

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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## News Release

March 6, 2019

### UBCIC Continues to Support Tsilhqot'in Opposition to Drilling Permit in their Territories

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, B.C. – March 6, 2019) On March 1, 2019, B.C.'s Court of Appeal dismissed the Tsilhqot'in Nation's appeal of the provincial government issued exploratory drilling permit at Težtan Biny (Fish Lake) and the surrounding area.

This permit allows Taseko Mines Ltd. to begin an exploratory drilling program for their proposed New Prosperity Mine in the territory held by the Tsilhqot'in Nation, 125 km west of Williams Lake. Taseko Mines Ltd. will now have license to begin clearing 76 kilometers of new or modified road and trail, excavating 367 test pits and drilling 122 geotechnical drill holes in the territory that bears sacred and ceremonial significance to the Tsilhqot'in people. Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), stated, "UBCIC strongly disapproves of the court's decision and fully supports the Tsilhqot'in Nation whose Title, Rights, and spiritual and cultural livelihoods are endangered by a project that has already been rejected twice by the federal government. The permit was issued on the last possible working day of the Christy Clark government and it is like a slap in the face to Indigenous Title and Rights, and to the landmark *Tsilhqot'in* decision, that Premier Horgan is allowing this to proceed."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC, stated: "British Columbia's flagrant favoring of corporations and economic windfall over the sovereign, constitutional and legal rights of Indigenous people continues with Taseko's copper and gold mining project. Despite the federal government rejecting New Prosperity Mine twice on environmental grounds, BC has decided to proceed with a drilling program that will have severe repercussions for the ecosystems in Težtan Biny and overlook the free, prior and informed consent of the Tsilhqot'in. We will continue to do everything we can to support the Tsilhqot'in in their fight against Taseko Mines Ltd."

The Tsilhqot'in Nation's appeal was based on the position that it cannot be consistent with the honour of the Crown to authorize such severe impacts in an area of profound cultural and spiritual

importance, in the face of proven Aboriginal rights, all to advance a mining project that is rejected and cannot be built. UBCIC urges the federal and provincial governments to immediately rectify this, and to halt this drilling program that fundamentally violates the Title and Rights of First Nations. Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice-President of UBCIC, concluded: “Two independent federal panels confirmed that these lands are unique and special for the Tsilhqot’in—as hunting and trapping grounds, as a cultural school for their youth, as a place of ceremony and spiritual power, as the resting place of their ancestors. It cannot be acceptable in this day and age to cause further damage and destruction to these sacred lands and to the culture and spirituality of the Tsilhqot’in people – over their objections and without their consent. If British Columbia is truly committed to implementing the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is time for the government to step up and find a resolution to this long-standing conflict.”

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