



Gitksan Treaty Office NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Life of lake hangs in balance as mining decision nears

GITXSAN TERRITORIES -- The pending release of a Canada-BC joint review panel about whether to end the life of a 6-kilometre long, pristine mountain lake in the northwest part of the province by turning it into a toxic waste dump was marked yesterday with a solemn ceremony by Gitksan hereditary chiefs on the shore of Taax Daajii (Amazay Lake).

Simogyet (hereditary chiefs) Nii Kyap and Miluulak sang a lament song and prayed to the spirit of the lake in an eagle down ceremony as they await the decision by the review panel on Northgate Minerals plans to use the body of water as a tailings pond for their proposed Kemess North copper-gold mine.

“We are saying a prayer to the spirit of the lake,” said Simogyet Nii Kyap (Rena Benson). “We are thanking the creator for the water and thanking our ancestors who protected the land for future generations.”

The eagle down ceremony shows the Gitksan “intent is pure” in attempting to protect Taax Daajii said Simogyet Miluulak (Alice Jeffrey) as the white feathers floated out over the lake.

“The eagle down is the purest telling of our intentions. It is soft, it is pure and it says we don’t lie. And it isn’t harsh.”

Northgate’s plan is to use the lake as a dump for 750 million tons of acid producing tailings from its proposed Kemess North development. Currently Northgate operates the nearby Kemess South mine and maintains that using Taax Daajii as a toxic waste dump is the only option to make the new development economically viable – an assertion that was soundly rejected by the Gitksan in their three-day presentation to the joint review panel during a special hearing convened in Smithers in May.

“We presented a thorough case at the hearings,” said Gitksan Treaty Office executive director Luutkudziiwus (Gordon Sebastian) “We have put our faith in this system created by Canada and BC. But we know our strength comes from our hereditary system. We have no choice but to be the stewards of that land and everything on it. For the future prosperity of the region, I hope the joint review panel heard our message.”

**** (photos attached)**

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