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Media Release

First Nations Respond to Independent Expert Engineering Investigation and Review Panel on Mt. Polley

(Coast Salish Traditional Territory) First Nations have carefully taken time to review the January 30, 2015 Report on the Mt. Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach that was undertaken by an independent expert engineering investigation and review panel. The comprehensive report resulted from months of site investigations and document reviews by a panel of three experts chosen by the BC government.

Chief Bev Sellars from the Xat'sull First Nation states, "Last week I personally thanked the three panelists for their diligent efforts and want to ensure that all their recommendations are implemented. Our next step is to use our collective efforts to create a new mining industry that protects the environment while providing social and economic opportunities for everyone."

Two communities, the Xat'sull First Nation and the Williams Lake Indian Band have engaged directly with British Columbia in a letter of understanding to jointly oversee all aspects of the decisions related to Mt. Polley. Williams Lake Indian Band Chief Ann Louie is very pointed in her comment: "Safety has a price and these companies have to quit taking shortcuts that prove disastrous."

The 150-page report sends a clear message to the mining industry around the world that such disasters are avoidable and unacceptable.

The panel made six recommendations that must be implemented in their entirety plus the First Nations priorities. The panel concluded that *business as usual cannot continue in BC*. "For the sake of our grandchildren we cannot accept six more tailings breaches in the next 30 years", said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

The engineering experts conclude that clearly multiple failure modes (undetected weakness in the foundation, overtopping and internal erosion) were all in progress...all of which were on their respective failure pathways. It went on to say the company had adopted a minimum factor of safety in operations and closure.

Grand Chief Edward John from the First Nations Summit states, “While mining is an important industry and provides jobs for many it cannot be at the expense of the environment or public safety. The best available technology (not the best practices standard) is required for existing and future mines instead of water/tailings storage and the use of lakes.”

“The Government of BC has stated that they will take a leadership role to ensure an environmental crisis like Mt. Polley never happens again. Not only will this mean implementing all of the Investigative Panel’s recommendations, but also committing to bold policy reforms which would see First Nations communities as partners in environmental regulation. The Northern Shuswap Tribal Council mining policy is one of many examples where First Nations are taking the lead by developing Nation-based regulations to govern resource activities on their traditional territories”, said Chief Maureen Chapman, Board Member for the BC Assembly of First Nations.

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