

# First Nations Summit

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Many concerns remain on the third anniversary of the Mount Polley Disaster**

**Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver, British Columbia** – Tomorrow, Friday August 4<sup>th</sup> marks the third anniversary of the failure of the tailings storage facility at the Mount Polley Mine which resulted in 26 billion liters of mine waste—including mercury, lead and other toxic waste—into Hazelton Creek, Polley Lake and Quesnel Lake. Despite numerous reports and investigations, no charges of fault have been laid following this environmental disaster and little has been done to quell fears that this disaster could be repeated.

“The Mount Polley disaster should have been an immediate wakeup call and a lesson for the provincial government as well as the mining industry”, said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

“While we were encouraged by the findings of both the 2015 Mount Polley Panel report, as well as the 2016 BC Auditor General Report regarding compliance and enforcement of the mining sector, there is little confidence that the previous government or the mining industry have taken the necessary steps to implement the recommendations to ensure an environmental disaster like this never happens again. We are therefore encouraging the new government to undertake a complete review and ensure all of the recommendations of the 2015 Mount Polley review report and 2016 BC Auditor General reports are fully implemented”, added Phillips.

BC First Nations will be looking to the new NDP government for a signal that increased mining industry safety and oversight will be a top priority.

“The Mount Polley tailings pond breach was exactly the type of environmental disaster First Nations have been deeply concerned about for years. As a result, we have been witness to vast negative effects on the water quality in the surrounding area which has posed a threat to the migration routes and habitat for salmon and other fish, as well as wildlife habitat and plant life in the affected area. Our expectation was for the company to be held to account for the human failure and disregard that set the stage for this disaster, and so it is truly mind boggling and disappointing that no charges have been laid to date”, said Grand Chief Edward John of the FNS Political Executive.



"We are encouraged by Premier Horgan's mandate letter to Michelle Mungall, Minister of Energy and Mines which, in part, directs her to *"develop an improved and properly resourced approvals process to assess mining applications, and increase industry safety by establishing an independent oversight unit.* The independent oversight body is long overdue and we look forward to meeting with Minister Mungall soon to ensure First Nations participation and involvement in the oversight body. We also look forward to further discussions with Premier Horgan to discuss follow-up on his commitments to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as an implementation plan that would see the standards contained in the Declaration be reflected across provincial government ministries", concluded Grand Chief John.

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*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further information on the First Nations Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

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