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## **Government of Canada Forgives \$32 Million Treaty Loan**

SECWPEMULUCW, Williams Lake, BC (June 8, 2020) – The Northern Shuswap Treaty Society (NSTS) and the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (NSTC) are celebrating the forgiveness of over \$32 Million in accumulated negotiation debt. The funds were part of a ‘comprehensive land claim negotiation loan’ that the NSTC agreed to take on when they entered the BC Treaty process 26 years ago. The loan forgiveness removes a major economic hurdle for the four Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw (NStQ) nations represented by the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council.

With recent developments that include the return of jurisdiction over child and families and the BC governments adoption of UNDRIP legislation, the treaty process has been reinvigorated. The Government of Canada’s loan forgiveness marks a new era for the people of the NStQ who have worked steadily during the last quarter century to demonstrate their self-determination. This has led to the many steps that have been taken to develop self-government.

NStQ spokesperson Stswecem’c Xgat’tem (Dog Creek-Canoe Creek) Kupki7 Patrick Harry says that there is a legacy of work that has been done by members who are no longer here. “To finally see the day when real progress is being made would have meant a great deal to the elders who have worked toward self-government. This opens a new chapter for our members and places the NStQ one step closer to breaking free from the Indian Act”.

In her letter to the Northern Shuswap Treaty Society, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett says the government is committed to advancing reconciliation and recognizing indigenous rights. Minister Bennett saying, “I hope that the forgiveness of this debt demonstrates this commitment in a concrete way and will enhance financial stability and enable your community to improve access to funding.”

The Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw is comprised of the four Secwepemc communities Tsq’escen’ (Canim Lake); T’exelc (Williams Lake); Stswecem’c - Xgat’tem (Dog Creek - Canoe Creek); and Xat’sull - Cmetem (Soda Creek – Deep Creek). The Nations of the NStQ are in the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of treaty negotiations with the Province of B.C. and the Government of Canada.

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