



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Lilwat Nation Celebrates Dr. Mason Ducharme's PhD Achievement

Lilwat Nation, BC — The Lilwat Nation proudly announces that Mason Ducharme has successfully defended his PhD dissertation, *Turnover and the Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations*, earning his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Victoria. This historic milestone makes Qátsya7 Mason the Nation's second Doctor, following in the trailblazing footsteps of Dr. Wanostsa7 Lorna Williams.

Mason's journey exemplifies the resilience required to succeed in a university system shaped by Western frameworks, while uplifting Indigenous knowledge and values. Guided by the teachings of his parents—Cedric Jones of the Lilwat Nation and Allison Ducharme of the Samahquam Nation—Mason has centered his work on an issue critical to Indigenous governance: retaining leadership within Indigenous organizations. Grounded in both academic rigor and lived experience as an Indigenous executive, his research will have lasting impacts on leadership development and nation-building across Indigenous communities.

A proud citizen of both the Lilwat and Samahquam Nations, Mason has consistently honored his dual heritage while advancing governance and leadership. Beyond his academic achievements, Mason has served in significant roles such as Research Advisor for the First Nations Public Service Secretariat and Inherent Rights Fellow for the Rebuilding First Nations Governance project.

"Mason's accomplishments inspire pride and hope for the future of our Nation," said Skalúlmecw (Political) Chief Dean Nelson. "Becoming our second Doctor is a monumental achievement, and we are thrilled to see Mason's contributions strengthen Indigenous leadership and governance. His work reflects the resilience and brilliance of our people and will resonate far beyond our community."

Mason's success is not only a personal milestone but also a collective triumph. The Lilwat teaching of *tákem nsnekwnukwa7*— "we help each other"—has guided his journey, underscoring the importance of community support in individual achievements. Mason follows the path laid by Dr. Lorna Williams, inspiring future generations to pursue education and embrace their cultural roots with pride.

The Lilwat Nation celebrates Dr. Mason Ducharme's achievement as a powerful example of perseverance, cultural pride, and the transformative power of education. His work reinforces the Nation's commitment to excellence, self-determination, and the advancement of Indigenous knowledge.

Please join us in honoring Dr. Mason Ducharme's extraordinary accomplishment and the invaluable contributions he is making to Indigenous leadership and governance.

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#### About Lilwat Nation

Lilwat Nation is a progressive First Nation's community located 7 km north of Pemberton, BC. With a membership of almost 2,300 people — approximately 1,495 of whom live in the community — the Lilwat Nation is the third largest First Nation in the province. The Nation is striving towards self-determination for, and by, the citizens of Lilwat by continuing to exert control over its Territory and resources. With economic development focused on land and resource management, Lilwat Nation is building the foundation for a sustainable community by exploring opportunities in retail, forestry, construction, agriculture, energy projects and tourism.

The Lilwat Nation's government, headed by an elected chief, a culture chief and an 11-person council, is committed to transparency and employs best practices in all aspects of governance.