

PRESS RELEASE

**SECWEPEMC HAVE TO INDEPENDENTLY ASSESS MT. POLLEY TAILINGS POND BREACH -
IMPERIAL METALS CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN SECWEPEMC TERRITORY**

(Secwepemc Territory, August 7, 2014) Imperial Metals' Mount Polley Mine Tailings containing arsenic and mercury polluted Secwepemc Territory and Waters this week. Chief Judy Wilson of the Neskonlith Indian Band called for "A state of emergency and immediate measures to contain the pollution and to clean up the damage. This is an example how the federal and provincial governments have been failing to protect the environment, both when it comes to the approval and monitoring of the mine and now the disaster response. Indigenous Peoples should be in charge of determining what a proper response is since only we can properly assess the effect this will have on our land, food and the health of our people."

The Secwepemc People have long raised concerns regarding Imperial Metals projects in their territory, not just the Mt. Polley Mine, but also the proposed Ruddock Creek Mining development in the headwaters of the Adams River. Notably this river contains the world's largest remaining sockeye salmon run currently set to enter the Fraser River in its peak year. Just in July 2014, the federal government refused to conduct its own comprehensive environmental assessment of the proposed Ruddock Creek Development, despite demands by the Secwepemc People that the federal government directly engage with the Secwepemc People and live up to their fiduciary obligation to protect Secwepemc Aboriginal Title and Rights. Both Imperial Metals Mt. Polley and Ruddock Creek operations, are located in extremely sensitive ecosystems and watersheds, and their protection has always been a priority for the Secwepemc People. This current environmental disaster proves what can happen if Indigenous concerns are not taken into account. It also underlines that the Secwepemc people have to be in charge of environmental assessments and determining proper measures to protect their land for all future generations.

Chief Judy Wilson stressed that is at stake is the health and livelihood of the Secwepemc People, who have been awaiting the return of the salmon in this critically important peak year. Any impact on, contamination or loss of these essential salmon runs and their habitat, will have devastating effects on the health, livelihood and economy of Indigenous Peoples who depend on these salmon runs.

The Neskonlith Chief and Council made it clear, that in light of the federal government abdicating their responsibility regarding the environment and the provincial government failing to properly monitor industry and especially mining operations, the Secwepemc people have to assert their jurisdiction to independently assess this environmental disaster, including its impact on indigenous land uses, food and health and proper response measures. The necessary research and analysis have to be sufficiently funded, in line with the fiduciary obligation of the governments to protect Aboriginal Title and Rights and land uses.

The Secwepemc people hold the most long-term and reliable knowledge regarding the territory where the spill occurred. As the collective Aboriginal Title and rights holders they hold the responsibility to protect this land for their future generations. They can serve as a check and balances on the government and industry who are downplaying this disaster.

Chief Judy Wilson made it clear: "Imperial Metals cannot be allowed to operate anywhere in our territory, its failure to take proper risk assessment and management measures, have already resulted in this huge environmental disaster today. We cannot risk another disaster in our sacred headwaters that could potentially be worse. Our land already has to cope with the effects from this spill which adds to the cumulative effects we are dealing with. Our first responsibility right now is to assess and to the extent possible clean up this disaster. Indigenous Peoples are ready to do this, and the federal and provincial governments have a fiduciary obligation to support us in this endeavor."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Chief Judy Wilson alongside Elder Sarah Deneault Opposing Imperial Metals Mining Operations in Secwepemc Territory (Secwepemculew).