

First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun

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First Nation of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Demands Halt of all Yukon Mining Activity and an Independent Investigation and Review of Victoria Gold Eagle Gold Mine Failures

Land Use Planning as Required by Treaty, Rigorous Safety and Regulatory Processes Urgently Required to Prevent Repeated Mining Incidents

MAYO, YUKON (July 3, 2024) – The First Nation of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun (FNNND) is demanding an immediate halt of all mining activity in FNNND’s Traditional Territory and an urgent Independent Investigation and Review of the region’s most recent and potentially catastrophic mining failure. The Victoria Gold Eagle Gold Mine heap leach pad failure and resulting cyanide contamination is the most recent of many examples of how lack of mining regulation and negligent government oversight is threatening community and wildlife health and safety.

The severity of contamination from cyanide and other chemicals has not been publicly conveyed. This event has implications on all life in the region, including salmon stock recovery, something so crucial that Alaska and Canada recently committed to a seven-year moratorium on salmon fishing. Cyanide contamination of the land and water has implications for spawning rivers and their tributaries and for all life in the area.

“We have been sounding the alarm for decades on the need for sustainable development and responsible mining. The integrity of our lands, people and ecosystems are our top priority,” says FNNND Chief Dawna Hope. “There must be an independent investigation and review immediately to understand environmental impacts from this disaster. All mining activity must pause until there is a land use plan that limits development and includes rigorous oversight and enforcement of mining and industrial operations on our Territory. We will pursue every available avenue, including legal options, to protect and preserve our rights and to ensure that this environmental catastrophe is addressed and the lands and waters of our Territory are safe for the fish, wildlife, and people that have relied on them for generations.”

FNNND is focused on sustainable development and responsible mining

Environmental and safety protections cannot be an afterthought. Land use planning is needed and regulatory oversight must be enforced. Mining brings benefits to the region but it requires a precautionary approach and rigorous oversight. Nearly half of all the Yukon’s mining activity (more than 80,000 claims) is within the FNNND’s Territory. Very few projects (less than one per

cent) are denied and there is little oversight or enforcement of operations. The status quo is not tenable.

Mining Companies and the Yukon Government must suspend industrial activity immediately

A complete and independent evaluation is crucial to understanding the environmental and health impact of this most recent event. What is currently in place is insufficient and not being monitored or enforced and contributed to this event. A pause on mining activity will ensure that the necessary checks and balances are in place to protect these lands and waters, wildlife and people.

Honour and implement FNNND's Treaty right to land use planning before industrial activity resumes

FNNND has repeatedly asked that the Treaty Promise to land use planning, made more than 30 years ago, be fulfilled. FNNND's victory at the Yukon Court of Appeal only a few months ago made clear that FNNND must be engaged in a collaborative planning process that will protect its rights, lands and waters. Authorizing industrial activity in the absence of a land use plan can undermine FNNND's rights. There is still no land use plan.

First Nation of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun

The First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun represents the most northerly community of the Northern Tutchone language and culture group. In the Northern Tutchone language, Na Cho Nyak Dun means the People of where the Big Waters converge. Our Traditional Territory covers over 160,000 km², of which approximately 130,000 km² lies within what is now the Yukon Territory. Within the Yukon Territory, the NND Traditional Territory stretches from Fort McPherson in the north to the South MacMillan River and Pelly River in the south, and from the Dempster Highway in the west all the way to the border with the Northwest Territories and beyond.

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