



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
May 12, 2020

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs

Wet'suwet'en Chiefs MOU and the Wet'suwet'en Members Across the Yintah

SMITHERS – from the ancestral homelands of the Wet'suwet'en, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs issued the following statement today:

“The Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze have had several clan meetings, including meetings in person, and virtual meetings with clan/house members, band council members, youth, elders, people close to home and those far away. The discussions focus on the details of the MOU for Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title including a clause by clause explanation and a summary of the work to date since the February 29, 2020, tripartite initialing of the MOU.

“In the last few weeks, we have heard from Wet'suwet'en members from across the yintah and from urban centers from across the country. We hear recommendations, concerns, fears and cautious optimism for the year of negotiations to come and we are listening.

“We need to spend time to work on ideas and solutions that will help our People, wherever they live. As our elders have taught us, we listen, we do the work together, and keep moving forward, as we have done this for generations”, Dini'ze Hagwilnegh shared. In the light of openness, a copy of the MOU and a back ground information was sent out by email to Clan members and to Band Councils last week.

“Tsakë'ze Wila'at stated this work has been in the works for decades “We are lifting up our ancestors, fill up your pack sack, set it by the door and be ready; be prepared, is what they would teach us. Tsakë'ze Wila'at continues to say, our families are interconnected, across many communities, we are not strangers, we help each other as grandmothers' as I am, as family”.

“The Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze of the 5 clans, Gil_seyhu, Laksamshu, Tsayu, Gitdumten and Laksilyu make decisions by consensus, we listen, ask questions and discuss all matters as we have done for generations. A strong key aspect of the yintah comes from our unique stewardship relationship, our Spirit is in the land, our language and crests come from the life- giving force of the yintah.

“This relationship is a key foundation of our sacred laws, anuk nu'at'en, which we seek to continue, today and for generations to come. We have heard this strong message from our clan and house members, and throughout all communities in our homelands. The strength and resilience of our families, our house groups that will help carry us forward for years to come, together, as family, throughout our whole lives wherever we live. Our collective vision is for

the “betterment of all”. We know that we live amongst many people, many communities and our collective wellbeing and safety depends on all us to live together in a good way, that we are all safe, children, youth, women and elders especially. We seek further support from everyone for more community building, in all the communities in our yintah.

“We look forward to more sharing, more collaboration and strengthening our relations, in following our core teaching of wiggus, living in a good way, with all our People and settlers in our yintah.

“It is important to note that we are in a place that our ancestors set the path for us, generations of government policies that silenced our leaders and the fabric of who we are our governance went underground for many years. February 29, 2020 marked a turning point in our history, we commend Minister Bennett and Minister Fraser in hearing and listening to the Wet’suwet’en, hearing the voice of our ancestors and seeing a path of reconciliation to create new memories in the minds of our children.

“It is our time now, to ready ourselves, to care for the yintah as we have in the past, determining the use and health of the yintah, now and for future generations to come. This MOU begins those discussions.

“We encourage all Wet’suwet’en from children to elders to not only participate but own our destiny”.

As Dini’ze Hagwilnegh told the Band Councils and clan members, “the signing of the MOU is just the beginning. Just as our fathers and grandparents did in the Delgamuukw/Gisday’wa case, all Wet’suwet’en need to stand and work together for the better future for our children and grandchildren and those yet to be born. The commitment of Canada and British Columbia to affirm us and our title to the Yintah in the MOU will allow us to give our future generations that better future”.

Given the public health recommendations to continue the physical distancing measures and avoid non-essential travel, we are seeking a virtual private meeting for the MOU signing on May 14th, 2020 as our Wet’suwet’en house groups and clans have directed us.

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