

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2021

### **The T̓silhqot̓in Nation in partnership with UBC researchers release a COVID-19 report called *Dada Nentsen Gha Yatastig; T̓silhqot̓in in the Time of COVID: Strengthening T̓silhqot̓in Ways to Protect Our People***

**Williams Lake, BC:** The T̓silhqot̓in Nation has released a comprehensive COVID-19 report called *Dada Nentsen Gha Yatastig; T̓silhqot̓in in the Time of COVID: Strengthening T̓silhqot̓in Ways to Protect Our People*. The T̓silhqot̓in title translated to English means “I am going to tell you about a very bad disease.” The one hundred- and thirty-six-page report, generated in partnership with University of British Columbia (UBC) researchers, and documents the T̓silhqot̓in Nation’s experiences, achievements and lessons learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and culminates with forty, forward-looking calls-to-action.

The calls-to-action in the report are recommendations for all levels of government (T̓silhqot̓in, regional, provincial and federal), and build from the previously released T̓silhqot̓in Wildfire Report, *The Fires Awakened Us (2019)*. These calls-to-action address the ongoing need for:

- Recognition of inherent Indigenous jurisdiction in emergency response and recovery.
- Improved health data sharing during a public health emergency between all levels of government and the Nation.
- Long-term funding to address mental health issues that have worsened due to the pandemic.
- Response to systemic racism in emergency management and in health care.
- Building on the important investigative work of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond in the report, *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care (2020)* and the UN Special Rapporteur in the *Report on the impact of COVID-19 on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (2020)*, this report provides a nation-specific plan toward true collaboration and partnership.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Nits’il̓in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, TNG Tribal Chairman**

“Last month, our Nation, along with the Heiltsuk Nation and Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council Member Nations negotiated a COVID-19 information-sharing agreement with the Provincial Health Office that improves health data sharing related to COVID-19 cases in nearby communities. While that is a start, it isn’t the end of the conversation. It is critical

that all levels of government work to address systemic racism, which exists in both emergency management and within the health care system. Racism has piled on to our challenges during the pandemic. That is one of the reasons why our people have, and will continue to document our experiences. The T̓silhqot̓'in are warriors, we have fought to protect our people and our lands for centuries. We will continue to exercise our Aboriginal rights and title and protect our people and our lands, whether that be from a devastating wildfire, a global pandemic or a racist system."

**Nits'il?in (Chief) Otis Guichon, TNG Vice Chairman**

"It's been a challenging year for our Nation and for the world. In this report our communities share our experiences during the pandemic and provide recommendations for better outcomes in the future. For me, one of the most distressing outcomes from the pandemic has been the affects on our people's mental health. COVID-19 restrictions such as isolation measures have taken a toll and we have seen addictions worsen such as the abuse and overuse of drugs and alcohol and increased incidents of domestic violence. This past fall, we lost three of our youth within six weeks to overdoses and its just not right when we tragically lose our young people like that. COVID-19 will have lasting effects on our Nation – physically, mentally, spiritually and economically. Our community has and will continue to come together to support each other with healing after the multiple impacts this virus has caused. We call on all levels of government to adopt and implement the forty calls-to action in this report to ensure better coordination with Indigenous peoples in the future and to bring about a strong recovery from COVID-19."

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**Resources:**

- COVID-19 Report: *Dada Nentsen Gha Yatastig*; T̓silhqot̓'in in the Time of COVID: Strengthening T̓silhqot̓'in Ways to Protect Our People - <https://www.tsilhqotin.ca/documents/>
- Media Package: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cpP5gZUk\\_hHMlz2wx2bAMxZ1fL\\_0S9ty?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cpP5gZUk_hHMlz2wx2bAMxZ1fL_0S9ty?usp=sharing)

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