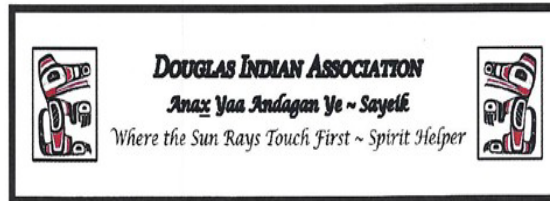




TAKU RIVER TLINGIT
First Nation



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**BC FIRST NATION AND ALASKA TRIBES URGE BC GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE
CLEANUP OF TULSEQUAH CHIEF MINE**

End of Bankruptcy Receivership was Last Major Obstacle to Ending Pollution of Taku Watershed

British Columbia (B.C.) on August 12 announced the [end of the bankruptcy receivership for Chieftain Metals](#), owner of the abandoned Tulsequah Chief mine. The receivership hindered B.C.'s efforts to clean up the site and was the major obstacle in the way of mine closure and cleanup. Now that receivership is over, the [Taku River Tlingit First Nation](#) (TRTFN), the [Douglas Indian Association](#) (DIA) and the [Southeast Indigenous Transboundary Commission](#) (SEITC) are calling on the B.C. government to honor its commitment to end decades of toxic acidic mine discharge into the transboundary Taku watershed.

“This is very good news. The receivership hindered B.C.’s efforts to stop the pollution from Tulsequah Chief and clean up the site and was the major procedural hurdle to clear. Now, our First Nation and Alaska Native Tribal governments call on B.C. to start taking specific steps toward turning its commitments into action,” said Charmaine Thom, TRTFN Spokesperson.

“We are celebrating this long overdue step. We strongly support the TRTFN and will do all we can to ensure B.C. makes good on its commitment to solve the Tulsequah Chief problem. In 2015, then B.C. Mines Minister Bill Bennett came to Juneau and promised to address this situation; seven years later we are still waiting,” said DIA President Clarence Laiti.

“Salmon and other traditional foods are the foundation of our culture and transboundary rivers such as the Taku have nourished our communities since time immemorial. We are in solidarity with the TRTFN and urge the B.C. government match its commitments with real on the ground action to clean up the Tulsequah Chief mine,” said SEITC Chair Robert Sanderson, Jr.

This mine has been discharging toxic acid mine drainage into the Taku watershed for 65 years. The Taku River is extremely important to Tlingit people on both sides of the border. Tulsequah Chief is in the territory of the TRTFN based in Atlin, B.C. The DIA is the federally recognized Tribe with ties to the downstream Alaska side of the Taku. SEITC is a consortium of 15 sovereign Tribal nations in Southeast Alaska, including DIA.

In 2016 mine owner Chieftain Metals sought bankruptcy protection and a receivership process was established. In 2020 a Canadian bankruptcy court ruled that the receivership was to be ended but that it could be re-started within two years. That deadline passed on August 11. The court also ruled that the dissolution of Chieftain Metals would be stayed until October 2022. The release of the draft mine [remediation plan](#) in August 2020, securing of initial funding to carry out further studies, and getting a crew on site to begin stabilization and cleanup efforts, were important initial steps taken by B.C. but the receivership has hindered more extensive efforts.

We would like to see B.C. accomplish the following as soon as possible:

- formal announcement from B.C. that the receivership is over and that the responsibility for the closure and cleanup is being taken on;
- the dissolution of Chieftain Metals as a company in October;
- revoke Chieftain's mine permits and transfer them to the B.C. government;
- development of a plan specifically for the cleanup timelines;
- development of a plan specifically for funding the cleanup and closure;
- continued and enhanced engagement with affected First Nations and Tribes; and
- complete needed studies.

As previous TRTFN Spokesperson Ward testified to the bankruptcy court in July 2020 “The name Tulsequah is based on the Tlingit name for this area, *Taas Teiyi Heeni*, which means Root Garden River...In addition to the Tulsequah Valley being a core traditional use landscape, it also contains many culturally important places such as camp sites and settlements. While we historically used the area around the Tulsequah Mine site, currently we are not able to exercise *khustiyxh* [way of life] and our Aboriginal rights there due to the environmental contamination.”

“Today, Tlingit people come together to urge that, with the end of the receivership, B.C. begin taking concrete steps toward honoring its commitments to mine cleanup. Alaskan and U.S. federal attention to this issue has been an important factor in progress to date, and we urge continued cross-border engagement on behalf of the Taku from the people who call it home,” said DIA President Laiti.

“The abandoned mine has now been polluting the Taku watershed for sixty-five years. As Chinook salmon runs decline elsewhere along the West Coast due to multiple environmental factors, closure and cleanup of Tulsequah Chief will help ensure that the Taku remains a world class international salmon river system of profound cultural significance to the First Nation and Tribes,” said SEITC Chair Sanderson.

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