

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
June 6, 2022

Tahltan Central Government  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **Tahltan Central Government, B.C. make history under Declaration Act**

VICTORIA – Tahltan Central Government and the Province have entered into the first consent based decision-making agreement under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act). This agreement honours Tahltan’s jurisdiction in land management decisions in Tahltan Territory, in recognition of Tahltan’s title and rights within its territory. The agreement advances reconciliation as well as provides clarity and predictability for the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project.

“Today marks an exciting step forward in the evolution of the relationship between the Tahltan Nation and the Province of British Columbia,” said Chad Norman Day, President of the Tahltan Central Government. “Reconciliation is not achieved with just one step. It requires ongoing innovation, collaboration and leaning into discomfort. For the Tahltan people, strengthening and preserving our culture, values and independence is why we keep pushing forward on this journey. The Tahltan Central Government has been clear on behalf of all Tahltan people that there will be no world-class mining jurisdiction in Tahltan Territory without robust Tahltan stewardship which must include world-class wildlife and fisheries management, strong environmental mitigation measures and recognition of our 1910 Declaration. The Tahltan Nation and the Province have a long journey ahead walking and living on the path to reconciliation and we look forward to building on our relationship together. I thank all of those who have worked on this historic agreement which better recognizes Tahltan jurisdiction over our homelands. It has been generations in the making. Mēduh.”

“This historic step shifts B.C.’s legal decision-making framework to respect First Nations jurisdiction, recognize the inherent rights of the Tahltan, and provide a clear, stable, and sustainable path for everyone to work together. This is reconciliation in action, in the real world,” said Premier John Horgan. “The Tahltan Nation is a strong partner. By working together, we are delivering on the promise of reconciliation, supporting predictability for business, and encouraging responsible investment in B.C.”

This agreement outlines consent-based decision-making related to the environmental assessment of the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project. The governments are working together to change B.C.’s traditional approach to environmental assessments and permit authorizations, by placing Tahltan values and rights at the forefront. Together, the shared intent is to create a model for sustainable mining and world-class environmental practices and standards. The agreement helps advance reconciliation with the Tahltan Nation, while providing certainty for the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project.

“As an already developed mine site with existing road access, waste management facilities, nearby access to green power, and robust economics, Indigenous consent is an essential step in an efficient approval process for Eskay Creek,” said Justin Himmelright, Senior Vice President, External Affairs and Sustainability, Skeena Resources. “We look forward to working with our Tahltan partners and the governments of British Columbia and Canada to bring this iconic project back into production.”

The consent-based decision-making process outlined in the agreement demonstrates that reconciliation and economic development can go hand-in-hand, by supporting strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards as guided by the Tahltan people. This agreement positions B.C. as a preferred destination for ESG investors and is a tangible demonstration of successful collaboration with First Nations on decisions that affect them and their territories. It reflects the ability to co-create regulatory certainty for major projects.

Section 7 of the Declaration Act provides a mechanism for the Province to recognize in law Indigenous jurisdiction and decisions within the provincial statutory decision-making framework. Section 7 of the Environmental Assessment Act provides the enabling legislation required under the Declaration Act for the decision-making agreement between Tahltan and the Province.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –**

“This agreement is the first consent-based agreement for decision-making ever to be negotiated under the Declaration Act. It is a tangible example of the Province’s commitment to changing our relationship with Indigenous peoples. Together, the Tahltan Central Government and the Province are leading the way toward a new model for advancing free, prior and informed consent.”

##### **George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy –**

“Through this consent agreement, we are weaving together the processes of two governments, with both Tahltan knowledge and western science informing our shared environmental assessment decision-making and supporting collaborative and ecologically sound economic development. We are breaking new ground in how the provincial government, First Nations and companies can work together – recognizing jurisdiction for decisions in a Nation’s territory. We are creating regulatory clarity and greater certainty for investors, while protecting our natural environment for the generations to come.”

##### **Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship –**

“This agreement is a remarkable milestone for the Province and the Tahltan Central Government, and a powerful example of what can be achieved when we work together. We will build on this progress as we develop a path forward with First Nations towards collective stewardship, fair and timely decisions and a resource management system that supports

reconciliation, environmental sustainability and lasting economic benefits for British Columbians.”

A backgrounder follows.

#### **Quick Facts:**

- Tahltan Territory is 95,933 square kilometres, or the equivalent of 11 percent of the Province of British Columbia and is located in Northern B.C.
- The Tahltan Central Government and the Province announced the start of negotiations, including fulsome partner and stakeholder engagement, in June 2021.
- On November 28, 2019, the Declaration Act was passed into law, and B.C. become the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the UN Declaration.
- The Province's StrongerBC Economic Plan is based on extensive engagement with Indigenous Peoples to address their full participation and leadership in all aspects of B.C.'s economy.

#### **Learn More:**

Tahltan Central Government: <https://tahltan.org/> and its Tahltan Stewardship Initiative: <https://tsi.tahltan.org>

Province's work with the Tahltan Central Government, including a copy of the agreement with area maps: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/first-nations-negotiations/first-nations-a-z-listing/tahltan-central-government](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/first-nations-negotiations/first-nations-a-z-listing/tahltan-central-government)

Environmental Assessment of the Eskay Creek Mine Revitalization Project: <https://projects.eao.gov.bc.ca/p/60f078d3332ebd0022a39224/project-details>

Eskay Creek Revitalization Project (Skeena Resources): <https://skeenaeskaycreek.com/>

The Declaration Act: <https://declaration.gov.bc.ca/>

StrongerBC 2022 Economic Plan: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/plan/>

#### **Contact:**

Ombrielle Neria  
Tahltan Central Government  
604 316-0478  
[communicationsdirector@tahltan.org](mailto:communicationsdirector@tahltan.org)

Lindsay Byers  
Press Secretary  
Office of the Premier  
[Lindsay.Byers@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Lindsay.Byers@gov.bc.ca)

Art Aronson  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
250 893-2028  
[Arthur.Aronson@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Arthur.Aronson@gov.bc.ca)

David Karn  
Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy  
250 213-3760  
[David.Karn@gov.bc.ca](mailto:David.Karn@gov.bc.ca)

---

## BACKGROUND

### History in the making

The Tahltan Central Government and the Province of British Columbia announced the start of the negotiations for the Tahltan Declaration Act Consent Agreement, including fulsome partner and stakeholder engagement, in June 2021. The negotiations focused on consent-based decision-making related to the environmental assessment for the proposed Eskay Creek Mine Revitalization Project in Tahltan Territory.

The Tahltan Central Government is the central governing body of the Tahltan Nation and represents the Nation on matters relating to inherent Tahltan Aboriginal title and rights. Tahltan Territory, located in north-western British Columbia, encompasses nearly 11 percent of British Columbia. Tahltan Territory has the richest mineral potential in B.C., including the “Golden Triangle,” where private-sector investment has been and continues to be significant.

The proposed mine at Eskay Creek is on Tahltan Territory, located approximately 85 kilometres northwest of Stewart. The original mine was a high-grade underground gold and silver mine that closed in 2008. The mine was acquired by Skeena Resources Limited., a B.C.-based exploration and development company, in 2020. Skeena Resources proposes to construct and operate a high-grade, open-pit, gold and silver mine. If Tahltan and the Province approve the Eskay Creek project, Skeena Resources expects the mine to be in operations for 9.8 years, employing more than 700 people and generate \$733 million direct benefit to B.C. in mineral and income taxes.

The consent agreement sets out how the Tahltan Central Government and Province of British Columbia will be accountable and transparent throughout the environmental assessment process for the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project, how the two governments will work together to support their respective decisions and includes provisions for dispute resolution.

The negotiations and the agreement are in keeping with several specific articles of the UN Declaration, including:

- Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 recognize Tahltan’s right to full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights including equality and self-determination by utilizing Tahltan values, culture, law, policies, processes, and decision-making bodies as they exercise their rights as a Nation.
- Article 18 by honouring Tahltan’s right to participate in decisions that affect them through their own representative institutions, the Tahltan Central Government.
- Articles 19 and 32(1), which honour the consent of Indigenous Peoples in decisions that affect them including free, prior and informed consent.
- Article 31, which speaks to the right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their traditional knowledge, by incorporating Tahltan traditional knowledge and manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures as part of the assessment process, respecting Tahltan rights which shall be recognized and protected.

---

## BACKGROUND

The Province and Tahltan Nation have a history of partnerships, including the Klappan Plan, an interim land-use agreement signed in 2019 that has the Nation and B.C. government working together in new ways to protect and manage the Sacred Headwaters, while respecting the Nation's rights in the Klappan Valley.

**Contact:**

Ombrielle Neria  
Tahltan Central Government  
604 316-0478  
[communicationsdirector@tahtlan.org](mailto:communicationsdirector@tahtlan.org)

Art Aronson  
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and  
Reconciliation  
250 893-2028  
[Arthur.Aronson@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Arthur.Aronson@gov.bc.ca)

David Karn  
Ministry of Environment and Climate  
Change Strategy  
250 213-3760  
[David.Karn@gov.bc.ca](mailto:David.Karn@gov.bc.ca)