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Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc Nation implement its own Assessment Process for the proposed Ajax Project

Kamloops, BC, September 10, 2015

Stk'emlupsemc of the Secwepemc Nation have approved their Project Assessment Process and Plan for the proposed KGHM Ajax Copper-Gold Project near Kamloops, BC. On June 21, 2015 following the Province's revision to their assessment and conclusions that SSN have high prima facie for both Title and Rights, SSN declared Title at Pípsell with a landmark document. This document declared, [*Re Stk'emlupsemc w7ec te tsyecwminst.ses re Pípsell*] The Stk'emlupsemc who are the caretakers of Jacko Lake & area and our project assessment will respect their Aboriginal Rights and Title (ownership) to the lands and resources and include decision- making power (jurisdiction) on how the land is to be used and preserved for future generations.

SSN have moved beyond the strength of claim to the pre-declaration stage identified in the *Tsilhqot'in* decision for Title and Rights. SSN have given notice to the government that this project cannot be assessed using the same consultation based status quo Environmental Assessment methods and process, and assumptions. The SSN like others have been requesting an Independent Review Panel process for the assessment of the Ajax Mine Project. This level of review continues to be denied and has prompted the development of the SSN project assessment process.

The SSN project assessment process will run alongside, and where appropriate, collaboratively with the Environmental Assessment Process (BCEAO & CEAA). SSN's process is inclusive rather than exclusive and assesses the project using SSN laws and governance which includes assessments which respect SSN cultural perspectives, knowledge & history. SSN's process is comprised of several components such as independent expert reviews, community information sessions, the SSN Review Panel Hearing and SSN assessments designed to review and assess both tangible and intangible impacts of the project such as those impacts of a cultural and spiritual nature. The SSN Review Panel will include Chief and Councils, family appointed representatives, elders, youth and knowledge keepers who will be involved throughout the process and who will sit for a week to hear evidence before deliberating and making their decisions regarding the proposed project.

The purpose of the SSN assessment process is to: "Facilitate informed decision making by the SSN Communities in a manner which is consistent with our laws, traditions, and customs and assesses project impacts in a way that respects our knowledge and perspectives". The process will result in an SSN Decision Package which will be included in the EAO's package to the Ministers. Recently in a presentation to Thompson Rivers University Law students at Pípsell Tk'emlups Councilor Ed Jensen articulated, "we are challenging BC's current 'consultation' assessment model with one based on our full informed consent."

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