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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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National Assembly of First Nations “strongly denounces and opposes” BC mining industry campaign concerning Kemess North mine

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver – The Assembly of First Nations has unanimously passed a resolution entitled, "Confronting BC Mining Industry's Kemess North Campaign" at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa this week. The resolution was passed by the Chiefs in response to the BC mining industry's mail out of a letter and brochure to all BC mayors, MLA's, and MP's in November asking them to write letters to the provincial and federal governments in support of Northgate Minerals' Kemess North Mine.

Northgate Minerals' controversial Kemess North Mine project was recently rejected by a joint federal-provincial environmental assessment review panel because it was deemed not to be in the public interest, as it would result in the destruction of Amazay Lake, which is of cultural significance to First Nations in the area.

The Chiefs attending the National AFN meeting resolved to “strongly denounce and oppose” the mining industry's campaign to disregard the environmental assessment review panel report, and have directed National Chief Phil Fontaine to “seek timely confirmation from the governments of Canada and British Columbia that they reject the BC mining industry's campaign.” They have also directed the National Chief to contact both BC mining associations to urge them to “cease their campaign” and begin operating on the basis of the existence Aboriginal Title and Rights regarding activities carried out by their memberships on lands subject to Aboriginal Title and Rights.

“The mining industry campaign is a crass attempt to manipulate both governments into blatantly disregarding the conclusions and recommendations of a federal-provincial environmental assessment review process, which, in this case, rightfully rejected an ill-conceived project due to very serious First Nations and public concerns,” said Grand Chief Edward John, political executive of the First Nations Summit. “It is high time resource industries in this province start working closely with First Nations based on the existence of their Aboriginal title and rights to ensure developments are environmentally sustainable as opposed to trying to skirt this obligation in the name of profit.”

“Chiefs right across Canada denounce and reject the BC mining industry's shameful, self-serving attempts to promote Northgate Minerals Kames North proposal in spite of the fact that this very same proposal was rejected by the Joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Review Panel. Such unethical behaviour, on the part of the mining industry, will only serve to poison the relationship between the Indigenous Nations of BC and the mining investment community”, said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

“This resolution was brought forward to the national chiefs meeting by two BC First Nations representatives as an act of our collective commitment to stand united in order to protect the interests of First Nations in this province, as reflected in our unity declaration that was endorsed by BC First Nations in November,” said BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Shawn Atleo. “We are standing together collectively on this issue.”

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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. The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.

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