



T̓SILHQOT̓IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

253 – 4th Avenue North - Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4 - Phone (250) 392-3918 - Fax (250) 398-5798

Media Release

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T̓silhqot̓in Nation Takes Struggle to protect Te̓ztan Biny to the United Nations

Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur highlights imminent violation of human rights and extends invitation to visit Te̓ztan Biny

Williams Lake, BC: The T̓silhqot̓in Nation is taking its struggle to protect Te̓ztan Biny from an extensive drilling program to the international level, submitting an urgent request for investigation to Ms. Victoria Tauli Corpuz, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The T̓silhqot̓in Nation has also invited the UN Special Rapporteur to visit Te̓ztan Biny to witness first-hand how special this sacred place is to the T̓silhqot̓in Nation.

Following the historic visit of the T̓silhqot̓in Nation to the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York City in May 2019, the T̓silhqot̓in have made this submission (<https://bit.ly/2ShDUtt>) alleging an imminent violation of T̓silhqot̓in human rights to the United Nations to highlight the gap between the public commitments from the Province of BC to honour and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the current conduct of the Provincial BC Government.

The submission notes that,

“The T̓silhqot̓in peoples face an imminent, “eyes wide open” violation of their most fundamental human rights under international law, including the U.N. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* ...

Despite repeated entreaties, the Government of British Columbia has not acted to resolve or reduce conflict over the Drilling Program. Notwithstanding its public commitments to Indigenous peoples, and to implementation of the U.N. Declaration, the Government of British Columbia has not taken steps to prevent the serious cultural and spiritual impacts of the Drilling Program.”

The submission also notes that the Province of BC has acknowledged “Te̓ztan Biny and Nabas areas are places of unique and special significance for the T̓silhqot̓in cultural identity and heritage” and conceded that the drilling program is “*likely to have serious impacts on social, cultural, spiritual and experiential aspects of [T̓silhqot̓in] hunting and trapping activities*” and “*fishing activities*”. Despite these impacts, the BC Liberals in 2017, on the last day of power, approved Taseko's permit. Taseko Mines Ltd. donated \$137,450 to the BC Liberal party between 2008 and 2017.

Quotes:

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

“These drilling permits were approved on the final days of the former BC Liberal Government and the fact that Taseko donated to the BC Liberals for years, in my opinion, is corruption at its finest. The T̓silhqot̓in are the only Indigenous Nation in Canada that has had its rights and title recognized, therefore we believe BC and Canada must move forward with the T̓silhqot̓in in a co-management governing process. As far as we are concerned, Taseko has acted disgracefully

throughout the years when it comes to the project at Teẓtan Biny. The T̓silhqot'in feel as if Taseko has attempted to make a mockery of our culture, history, way of life and our Aboriginal rights, and this alone is one of many reasons why Taseko will never have the T̓silhqot'in social contract. BC has stated that they are committed to implementing the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and they seem to have forgotten this commitment. In a case like Taseko, it is apparent that our Aboriginal rights and jurisdiction aren't being taken seriously and therefore, we are taking this matter to the United Nations in effort to get our voices heard and wake up both BC and Canada."

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

"At this time, our backs seem to be up against a wall. All of our time, efforts and court appearances and we are still struggling to defend our protected areas of cultural and spiritual significance. Taseko has been nothing but disrespectful to our Nation and the BC Government appears to be allowing this kind of business to continue despite their commitments to implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* so we are engaging the United Nations in hopes that they will step in and recognize this violation of our peoples' human rights and put the necessary pressure on BC and Canada to right this wrong."

Resources:

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

Media Contacts:

Jacey Beck
Communications Manager
T̓silhqot'in National Government
(403) 998 - 7581
jbeck@tsilhqotin.ca

Graham Gillies
Radio Manager
T̓silhqot'in National Government
(604) 779 - 4221
ggillies@tsilhqotin.ca