



**Tahltan**  
Band Council

# #TahltanStrong

## Highlights from the 2018-2020 Council Term

### **Acknowledgement**

The past two year-term for Chief and Council has been memorable. Record forest fires, landslides, and a global pandemic filled our agenda, along with regular business to keep the communities moving forward. Together, we met each of these challenges with strong leadership, collaboration and determination. As this term comes to an end, we would like to acknowledge the Tahltan Band staff who worked very hard for us and all community members. We also want to acknowledge the positive energy of all members who stepped up to give us guidance. We are overcome with gratitude for all the support and encouragement our partners and members have given to us through the term and we want to share with you some of what we accomplished with your help.

Medu,  
*Your Chief and Council 2018 – 2020*



# Milestones

Here are just a few of the significant events and milestones that shaped our work as a Council over the past term.

- 2018
  - Alkali Lake Fire
  - Tahltan Strong Benefit Concert
- 2019
  - Landslide on Telegraph Road
  - 35 new houses added to the housing stock in Dease Lake and Telegraph (2019 – 2020)
  - Upgrades to the Music Fest Grounds at 6 Mile
  - Participated in Hobiyeey – Nation to Nation Alliance with Niga'a Nation
  - Equipment upgrades for our maintenance department, including new low-bed truck, new service truck and a new skid steer
  - 6 staff and nurses residences rebuilt/replaced in Telegraph (2019 – 2020 and ongoing)
  - Waste-transfer station new build in Telegraph Creek
  - Hosted the Antarctica research vehicle presentation that brought Prince Albert II and Astronaut Chris Hadfield to Telegraph
  - Repairs to Sawmill Lake Community Recreation Area and Playground (2019 – 2020)
  - Comprehensive Community Plan
  - Housing Development Plan
  - New Band Manager
  - Rebuilt the community garden in Telegraph
  - One-year after the fire anniversary ceremony
  - Airport upgraded in Telegraph Creek
  - Peoples Haven Sewer Upgrade
- 2020
  - Emergency Management Plan
  - Evacuation Plan
  - Built the Tahltan Strong Sprung structure – a donation from Samaritan's Purse
  - Tanning cabins, fish camps, 30 mile – men's camps. Blueberry camp built/rebuilt (2019 – 2020)
  - Riversong Café open for business
  - Council Governance Manual developed
  - IR 13 moves into final phase before construction
  - Business Continuity Plan
  - Headstart rebuild (in progress)
  - Helipad installed by Tahltan Health Centre in Telegraph
  - Purchase of Community Infrastructure Protection Trailer
  - Fenced in Fisheries yard and Public Works yard
  - Brought Chon-FM (Yukon radio station) to Dease Lake at the request of elders in Dease Lake
  - Rebuilding the dock in downtown Telegraph (in progress)
  - Community safety assessment (in progress)
  - TNDC Shareholders protocol (in final draft)
  - Galore Creek Community Garden and recreation area project (in progress)
  - COVID 19 Response (2020 and in progress)

## Welcoming a new Band Manager

We have been very happy to welcome and work alongside our new Band Manager, Rochelle DeLaRonde. Rochelle, who grew up in Pouce Coupe, BC, is a proud member of the Tahltan Nation who visited Telegraph Creek in the summers for many years as a child. A member of the Tsesk'iyá clan, and the Eh'eni family, Tahltan country has always been dear to Rochelle's heart.

After graduating from Thompson Rivers University in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, majoring in Human

Resource Management, Rochelle gained field and administration experience in the oil, gas, and mining industries.

We are very lucky to have her skills and talents put to work in the Nation. Welcome again Rochelle!

We are also very grateful to Shana Dennis for all of her hard work and dedication as our previous Band Manager and we are very happy that she has stayed on with us in her new role as Finance Admin.

## Wildfire Response

The 2018 Alkali Lake fire had wide reaching impacts. In Telegraph, 27 structures including 21 homes, 2 businesses, the day care and the church were destroyed. Members lost vehicles and essential items as well as irreplaceable and precious items. Precious sites were also lost such as fish camps and gravesites. Smoke and soot from the fire blanketed the community. In Dease Lake and even as far as Iskut, the smoke created poor air quality for many weeks. Many of us suffered physically and financially, and all of us suffered emotionally and spiritually.

For Council, the fire was the first, and biggest challenge we faced together. In many ways, it brought us closer together as a team. We were elected in June of that year, and just over a month later we were meeting weekly, if not daily, to ensure the health and safety of community members during the evacuation period. At the same time, we continued to work with staff to maintain regular services. Working around the clock with our incredible team, we were able to bring everyone home to Telegraph by Christmas 2018.



***We are very proud to say that this was fastest recovery for any First Nation which has faced a disaster of this scale. The evacuation order in Telegraph lasted 102 days. From the time evacuation order was put in place until the last family returned to Telegraph was 146 days.***



We could not have accomplished all of this without the Iskut Band, Tahltan Central Government as well as our partners from Indigenous Services Canada and the First Nations Health Authority. Everyone was quick to come to our aid and played an important supporting role in the evacuation and rebuild. Special thanks to the team at the regional district who have partnered with us on so many projects that not only helped to rebuild Telegraph, but are helping to revitalize the communities of Telegraph and Dease Lake.

To continue the healing process and recognize the front-line workers, fire fighters and all those

who helped and donated to the community, we hosted a ceremony on the one-year anniversary. The 2019 event was an important step in the healing process for the entire community.

Since the fires, the Tahltan Band Council has spoken about our experiences and been asked to provide best practice leadership to other organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations. Chief McLean also met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Kamloops to provide advice to the federal government for providing support to First Nations in times of crisis.

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***“Getting everybody back home after the fire was our biggest achievement. It happened because we had the right people in place at the time we needed them. The community understood how hard it was for the Council to get them home and it was a huge achievement that we could say that everything was in place and people could safely come back home.”***

***—Vernon Marion***



## Housing Renovations, Rebuilds and Expansion

Our priority as Council was first and foremost to ensure adequate housing for our members living in the communities. In total, 35 new houses have been added to the housing stock in Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek since this Council's term started.

In Telegraph, 18 new single-family homes have been added, including 9 modular, 2 homes that were under construction when the fire started, and 9 new stick builds. Our Nation's company, the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, was the prime contractor in charge of site excavation. A big shout out to everyone who worked on the ground to help with the rebuild. A specific shout-out goes to our Capital Projects Manager Feddie Louie who bravely and expertly led the emergency response and rebuilding projects. Our team also managed the replacement or repairs to several roofs damaged by the fires, and every home in Telegraph was cleaned and painted inside and cleaned on the outside.

In 2019 Tahltan Band started a New Housing Authority – the Stikine Housing Authority – which is a non-profit organization we have created to oversee the management of 18 houses in Dease Lake transferred to the Authority from M'akola Housing Society and BC Housing . Through the current housing program Tahltan Band is taking care of the day-to-day management of the units.

One of the first big plans to come after the fires was the Housing Development Plan. The plan was completed in October of 2019 by a professional planner. The plan takes into account the home replacements needed from the 2018 wildfire, the housing waitlist and estimated population growth projections for Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek.

In conjunction with the Housing Development Plan, Council approved the final design of Dease Lake IR13, zoned for 180 lots (Parcel A). This has been a long-running project and we are very happy to see it move forward to the final stage: awaiting funding approval from the federal government. The expansion means a lot more homes for Tahltans in our territory and is a great example of Council working well with all levels of government, including the Ministry of Highways, to push for the reserve expansion.

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*“I think we have done a really good job building up that housing and we’re in a better place now. The IR 13 Expansion has been a huge win for us. It has been a long-running priority for the whole Nation, and I’m so happy to see it finally come together because it means more houses for us and the community.”*

—Brian Quock



## Emergency Management Plans

The fire reminded us about the value of having a solid and up-to-date emergency plan. Tahltan Band was in the midst of updating the 2012 emergency plan when the Alkali Lake Fire started. We learned so much about dealing with emergencies from the fire that one of our priorities during the re-build was to update that plan and ensure all of our learnings could be leveraged by future Councils. The draft of the plan is now ready and gives guidance for Council and staff on things like emergency operations

centre management, operational responsibilities, evacuation logistics and much more. The plan is available for everyone to read on the Tahltan Band website.

This year we also approved a new Business Continuity Plan. This plan sets out the processes that will enable the Band to continue effective governance and maintain priority services in times of crises. This plan is also available for everyone to read on the Tahltan Band website.

## Landslide Management

In the spring of 2019 Telegraph was hit again with another serious environmental disaster when a landslide fell over the road to Telegraph Creek. For two weeks Council met regularly with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure,

ensuring that our members in Telegraph did not go without food or medicine, and that transportation was available to anyone requiring emergency medical services.

## Comprehensive Community Plan

The Community Comprehensive Planning process started in March of 2019. This Plan is intended to be a roadmap from the community for Chief and Council and band staff for years to come. Working with the community, the plan

outlines guideposts for developing and expanding programs, developing community infrastructure, building up our local economy and bringing Tahltan culture into all that we do.



Between March and September of 2019 Council and the planning team held six community meetings. Three in Dease Lake and three in Telegraph. The meetings were organized in an “open house” format so that the planning team could hear directly from every person who attended the meetings.

➤➤➤ **March 2019 = 58 members**  
*attended from Dease and Telegraph*

➤➤➤ **May 2019 = 44 members**  
*attended from Dease and Telegraph*

➤➤➤ **September 2019 = 63 members**  
*attended from Dease and Telegraph*

A fourth round of community meetings was held December of 2019 in Dease Lake and Telegraph to present the Draft of the Comprehensive Community Plan.

The process also included a survey for members living in Dease Lake and Telegraph. The planning team collected 65 fully completed surveys during the process. The plan is available for anyone to read on our website.



## Tahltan Leadership Protocol

As one of three governments in the territory, we continued our collaborative work with the Iskut Band and TCG under the Tahltan Governance Protocol. Over the past year much work has been done by the collective leadership to update our Protocol. The collective leadership of 26 members meets yearly, usually in conjunction with Mining Roundup. With COVID-19 and the need for a Nation response plan and monitoring, Chief McLean met many times with the other Leadership Council members, Chief Marie Quock and President Chad Day.

## Covid-19 Response

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, together with the TCG and Iskut Band, Council acted quickly to implement Covid-19 safety protocols and procedures. On July 30, 2020 the Tahltan Nation announced that everyone, including hunters and wildlife enthusiasts, should avoid nonessential travel to Tahltan Territory until the Province safely enters Stage 4 of the COVID-19 response. The consequence of spreading COVID-19 is too great given the limited access to medical care. We also worked together to put in place a number of personal measures for members who live in Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek to help keep our communities free of COVID-19.



**OUR APPROACH IS WORKING.** As of Oct. 28th, 2020, we are glad to report no cases of the virus in our communities, and are grateful for the on-going cooperation of all Tahltans to keep each other safe.

Chief and Council credit the strong working relationships we have built with each other as one of the main sources of motivation to keep working through this challenging time.

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*“We took a lot of what we learned from the fires and used it to help us respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19.”*

*—Chief McLean*

## Facilities Upgrades and New Builds

Over the past two years, the Band, working with our partners, have completed many important projects to upgrade our cultural and community facilities as well as critical infrastructure.

New buildings and rebuilds have been a constant item on our agenda this term.



PROJECT	PARTNERS AND/OR FUNDERS	STAGE OF COMPLETION
Staffing residences (1 for band, 5 for health professionals including a five-plex Nurses residence)	Tahltan Band insurance, First Nations Health Authority	<i>Completed</i>
1 Head-Start/Daycare rebuild in Telegraph Creek	Tahltan Band Gaming Revenue and Insurance	<i>Completed</i>
Waste-transfer station new build in Telegraph Creek	Regional District	<i>Completed</i>
Repairs to Sawmill Lake Community Recreation Area and Playground	Regional District	<i>Completed</i>
Telegraph Creek Aerodrome	Navigation Canada	<i>Completed</i>
Firehall in Telegraph Creek	Indigenous Services Canada	<i>Design phase</i>
Purchase of new Fire Truck and Fire Hall	Indigenous Services Canada	<i>Awaiting approval</i>
Community Cultural Centre	Fire donation	<i>Pre-feasibility</i>
Renovation of Tahltan Centre		
Tanning cabins	Stikine Wholistic Working Group	<i>Completed</i>
Helipad by Tahltan Centre	Tahltan Band	<i>Completed</i>
Rebuilding the community garden in Telegraph	Galore Creek	<i>Completed</i>
Water system upgrade in Telegraph	Indigenous Services Canada	<i>Design phase</i>
Rebuild/upgrades to fish camps, Men's camp and Blueberry camp	Stikine Wholistic Working Group	<i>Completed</i>
Purchase of Community Infrastructure Protection Trailor	Donation fund	<i>Completed</i>
Replacing Telegraph Creek Road waterfall bridge	Ministry of Transportation and Regional District	<i>Completed</i>

We are especially proud of the new tanning cabins, where community members can learn the whole tanning process to process moose hide, caribou hide, etc. and learn Tahltan

traditional practices. Facilities like these are an important part of our healing process and help get members back to their normal lives as much as possible.

***“The tanning cabins are really terrific examples of us getting back to our Tahltan traditional practices. They are opportunities for all of us to learn together and get back to our traditions.”***

***—Rocky Jackson***



## Economic Development

The past term Council approved several key projects for economic development in our community, including:

- A floor plan for the new store renovation. Council approved the plan to be taken to the community for your input, feedback and approval
- A grant funding proposal for Riversong renovation, which has been approved by ITAC
- A proposal for year-round greenhouses in Telegraph Creek which are going through pre-feasibility stage, with the goal of beginning commercial production in late 2021

Potential future investment opportunities also discussed with Council included:

- Laundry mat in Dease Lake
- Waste management

In 2020, we were very happy to see our Riversong Café and Lodge open for business, practicing covid-19 safety protocols while keeping us all safe. We would like to congratulate and thank the Café's new Manager, Corrina Reimert, for her hard work and dedication to making this business a success in a particularly challenging year for any business. Corrina opened the restaurant for the season with a limited menu and takeout only and got to know lots of locals while she oversaw some renovations to the space. The Lodge added a new suite, called the "Klondike Suite" to the town house which will provide much needed tourism accommodation in our community. Corrina is excited to work together with the Band Council to promote the indigenous tourism strategy and the beauty of our land.



As a shareholder of the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation Council, met twice each year with the TNDC Board to discuss the progress of the company. We also supported the re-appointment of two Directors on the TNDC Board, and worked with the Iskut Band, TCG and TNDC Board to begin drafting a new Shareholders Protocol. When it is finished and agreed to by the Board and Shareholders, the Protocol will set the foundation for an effective working relationship between the Tahltan governments and the Board.



***"I am excited about the year-round greenhouse project in Telegraph, managed by Tahltan Band. We'll be growing food for the community and looking at selling produce at surrounding mines and exploration camps."***

***—Brian Quock***

# Tahltan Band Council Governance Manual

In February 2020, we completed the first ever Tahltan Band Council Governance Manual. The Manual sets out the roles and responsibilities of Council, and guidelines for how Council conducts its business and makes decisions. All of Council was involved in developing the manual, which took several full day meetings to accomplish. The Governance manual is available for anyone to read on our website. We are all very

proud of this piece of work and encourage all members to read it and learn about what Council does and how you can take part

*“This Council’s camaraderie throughout the process was key to the collaboration and vision needed to get the Manual from an idea to a reality.”*

—Rocky Jackson

## Community Programs and Events

Despite the challenges of the past two years, lots of our kids and members continued to participate and maintain strong connections here at home.

Here are some of the programs and events we supported over the past two years:

Indigenous Day Celebrations in Iskut

Free early learning program started in Dease Lake

Five-day Painted Turtle Camp for kids ages 5 and up



Regalia making



Tour de Telegraph

After-school programs for ages 5–12 hosted by Elizabeth, started in September

SD87 Dease Lake School Cultural and Language programs and activities

Hosting grades K-9 once or twice per week at Peoples Haven

Two-day literacy camp in Iskut for five kids

Supporting Jujitsu classes at Dease Lake School

Five-day carving workshop at Fish Camp in Telegraph Creek

Five-day literacy camp in Telegraph Creek for nine kids and three chaperones

Drumming and Dancing Practice

Movie nights for youth

Come Alive five-day program in both Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake

Psychological First Aid

First Aid level 1

Water safety for children



## Working with the 3 Nations and the Stikine Wholistic Working Group

Another major achievement of this Council's term was its continued work with the Stikine Wholistic Working Group and 3 Nations, where the Tahltan Band Council was represented by Councillor Rocky Jackson. Every year our work with the 3 Nations produces results for our communities. It opened doors with government. At one time, we had a high child apprehension rate, with the government taking children away from their homes. But our work with the Group has been very positive and its changed that. None of our children are in the care of non-Tahltans. Our model places children at the centre, with regards to everything you do.

Through the Regional Education Agreement between the 3 Nations and School District 87, the Tahltan Band is supporting the development of the Tahltan Wellness Framework. The Framework is a Tahltan approach to wellness, and a way to address the intergenerational trauma that the children have experienced, and which create

barriers to learning. Council appointed David Rattray and Curtis Rattray to work directly with the school district to bring the Framework to life.

The 3 Nations received its first Premier's Award in the innovation category in 2018. We are now nominated for a second time for our exceptional emergency management during the fire and recovery.

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*“The Working Group has changed everything. We have much better relationships with all level of government now – provincial, federal, even up to the UN. We are now leaders in this and Council helped move it along.”*

*—Rocky Jackson*

## Working with the Tahltan Socio-Cultural Working Group

We have also continued to help guide the work of the TSWG. In 2019, we supported the development of the TSWG's new strategic plan.

Chief McLean also provided technical support as part of the regional revitalization and infrastructure team.



## Final Thoughts

As we round out the term, we would like to thank every one of you, our members. You have made these last two years not only memorable, but incredibly successful for the Nation as a whole, and we are grateful to you all! We have learned a lot working together, and with all of you. We encourage all our young Tahltans to focus on the positive and keep an open mind. We want to remind you that Council work is a great opportunity to learn new skills and build relationships, and its never too late to get involved.



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*“I hope that young Tahltan members can come up and join in the work of Council in the coming years and take on the important task of moving our communities forward in a good way.”*

*—Chief McLean*

