



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 26, 2015

One year later: First Nations continue to wait for government to recognize and implement principles contained in Tsilhqot'in decision

(Coast Salish Territories/Vancouver) - The First Nations Summit (FNS) is acknowledging the one year anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decision in *William v. Canada*, also known as the Tsilhqot'in decision, released one year ago today. This critically important decision marked the first time the SCC issued a declaration of Aboriginal title.

First Nations continue to view the Tsilhqot'in decision as a significant opportunity to engage with government in an effort to achieve true reconciliation. However, the last year has clearly proven that this is a long and onerous process.

The SCC decision clearly put to rest the Crown's impoverished view that Aboriginal title only exists in small spots and includes no substantive rights of jurisdiction. The decision also defined a clearer path forward for the negotiation of fair, just and equitable treaties and agreements in British Columbia. As such, First Nations will continue to engage with government with a desire to achieve reconciliation with the Crown through honourable negotiations and partnerships.

On September 9th-10th, 2014, the First Nations Leadership Council and First Nations leaders met and collectively agreed on four principles required as a foundation for a transformed relationship. The four principles are;

- 1) *Acknowledgement that all our relationships are based on recognition and implementation of the existence of indigenous peoples inherent title and rights, and pre-confederation, historic and modern treaties, throughout British Columbia.*
- 2) *Acknowledgement that Indigenous systems of governance and laws are essential to the regulation of lands and resources throughout British Columbia.*
- 3) *Acknowledgement of the mutual responsibility that all of our government systems shall shift to relationships, negotiations and agreements based on recognition.*
- 4) *We immediately must move to consent based decision-making and title based fiscal relations, including revenue sharing, in our relationships, negotiations and agreements.*

The First Nations Summit remains committed to upholding these four principles in our continuing engagement with all levels of government.

Background

The Tsilhqot'in began their journey 25 years ago. A whole generation has grown up in this time. The *Williams* case, named for Chief Roger William of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, is one of the most significant cases ever brought before the SCC. After 339 days at trial, millions of dollars paid in legal fees, a nearly 500-page trial decision and two appeals, the SCC has finally given the final word by confirming that Aboriginal title is real and that there is real meaning to the recognition and protection of Aboriginal rights in section 35 of the *Constitution Act*. The First Nations Summit was one of thirteen groups intervening in support of the Tsilhqot'in in this important case.

For further comment please contact:

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