

April 30, 2010

Submission for the Federal Environmental Review Panel  
(For proposed Prosperity Mine)

My name is Stuart Kohut. I'm a resident of Williams Lake, and have called this area my home for 27 years of my life. I would like to thank this panel for the job it is doing and for the opportunity given to the public to provide input into this process. I have been present for much of these panel hearings; I've been riveted, and have never felt more compelled to engage in my community, putting my name on the list to present after the first morning. Watching these hearings, at times I feel like I'm witnessing not just a cross-section of our community, but a cross-section of humanity itself.

Formally addressing the panel specifically regarding the proposed Prosperity mine, I will talk about the "environment" in this submission, and relate it to this project and review panel. It is essential to acknowledge that we all effect the "environment" that we live in, by showing who we are, what we know, what we believe, and by learning about and contributing to our community, and that is very powerful for every individual living in this country. The existence of this review process itself is a reflection of the consciousness of our society. Although it may not be perfect, this type of process was not even a thought just a short number of years ago. I hope that as a community, and as a society we take the opportunity to benefit from an event like this. I see that this is part of *your role*, no matter how defined your terms of reference, to recognize that you will contribute to the future of our society as a whole – and I believe we have a long way to go. Your work is not just isolated to one lake - whether your terms of reference dictate so or not, you will influence our society and world. The most important issues of our time have been brought into this public forum, reaching back into history and the settling of our continent, and concerning the course for our future as a society. A monumental affair, not to mention for just 3 panel members to have to deal with. I can only imagine that you have taken on this responsibility because you feel strongly about it, and know that it is at the forefront of our democratic evolution, and our relationship with our environment as a country and people. It is obvious how gruelling this job has been for you, as well as many others. Kudos to you, and all the best to you in your task at hand.

As I mentioned, I've heard many of the presentations, and I will address a few issues I believe to be very important. I will talk a little about myself for reference first. My family comes from a history of farmers, loggers, mill-workers, prospectors, miners, trappers and have been in Canada since roughly 1801; on my Mothers side, the Fraser family, the European name of one of the rivers in question in the Prosperity project. I have Native and non-Native family stretching from BC and The Yukon across Canada thru every province to Nova Scotia. I have 2 children 10 years old that have been born and raised in Williams Lake. I am proud to call this area my home. I am a business owner, and I also have worked in the forest sector for years, and it helped put food on our table.

I want to talk about how the First Nations people of this area have influenced my life, as a person of European descent, and how it is relevant to this environmental panel. I hope to provide some insight and perspective as an “outsider” becoming a part of First Nations communities in this area. As a small boy I moved with my mother, a school teacher, and younger brother, from the Lower Mainland to Tl’etinqox, Anaham reserve. Over the years my family was a part of this community, while she taught there and at Yuneset’in (Stone), and then as a part of the Shuswap community of Dog Creek (Canoe Creek), where she taught as well. I never once felt unwelcome in all of those years. On the contrary, the Tsilhqot’in and Secwepemc (Shuswap) people that I grew up with took care of me as though I were their own, which I am, as a citizen of this earth. They nurtured my spirit, and being out on the land with them did things for me that I’ll probably never fully understand. It helped me to know that I am a part of my environment. It helped me to be at peace with the paradoxes of life. It helped me to listen and to understand others, to not judge people.

In contrast, when I walk into a business in this town, and hear shop owners make racist comments, just in the course of conversation, I’m reminded that *this* is part of the *environment* that Native people of the area, and *all* of us have to live in. Also in contrast, I’ll note that the most unwelcome I have felt anywhere in my life was when I came into Williams Lake for Junior High School. In my opinion, on the socio-economic side of things, some shop owners and workers would do well for themselves to cultivate better relations with their First Nations neighbours. I know for a fact that business has been lost in this area due to many First Nations people going elsewhere, to Quesnel, or even Kamloops or Prince George to shop. It’s just *one* thing, in light of, that I find a bit ironic to hear First Nations people described as “anti-business” in this area.

Another topic I would like to address is that of health. We need to look seriously at the effects of the environment on our health in new ways. Not just the obvious issue of poison in our water = bad for our health, and all the costs associated with that fact. I don’t believe the relationship between our health and the environment has been adequately addressed. As someone whose work involves the holistic health of people, I have seen health issues of all sorts be resolved through the simple act of spending time in pristine nature. This relates also to the Tsilhqot’in and Secwepemc voicing their concern around the connection to the land, and the relationship between that and the health and well-being of their communities and individuals. Mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health are all taken care of in the relationship to the land. That is, mother earth in her purity. It is a deeply personal connection that nurtures the very lives of people. I shared in my presentation in Dog Creek the importance of this connection to personal well being through a personal example of a community member, late Jesse Seymour’s connection to the land, and its importance to his well-being. When people take care of themselves, they also take care of the people around them, their communities and greater society. Strong, balanced individuals will contribute to creating a strong, balanced society. I will also share a personal experience you can consider as evidence. A short number of years ago, my brother Jesse was working full-time, waiting to be paid, and had been short-changed in a previous job, denied weeks worth of wages. He had hardly *any* food in his house. I mean almost nothing. Some rice and a couple cans of beans, for

days. Being the guy he was, he didn't ask for help, although he could have received it, through the support of his community. It was nearly October, and the fish were running so late that year, that I was able to help him get some healthy fish to smoke, and freeze. We had to look carefully in the dark for ones close to spawning, and put them back, as they were not needed by us, and would then continue to contribute to the lifecycle. Because he was working full time, I helped him deal with the fish we caught. It was a great feeling to have the despondency lifted, and have fresh fish to nourish body and soul. If I was ever in need, Jesse would have done the same for me, and he did. A simple story, but does in fact show the value of the wild salmon stocks to the health and well-being of communities in our area. The value of the land taking care of so many people is that of an economy in itself, and now the Fraser River is threatened by the Prosperity project, threatening an economy already in existence. This simple story paints a very real picture of how our environment takes care of us, and also how we can take care of each other and we will all make it by. In this simple story, which could be told in hundreds of different versions by hundreds of different people – some of which you have heard - it is also essential to recognize that central to life is the importance that the environment has in providing, and to take care of it also allows it to take care of you. It is these principles lived by First Nations people that I believe if integrated, would benefit the rest of the world.

Being involved in ceremonial and spiritual practices of First Nations people helped me discover my own gifts, and follow myself, and contributed immeasurably to my career path, working with people. I've been able to help people who struggle with issues of all sorts. From obsessive-compulsive disorders, emotional trauma, childhood trauma, physical trauma, and just people who want to make changes in their life, including professionals in the corporate world. I see first hand the sincere interest people have these days for spending time with themselves, getting real, so to speak, and grounded, and finding more meaning in their life. I believe for First Nations communities to share their knowledge *in a balanced way, not exploitatively* and offer a part in this, as some have mentioned, will help to bring balance to our entire world, like a balanced medicine wheel. We may not have solutions to all of our problems in the world, but to take care of one's spirit, to gain perspective and inspiration, and to be well-balanced individuals, I believe would be of enormous benefit to the job our community, corporate and government leaders have of fixing this world. It is my dream to contribute to the world in this way. Even busy corporations are recognizing that corporate retreats with a holistic approach to a balanced life, and team building thru simple experiences together out on the land are an incredible way to build relationships and foster a healthy corporate *environment* – that word, once again. Our *environment* is about more than rocks and dirt, it's the people who live on this earth, their behaviour, and their relationship with other fellow human beings.

Places such as these at issue here are very powerful, and are few and far between on this planet now. Through my work, I have seen people deal with all sorts of serious issues that have affected their lives, at work and with their family, just by engaging themselves in the power for personal transformation that Mother Earth carries for us. Sitting by a mountain stream, being overcome by healing energy, crying their hearts out, letting go of

psychological blocks, seeing themselves as one with our universe, and then living the power we all have as human beings, given to us by the creator. I have seen physical trauma, emotional trauma, and mental imbalance all be resolved through time spent in this way. Let this not be overlooked. How much money do people spend on prescription drugs unnecessarily? What is the overall environmental cost in manufacturing these drugs, and then distributing them, trucking them around the country? And does it even help people? Some most certainly, but not all. This is just *one* example, *one* issue in relation to how detrimental it is to ourselves to destroy our pristine environment. It *must* be recognized that our natural world can contribute even more to the overall well-being of our society. Cultures such as that of the Ts'ilhqot'in people have an invaluable contribution to make to our world, and it will all come in a way that is simple, and preserves rather than destroys our environment.

I have been listening to these hearings and listening to people from many communities and I want to emphasize here that this environmental review should not focus only on how many berries somebody eats from the edge of which lake, and which kind of berries, and if they pick them elsewhere also. I recognize that the panel is collecting information it needs within its terms of reference, but this is about a fundamental issue: A development of this kind will have a catastrophic effect on an entire nation of people, as a whole, period. The culture and gifts of the Tsilqot'in people are so strong, and so close to breathing life back into their communities that need help, and into our whole world. It is unfathomable what our First Nations landlords have had to endure. This process, and our governments, and business' way of doing business throughout history, has put untold stress on First Nations people just in having to deal with such a foreign, intimidating, and threatening system. There are people in this room who have had to deal with residential school, racism, witnessing the destruction of their homeland by big business, drug and alcohol abuse, a controversial years-long court battle to try to hold on to what's left, and now *this*. All in one short lifetime. Like it never ends. And they are here today, strong and clear, standing up for what they know is right. They are inspirational leaders. We should be asking for their assistance in dealing with the problems this world is facing.

Apparent at these hearings is the lack of understanding that so much of our society has of the First Nations people of this land. I don't know how we as a society can bridge these gaps that are also grossly apparent in the corporate culture. I'd like to make an observation that in many aspects First Nations People have learned much about the European way of doing things, integrating it into their lives, but we on the other hand fail to do the same. First Nations leaders are some of the most honest, heart-felt, savvy, and clear public speakers and presenters I have ever witnessed, even in a second language, even in an intimidating environment. In contrast, it's big news when one of our political leaders simply makes an appearance at one of the reserves. It seems to me that one side is being unbelievably accommodating to the 'way things are done', recognizing it as part of their 'environment' that they need to deal with, but the other side, namely business, is not recognizing the other 'way things are done'. I have personal friends from First Nations communities that have taken it upon themselves to become formally educated in our institutions, earning Master's Degrees in various fields, recognizing that as part of the

*environment* we live in. The act of embracing all aspects of our surroundings is part of living the balance of the medicine wheel.

I wish for my children to grow up in a world that values diversity and balance. I would like to think that “the way of the world” does not mean that everybody must assimilate into the world of all-encompassing financial gain, driven primarily by one demographic. I suggest that the wheels that drive the corporate machine are out of balance in our world. The world’s way of doing business needs its axis adjusted, just as we have done throughout history, from the Iron Age, the industrial revolution, the creation of democratic countries; legal corporations and so-called opportunity for all; the use of heavy transport; the internet; now the focus on locally-sourced food, and our next step hopefully, to bring our brains, abilities, and technology together to maintain harmony, sustaining ourselves and our environment into the future – sustainability and the green economy. To quote world renowned author, film maker, lecturer and anthropologist Wade Davis, “Imagine if all of our energy, thoughts, and technological advances throughout history were focused on *maintaining* the Garden of Eden.” \* (from the book “why ancient wisdom matters in the modern world.”) The 21<sup>st</sup> century dilemma of developing a sustainable economy has been highlighted at these hearings. I suggest we could use the assistance and principles of the First People’s knowledge of the environment that they have to offer, having lived here sustainably for thousands of years.

Groundbreaking scientific work is occurring these days through meaningful collaborations and collection of evidence from the depth of the experience of our First Peoples. People don’t necessarily need a university degree to have expertise in a subject. Grassroots knowledge and experience can be found in classrooms, laboratories, or field studies. I cite a recent case in our Arctic, dealing with climate change, where breakthroughs in understanding weather trends have been made by teams of scientists listening intently to local Inuit knowledge. They have said their studies and technology could not detect what they were able to discover by carefully listening to the Inuit people. (taken from Canwest News Service - April 10, 2010) Our local First Nations people have a knowledge of this land beyond what a science team can capture.

In my experience, working in the field in forestry, including leading a consulting crew I saw a lot of good people doing the best job possible with all the integrity they could muster. It was also obvious to many of us that the system we were working within was severely flawed, with serious implications relating to environmental management. This was simply par for the course. This truly reflects the power of the financial bottom line versus sustainable management - greed vs. common sense. But nobody in the field says anything in these situations because they have no authority to, and also need to put food on the table somehow. You, as a panel with the mandate you have been given are, and have, one of the few opportunities to be a voice for issues like this.

Be a voice for change. It should be obvious that there are serious systemic problems in our government’s system of management on many levels, and we have to start somewhere and somehow to make change. Acknowledge that changes must happen. Whether or not you have the authority or mandate within the scope of this review

process, you *must* bring these issues forward as fundamental and important. It is just a matter of time before the world and society as a whole will *have* to change. Help us be at the forefront of change, rather than at the bottom of the list of G8 countries for our environmental practices. *This is a disgrace* for a country such as ours. We should have the guts to be global leaders in environmental practices and social development, *and* relations with our First Peoples. We are the last on the boat to even *consider* the U.N. declaration recognizing indigenous rights. People, and national governments around the world are beginning to see us as laggards. (I site the article by Allan Woods – Ottawa Bureau, “Canada Darth Vader of G8” as one source highlighting this fact) If the rest of the world knows about this proposed environmental, and cultural atrocity, they will say “Shame on you, Canada”. Your recommendation through this process should be put into perspective, not isolating; macro, not micro- management.

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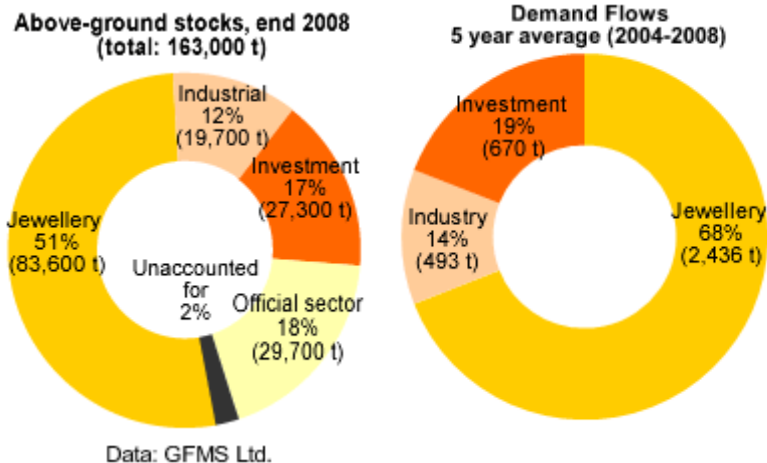
One issue that perpetuates our environmental issues in the world is our consumption as human beings. I’ve attached information on our uses of gold. They highlight some fundamental changes needed in the way we live as consumers. Are we mining gold, destroying watersheds, communities and cultures so that people can wear more jewellery? I was shocked to see the proportion that jewellery accounts for in the use of gold. Its demand is growing beyond the proportion of its stocks, which is already the major source of gold use. *Simplicity*, I would suggest is in order, as far as changes to the way we live in general. This should also be considered part of your mandate, as consumers are fundamental in determining supply and demand, and therefore driving decisions around resource extraction.

*Taken from the World Gold Council:*

#### **“About the World Gold Council**

Founded in 1987, the World Gold Council is funded by the world's leading gold mining companies, representing 26 companies and around 40% of total gold production. We are an international, not for profit organisation, with offices in India, China, Japan, the Middle East, Turkey, Western Europe and North America.

As the gold industry's key marketing body, the World Gold Council works closely with jewelry retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, banks, investment companies and distribution specialists to promote the use of gold in jewelry and industrial applications, as well as by central banks and other official sector institutions. We seek to improve access to gold for investors and maintain an active investor education program. “



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Another subject I have seen come up is that people want to know who Taseko Mines Ltd. really is. It's not just a traditional practice to introduce one's family and history as a means of presenting oneself. Who is Taseko Mines, the corporation? As we know, a corporation is considered an entity – as a person virtually, so who is this person? Who are their children, ie Gibraltar Mines, Amark Exploration.; and parents, Hunter Dickinson; cousins Northern Dynasty, etc; adopted family: partnership companies; and especially, the godparents – the shareholders. Who are they? Who are the individuals running these companies? They don't run themselves. In a short time, I was able to find, through the companies websites themselves, that a major corporate shareholder of a Hunter Dickinson company, Northern Dynasty (a "sister" company to Taseko Mines Ltd.), is also a major shareholder in a Canadian junior mining company called Copper Mesa, which in March 2010 has been sued - along with the Toronto Stock Exchange for providing financing - by three representatives of a village in the mountains of Ecuador, for a violent attack on the villagers by paramilitary hired by Copper Mesa. I encourage anyone to search for documents and even video relating to this, *Ramirez Vs Mesa*. In many cases it is the same individuals involved in many of these companies. Once again, the theme of *isolation* is found, in the concept of individual companies, reducing accountability for all other activities. What else are they involved in around the world? It is *irresponsible* to isolate one situation here – the Prosperity mine proposal – as it is the sum total of the history of the people involved in this proposal, and also of the parameters of government within which we function. I don't have the capacity to explore details of this issue; volumes could be written about it, but nonetheless, it should not be ignored. You are the experts for us, and examining the system within which this proposal is made should be seriously considered – if not through your recommendation and its terms of reference then through whatever avenues are available to you outside of that.

Questions of unethical practices around the world by Canadian mining companies have been raised in our parliament with the proposal of Bill C300, which aims to hold Canadian mining companies accountable to the same standards around the world as they are held to in Canada. This is a topic that requires much digging, but dig we must, either with spoon or backhoe. Opposition to legislation such as this raises obvious questions as to *why* the companies of our country would oppose. What are they doing in other jurisdictions that they don't want to be held accountable for? Who are we dealing with here? They should be at the forefront of issues like this, leading by example, making us proud, leading their industry to be the best they can be around the globe. Where is the vision? To me, in one aspect, if business is about making money, and beating the competition, why not leave the competition in the dust by way of creating better business practices to adhere to and *make noise about it*. The weak will fall and the strong will survive. The costs associated with better environmental practices will be offset by increasing the longevity of resource extractions, stabilizing the economy, and will help reverse the trend of government debt by way of sustainable economics, rather than being "behind the eight-ball", always borrowing on future success. Simplify, and we can be successful with what we have right now.

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As an owner of a provincial trap-line territory within Xenigwet'in traditional territory, I plan on working with Xenigwet'in people in their traditional practices of resource management. I don't see this as a hindrance to business, but a benefit in resource management, holistically, and will address sustainability, as well as providing opportunities to think outside the box and develop new, better ways to work with the earth's resources, moving forward in the spirit of working together for the common good and preservation of mother earth, rather than strictly for profit. Not to mention the value of healthy relationships with one's neighbours, which can't be understated.

One way to contribute to a *holistic* economy in this part of the world is first to recognize what this part of the world has to offer. People who have seen many corners of this earth agree that the Chilcotin is one of the most beautiful places on this planet. I've heard it compared to our most visited National Park, Banff, which sees more than 1 million visitors per year. Banff is missing one thing however: people as an original part of the landscape; an ancient culture still connected to ancient practices, right here on the land. We protect caribou relentlessly, and study the unique behaviour of frogs and fish, protecting their interactions with their habitat – why do we fail to recognize and care about *people*? It could be said that we are the most unique, intelligent and powerful species on the planet, don't people and *their* habitat deserve to be protected? I guess there is a reason cities are referred to as *zoos*. The ability to contribute into perpetuity to the economy and well-being of the world is right here, and is a reality if we take care of what we have. The contribution of a culture can last forever, as long as there *is* a culture. Taseko has not factored the value of hundreds or possibly thousands of years of economic benefit into its calculations. Can *eternity* be calculated within a mathematical economic



formula? The eternal loss proposed, or the eternal benefit of leaving this place alone? Don't wreck this place. There is a reason people from all over the world come here in awe. If nothing else, consider it a disservice to the economy to destroy one precious sector in British Columbia. You would not be contributing, but merely taking sustenance from tourism and other sectors like fishing and living off the land, and giving it to mining. Like blindly ripping out a whole plant to feast *right now*, instead of letting it grow and provide modestly every year for generations. Let this place be what it is. Let it speak for itself.

What about jobs? Well, there will be plenty of work to do in making these changes I've referred to here. We don't have a "plan" for our current economic model and policies, as it is, other than to essentially just keep moving forward. In this same spirit perhaps we can find a way, moving forward, but more conscientiously.

How does a 33 year mine look after my children's future here? Do we just find the next deposit and keep digging? Don't wreck what is still left. When there is nothing left but open pits and toxic waste, then what?

I empathize with people who just want to take good care of their families. I am the same. It has not been easy for me personally over the years to follow what I knew was right, with the almighty dollar calling. We all want to take good care of our families. But this mine is not the only way to do that. It may actually be the *worst* way to do that, causing *more* division in the community that our children grow up in. I am speaking for myself, but I am sure I'm not alone in saying that I am out on the land, and I plan to make my living in harmony with it.

We need to commit as a society to work together and find a better way to make it. It is *the* issue of our time. As an environmental review panel, *you* have the power to contribute to finding solutions, and moving Canada forward, out of the doldrums and from the bottom of every environmental list, to the forefront as global leaders. As supposedly "the greatest country in the world", do we not value the contribution our First Peoples have to offer our society? Is that worth a 33 year mine? Not even a thousand-year mine. We have to find a better way to thrive as a society, without having to destroy each other and the very ground we walk on. Recognize the detrimental nature that a mine like this would have not just to a watershed, but to a way of life in Xeni Gwet'in. Value the contribution they wish to make to our society, our country, our world.

This proposed mine is in somebody's backyard. I wonder how the rest of Williams Lake would feel if Scout Island were to be destroyed and the Lake drained, maybe a tailings pond down at the Creek or in the graveyard even. Why not? Think of the boost to our local economy, maybe for 33 years even! Imagine if we had built that mine in 1990, a 20 year mine, shutting it down today; "reclaiming" it. Where would we go at that point? On to the next pillage? It's not a pristine lake anyway. I don't know anybody who eats fish from Williams Lake, most people are afraid to swim in it, let alone eat from it. Wouldn't that be a nice view of the pit from the Tourism Discovery Center, showcasing our "mining town"?

We have better things to offer here I believe. For one, this area is rich in tourist resources that could be here for generations if we take care of it. Especially the gifts of First Nations people. Recognize that this is also a precious resource, and that its development won't happen overnight, especially considering how in every other case, resources have been ripped out and exploited for someone else to profit.

I've been hearing talk of how people against this mine are making it an emotional issue. I beg to differ. Isn't people's fear of not having money emotional? I have heard plenty of pragmatism, and down to earth common sense in opposition to this mine. If Taseko has another view of the drive to earn money as being something other than *emotional*, I would love to hear it. *Emotion* is exactly what drives the price of all our world commodities – ups and downs, gaining and losing, every minute of every day. It is simply the *emotional drive* to make money that stops people from doing what they know is right in such situations. You can't tell people forever that it's all about maintaining a strong economy because the way we do business in this world can't last. We are on a crash course. There will be nothing left to take eventually.

I can testify, having been raised in a typical “Canadian” tradition, and also having been raised in part by Secwepemc and Tsilhqot'in people, that traditional knowledge is not just about how to fish in what spot or things of this kind of nature. It is a way of life; a way of being. It's the way you treat people, the way you live on earth. It's more than can be explained to this panel. It is to be felt, and known in the depths of your heart. I have come to know this. This beautiful way of life has been shared with me since I was a small child. Just sitting quietly with an elder can heal you, even if you didn't even realize you were in need of it; it can open your mind. I can't imagine the frustration of people here, who just want to say: *Look* at us. *Look* at who we are. *Listen* to us. You have an enormous task as this panel. You have my empathy. You probably had no idea that this was what you were in for. This process is not easy on anybody, on any side of any of these tables, unless maybe if you are paid buckets of money to sit here.

Imagine if all the energy, time, and intelligence put into projects like this were focused on developing relationships, developing green technology and finding ways to sustain us all on this earth for millennia. Perhaps like other addictions, some noses go where the money is.

Don't support anything that risks harming this beautiful ancient culture. It's value to our world is too great. Xeni and most of this area for that matter, is a jewel of this planet, and should be considered priceless not just to the Ts'ilqot'in and Secwepemc people who call it home.

Take this opportunity to help us change as a society, to address the communication gap between our two cultures and the education needed by our government and society on the First Nation's way of working with the earth's resources; to remember our Federal

Governments commitment to truth and reconciliation with First Nations people, and also to work towards a new model, of a more sustainable, harmonious way of life on this Earth.

This mine will not go through. That I believe is for certain. People simply wont allow it - whether that authority is recognized or not. Please don't let it come to this. Recognize the seriousness of this situation and contribute to developing a better way, rather than deepening the divide. And don't just say no to this mine, say no to the way we do business in this world in general; use all the power you can muster to put our world on a better course for all of our sakes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. I am including this quote from Black Elk to end.

#### The True Peace

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Taka (the Great Spirit), and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this. The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is known that true peace, which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kohut