

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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BC First Nations Leadership Council calls on Provincial Government to intervene with respect to Taseko Mines drilling in Tsilhqot'in Territory



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923

Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 – 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver, BC: Last week, the British Columbia Supreme Court dismissed the Tsilhqot'in Nation's legal challenge to halt Taseko Mine Ltd.'s (TML) extensive drilling and excavation program in Tsilhqot'in Title Territory throughout the Teztan Biny and Nabas region. The BC First Nations Leadership Council strongly supports the Tsilhqot'in Nation's call for the Provincial government to intervene and put an end to TML drilling work within these sites of great cultural and spiritual significance, and to find a permanent solution to this conflict over the future of the area.

The Province's permitting of any further drilling in Tsilhqot'in Territory is clearly in contravention of its own *Draft Principles that Guide the Province of BC's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*. In particular, this action violates Principles 1 and 6, which affirm the priority of recognition in renewed government-to-government relationships and commit to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including the principles of free, prior and informed consent, the right of self-government and self-determination.

"This devastating decision clears the way for the destruction of an area of profound cultural and spiritual importance for the Tsilhqot'in Nation. This will open up construction to numerous kilometres of road, 122 drill sites, 367 trench and pit tests, and clear 20 kilometres of seismic lines near Teztan Biny. This is absolutely unacceptable and out of line with the Province's commitments to uphold Indigenous Title and Rights, and respect the Tsilhqot'in Title area and their Indigenous laws. We will stand with the Tsilhqot'in in their fight to ensure that these areas remain protected," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

"This most recent court decision is just one of many in a long line of legal applications and disputes with respect to Taseko Mines' application to mine in the territory. It is clear that this project should not go through. The Provincial government must act, and fully adhere to their mandate letters which expressly articulate the commitment to implement and honour the Aboriginal Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Tsilhqot'in Nation have advanced the struggle for free, prior and informed

consent as well as receiving a declaration of Title with the historic Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*. Now is the time to act on this historic decision," stated Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit political executive.

"This continued injustice will continue to have long term and irreversible damaging impacts on the community and within the territory. BC First Nations will continue to stand in unity with the Tsilhqot'in Nation in their stance against Taseko Mines Ltd. We urgently call on the Provincial government and Premier John Horgan to act immediately with respect to this issue," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations.

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

For further comment please contact:

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC AFN:	250-981-2151
Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive:	778-875-2157
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs:	250-490-5314