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News Release

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BCFNEMC and FNLC Call for Moratorium on Placer Mining in British Columbia

(x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm (Musqueam), Sḳẉx̣ẉụ́7̣mesh (Squamish) and sə̣ḷiḷẉə̣ṭə̣ł (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council (BCFNEMC) and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) urgently call on the British Columbia government to immediately impose a moratorium on placer mining claims and leases as highlighted in a recently released [report](#) prepared for the FNEMC. The report titled, “The Need for a Moratorium on Placer Mining Claims and Leases,” is critical of the outdated and inadequately regulated placer mining system, emphasizing the substantial adverse effects on the environment, First Nations’ rights and the well-being of communities.

The regulation of placer mining, which involves the extraction of minerals such as gold from riverbeds and streams, has not been modernized and remains rooted in nineteenth-century gold rush laws and policies that ignore Indigenous rights and continue to fail to mitigate serious environmental harms. The situation is dire as the current drought and stresses on water systems throughout BC contribute to the urgency and need for the moratorium. The cumulative impacts of placer mining on watersheds, biodiversity and First Nations traditional territories are devastating to ecosystems and human health and well-being.

“The lack of ongoing and meaningful consultation, violation of First Nations rights and sacred sites, and environmental impacts that exist within the antiquated placer mining system damages the livelihood and well-being of First Nations communities. It is essential that the BC government immediately address our concerns regarding the industry and take decisive steps to protect waterways, honour First Nations rights and foster sustainable and long-term economic development,” stated BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “Even though the *Mineral and Tenure Act* is currently being overhauled so that it aligns with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* urgent and decisive action is required as indicated by the report.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, “First Nations across BC have long been calling for an overhaul of current mining laws and regulations, which fail to provide meaningful consultation with First



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Nations before mineral claims are staked in our territories. The consequences of inadequate regulation are particularly grave for placer mining, which harms critical riparian wildlife, plants, and fish populations, with profound implications for the communities that depend on stream ecosystems for drinking water, medicines, and food. The BC government has stated its commitment to upholding the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and must act accordingly. A moratorium on new placer claims and leases is required until the laws and regulations are updated to provide adequate environmental protection and uphold First Nations rights.”

“Last year, the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly passed a resolution which acknowledged the detrimental environmental impacts of placer mining and called for an immediate moratorium on the issuance of new placer claims and leases in BC. Placer mining activity has continued unabated since our first call for action, and it is time for BC to finally recognize and address the substantial harm this industry inflicts on First Nations communities and the environment at large,” stated First Nations Summit Political Executive Robert Phillips. “A moratorium on new placer claims and leases is the first step in bringing the *Mineral Tenure Act* into accord with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.”

Considering the many significant concerns outlined in the report, British Columbians must see comprehensive changes in the *Mineral Tenure Act*. The moratorium on placer mining would temporarily suspend new claims and leases and is a necessary action to provide decision-makers with time and space to study and assess the critical issues, impacts and environmental, social and cultural consequences to First Nations communities of this industry.

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

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