



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 2022

### **Tsilhqot'in Nation Outraged by Alaskan Commercial Fishery Threatening B.C. Bound Salmon: *Calls for Immediate Review of the Pacific Salmon Treaty***

**Williams Lake, BC:** The Tsilhqot'in Nation is alarmed to learn about an Alaskan Commercial Fishery that is threatening salmon that are bound for British Columbia and having severe impacts on the fishing rights of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and other First Nations in British Columbia. The Tsilhqot'in call on Canada to establish an independent review of the Pacific Salmon Treaty and the failure by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to meaningfully represent First Nation interests, including food, social and ceremonial fishing rights, at the international table.

A new report commissioned by Watershed Watch Salmon Society and SkeenaWild Conservation Trust found that the Alaskan Fishery is responsible for harvesting hundreds of thousands of fish bound for B.C., which could partially explain the historically low returns that the province and our territory have experienced over the past few years and has led to fishing closures. While hundreds of thousands of B.C. bound salmon are harvested by commercial fisheries in U.S. waters, Tsilhqot'in families have gone hungry and have been denied their Aboriginal right to fish. In 2019, the Alaska catch of Chilko salmon was almost 45,000 and only 158,000 returned to spawn in the territory, which means that Alaska was responsible for taking over 20% of the run, despite the numbers being so low that conservation measures were implemented throughout B.C. This is not an isolated event: over-harvesting in Alaskan waters is threatening the future existence of these stocks.

While the Tsilhqot'in Nation has made substantial economic, lifestyle and cultural sacrifices to conserve endangered salmon, Canada has stood silent while watching the U.S. permitting overfishing our already mismanaged stocks. The Tsilhqot'in Nation calls for an independent review of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, with Tsilhqot'in appointed representatives' participation, and leading to new structures and renegotiation with the U.S.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair, Tsilhqot'in National Government**

"This is outrageous. Our Nation has made huge sacrifices to conserve salmon over the years, including protecting the headwaters in our Title lands where these salmon spawn, and having the last remaining relatively healthy Fraser River sockeye run. More importantly, our Nation has

---

D O W N T O W N   O F F I C E

253 4th Avenue North  
Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4  
Ph: (250)-392-3918  
Fax: (250)-398-5798

L A K E S I D E   O F F I C E

1729 South Lakeside Drive  
Williams Lake, BC V2G 3A9  
Ph: (778)-799-2145  
Fax: (778)-799-2142



implemented closures and denied our citizens their Aboriginal right to fish, impacting our traditional way of life, our economy and the mental and physical health of our peoples. We made these sacrifices because there were so few fish remaining in 2019 and 2020, only to learn that the drastic decline in returns was the result of major overfishing in Alaskan waters. We need to immediately review how the Pacific Salmon Treaty is structured, and First Nations' role at such an important international table. We demand our own seat at the Pacific Salmon Commission to represent our Chilko fishery directly – this is what happens when others say they are looking after our interests. We cannot wait to fix this – it has too many consequences for Indigenous Peoples who rely on salmon for sustenance, our economy and our ability to transmit our culture to future generations. We will consider all options, including legal action, after learning of this clear infringement of our rights and Canada's unwillingness to protect them at the Pacific Salmon Commission level.”

**Media Contact**

Jacey Warne

Communications Manager

Tsilhqot'in National Government

778-267-6197

[jwarne@tsilhqotin.ca](mailto:jwarne@tsilhqotin.ca)