



Wolf Lake



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Timiskaming, Wolf Lake and Eagle Village First Nations Congratulate Tsilhqot'in Nation on Achieving Judicial Recognition of Aboriginal Title: *Urge Crown Governments to Show Respect for Algonquin Aboriginal Title & Rights***

June 27, 2014

(*Algonquin Territory/Quebec/Ontario*) - The Algonquin communities of Timiskaming, Wolf Lake, and Eagle Village today congratulated the Tsilhqot'in Nation for achieving a historic win before the Supreme Court of Canada in the William decision on Aboriginal Title.

"We are pleased the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that the Tsilhqot'in Nation holds Aboriginal Title to their historic traditional territory and not just small current use areas. We are optimistic that in the face of this game changing court decision, the federal and provincial governments will now quit stalling and get on with negotiating a formal consultation and accommodation protocol with our three First Nations regarding land-use planning and natural resource development on our Aboriginal Title territories," said Chief Terence McBride of Timiskaming

On January 23, 2013, the three Algonquin First Nations issued a **Statement of Assertion of Rights and Title** to the governments of Canada, Quebec and Ontario announcing their assertion of Aboriginal rights and title to their traditional territories. The purpose of the **Statement** was to put other governments on notice, and to establish a firm basis for an effective consultation and accommodation process regarding infrastructure, land-use plans and natural resource developments that impact on their Aboriginal Title and Rights.

The territory covered under this **Statement of Assertion of Rights and Title**, measuring over 34,000 square kilometres, straddles the Quebec-Ontario border along the Upper Ottawa River (see attached map), with a large portion of it located in Ontario. The evidence, which has been in preparation for almost 20 years, shows that these communities are descended from the Algonquin bands that traditionally used and occupied the territory, and that they meet the legal tests for establishing rights and title. Because the rights being asserted are trans-boundary, this will require the attention and commitment of the government of Canada, as well as the governments of Quebec and Ontario. There are also some significant areas of overlap with the "Algonquins of Ontario" claim, which will need particular consideration in the short term.

The SCC William decision make it clear what the duty of the federal and provincial governments are when Aboriginal Title is asserted:

*“[p]rior to establishment of title, the Crown is required to consult in good faith with any Aboriginal groups asserting title to the land about proposed uses of the land and, if appropriate, accommodate the interests of such claimant groups. The level of consultation and accommodation required varies with the strength of the Aboriginal group’s claim to the land and the seriousness of the potentially adverse effect upon the interest claimed.”*

“On January 23, 2013, our communities presented strong evidence to establish our Algonquin Aboriginal Title and Rights to our traditional territories,” said Chief St. Denis of Wolf Lake. “All parties will have to work together to address our Aboriginal Title and Rights in a timely fashion,” stated Chief St. Denis, adding, “We are encouraged by the Supreme Court of Canada’s judicial recognition of the Tsilhqot’in Nation’s Aboriginal Title in the William case. We have been working hard to achieve the reform of the federal Comprehensive Land Claims policy, because that is what is needed, and that is what we expect. The current federal policy framework is broken because it is based on the extinguishment and denial of our Aboriginal Title and Rights. As a consequence of this unequivocal Supreme Court of Canada decision we believe that now is the time to chart a new course, based on the recognition and affirmation of our Aboriginal Title and Rights.”

The Chiefs expressed the desire to work in a mutually respectful way with their neighbours and third parties. “By establishing the Crown’s duty to acknowledge our asserted Aboriginal Title and Rights and accommodate our interests,” explained Chief Paul of Eagle Village, “we will have greater certainty as we move forward to build a sustainable future for our First Nation communities. We will continue to work with our neighbours towards true partnership in the future.”

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