



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tsilhqot'in Nation celebrates and congratulates Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse on his appointment to the Order of British Columbia.

Williams Lake, BC: The Tsilhqot'in Nation is celebrating and extending congratulations to Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse of the community of Tl'etinqox and Tribal Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government on his appointment to the Order of British Columbia.

The Order was established on April 21, 1989 to recognize individuals who have served with the greatest distinction or have excelled in any field of endeavour that has benefited the people of the province of British Columbia or elsewhere. It is the highest honour that British Columbia can bestow upon a citizen.

On June 26, 2014, after over 25 years of litigation fought by the Tsilhqot'in people and the brave testimony of Tsilhqot'in Elders, the Supreme Court of Canada declared Aboriginal title for the first time in Canadian history, in the Tsilhqot'in homeland. This marked a new era of recognition and respect for Indigenous rights and self-determination, one of which Nits'il?in Alphonse and the other Tsilhqot'in Nits'il?in (Chiefs) carry on and which guides the path forward for the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Nits'il?in Alphonse would be the first to credit this victory to the sacrifice and bravery of the Tsilhqot'in Elders that testified at trial, and to the many Nits'il?in and leaders that fought this litigation over the decades. However, it is fitting that Nits'il?in Alphonse receive the highest honour in British Columbia, because of his tireless, critical role in advancing the rights and recognition of Indigenous peoples.

Throughout Nits'il?in Alphonse's tenure as Tribal Chair, he has worked to keep the Tsilhqot'in Nation strong and unified. Despite the various challenges and struggles that emerged from government or industry, such as the high-profile victories to protect sacred lands and waters at Te?tan Biny (Fish Lake) from destruction by open-pit mining, "he has remained dedicated and a driving force behind much of the progress within, not only the Tsilhqot'in Nation, but also with Indigenous rights provincially, nationally and internationally" says Nits'il?in Otis Guichon, TNG Vice-Chair. "He is a good person to have at the negotiation table, he is a warrior for our people and passionate about preserving and protecting our traditional way of life and culture."

Following the historic Tsilhqot'in decision, Nits'il?in Alphonse drove efforts to secure exoneration from British Columbia and Canada for the Tsilhqot'in War Chiefs wrongly executed in 1864, including a powerful healing ceremony with the Prime Minister on Tsilhqot'in title lands.

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TŚILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Nits'ilʔin Alphonse has inspired and empowered Indigenous peoples around the world, and today, the Tsilhqot'in Nation celebrates and thanks him for his many contributions.

Quick Facts:

- In 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada, in a unanimous decision, confirmed that the Tsilhqot'in peoples had Aboriginal Title to 1900 square kilometres of their traditional territory.
- During the Chilcotin War of 1864 and 1865, six Tsilhqot'in War Chiefs were tried and hanged while negotiating peace talks with the colonial government. In 2014 the provincial government exonerated the six War Chiefs of any wrongdoing. In 2018, the federal government followed with an exoneration delivered both in the House of Commons and again while visiting the Declared Title Area.
- Tsilhqot'in Nation is comprised of six communities, ʔEsdilagh, Tl'esqox, Tl'etincox, Tśideldel, Xeni Gwet'in, Yuneśit'in. Together, they make up over 3,000 citizens (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Learn more:

Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia – Tsilhqot'in Title Decision:

<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14246/index.do>

Statement of Exoneration of six Tsilhqot'in War Chiefs by the Prime Minister

<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/03/26/prime-minister-delivers-statement-exoneration-six-tsilhqotin-chiefs>

Tsilhqot'in National Government

<https://www.tsilhqotin.ca/>

Order of British Columbia

<https://www.orderofbc.gov.bc.ca/>

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