
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Tsilhqot'in National Government

Interim decisions made within Tsilhqot'in Title land

TSILHQOT'IN TITLE LAND – The Tsilhqot'in Nation and the Province are taking practical steps in the complex process of transferring Aboriginal Title lands to Tsilhqot'in management, benefit and control following the Supreme Court of Canada decision on Aboriginal Title last June.

Interim understandings and practices are in place for 2015 for:

- maintaining emergency and wildfire response and road maintenance,
- private property owners and current tenure holders to access the Title lands, and
- existing guide outfitters to operate in areas within and overlapping the Title lands.

Permanent arrangements are being developed through ongoing discussions between the Tsilhqot'in Nation and the Province.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation and Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government, caretaker of the Supreme Court Declared Title Area, have authorized the extension of existing guide outfitter licences for one year to provide those businesses with certainty for the upcoming season. The agreement stipulates there will be no increase to guiding quotas compared to the 2013-14 year. All fees associated with guide outfitting in the Title area will be paid to the Province and remitted to the Tsilhqot'in Nation. The Tsilhqot'in Nation and Xeni Gwet'in have not authorized other hunting activities within the Title lands.

The Supreme Court of Canada granted Aboriginal Title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation on June 26, 2014. Aboriginal Title includes the right to exclusive use and occupation of the land, the right to the economic benefits of the land, and the ability to determine how the land is used. The ruling was the first in Canada designating Aboriginal Title to a large tract of land outside of a reserve.

On Sept. 10, 2014, the Tsilhqot'in Nation, Xeni Gwet'in and the Province signed a Letter of Understanding to explore how to implement the Supreme Court of Canada decision. Over the past several months, respectful and constructive discussion has been aimed at reaching lasting reconciliation.

The Province also apologized for the wrongful hanging of six Tsilhqot'in chiefs in 1864 and 1865, following the Chilcotin War. Premier Christy Clark read an apology in the legislature on Oct. 26, 2014, and stated the Province's will to exonerate the chiefs to the extent of its ability.

Quotes:

Chief Roger William, Xeni Gwet'in First Nation and Vice Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National

Government –

“The transition of management and control of Tsilhqot’in Aboriginal Title lands is going to take time. The declaration of Aboriginal Title is a first for Canada. We want to do this right. We need to look after our members and our lands, but we also want to be respectful of others who live and work on our lands. We want to create agreements that benefit everyone on Tsilhqot’in Aboriginal Title lands and incorporate our cultural values. The Tsilhqot’in Nation and Xenigwet’in have taken this step to provide some business certainty for guide outfitters while we develop our own laws, policies and processes for our lands. There is a lot of work to be done, but these steps are positive for everyone.”

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“This complex reconciliation process is a profound opportunity to build a stronger relationship and develop a renewed vision with the Tsilhqot’in Nation. I am confident we are going in the right direction to build stable economic, political and community partnerships with the Tsilhqot’in people.”

Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –

“This agreement represents another concrete step toward establishing a new approach to resource management with the Tsilhqot’in.”

Learn More:

For a complete copy of the Letter of Understanding, visit: <http://ow.ly/Bj1CT>

For more information about government’s efforts to redress the hanging of the Tsilhqot’in chiefs, visit: <http://ow.ly/K9HAZ>

For more information about the Tsilhqot’in National Government, visit: <http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/>

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