



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Media Release

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Tsilhqot'in Stand Strong Despite the Supreme Court of Canada's Decision Not to Hear Appeal

Williams Lake, BC: The Supreme Court of Canada decided today not to hear the Tsilhqot'in Nation's appeal of a permit issued to Taseko Mines Limited (TML) for an extensive drilling program at Težtan Biny (Fish Lake) and surrounding areas, but the Tsilhqot'in Nation continues to stand strong for these sacred lands and waters.

The exploratory drilling permit authorizes an extensive drilling, road building and excavation program by TML to advance its New Prosperity Mine Project – despite the fact that the Federal Government has twice rejected this mining proposal (in 2010 and 2014) and it cannot be legally constructed as a result. The permit authorizes TML to clear 76 kilometres of new or modified road and trail, 122 drill holes, 367 excavated test pits and 20 kilometres of seismic lines near Težtan Biny (Fish Lake) and Nabas, an area of profound cultural and spiritual significance for the Tsilhqot'in.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation continues to stand for its culture, its rights, and the lands and waters at Težtan Biny and Nabas that are “home” for many Tsilhqot'in born and raised there, a cultural school for youth and elders, a final resting place for ancestors, and a sacred area for ceremony and healing. The Nation calls on the BC NDP Government to put its commitment to the U.N. Declaration on the *Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to action, and act immediately to prevent this impending violation of international human rights.

Quotes:

Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman, Tsilhqot'in National Government:

“155 years ago, our Tsilhqot'in War Chiefs went to war and sacrificed their lives to protect our lands and our way of life when they were threatened by the gold rush. British Columbia and Canada have both exonerated our War Chiefs and recognized them as heroes of our people. But how much has really changed? Government and industry are once again ready to threaten our lands and our people, to devastate a place of such spiritual importance to us, to impact our way of life – all in pursuit of gold.

This simply cannot be acceptable in an age of reconciliation, in a time when government says it is ready to implement the U.N. Declaration and recognize our rights as Indigenous peoples. As Tsilhqot'in people, we have no choice. We have to stand for our values, for our lands, for our future. We are a spiritual people – this is a spiritual war.

We call on Premier Horgan and the Government of British Columbia to do the right thing and live up to the commitments it has made to Indigenous peoples.”

Nits'il?in (Chief) Russell Myers Ross, Vice-Chair, T̓silhqot'in National Government:

"The T̓silhqot'in leadership is doing everything we can to find a path through this conflict and show that there is a different vision for these lands, one that respects our long history here, our special connection, our spirituality and our values. Our communities have presented an alternative to reliving the cycles of oppression and violence of the past. We don't always want to be reacting to the efforts of others to destroy and exploit places that are so important for our people and way of life. Our communities have shared the Dasiqox Tribal Park as a model of peaceful co-existence – a vision for these lands and waters that truly respects our self-determination as Indigenous peoples. The T̓silhqot'in have fought through generations to explain that our land was never surrendered to the Crown and courts have acknowledged the need for reconciliation between two sovereignties; the Crown has acknowledged in their own words through the exoneration of our war leaders that the colonial government and its legal process did not recognize our inherent right 150 years ago - and this statement stands today as if nothing has changed. It is these moments, as T̓silhqot'in and Indigenous Peoples, that we understand that our place of authority within Canada is not yet being realized. The colonial apparatus of the Crown needs to change and begin developing legislation to move beyond conflict on our homeland."

Nits'il?in (Chief) Jimmy Lulua, Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government:

"We are as committed as ever to protect our sacred lands. As T̓silhqot'in people, we have a duty to our ancestors and to future generations. That will never change. Xeni Gwet'in and the whole T̓silhqot'in Nation have stood together for over a decade to protect this special area. The Federal government has twice rejected this mine proposal. At some point, no must mean no. Our people have spoken. We are more determined than ever."

More Information:

- Težtan Biny: www.teztanbiny.ca
- Video: www.tsilhqotin.ca/News-Media
- Dasiqox Tribal Park: <https://dasiqox.org/>

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