



June 16, 2023

## Statement of the Tsilhqot'in Nation on *Nagwentled* (Farwell Canyon)

*Nagwentled* (Farwell Canyon) is Tsilhqot'in territory, and it will always be Tsilhqot'in territory. It winds through the caretaker area of Tl'esqox, one of the six Tsilhqot'in communities that comprise the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) recently announced that it intends to start a "planning exercise" for *Nagwentled*. This is the latest public statement from WLFN asserting that *Nagwentled* is Secwepemc territory.

WLFN did not reach out to Tl'esqox or the Tsilhqot'in Nation before publicly announcing this "planning exercise" in the backyard of Tl'esqox, in Tsilhqot'in territory. WLFN did not invite our leadership to discuss this planning exercise or make any effort to engage our Nation before issuing a press release. This approach is highly disrespectful to our Nation and to our elders and members that cherish *Nagwentled* as Tsilhqot'in lands.

We would prefer to deal with this issue honourably, between Nations, and not through press statements. However, given WLFN's public statements and escalation of conflict, we have no choice but to issue this statement.

The Chilko salmon (*ts'eman*) that run through *Nagwentled* are one of the last, strong salmon runs in North America. Chilko salmon stocks spawn in the heart of declared title lands, deep in Tsilhqot'in territory. The Tsilhqot'in Nation has fought and sacrificed for generations to keep these waters pristine. We have turned down vast sums of money, while other First Nations have signed business deals with open-pit mines discharging directly into the Fraser and Quesnel systems. Each First Nation decides the priorities of its people, and we are not critical of the paths chosen by other First Nations. Our Nation has chosen to exercise not only our rights at *Nagwentled*, but more importantly our *responsibilities* to our sacred waters and our salmon stocks.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation opposes archaeological work or any other disturbance at *Nagwentled* without our approval. We will be reaffirming to British Columbia and Canada that *Nagwentled* is Tsilhqot'in territory and that our people will always carry the responsibility to manage and steward these lands and waters.

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