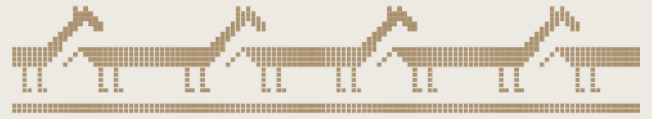
A Series of Learnings for
Tîlqhót'in Governance

Learning 1: Nagwentled (Muddy Waters)



Tîlqhót'in
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT





Background

On July 30, 2024 a landslide occurred at Nagwentled (Farwell Canyon), blocking the T̄silhqox (Chilcotin River). The T̄silhqot'in National Government (TNG) declared a state of local emergency, issued emergency orders to ensure people's safety and called on all parties to halt all fishing activities to conserve T̄silhqot'in territory-bound salmon. The T̄silhqot'in Fisheries Team began to monitor ts'eman and jās̄ (sockeye and Chinook salmon) migrating to their spawning grounds at Chilko Lake in the heart of the T̄silhqot'in Title land. T̄silhqot'in leadership asked Crystal Verhaeghe (Emoda Consulting), Dr. Jocelyn Stacey (University of British Columbia), and Dr. Emma Feltes (York University) to document the event, building on prior work in *Nagwediz̄k'an gwanēs̄ gangu ch'inidžed ganexwilagh* (The Fires Awakened Us) and *Dada Nentsen Gha Yatastig: T̄silhqot'in in the Time of COVID*.

This document captures insights from T̄silhqot'in leadership and staff interviewed in the immediate aftermath of the landslide. This is the first in a series to show that the T̄silhqox landslide meant much more to the Nation than a temporary waterway obstruction. It is a call to realign responsibilities and relationships to the nen (land), tu (waters) and ts'eman.



[NAG-WEN-TLED]

“Land slides across the river”



Key Learning

Nagwentled signifies a changing of the waters. It guides us toward a reactivation of responsibilities to the nen and tu, and a realignment of relationships with government partners.

August 4, 2024 - The 2024 T̓silhqox landslide



Nagwentled (Muddy Waters)

Nagwentled, the area where the landslide took place, means “sliding area across the river,” “land that moves” and “muddy waters” in the T̓silhqot̓in language as the lands have been known to break free into the river. Nagwentled winds through the caretaker area of the Tl'esqox community. T̓silhqot̓in Elders recount that Nagwentled has long been understood as a slide area and have witnessed previous slides in 2004 and even earlier in 1964. The 2024 landslide fully blocked the T̓silhqox (Chilcotin River) for six days. The resulting breach impacted properties, artifacts, fishing and burial sites and poses long-term threats to the survival of the Chilko Lake ts'eman (salmon). Nagwentled remains unsettled; at the time of writing further potential slides continue to be monitored.

Nagwentled, like many T̓silhqot̓in place names, has been passed down through generations. These names convey sophisticated connections between the T̓silhqot̓in, the nen (land) and tu (waters). The T̓silhqot̓in language communicates geographic and temporal complexity in ways that are distinct from the English language. T̓silhqot̓in words tend to be very long. There is “a story within [each] sentence.”[1] There are T̓silhqot̓in speakers in every community and throughout the nen. Each place name conveys knowledge of the landscape in relation to historical events, creation stories and the natural environment. The language itself supports T̓silhqot̓in jurisdiction by providing navigational direction, anticipating natural phenomena, and guiding future generations in stewarding the nen and tu.

[1] Lois Williams, quoted in *Lha yudit'ih We Always Find a Way: Bringing the T̓silhqot̓in Title Case Home* at xxix.



March 7, 2006 - Nagwentled in its natural state

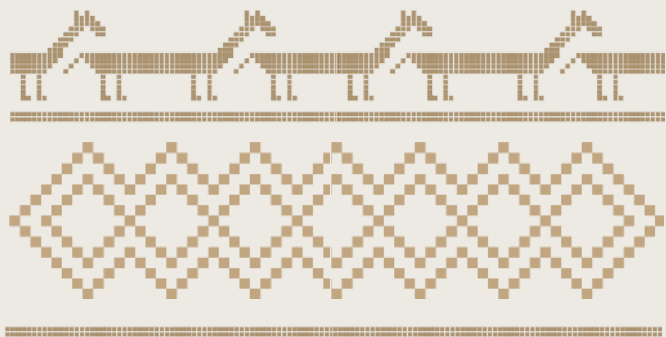
People of the River

The T̓silhqot̓in, known as the “people of the river,” are comprised of six communities - Tl'etinqox, ʔEsdilagh, Yunešit'in, T̓sidedel, Tl'esqox and Xenigwet'in - connected by the rivers that run through T̓silhqot̓in territory. Historically, and to this day, the T̓silhqot̓in Nation exercises inherent jurisdiction to steward the nen (land), tu (water) and sustain T̓silhqot̓in culture and way of life for the deni (people). The T̓silhqot̓in Nation won the first declaration of Aboriginal title in Canadian law, recognizing T̓silhqot̓in ownership of a portion of the nen. The Nation continues to exercise rights and jurisdiction to protect the whole of the nen. The Nation works to restore and strengthen collective and individual well-being through language, culture, and education guided by the ʔesggidam (ancestors) and dechen ts'edilhtan (laws).

This summer’s landslide has brought life to the significance of Nagwentled. T̂silhqot’in understand that Nagwentled reminds us that we must listen to the nen and take care of the tu. The landslide occurred in the same area as the 2017 wildfires. After the fires, T̂silhqot’in National Government called on BC to support T̂silhqot’in-led land-based stabilization measures – work that has not been completed. [2] The landscape has not been cared for. This draws our attention to the cumulative impacts on the tu and the life-sustaining salmon (ts’eman) that depend on it. The ts’eman face waters muddied by compounding landslides, industrial activity, logging, commercial and recreational harvesting, and climate change. Muddy waters are also changing waters. Nagwentled tells us that ts’eman stewardship will never look the same. What it will look like will be determined over time – by monitoring ongoing impacts, adapting to the changing waters and landscape, and implementing T̂silhqot’in law and jurisdiction in a way that is responsive to these changes. In turn, this will require realignment with provincial and federal partners in support of T̂silhqot’in knowledge and stewardship.



From time immemorial the T̂silhqot’in have fought to preserve language, culture, and traditions which are intrinsically connected to the nen and tu. The preservation and stewardship of the territory rely on the ability to make management decisions which support the Nation’s goals to live like the ʔEsggidam (ancestors) had lived prior to contact. These decisions include stewardship of the fish, wildlife, berries and medicines. They also include the ability to respond to a changing landscape.



[2] *Nagwedižk'an gwaneš gangu ch'inidžed ganexwilagh* (The Fires Awakened Us), Calls to Action 23-26.



T̂silhqox crossing