



Viewpoints: Letters / Opinions

SAY NO, PROTECT TAKU

By Chantelle Hart

March 18, 2017
Saturday AM

I am a Taku River Tlingit (TRT) woman from Atlin BC and I have lived my entire life in fear of “the mine” that might come to my home territory and cause disastrous impacts to my community and the surrounding environmental areas. Even as a young child, I lived with terror and unarticulated fury over the various investors that have come to capitalize off the Tulsequah Chief mine. First there was Redfern (later called Redcorp Ventures), and they went bankrupt – but the long and drawn out legal battles my First Nation became embroiled in was a tremendous financial sacrifice we have not yet recovered from. My people have never been able to breathe easy for long, because there is always a wolf at the door, attracted by the possibility of profit.

Chieftain Metals was the next company to try to re-open the mine, and they even went so far as to build a water treatment plant that could help with the acid drainage problem left by the original mining company six decades earlier, which stands in disuse now after Chieftain also went into receivership last year. My nation is opposed to the proposal of development in the Taku Watershed, which is the largest totally intact watershed on North America’s Pacific coast, and the region’s primary salmon producing river system. I am opposed as a TRT member, but I am not opposed to other forms of sustainable development in the area, possibilities related to tourism, or eco-friendly projects that are not designated to override the vulnerable populations and mandate of my nation.

I have watched the wolves at the door with increasing fear as I grew from childhood to adulthood and felt that my voice had been strangled from my throat, and this led me to become one of the founders of Children of the Taku, a small non-profit land protection society that was created to help give me the voice I need to advocate for the territory of my ancestors and our future generations. There will always be a big, dark shadow on the front door of my nation, sniffing around to find a way in to make money with a careless disregard for the environment around it. And I am not fooled by the BC government’s weak assurances and their misguided environmental studies – as a TRT woman who has watched from the sidelines while my land is parceled out to anyone holding a dollar sign, the BC government is smiling at the Taku River Tlingit people from under a big, shiny wolf skin.

Today, long after my grandparents and many elders from my nation have passed on after fighting the same battle I am now continuing, this issue remains contentious across borders and has stirred up a great deal of conflicting views. Despite the growing opposition, the big, bad wolf is still trying to close in on their prey, paving the way for new investors to set up shop at the Tulsequah Chief Mine site.

And I will be on the other side of the door, grimly pushing back with all my strength, drawing on the memories of my people before me and calling to action anyone who can help the Taku River Tlingit people keep the Taku Watershed from falling prey to the wolves at the door.

Chantelle Hart
Children of the Taku
Land Protection Society
Email: ChildrenoftheTaku@gmail.com
Whitehorse YT

Received March 17, 2017 - Published March 18, 2017

About: "I am a member of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, and the founder of the non-profit society Children of the Taku."