



AFN expresses full support for Tsilhqot'in Nation Aboriginal Title Recognition Case

(Ottawa, ON) – Following a meeting with Tsilhqot'in Nation leadership May 16, 2013 in Williams Lake BC, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo announced the National AFN Executive will apply to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada appeal hearing of the Tsilhqot'in Nation Aboriginal title recognition case, stating that recognition is the starting point to achieve reconciliation and is urgently required to advance certainty and economic opportunity.

“This case is an important opportunity to take concrete steps forward toward reconciliation in this country,” said AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo. “Respect and recognition is the basis of opportunity and successful partnerships required to build a stronger sustainable future for First Nations and all Canadians.”

The Supreme Court of Canada granted leave to appeal to the Tsilhqot'in Nation for their Aboriginal title recognition case in January, with the hearing currently scheduled for November 7, 2013 – just one month after the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation and three years since Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

June 28 – 29: Beaver Lake Cree Nation Annual Pow Wow, on BLCN territory near Lac La Biche, AB.

Presenting....

Woodward and Co LLP New Partners

Woodward and Company LLP is pleased to announce that Heather Mahony and Drew Mildon became partners in the firm as of May 1, 2013. Please join us in congratulating Heather and Drew!



Heather Mahony

Heather was called to the BC Bar in January 2004; she has been with Woodward and Co. since 2002 when she joined the firm as a co-op student. She is also called in Ontario.

Heather's current areas of practice include First Nation law development, reserve land management, taxation, economic and commercial development, environmental assessment, specific claims negotiation, and First Nation governance.



Drew Mildon

Drew began working with W&Co in January 2004 as a coop student and continued on to become legal counsel. He is also a member of the Yukon Bar.

Drew's areas of practice include: secured transactions, property and income taxation, trusts, and business associations. He is interested in assisting clients to develop policies and structures to separate economic development, as a function of government, from business development, as a commercial activity and balancing these priorities to result in successful corporate outcomes.

“Two hundred and fifty years after the Royal Proclamation and yet the security that was promised therein for First Nation lands, territories and resources remains unfulfilled. We cannot wait any longer. It a matter of human and Indigenous rights, recognition and opportunity, and has tremendous economic implications for Canada,” said National Chief Atleo. “This could change the economic future for all First Nations and all of Canada.”

“In BC, historically there were few treaties, and our Nations’ lands were not lawfully acquired,” said AFN BC Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould. “William is the latest in a long line of Aboriginal title and rights cases in BC that has national implications for all Indigenous peoples, and it is critical, when asked to determine the scope and extent of Aboriginal title, that the Court does so in a considered, respectful and thoughtful way that takes into account Aboriginal perspectives and does justice to our peoples’ thousands of years of occupation of our territories. Practically, this is necessary and in the interests of all Canadians, to ensure that the Crown engages and negotiates honourably and in good faith the reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown title.”

“It was such an honour to have the AFN National Chief meet with us. It is a pure blessing for us to have his personal commitment and the support of the AFN,” said Chief Roger William, Xeni Gwet’in First Nations Government and Plaintiff. “I reflect back and remember with warmth our Elders and leaders who stood up for our people and our culture in court, some of whom are no longer with us today, and I thank them – they have made this moment possible. **Woodward & Company**, the David Suzuki Foundation, Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Friends of Nemaiah, First Nations communities across BC and Canada, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the Assembly of First Nations have all supported us dearly throughout this and we will not back down – we will move forward with unity and strength.”

“We are grateful for the opportunity to meet with the National Chief on Nation issues that are at our forefront such as our court case and the threat to Teztan Biny/Fish Lake. National Chief Shawn Atleo spent time in his younger years in Yunesit’in – one of our Tsilhqot’in communities,” said Tribal Chairman Chief Joe Alphonse, Tsilhqot’in National Government.

AFN will be filing an application for intervention within the next month and is encouraging other First Nations and advocacy organizations, human rights and environmental groups to work together with First Nations in support. ❖

TAKING BACK THE NAME – MOUNT DOUG IS RETURNED TO ITS ORIGINAL: PKOLS



By Drew Mildon

On May 22, 2013, Drew Mildon and Heather Mahony joined hundreds of other locals to march up the mountain—previously known as Mount Douglas. At the top, a sign carved by Charles Elliott was placed to commemorate the re-naming to PKOLS, the original Coast Salish name.

The WSANEC peoples have been here for thousands of years. They named the lands, the plants, the animals -- in their language. At law, both British colonial law and Canadian law, they have not abandoned their interests in these lands.

On the walk up PKOLS, Heather’s seven-year old son asked her “What does Indigenous Nationhood Movement mean?” She explained to him that a Nation is a collective of *people* that are connected to a specific *territory*. During the lovely and educational ceremony presented at the top of PKOLS, artist Charles Elliot eloquently expressed how the act of taking the Indigenous names off the land and putting English names on in their place was a profound act of colonization and disconnection. Imposing a foreign name severs the relationship between the people and the territory that is the foundation of nationhood.

Some people might say that reclaiming place names is purely symbolic, but we don’t think so. It is a necessity to restore the honour of those of us who reside here as guests of the Coast Salish peoples. The past has not gone anywhere. It is written in the flesh and on the maps of our present day communities. We sincerely hope that this is a beginning of the renewal of the true names of this place many of us wish to call home. ❖

Photo courtesy of Heather Mahony.