



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xat'sull First Nation Calls on British Columbia and Osisko Development to Halt Cariboo Gold Project Until Concerns are Addressed and Xat'sull Grants Consent

Osisko overlooks concerns raised by Xat'sull First Nation and risks First Nation filing legal proceedings to challenge the Project

XAT'SULL FIRST NATION TERRITORY; 7 November 2024: Following ongoing negotiations regarding the proposed Cariboo Gold Project (the Project), which have not productively progressed, Xat'sull First Nation (Xat'sull) is calling on the Government of British Columbia and Osisko Development (Osisko) to consult and cooperate with Xat'sull as partners and in good faith to obtain its free, prior and informed consent before proceeding further with the Project, which is located in Xat'sull's Territory.

Any consent-based decision-making process for the Project must be based on Xat'sull's laws and values and be implemented in a manner consistent with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP).

"The Province has shown it is failing to responsibly regulate this sector in our Territory," said Xat'sull Kukpi7 (Chief) Rhonda Phillips. "It's not the 1980s anymore — by failing to address the very serious issues raised by Xat'sull about this Project, the Province and Osisko are neglecting to uphold their commitments to reconciliation and to implement DRIPA and UNDRIP.

"Xat'sull Territory is 'ground zero' for the harmful effects of the Province's unilateral regulation of resource extraction activities, which resulted in the ongoing environmental catastrophe of the Mount Polley tailings failure. Today many Xat'sull members are no longer able to fully or meaningfully exercise their Aboriginal title and rights, as physical disturbances in these areas disrupt essential rituals and seasonal gatherings, eroding Xat'sull's profound connection to the land and their ancestors."

Despite this, and over Xat'sull's informed decision to withhold its consent to the Project, the Province issued an environmental assessment certificate for the Project on October 10, 2023. Over a year later, Xat'sull's major concerns about Osisko Development's Cariboo Gold Project remain unaddressed, including:

1. negotiations with Osisko in relation to the development of an economic benefit agreement have been unproductive for months, with very minimal progress having been made despite significant efforts from Xat'sull;



2. the Project will cause negative impacts upon caribou, further threatening the survival of the Southern Mountain subspecies of the Barkerville Woodland Caribou herd which is designated as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and is red listed by the Province;
3. the Project would significantly worsen the existing, ongoing cumulative effects loading and unjustified infringements of Xat'sull's Aboriginal title and rights, preventing members from exercising their Aboriginal title and rights such as fishing, hunting, trapping, harvesting plants and berries, gathering medicinal plants, habitation and ceremonial practices; and
4. the Project will have negative impacts to the human health and spiritual and cultural wellbeing of Xat'sull members due to risk of exposure to contaminants through ingestion of traditional foods and water and inhalation of poor air quality. Additionally, the resulting loss of access to cultural sites disrupts the transmission of knowledge from elders to younger generations, undermining community bonds and weakening cultural cohesion.

Xat'sull previously informed the Provincial Environmental Assessment Office that it was withholding its consent for the Project, which it will continue to do until its concerns have been adequately addressed. Although Xat'sull is currently at the table with Osisko, the Nation is asking for Osisko to reach an agreement with Xatsull before taking any further steps to complete the permitting process. Xat'sull is also calling on the Province to prioritize and initiate a collaborative process to resolve unaddressed issues related to the Project and immediately develop a consent-based decision-making process for mining activities in Xat'sull's territory.

"We emphasize that Xat'sull would like to see sustainable resource development in our Territory, but it's remarkable that in 2024 the Province and Osisko continue to barge ahead with this mine without our consent, contrary to DRIPA and UNDRIP," said Kukpi7 Phillips. "If the permitting processes move ahead without addressing our concerns, any permits that are issued will be highly vulnerable to legal challenges."

The Supreme Court of Canada held in the *Tsilhqot'in* case that "if the Crown begins a project without consent prior to Aboriginal title being established, **it may be required to cancel the project** upon establishment of the title if continuation of the project would be unjustifiably infringing." Likewise, Project approvals will also be at risk if Xat'sull brings a Blueberry River infringement claim against the Province based on the cumulative effects from industrial developments the Province has authorized.



“Xats’ul has acted in good faith in our discussions and we will not stand down until we are treated respectfully as partners and acknowledged as Aboriginal title holders and decision-makers in relation to the Project, as we rightfully should be,” said Kukpi7 Phillips.

-30-

Xats’ul First Nation is a First Nations government and is part of the larger Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation, located in the Cariboo region of British Columbia near Williams Lake. Learn more on Xats’ul First Nation’s [website](#).

Media Contact:

Please direct any media enquiries and interactions to:

Michaela Konken
Consultant, Public Relations
Coast Communications and Public Affairs
Email: michaela@coastcomms.ca
Phone: 250-320-0666