



Canada

Gwets'en nilt'i "Towards it, We Are Striving"

On January 27, 2017, Canada and the T̓silhqot'in Nation entered a historic *Letter of Understanding* as the first step in achieving a lasting and comprehensive reconciliation for the T̓silhqot'in people.

On March 26, 2018, Canada recognized the T̓silhqot'in Chiefs wrongfully tried and hanged in 1864/65 as heroes of the T̓silhqot'in people, and exonerated these T̓silhqot'in Chiefs of all wrongdoing.

Today, November 2, 2018, the Prime Minister delivered this message of exoneration directly to the T̓silhqot'in people, on declared Aboriginal title lands, thereby honouring Canada's commitment in the *Letter of Understanding* and setting a path toward true nation-to-nation reconciliation and healing.

Now the real work is before us. We have to overcome a legacy of distrust created by the conduct of past governments, by demonstrating a sustained commitment from Canada to truly building a better future with and for the T̓silhqot'in people.

By this letter, we affirm our shared vision in the *Letter of Understanding* and set our path, together, to transform the lives of the T̓silhqot'in citizens and communities and the relationship between Canada and the T̓silhqot'in Nation.

Shared Vision and Priority Issues Affirmed

We affirm the Shared Vision and the commitment to work in the following areas identified as Priority Issues in the *Letter of Understanding*:

- Closing the profound gaps in the education, health, and mental health care, housing, infrastructure, access to clean water and the overall health and well-being of the T̓silhqot'in citizens and communities;
- Addressing criminal justice, community safety and policing issues;
- Supporting T̓silhqot'in children and families;
- Jointly reviewing fisheries management in T̓silhqot'in territory;
- Establishing new fiscal relationships based on stable, predictable and flexible funding;
- Exploring and seeking to resolve issues related to Lot 7741 (Chilcotin Military Block);
- Fostering economic opportunities for the T̓silhqot'in;
- Recognizing and implementing T̓silhqot'in governance and law;

- Recognizing and reconciling T̓silhqot'in Aboriginal title and rights;
- pursuant to 4(l) in the *Letter of Understanding*, we agree to include "Fostering strong T̓silhqot'in language and culture across generations"; and
- Other priorities as identified by the Parties.

Next Steps on the Path

We will engage on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis, as true partners and equals.

Our approach starts from *recognition* of T̓silhqot'in rights, respect, co-operation and partnership as the foundation for transformative change. Canada will not take the position, at any point, that T̓silhqot'in Aboriginal rights or title must be extinguished, surrendered or modified as part of reconciliation.

The T̓silhqot'in war chiefs sacrificed their lives in 1864/65 in defence of their lands and their culture. For the T̓silhqot'in people, this remains unfinished business. As a priority, Canada and T̓silhqot'in will work together with British Columbia to recognize and reconcile T̓silhqot'in Aboriginal rights and title. *Land is life* for the T̓silhqot'in peoples – their relationship to the land is at the very core of T̓silhqot'in identity, spirituality, sustenance and well-being.

Immediate and sustained progress will be taken on the Priority Issues for the T̓silhqot'in peoples. We will work together to develop agreements, arrangements and other measures, as required, to effect lasting reconciliation in respect of each of the Priority Issues. At the same time, we commit to step-by-step progress on each of the Priority Issues, and we will work together to define short, mid and long-term goals.

We will be innovative and flexible to find solutions that work. We will consider any arrangements to achieve our goals, including interim agreements, comprehensive agreements, memoranda of understanding, ceremonies, protocols, legislation, policy changes, revenue sharing or any combination thereof.

Canada is fully committed to recognizing the T̓silhqot'in Nation and its rights of governance and self-determination. We will work together, in good faith, to develop an agreement by Spring 2019 that sets out the milestones on this path and establishes clear, transformative steps towards achieving true and lasting reconciliation for the T̓silhqot'in people and an enduring nation-to-nation relationship with Canada.

We have touchstones to guide us. Together, we will work to implement:

- the June 26, 2014 Supreme Court of Canada judgment in *Tsilhqot'in Nation*;
- the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and
- the United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including the right of free, prior informed consent.

Nation-Building Priority

Our commitments to work together, nation-to-nation, must be matched by actions that bring positive and lasting change for Tsilhqot'in families and communities.

There are dire housing and infrastructure needs in the Tsilhqot'in communities. Addressing these basic needs is an essential step to support Tsilhqot'in nation building, governance and community health.

As an urgent priority, Canada commits to work with the Tsilhqot'in Nation to address the housing and infrastructure needs in the Tsilhqot'in communities. Canada fully supports the Tsilhqot'in Housing Investment Strategy and will work with the Tsilhqot'in Nation to realize this vision, including moving forward on the commitment sought from Canada for the initial two years of the Tsilhqot'in Housing Investment Strategy. We share the goal of seeing new housing starts in each of the Tsilhqot'in communities as an immediate priority.

We have much work ahead of us to realize our Shared Vision, to address the Priority Issues and transform the lives of the Tsilhqot'in people and communities. But we will start by bringing change right to the homes of Tsilhqot'in families and demonstrate, together, that there is hope and possibility for a better future.

Structure & Process

We will establish the processes and structures to support expedited, groundbreaking progress.

The Tsilhqot'in Chiefs and the Minister (the "Leadership") will engage as required to set direction, ensure efficient progress and resolve issues as they arise. The Minister will engage other federal departments as required.

The Working Group established under the *Letter of Understanding* is continued and will meet regularly (no less than monthly) to implement direction from Leadership. We agree that British Columbia has a critical role in reconciliation and we will work together as appropriate to engage British Columbia in tripartite discussions on Priority Issues that benefit from cooperation across Indigenous, provincial and federal jurisdictions.

In the *Letter of Understanding*, we agreed to make best efforts to negotiate a reconciliation framework by January 2019. This *Gwets'en nilt'i* Pathway Letter satisfies that commitment. We will determine the annual funding required from Canada to support implementation by the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Looking forward

We have started on the road of healing and understanding – a road of self-determination of the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Let us express, through this letter, and through our mutual commitments, our shared vision of a better future for the Tsilhqot'in peoples, for all of Canada, and for the generations that will follow this path that we are shaping together.

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ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA:

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations

Witnessed by:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

ON BEHALF OF THE TSILHQOT'IN NATION:

Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse
Tribal Chairman – Tsilhqot'in National Government
Tl'etingox Government

Nits'il?in Russell Myers Ross
Vice- Chair –Tsilhqot'in National Government
Yunesit'in

Nits'il?in Roy Stump
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Nits'il?in Francis Laceese
Tl'esqox (Toosey) Indian Band

Nits'il?in Jimmy Lulua
Xeni Gwet'in

Nits'il?in Otis Guichon
Tsi Del Del