



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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BC First Nations oppose mining company's plan to destroy lake

(Vancouver, BC) - At the BC Assembly of First Nations' annual general meeting in Kamloops last week, chiefs from across BC unanimously endorsed a resolution supporting those First Nations in northern BC who object to the planned destruction of Duncan Lake by Vancouver-based Northgate Minerals Corporation.

Duncan Lake will be destroyed if the company's Kemess North mine application is approved by the joint Canada-BC environmental review process currently underway. Duncan Lake is also known as Amazay by the Sustu'dene (Sekani).

The company proposes to dump up to a billion tonnes of acidic tailings and waste rock into this pristine, fish-bearing, 6 kilometer freshwater lake. Yet, hunting, fishing and trapping still occurs in the area, while burial sites are located nearby. Moreover, the lake and entire region is subject to Aboriginal title and rights and to land claims as registered with the BC Treaty Commission.

The Takla Lake, Tsay Keh Dene, and Kwadacha First Nations, and the Gitksan House of Nii Kyap have interests in the area.

"On October 11 Northgate issued a statement that this mine would be environmentally sound," said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive. "Clearly, there is nothing environmentally sound about destroying a pristine lake. And those First Nations in that region shouldn't have to scientifically prove that. However, that is what the current environmental review process is asking them to do. Yet, how can an environmental review process approve the complete destruction of a beautiful lake and its entire ecosystem? It's unconscionable in this day and age. There's something fundamentally wrong with that."

"This resolution is more than just a show of support for those First Nations impacted by a mine application," said Dave Porter, also a member of the First Nations Summit's political executive. "The chiefs made it clear that the issue of the lake's potential destruction is now on the forefront of their minds as it relates to environmental protection throughout BC."

"We must all be vigilant when it comes to protecting fish, fish habitat and water quality," said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, also a member of the Summit's political executive. "We know we can't place our faith in a process we had no hand in designing, so we have to band together to protect our interests. And in this case,

this mine proposal is attempting to set an ominous precedent for this province and this country. Everyone should be concerned about the potential impacts which could result."

In addition, the chiefs support those First Nations in their efforts to prevent the construction of an associated dam along the Finlay River. And that they be meaningfully consulted and accommodated on the Stewart-Omineca resource road being proposed by the provincial government for the area, which intends to link the proposed mine to a coastal port.

Furthermore, the assembled chiefs want BC and Canada to enter into government-to-government negotiations with area First Nations to address all matters related to the Kemess North mine application, including their meaningful participation in its environmental review.

The chiefs will also be asking National Chief Phil Fontaine to present this issue to Prime Minister Paul Martin in his next meeting with him in order to inform him of the importance of the lake to First Nations. This presentation is important as Northgate Minerals will require a special order-in-council from the federal government in order to receive approval to alter fish habitat and move forward with their proposal.

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Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.