

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TSILHQOT'IN NATION

A DECLARATION OF SOVEREIGNTY

TERRITORY

From the Fraser River to the Coastal Mountains and from the territory of the Stl'atl'imx Nation to the territory of the Carrier Nation is Tsilhqot'in Nen (Chilcotin Country). The heart of our country is Tsilhqox (the Chilcotin River) and its tributary lakes and streams. This has been the territory of the Tsilhqot'in Nation for longer than any man can say and it will always be our country. The outlying parts we have always shared with our neighbours -- the Nuxalk, Kwakiutl, Stl'atl'imx, Carrier and Secwepemc -- but the heartland belongs to none but the Tsilhqot'in.

Our mountains and valleys, lakes, rivers and creeks all carry the names given to them by Tsilhqot'in people: Anaham, Niut and Itcha, Tsilhqox, Tasiqox and Chilanko (Tsalhanqox), Tatla, Xeni and Toosey. Our territory is that which is named in our language. All living things in our country -- animals, birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, worms and flies, fish, trees, shrubs, flowers and other plants -- also bear the names given to them in the language of the Tsilhqot'in.

AFFINITY

The Tsilhqot'in are part of the greater nation of the Dene, whose language is spoken in territories that extend from Hudson's Bay

to Alaska and from the northernmost forests to Mexico. The Apache and Navaho are Dene. The Sekani, Tahltan, Gwich'in, Nahani, Kaska, Tsuu T'ina (or Sarcee) and the Sayisi Dene (or Chipewyan) are Dene; so are the Carrier, the Lhinchadene (Dogrib people), the Tatsandene (Yellow knife people), the Kawchodene (Hare people) the Dunne-Za and the Dene-Dhaa. The Greater Dene Nation is vast and we are part of it. We are the Tsilhqot'in.

#### THE ILLEGAL COLONIZATION OF OUR NATION

The first Europeans to enter our country did so only with our permission and when we told them to leave they left. When men settled in our country without permission, we drove them out.

When the Queen of England extended to our nation the protection of her law, by including our territory in the colony of British Columbia in 1858, she did so without our knowledge or consent.

When the colony joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871, it was done without our knowledge or consent.

Since that time, while our people were suffering from the effects of European diseases, our country has been invaded and despoiled. Our people have been deceived, impoverished, oppressed, exploited, imprisoned and maligned. Our sovereignty has been encroached upon and our jurisdiction ignored. Yet we have survived and once

again we thrive.

We are the Tsilhqot'in and we declare to all men and women that we are an independent nation, proud and free.

We accuse the government of the United Kingdom of breach of trust.

We accuse the government of Canada of invading the territories and jurisdiction of a neutral state whose sovereignty it is bound, by its own laws, to defend and protect.

We accuse the government of the province of British Columbia of invading our territories and plundering our resources, in clear violation of its own laws and ours.

We accuse all three governments of conspiring to invade our nation; of conspiring to destroy the foundations of our ancient way of life and to oppress our people; of crimes against land, air and waters over which they have no jurisdiction; of permitting the slaughter of the native wild-life; of encouraging or ignoring the over-harvesting of our forests, lakes, rivers and mountains and the destruction of our natural gardens and orchards. We accuse these governments of repeated and shameless violation of their own laws and of international agreements and covenants.

JURISDICTION

The Tsilhqot'in Nation affirms, asserts and strives to exercise full control over our traditional territories and over the government within our lands.

Our jurisdiction to govern our territory and our people is conferred upon us by the Creator, to govern, maintain and protect the traditional territory in accordance with natural law for the benefit of all living things existing on our land, for this generation and for those yet unborn.

We have been the victims of colonization by Britain, Canada and the province of British Columbia. We insist upon our right to decolonize and to drive these governments from our land.

TERMS OF UNION

We have often declared our willingness to negotiate terms of union with Canada. We repeat that offer now. We make only one condition: the process of negotiation and the final agreement must carry the consent of the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

We have asked the United Nations to supervise discussions between the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Canada to assist us in our decolonization. We feel that international assistance is necessary because Canada has stolen our lands and continues to have an interest in

maintaining control over them. It is difficult to ask a thief to sit in judgment of his theft.

Should the negotiations prove fruitful, they will define the terms and conditions of the union of the Tsilhqot'in Nation with Canada. However, if Canada again refuses to negotiate or chooses to bring unacceptable conditions to the negotiations, the Tsilhqot'in Nation will consider itself free to pursue whatever course of action it may decide upon. That will no doubt include the assumption of our rightful place in the United Nations Organisation and other international groups, either as an individual nation or as a constituent member of a federation or alliance of nation-states.

#### "NON-STATUS" TSILHQOT'IN

To all those people who know themselves to be Tsilhqot'in but who have been denied recognition by Canada, the Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that they will be granted Tsilhqot'in citizenship and that they should inform their local community office of their desire to be so recognized.

#### "INDIAN RESERVES"

The Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that the reserves established by Canada and British Columbia for the use and benefit of "Indian Bands" in Tsilhqot'in Nen are inadequate and illegal, having never been approved nor consented to by the Tsilhqot'in people. The

Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that all so-called Crown Land within the traditional territories of the Tsilhqot'in Nation is forthwith reserved for and owned by the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

DECLARATIONS

To the governments of the Crown, the Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that they should henceforward honour their fiduciary obligations towards us and obey the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as the supreme law in their relations with us.

Especially to the government of the province of British Columbia, the Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that it should henceforward cease and desist its lawless plunder of the resources of our country.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that, as of December 11th, 1997, the laws enacted by Canada and British Columbia will have no force or effect in Tsilhqot'in N'en and that the laws of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and its constituent communities will prevail.

Holders of all licences, permits, deeds and other documents issued by the governments of Canada and British Columbia must obtain the permission of the Tsilhqot'in Nation to continue the operation of their interests in Tsilhqot'in N'en. They can do so by contacting the appropriate local community office during regular office hours and asking to speak to the Chief. Local community offices are

located at 'Esdilagh (Alexandria), Tl'esqox (Toosey), Yunesit'in (Stone), Tl'etingox (Anaham), Tsi Deldel (the Alexis Creek Community at Redstone), Xeni (Nemiah Valley) and western Tsilhqot'in Nen.

#### RECOGNITION

The Tsilhqot'in Nation requests the recognition of all nations of the Earth, the understanding of the people of Canada, the trust and goodwill of the people of British Columbia and the active cooperation of all indigenous peoples.

#### RESPECT

To those people who have settled amongst us in our country, the Tsilhqot'in Nation declares that we bear no enmity towards you, as long as you respect us. It is the policies and practices of the governments, the courts and the churches of Canada that have done us so much harm and that must now change. We do not blame you. We ask you to understand that change must now take place and we invite you to assist us to the best of your ability. We invite you to work with us to make Tsilhqot'in Nen a better place for all of our children. We govern according to principles of consent. We ask you to understand that what we are saying is not unique or peculiar to the Tsilhqot'in Nation: it is happening throughout the Great Turtle Islands (the Americas).

Chief Thomas Billyboy,  
'Esdilagh

Chief Shirley Grambush Johnny  
Tl'esqox

Chief Leslie Stump,  
Tl'etingox-t'in

Chief Ervin Charleyboy,  
Tsi Deldel

Chief Roger William,  
Xeni Gwet'in

Chief  
Yunesit'in

April 17th, 1998

Note. This declaration was first signed by the Chiefs of the Tsilhqot'in on May 2nd, 1984, namely: Chief Thomas Billyboy ('Esdilagh), Chief Arnold Solomon (Tl'esqox), Chief Bernard Elkins (Tl'etingox), Chief Daniel Case (Tsi Deldel), Chief Benny William (Xeni) and Chief David Quilt (Yunesit'in).

The 1984 declaration was replaced by one signed by the Chiefs on the occasion of the first visit of a Minister of Indian Affairs to Tsilhqot'in Nen, March 1st, 1992 (at Tl'esqox), namely: Chief Thomas Billyboy ('Esdilagh), Chief Francis Lacey (Tl'esqox), Chief Andrew Harry (Tl'etingox), Chief Ervin Charleyboy (Tsi Deldel), Chief Roger William (Xeni) and Chief Tony Myers (Yunesit'in).

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