



T̓SILHQOT̓'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Media Release
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T̓silhqot̓'in Nation Continues to Oppose Drilling Program as Court Grants Taseko Injunction *Xeni Gwet̓'in announces Peaceful Gathering at Tet̓zan Biny as Taseko Mobilizes*

Williams Lake, BC: The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation continues to oppose an extensive drilling program by Taseko Mines Limited (TML) in Tet̓zan Biny (Fish Lake) and Nabaš, even as TML secured an injunction today from the B.C. Supreme Court prohibiting the T̓silhqot̓'in and others from interfering with the drilling program or impeding access to the area.

The BC Liberal Government granted Taseko the drilling permit in July 2017, on their last day in power. The drilling program is for the purpose of advancing the New Prosperity Mine – despite the fact that the Federal Government rejected New Prosperity in 2014 and the mine cannot be built as a result. The Federal Government rejected New Prosperity in part because of significant and unavoidable impacts on T̓silhqot̓'in culture, heritage and rights.

Tet̓zan Biny and Nabaš is an area of profound cultural and spiritual importance for the T̓silhqot̓'in peoples. Two independent expert panels have confirmed the unique and special significance of this area for the T̓silhqot̓'in as a place of ceremony and healing, as an active cultural school, as a resting place for ancestors, and as highly valued hunting, trapping and gathering grounds. It is also one of few areas in Canada subject to a court declaration of proven Aboriginal rights.

On July 2, 2019, a T̓silhqot̓'in peaceful action blocked Taseko's efforts to mobilize machinery and personnel into the area. Now, with a court order in hand, Taseko has provided notice that it intends to mobilize again on July 17 and start the drilling program soon after.

The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation continues to make every effort to oppose the drilling program, including renewing a civil action for infringement of proven Aboriginal rights and seeking an injunction to bar the program from proceeding pending the disposition of trial.

The T̓silhqot̓'in National Government has also submitted an urgent request for investigation to Ms. Victoria Tauli Corpuz, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, alleging that the drilling program represents a violation of the human rights of the T̓silhqot̓'in peoples under the U.N. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation has invited the Special Rapporteur for a site-visit to appreciate first-hand the significance of these lands and waters to the T̓silhqot̓'in peoples.

Quotes:

Nits'il̓'in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman of the T̓silhqot̓'in National Government:

"New Prosperity is a dead-end project – it will never be built. The fact that BC and Canada continue to allow Taseko to move forward with this drilling program in an area that is sacred to our people, is a disgrace for this province and for this country. This is an attack on our spirituality, on our culture, and who we are as T̓silhqot̓'in peoples. We are doing everything we can to resolve this

conflict respectfully and peacefully. If this matter escalates, we cannot guarantee the safety of TML's contractors and staff or our own members. We are calling on the BC Government to step up and resolve this matter now."

Nits'il?in (Chief) Russell Myers Ross, Vice-Chair, T?ilhqot'in National Government:

"There is no T?ilhqot'in consent for this drilling program. In our view, it is a serious violation of our human rights as Indigenous peoples, as protected by the U.N. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The BC NDP government has made commitments to implement the U.N. *Declaration*, but it has stood on the sidelines in the face of this direct threat to one of our most important cultural and spiritual sites. It is time to live up to the commitments. Through the Dasiqox Tribal Park initiative, we have set out a different vision for these lands and waters that respects our culture and our aspirations. This is a choice between repeating the painful tragedies of the past, or showing that another way is possible."

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

"This is not the end. In Xeni Gwet'in, we take our direction from our elders and from our community. We held a special community meeting in Xeni yesterday and our elders and members decided unanimously to set up a peace camp at Tet?an Biny. The courts and the government are failing to protect our culture and our sacred places. But our people know what is right. It is deeply instilled in us from our culture and our teachings. They are saying enough is enough. Taseko is not welcome at Tet?an Biny and Naba?."

Resources:

- Te?tan Biny: www.Te?tanbiny.ca
- Video: www.tsilhqotin.ca/News-Media
- Dasiqox Tribal Park: <https://dasiqox.org/>

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