



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2021

### **Tsilhqot'in Preparing for Environmental Appeal Board Hearing**

**Williams Lake, BC:** Beginning on March 15<sup>th</sup>, the Tsilhqot'in Nation will be taking part in an Environmental Appeal Board virtual hearing, challenging a permit amendment issued by a Director of the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy that authorized a 50% increase in discharge from the Gibraltar Mine tailings pond directly into the Fraser River. This discharge has never been subject to sophisticated water treatment; instead, the permit effectively authorizes the use of the sensitive Fraser River for dilution of the mine effluent.

Located within the Tsilhqot'in Territory and caretaker area of ʔEsdilagh First Nation, Gibraltar Mine is the second largest copper-gold mine in Canada. The mine effluent is discharged via pipe into the Fraser River just 4km downstream from the community of ʔEsdilagh, adjacent to traditional fishing sites, and upstream from the community of Tl'esqox and numerous Indigenous communities all along the Fraser River.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation is calling on the Environmental Appeal Board to revoke or amend the 2019 amendment to this discharge permit, arguing that BC failed to consider our Indigenous laws and principles in the consultation and accommodation process associated with the 2019 amended permit, and failed to adequately protect the environment in authorizing the permit amendment.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Nits'il?in (Chief) Troy Baptiste, ʔEsdilagh First Nation**

"The fact that the Province of BC is permitting Gibraltar Mines Ltd. to use the Fraser River as a dumping ground for its tailings effluent is absolutely appalling. Anything that enters the Fraser River should be of equal or better water quality than the Fraser itself. Our long held Indigenous laws state that the Fraser River (ʔElhdaqox in our language) should be protected from degradation. We are calling on the Environmental Appeal Board to revoke this discharge permit and demand better mining practices from Gibraltar Mines. Without this, our salmon and waterways will continue to be threatened."

#### **Nits'il?in (Chief) Francis Laceese, Tl'esqox**

"The continued environmental pressure being put on the Fraser River and our salmon is unacceptable and in direct opposition to our indigenous laws. Our waterways, fish and wildlife know no boundaries.

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# TŚILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Pollution that enters the ʔElhdaqox flows through many Indigenous communities, affecting essential food sources that we rely on.”

“Our salmon run has come nothing but short of being decimated by water quality and habitat impacts. BC must change its mining practices if there is going to be any hope for the survival of ourselves, our relatives in the water and all that have relied on it for millennia.”

## More Information:

- Livestream of virtual EAB hearing: [http://www.eab.gov.bc.ca/hearing\\_schedules/index.htm](http://www.eab.gov.bc.ca/hearing_schedules/index.htm)
- [www.tsilhqotin.ca/gibraltar](http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/gibraltar)
- Media Package: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14lURUafU9322B091N1-hcmZDeLk86r-L?usp=sharing>
  - Media Backgrounder
  - 2019 Discharge Permit
  - Photos and maps available for use
  - Sturgeon River Law (May 2020)

## Media Contact

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