

## HUCKLEBERRY MINE - BACKGROUNDER

- Huckleberry Mine is situated near Houston, 300 km West of Prince George and south of Burns Lake. Tahtsa Lake is part of the Nechako Reservoir which is the headwaters of the Upper Nechako River, the largest tributary of the Fraser River. The mine is located in the traditional territory of the Cheslatta Carrier Nation.
- The Huckleberry copper mine is owned by Imperial Metals and a Japanese consortium.
- Imperial Metals has donated \$16,040 to the Liberal party since 2000. The Huckleberry Mines operation donated \$1050.
- As per Huckleberry's permit application, the provincial government would allow the following quantities to be discharged into Tahtsa Lake every year:

Copper	250 kg
Iron	5000 kg
Mercury	25 kg
Zinc	1000 kg
NO <sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide):	3500 kg
Total suspended solids:	250,000 kg

- The current permit prohibits discharge of waste water from the tailings impoundment into surface waters or into the ground.
- The application to amend the permit to allow discharge into Tahtsa Lake was unanimously opposed by the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechaco at their Jan 12 meeting. According to a Lakes District News poll among local residents, one hundred percent of the interviewees were against the application.
- **Toxicity of mercury:** Once it enters an aquatic environment mercury is converted to organic methylmercury and is taken up into the food chain and ultimately into fish. Methylmercury is a known neurotoxin and when consumed by pregnant women it readily crosses the placenta and targets the developing foetal brain. Methylmercury can also be passed on to an infant through breast milk. In infants, methylmercury damage typically manifests as delayed walking, talking, speaking, or as subtle learning, memory and behavioural effects. Prenatal methylmercury exposure can kill developing brain cells and cause brain cells to migrate to the wrong position.
- Mercury is so efficiently accumulated in the aquatic food web that fish at the top of the food chain may have levels of mercury in their muscle tissue that are one million times higher than the mercury concentration in the water. Because of this extreme bioaccumulation, it takes very little mercury to contaminate a lake and its fish.
- Mercury never disappears in the environment, ensuring that contamination today will remain a problem long into the future.