Tsilhqot’in, B.C. sign historic Letter of Understanding, set the stage for lasting reconciliation

NEMIAH VALLEY – Premier Christy Clark and the Tsilhqot’in Nation Chiefs signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) today that provides a response to the Supreme Court of Canada’s Tsilhqot’in Nation judgement, commits to building a more positive relationship between the Province and the Tsilhqot’in Nation and sets the groundwork for long-term reconciliation efforts.

The signing took place during a historic visit by the Premier and John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, with Tsilhqot’in leadership, Elders, youth and communities in Xeni Gwet’in on Tsilhqot’in Title lands.

The LOU is a commitment to work together to achieve a just and lasting reconciliation for the Tsilhqot’in people. This sets the stage for long term negotiations, with a high-level table to explore new and innovative approaches to Crown-First Nations reconciliation.

Quotes:

Premier Christy Clark –

“This agreement commits us to working together in partnership as we explore how to implement the Tsilhqot’in Nation judgement. The Supreme Court of Canada has provided us with clarity, direction, and a profound opportunity to build a more positive relationship between the Province and the Tsilhqot’in Nation. The way forward starts with a renewed and strengthened vision of First Nations as partners in the economic, political and social future of this province.”

Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman of Tsilhqot’in National Government and Tl’etinqox Chief –

“September 10th was a day I thought would never happen. 150 years ago, our Tsilhqot’in Chiefs came to negotiate a peace accord, under a flag of truce, only to be arrested and hanged as murderers. The signing of this LOU marks an opportunity to move beyond this tragic past, and start a new era based on real respect and recognition. There is so much that can be accomplished in this province by working with First Nations instead of against us. This LOU is a positive first step, and we call on the Province to show leadership and carry through on this commitment to a new future, for the benefit of all First Nations and all British Columbians. We are hopeful that Canada will follow suit.”

Chief Roger William, Vice Chairman of Tsilhqot’in National Government and Chief of Xeni Gwet’in –
“The Tsilhqot’in are proud to host the Premier on our land. Our lands and our people are so deeply connected, and we acknowledge the Premier’s efforts to come to our territory and meet with our Elders and members. Our Elders showed such courage to testify in court, in our own language, and many are no longer with us today – we will forever remember them for winning this battle for us. We could not be prouder of them. Collectively this land is ours and collectively we have the strength to continue governing these lands, honouring our culture, and making decisions based on our cultural values – decisions that affect us and our future generations.”

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“This agreement lays out a structure for a government-to-government relationship that will allow us to explore how we can work together to bring life into the court decision. Our existing relationship with the Tsilhqot’in Nation will provide us with a strong foundation as we move forward and we are eager to begin exploring the historic opportunities that lay before us.”

Quick Facts:

On June 26, 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its unanimous judgment in the Tsilhqot’in case, recognizing Aboriginal title for the first time in Canadian history on territory of the Xeni Gwet’in First Nation, one of six communities within the Tsilhqot’in Nation.

The Letter of Understanding sets out how the Tsilhqot’in and Province will work together to:

- Redress issues of the past, including the wrongful trial and hanging of the Tsilhqot’in Chiefs in 1864-65;
- Begin the immediate work of the present, by establishing tables that will work together to implement the court’s decision; and,
- Move into the future with longer-term reconciliation initiatives that explore economic opportunities, and improve the health, education and socio-economic well-being of the Tsilhqot’in people.

Learn More:

For a complete copy of the Letter of Understanding, visit: [http://ow.ly/Bj1CT](http://ow.ly/Bj1CT)

For more information on the Tsilhqot’in National Government, visit: [http://www.tsilhqotin.ca](http://www.tsilhqotin.ca)

Media Contacts:

Sam Oliphant
Press Secretary
Office of the Premier
Government of British Columbia
250 952-7252

Lisa Leslie
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
250 213-7724

Myanna Desaulniers
Communication Coordinator
Tsilhqot’in National Government
778 836-0122
Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect