

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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July 7, 2010

On behalf of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the Tsilhqot'in Nation enjoys the full commitment of the UBCIC in support of your collective efforts to protect Teztan Biny and Nabas from complete destruction and obliteration as a consequence of the proposed Prosperity Mine by Taseko Mining Limited. As you may know, I was honoured to witness and participate at the beginning and ending of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's Federal Review Panel hearings in Williams Lake. In fact, the UBCIC presented two formal submissions to the Review Panel. I attended the hearings for several days as the UBCIC believes that the hearings are vitally important to the ongoing Nation-to-Nation relationship of First Nations and the federal government. I was struck by the gravity of these proceedings and their significance for the future of First Nations relationships in British Columbia.

The panel hearings offered an opportunity for reconciliation through dialogue between different view-points and cultures. Tsilhqot'in leaders, Elders, youth and other members spoke eloquently and powerfully about the dire threats they would face if the proposed mine proceeded. The panel clearly heard and understood. Its report leaves no doubt that this proposed mine would only proceed at an unfathomable cost to your communities, your families and your culture.

The UBCIC is gratified that the panel also described the alarming environmental impacts of the proposed mine. Such findings are almost without precedent. The report speaks of significant and irreversible impacts to fisheries that cannot be mitigated. It describes significant adverse impacts on threatened grizzly bear populations. It describes the impacts on your Title and Rights as significant and without justification or accommodation.

The question for the federal government is: does the Canadian Environmental Assessment process have any relevance or meaning? If the alarming conclusions of the report are swept aside for political convenience, it will represent a complete betrayal of the federal environmental assessment process. With many major projects proceeding through regulatory reviews just like this one, the legitimacy of these processes would be very much in question. Federal Cabinet approval of the proposed mine would certainly demonstrate to First Nations that there would be no reason for First Nations to participate in these flawed processes. First Nations would have to look to other means to protect their Title, Rights and Treaty Rights.

Needless to say, approving this project at this stage would 'poison the well' of First Nations' relationships to government and industry. It would send a clear message that our cultural survival holds no weight in environmental reviews or government decision-making. I have no doubt it would push us into conflict across this province and the repercussions would be widespread, long-lasting and uncertain.

Regardless of the federal government's decision, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs will stand with the Tsilhqot'in Nation until this proposed project is stopped and Teztan Biny is protected for all.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Phillip', written in a cursive style.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President