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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First Nations Leadership Council Supports Protection of Amazay Lake

Amazay Lake, Tsay Keh Nay Territory (north-central BC) – On August 23rd, representatives from the BC First Nations Leadership Council joined the Tsay Keh Nay People from Kwadacha, Takla Lake, and Tsay Keh Dene at a Tsay Keh Nay gathering on the shore of Amazay Lake. For five years now, the Tsay Keh Nay People have gathered annually on the shore of Amazay Lake to honour and to discuss how to protect Amazay Lake for all future generations.

A mining company, Northgate Minerals Inc., proposes to open a new open pit mine five kilometres from their existing mine and submerge the acidic waste rock and tailings into Amazay Lake, totally annihilating the aquatic life in and around the lake. Amazay (meaning mother caribou in the Sekani language) is a six-kilometre long fish-bearing lake that has been an important gathering place throughout the history of the Tsay Keh Nay People.

Elders, youth, and supporters spoke of the significance of this lake and the surrounding lands. Grand Chief Edward John, member of the political executive of the First Nations Summit stated, "Amazay Lake is at the headwaters of the Finlay River that flows north to the Arctic. It is unconscionable for any company or government to even consider the obliteration of the waters that sustain life from Amazay to the Arctic Ocean. This proposal is a serious human rights matter worthy of attention at the United Nations."

On October 20th, 2004, the president and CEO of Northgate Minerals committed in a public forum in Prince George to discontinue the proposed project if First Nations do not support the proposal. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, "The Tsay Keh Nay People clearly object to the destruction of their lake and Northgate Minerals should honour their commitment." Grand Chief Phillip further called on Premier Campbell to intervene, "A provincial permit to this mining company will clearly compromise the Province's goal in the New Relationship - to lead the World in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none. The destruction of this sacred lake will represent an unacceptable betrayal of the spirit and intent of the New Relationship."

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in BC.

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