



MEDIA RELEASE:

Trans Mountain Deviation Application Regarding Pípsell Area

Stk'émłúpsém te Secwépém – September 29, 2023 – On June 11, 2017, Pípsell was officially designated as a Secwépém Nation Cultural Heritage Site (stkemlups.ca/process/). The Stk'émłúpsém te Secwépém Nation (SSN), stood with our fellow Secwépém Nation communities and families to re-affirm and mark Pípsell through ceremony in accordance with our Secwépém laws, customs and traditions and a national resolution.

Since time immemorial, our people have had an ancestral, cultural, and spiritual connection to the area known as Pípsell, which is considered a “cultural keystone place”. Furthermore, under Secwépém law, Stk'émłúpsém te Secwépém (SSN) are *yecwemínem* (caretakers and stewards) of Pípsell. We exercise physical, cultural, and spiritual rights in and through the Pípsell area that flow from the land and allow us to make decisions in respect of the land, and which carry legal and spiritual stewardship obligations. Our obligation to maintain and steward the Pípsell area has always been and continues to be our paramount concern in relation to the Trans Mountain Expansion Project. All steps taken by SSN in this regard have been informed by our overarching obligation to protect the integrity of this land for past, present, and future generations, in accordance with Secwépém law.

Through engagement and collaboration over the years, Trans Mountain is aware of the spiritual and cultural significance of the Pípsell area and our obligations to these lands. The sacredness of this area is also recognized by the provincial and federal Crown.

SSN withdrew its opposition to the Project's crossing through SSN territory by agreeing to enter into a Mutual Benefits Agreement with Trans Mountain. The mutually agreed promises reflect our inherent jurisdiction over our territory and our right to protect our cultural heritage, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous legal orders.

SSN is deeply disappointed and strongly disagrees with the decision of the Canada Energy Regulator (“**CER**”), a federal regulator, to allow Trans Mountain, a Crown Corporation wholly owned by the federal government, to proceed with construction methodologies through the Pípsell area which directly, unjustifiably and irreparably harm our rights and obligations in and to these lands. The CER issued its decision with “reasons to follow”, thus opening the door to Trans Mountain to proceed on an expedited basis, leaving SSN with great uncertainty and limited immediate options to safeguard our interests. Despite this, Trans Mountain intends to break ground on October 2, 2023, which is a statutory holiday for Canadians to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

SSN's opposition to the new construction methods approved by the CER is a product of the exercise of our inherent right to self-govern our lands and resources in accordance with Secwépém law and rights affirmed under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of



Indigenous Peoples (“**UNDRIP**”). This approval by the CER directly undermines Secwépemc law and represents a failure to recognize the transformative change in the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples that was represented through the federal government’s passing of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* affirming UNDRIP into Canadian law. Further, it is contrary to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s “*Principles of Reconciliation*”, including Principle 8, which states, “Supporting Aboriginal peoples’ cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.” (Source: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/trc/IR4-6-2015-eng.pdf at page 3). It is also inconsistent with the federal government’s published “[Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.](#)”

It is deeply saddening to us, on the eve of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to see yet again the prioritization of the interests of industry over the advancement of reconciliation. As Canada prepares to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th, we call on Prime Minister Trudeau and all federal ministers to reflect on this truth - that despite the promises made to Indigenous peoples by this government and others, the corporate interests of a Crown corporation overseen by a federal regulator continue to take precedence over the spiritual and cultural integrity of this cultural keystone place, our inherent rights, and our unceded title.

