



Chief Fred Robbins
Esketemc First Nations
Esket, B.C.

RE: Potential Social Impact of Taseko/Prosperity Mine on the Community of Alkali Lake

Chief Robbins,

In a recent conversation you asked for my opinion about the potential impact of the proposed Taseko/Prosperity Mine on the people of Alkali Lake.

As you know, I have been working in this community on a monthly basis for the last five years. My colleagues from the Betty Ford Institute and I have joined in support of the on-going healing and sobriety movement which began at Alkali in the early 1970's. The Sobriety Movement of the Esketemc is of great interest to many of us working in the field of Addictions Recovery because we have seen the impact your film, The Honour of All, has had on American Indians across the US since the late 1980's. We have also witnessed the far-reaching, positive influence of your sobriety gatherings like the Annual Alkali Lake Round-up on recovering men, women and families. So our work has been to support this recovery movement and has included family education, sobriety workshops, residential school trauma recovery workshops and training of Esketemc Health Services personnel.

Research in the last few years has revealed a definite link between early childhood trauma, historical trauma and alcoholism/addiction. That is why the Sobriety Movement and Residential School Trauma Recovery at Alkali Lake are so important. In Alcohol Problems in Native America: The Untold Story of Resistance and Recovery- "The Truth About the Lie.", "William White and Don Coyhis identify what is happening at Alkali Lake as a modern day example of 200+ years of efforts by American Indians to recover from the devastating effects of colonization where alcohol was used as a weapon of mass destruction. Don Coyhis, founder of the White Bison Movement, which serves American Indian Tribes across the US in their efforts to recover from alcoholism and historical trauma, freely acknowledges that the origin and success of his movement has been significantly influenced by the recovery movement at Alkali Lake.

I sincerely hope that all parties involved in assessing this case can quickly come to see that the Sobriety Movement at Alkali Lake is a Provincial as well as a Canadian treasure which should be carefully preserved. Because of this, I hope that the necessary time and resources will be invested to accurately assess the impact of the proposed mine on the Sobriety Movement at Alkali Lake.

In the last two months I have spoken with some of the people at Alkali Lake who have been affected by the news of the proposed mine. Some are reporting symptoms of disturbed sleep, hopelessness, anger, rage, weeping and memories of previous personal, familial, cultural and historical abuses. The sense of further loss of their traditional lands and use thereof is re-traumatizing them.

Since we know that trauma and grief are serious factors for relapse in alcoholism recovery, I have concerns about what the long-term impact of this proposed mine might mean in terms of relapse to

members of this community, including many who have attained over 30 years of uninterrupted sobriety. I can assure you that anything that negatively affects the Sobriety Movement at Alkali can't help but impact all Canadian First Nations and American Indians across the US who continue to look to Alkali Lake for a ray of hope in resolving their own problems with alcoholism and historical trauma. The current and potential stressors resulting from this proposal are factors that demand the utmost attention and careful assessment. Please be assured of the Betty Ford Institute's continued support of the Sobriety Movement of Alkali Lake and the recovering community in the surrounding area.

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