



## TŚILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Tsilhqot'in National Government appears in Court over Taseko Mines Ltd. Defamation Lawsuit**

**Vancouver, BC** (January 29, 2015): Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government, was cross-examined this morning in the defamation trial brought by Taseko Mines Limited (TML) against the Wilderness Committee. TML claims that it was defamed by statements made by the Wilderness Committee about the now rejected New Prosperity Mine project.

The lawyer for TML questioned Chief Alphonse about the opposition of the Tsilhqot'in Nation to the New Prosperity mine.

After his testimony, Chief Joe Alphonse stated, "The Wilderness Committee supported our people and expressed what we have been saying for years now – the Tsilhqot'in Nation is fully and completely opposed to this project. It is simply not acceptable to build a massive open-pit mine in a place of such profound cultural and spiritual importance to our people. The Wilderness Committee has been hit with what has been described as a defamation 'SLAPP' suit for questioning this project -- a project that even the federal government has rejected."

Chief Alphonse further stated, "To me, this is a disrespectful and desperate approach for a mining company to take, bringing a law suit against an environmental group that will suffer from the financial burden. This is an all-new low even for this company. The Wilderness Committee stepped up and supported us and we are grateful for them."

Closing arguments in this matter are expected to be heard at the end of March 2015.

"In my opinion, this is a classic case of big industry using the court system as a means of simple bullying. This looks to me like a tactic to scare concerned people or groups out of exercising their basic right of freedom of expression. It was an honour to testify for the Wilderness Committee," said Chief Alphonse.

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Photo: Chief Alphonse, Beth Clarke (Development and Program Director for Wilderness Committee), Sven Biggs (Former Outreach Director for Wilderness Committee), and Joe Foy (National Campaign Director for Wilderness Committee) on steps of BC Supreme Court.