

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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David John Cooling
UN Environment Programme
Via Email Only: david.cooling@un.org

September 7, 2021

Re: Indigenous Representation on the Advisory Panel for GTMI

Dear Mr. David Cooling,

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) writes to express our concern about the lack of representation of Indigenous Peoples in the formation of the Advisory Panel for the Global Tailings Management Institute (GTMI).

The Advisory Panel, and any governance structure for the GTMI, must include meaningful participation and feedback from Indigenous Peoples to ensure that the GTMI structure, priorities and accountability mechanisms will serve multiple stakeholders while respecting the sovereignty, jurisdiction, and Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples stipulates that Indigenous Peoples have, “[the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures.](#)” Indigenous territories have been disproportionately harmed by centuries of mining and tailings storage, and this must be adequately addressed in the formation of the Advisory Panel.

We have seen firsthand the destruction caused by irresponsible tailings management. Our land, air, water, and culture were devastated by tailings pond breach at Mount Polley in 2015. As Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated, “The collapse of the Mount Polley tailings dam will be long remembered as the most destructive assault of Indigenous Title, Rights and Treaty Rights for all First Nations living in the Fraser River Basin.” First Nations are still dealing with the fallout from the environmental catastrophe, and we are extremely concerned that not enough has been done to prevent another Mount Polley disaster. These forms of environmental catastrophes represent a clear threat to ecosystems and an unacceptable infringement of Indigenous Rights.

We recommend Martha Manuel serve on the Advisory Panel for the GTMI. Ms. Manuel is a consultant specialized in Indigenous relations and intergovernmental affairs. She is a member of the Neskonalith Band, which is one of the 17 communities within the Secwepemculecw (Shuswap territory) in British Columbia. She worked with New Gold Inc., an intermediate mining company as Manager Indigenous

Relations for 12 years and prior to that worked with Indigenous groups in the areas of education, trades training, housing, language, and healthcare. Since leaving New Gold in 2020, she started her own consulting business and completed a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). In 2019, Ms. Manuel received the Michelle Pockey Leadership Award. She also received the Trailblazer Award through Women in Mining Canada at the PDAC conference in Toronto in March 2020. Ms. Manuel can be contacted at 250-318-2046.

Ms. Manuel possesses an enormous breadth of invaluable expertise and knowledge that distinguishes her as an excellent candidate for the Advisory Panel for GTMI. Her participation will signal that GTMI is serious about respecting and advancing the Indigenous rights enshrined in the *UN Declaration* and is committed to treating Indigenous peoples as key decision-makers who can positively influence and transform policy and action around tailings storage and management. We are happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: Marth Manuel

Elisa Tonda, UNEP

Stephen Barrie, Church of England