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## Tsilhqot'in First Nations fight open pit mine

By CBC News

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About 30 members of the bands ? which are also known as the Chilcotin First Nations ? and their supporters rallied outside a downtown Vancouver hotel where the Mining Association of B.C. was holding a reception on Wednesday night.

Loretta Williams, the bands mining co-ordinator, said the open pit for the Prosperity mine proposed by Taseko Mines would be more than a kilometre in diameter and half a kilometre deep, effectively destroying a pristine part of their traditional territory.

The group is also concerned that the mine would use nearby Fish Lake and the surrounding valley to store tailings and waste rock, and a 125-kilometre transmission line would have to be installed to provide power, said Williams.

"We are totally opposed to both the proposed construction of the transmission [line] and also the destruction of Fish Lake. We are concerned about our way of life and our salmon," said Williams.

In 2007 a landmark court ruling determined the proposed Prosperity site does not fall inside a 2,000-hectare area where the six nations of the Tsilhqot'in First Nations have aboriginal title, but it is within an area where they still have rights to hunt and trap birds and animals.

2 reviews underway

According to the Taseko mining company, the project is in the final phases of its review by the Environmental Assessment Office, and a decision by the province on the future of the project is expected in January. The project would then require approval by the federal ministry of the environment, which is also reviewing it.

"The environmental assessment process is a time-consuming and expensive undertaking and one that has taken governments longer to advance than anticipated. Great care is being exercised to ensure delivery of a

completely thorough examination, one which is fully transparent," said Taseko CEO Russell Hallbauer in a statement released last week.

The company said its 9,000-page environmental review was the most extensive ever submitted in the history of mining in B.C. The Prosperity project is one of the largest undeveloped gold-copper deposits in Canada, with an estimated 13.3 million ounces of gold and 2.4 billion kilograms of copper.

In recent weeks gold has surged to a record price of over \$1,060 per ounce.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

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