



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“TSILHQOT’IN COURT VICTORY SUPPORTS STRONG STANCE ON ABORIGINAL TITLE AND RIGHTS”

After battling the Provincial and Federal governments for 17 years in court, Chief Roger William and the Xenigwet’in, on behalf of the Tsilhqot’in, have been rewarded with a complete victory on all the major issues in their Aboriginal title and rights claim. The B.C. Supreme Court’s decision in *Tsilhqot’in v. British Columbia* vindicates the Okanagan Nation’s long struggle to have the provincial government recognize Okanagan Aboriginal title and rights. “This case supports the Okanagan Nation’s firm position that the laws of the Okanagan Nation, not the province, apply over our lands,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

The Court’s decision is a thorough rejection of the positions the province relies on to deny Okanagan title and rights. The Court dismissed the Province’s argument that Aboriginal title could only be proven for small, discrete sites and instead found that Tsilhqot’in Aboriginal title exists over approximately 200,000 hectares. The Court concluded that Provincial laws, including the *Forest Act*, do not apply to Aboriginal title lands.

The Court also confirmed what the Okanagan Nation has been saying for over 130 years: the Province has no right give away or sell our lands or its resources without our consent. “Having acted illegally since Confederation, the Province will now have to pay compensation for its long history of denying Aboriginal title.” said Chief Joe Dennis.

The Okanagan Nation congratulates Chief Roger William, the Xenigwet’in and all the Tsilhqot’in people on their hard fought victory. Their determination and commitment is an inspiration to all Aboriginal people. The court decision in their case is a major step forward in the long struggle we have inherited from our ancestors to defend our land and way of life.

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