



# Indigenous peoples and historical evolution of mining in British Columbia;

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Below BC, 2020



# Historic Conflicts over Minerals



# Coal: Vancouver Island

- Kwakiutl (kwa-gul) First Nations near Fort Rupert traded with the Hudsons Bay Company and collected coal dug from exposed surface seams
- Trade ended in 1849 when British Miners came and created underground workings
- In 1850, the captain of the HMS Driver reported “*no less than 1200 tons of coal lying on the beach, collected by Indians ...*”
- In 1850 the Kwakiutl worked out agreements with the Hudson's Bay Company commonly known as the Douglas Treaties. Covered 930sqkm on Vancouver Island, which was exchanged for cash, clothing and blankets.



Kwakiutl Plank House, 1905



# Gold: Haida Gwaii

- In an 1851 government dispatch to London *“a very rich specimen of gold ore ... brought (to the HBC) by the Indians of Queen Charlotte Islands...”*
- This gold rush was started by a Haida man who sold a **27-ounce nugget** to HBC for **1,500 blankets**.
- The crew of the HBC vessel *Una* were the first to mine from the site, discovering a vein 6.5 inches wide, 80ft long and with a **25% gold content**.
- HBC started blasting, but after each blast, Haida would **rush in to gather gold**, holding the legs of the crewmen to prevent them from reaching the gold.
- Half the **gold was abandoned, along with the mine, to avoid bloodshed**.
- American ships arrived and were swarmed by Haida, crews captured and boats set fire. Crews were released after paying ransoms.
- The *Una* was **wrecked** on her return voyage off Neah bay and the gold was lost. HBC did no attempt to mine there again



# Governor Douglas and Placer Gold



- Initial gold rush of American miners (mainly from California) came into the lower Fraser Canyon in early 1858
- Governor James Douglas on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1858 noted that up to this point *"the search for gold and prospecting ... had been carried out almost exclusively by the native Indian population"*
- They *"discovered the productive beds and put out almost all the gold, about 800 ounces produced to date ..."*
- They were also *"extremely jealous of whites and strongly opposed to their digging the soil for gold"*



# Fraser River War of 1858

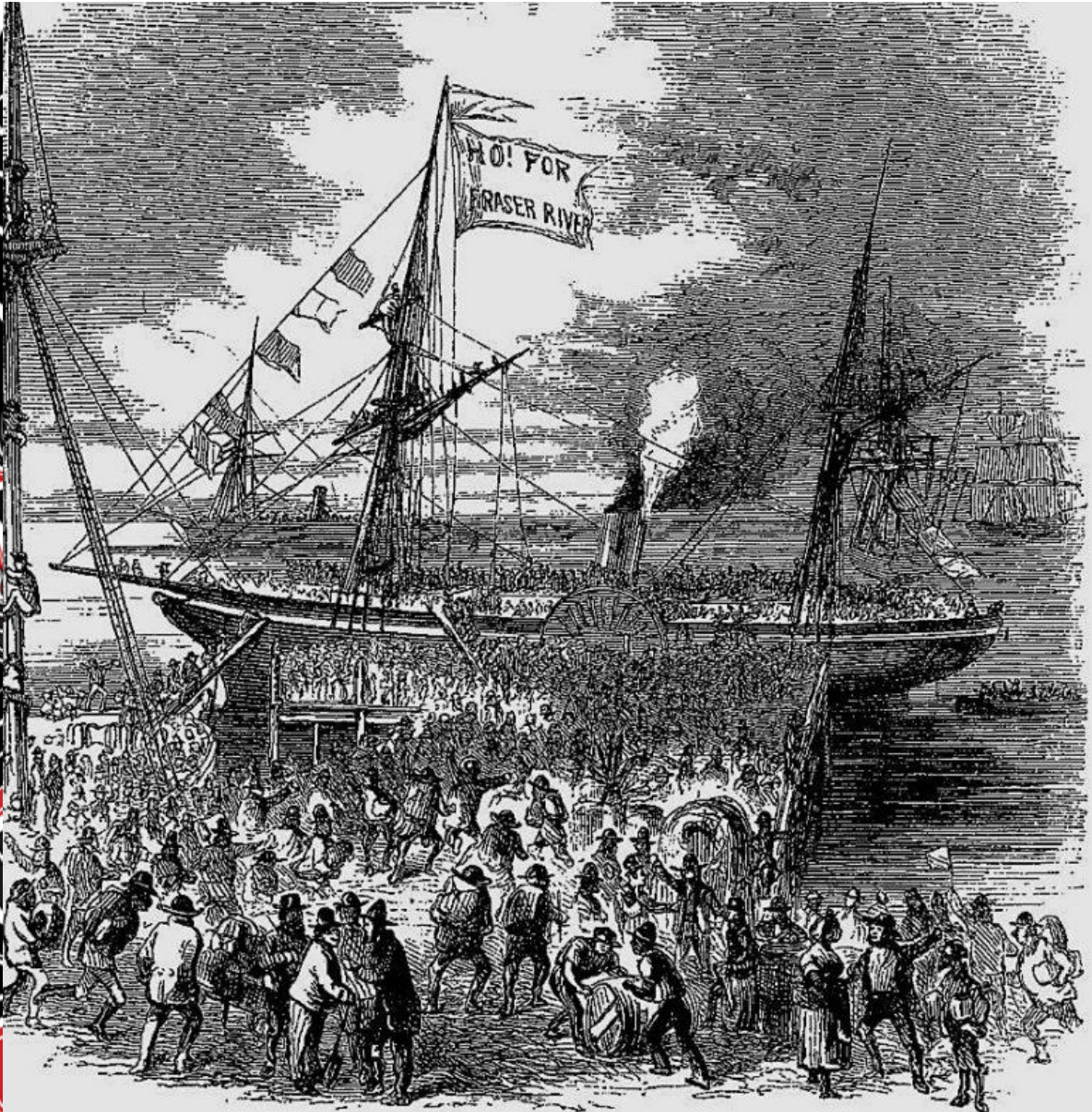


Miners sluicing for gold along the Fraser River

- Before the assertion of British sovereignty from the adjacent colony of Vancouver Island, all Indigenous lands of southern BC were invaded by large companies of miners
- The “Indian Wars” were triggered in the wake of the **Oregon Treaty of 1846** (which created the states of Washington and Oregon) and caused **sudden immigration** into the area and subsequent appropriation of Indian lands.
- This eventually extended into the Fraser Canyon area as **violent skirmishes** broke out between native population of Nlaka’pamux (*pronounced “ent-la-cap-um”*) and militias (of American miners)
- The war was precipitated when a **young native girl was raped** by a group of **French miners** at Kanaka Bar. The Nlaka’pamux retaliated by **killing several of them**, decapitating and then dumping their bodies in the river, which were eventually found **circling in a large eddy** near the town of Yale.



# Fraser River War of 1858



HO! FOR FRASER RIVER.

- The Fraser River War resulted in fatalities on both sides. *"A mass meeting at Fort Yale drew thousands of miners...who ascended the river in an organized armed reprisal ...five separate treaties with as many as two thousand Native peoples"*
- *"The final treaty at Lytton, entered into with eleven chiefs present, forced the ultimatum that if peace was not possible...the mining population of the lower Fraser would return in the thousands "and drive them from the river forever".*

*Quoted from: Daniel P. Marshall, 1996: Rickard Revisited: Native "Participation" in the Gold Discoveries of British Columbia; Native Studies Review 11, no. 1.*



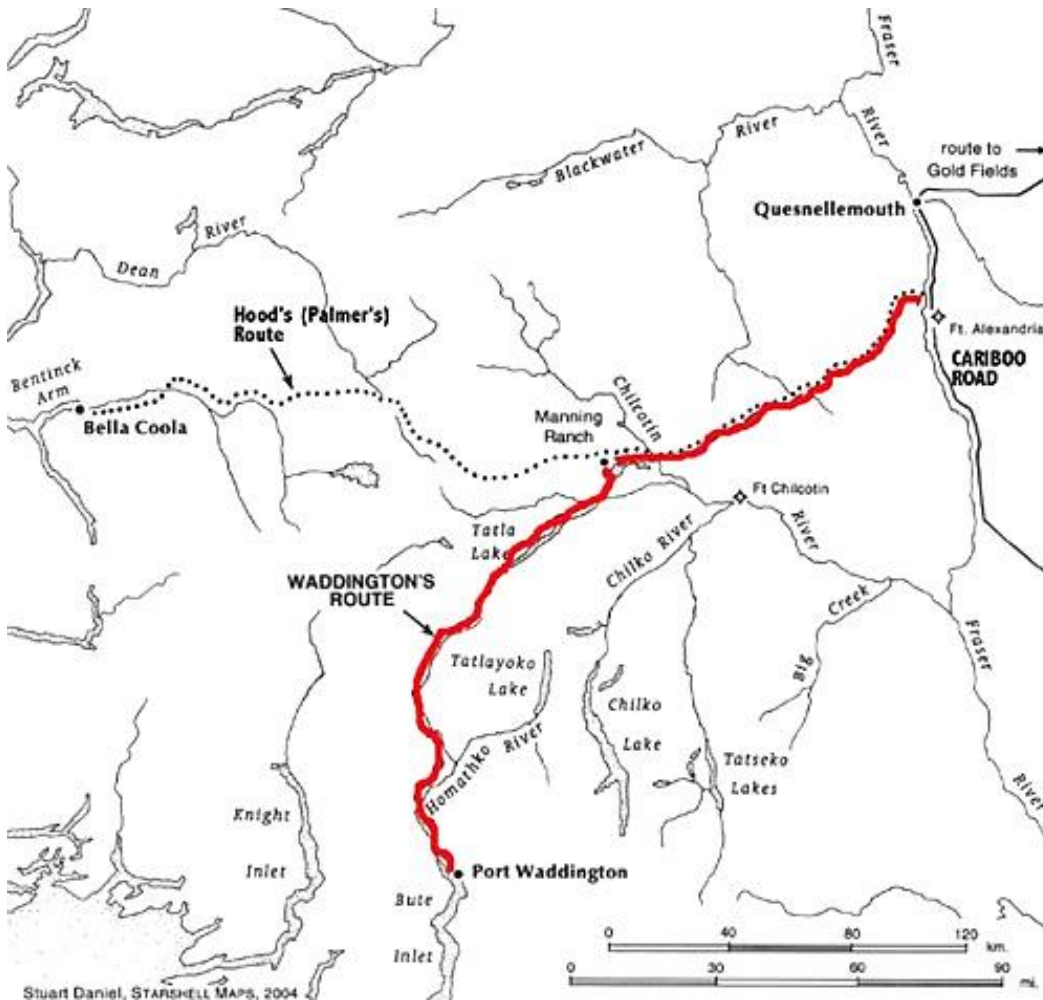


# Lac la Hache Conference 1859

- The meeting took place in Shuswap (*shoo-shwahp*) Territory in a place traditionally used for intertribal games between the Shuswap, Chilcotin (*sill-ko-teen*) and Dene (*de-ne*) First Nations
- The conference was on how to deal with the increasing number of white men approaching the region;
- Resulted in differing opinions:
  - Chief Dehtus Anaheim (Chilcotin): take action to keep white men out
  - Chief Williams (Shuswap) / Chief LooLoo (Dené): resistance is useless, we must learn to live in contact!
- No further talk of an Indian-settler war; instead trade, work-for-hire, and intermarriages took place;

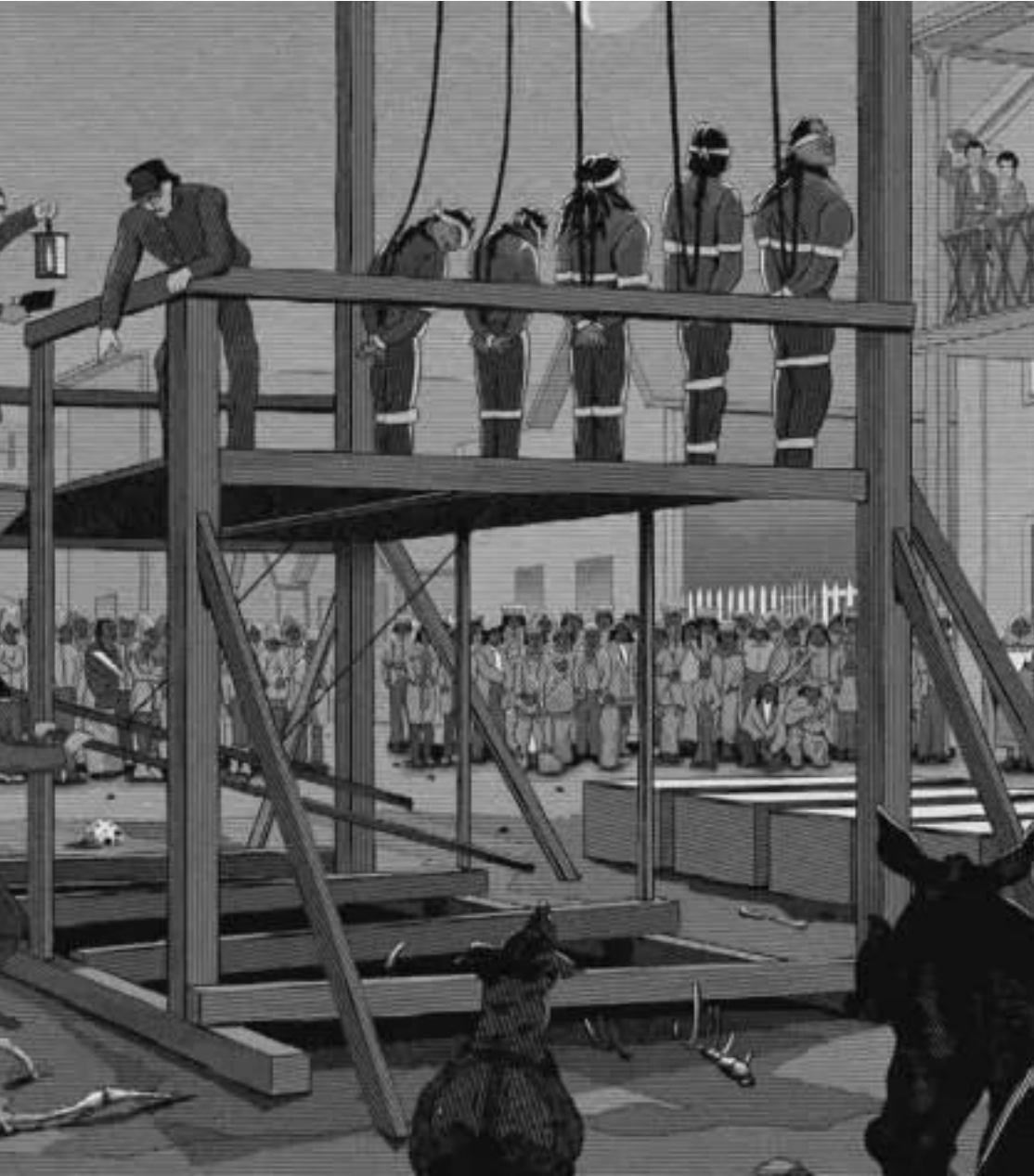


# Chilcotin War (Bute Inlet Massacre 1864)



- Background:
  - Tsilhqot'in (*sill-ko-teen*) suffered through starvation and smallpox which decimated the population by up to two-thirds in 1862-1863;
  - Alfred Waddington lobbied the press and political allies to build a wagon road from Bute Inlet to Fort Alexandria where it would connect to the Cariboo Road and the on to the gold fields at Barkerville.
  - No consultation with First Nations. Violence started on April 29<sup>th</sup> 1864 when a ferryman was killed after refusing to give food to local First Nations. He was shot, killed and dumped in the river. The food stores were looted and all but three men in the camp killed.
  - The Band then came across the road foreman and his crew, who were murdered. In all, 19 men were killed.

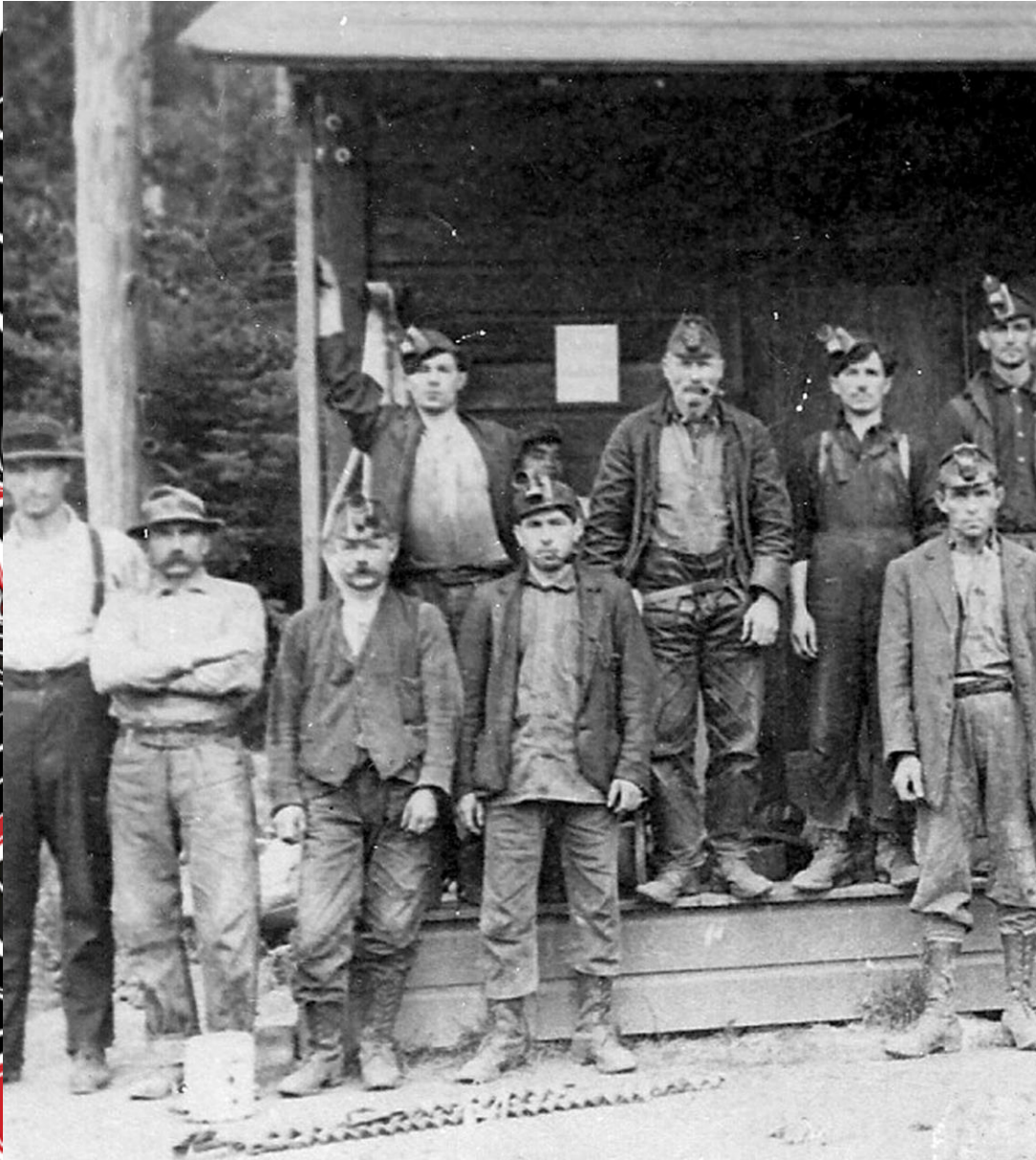
# Chilcotin War (Bute Inlet Massacre 1864)



- Chiefs met with Gold Commissioner William Cox, believing they were going for peace talks.
- They were arrested and transported to Alexandria and charged with murder.
- They protested that they were “*waging war and not committing murder*”;
- They were tried by Judge Begbie in Quesnel in September 1864, and sentenced to hang.
- Sentence was carried out on **October 26<sup>th</sup> 1864** and was one of the largest public executions in Canadian history. The day is still marked as a **Day of Mourning** by the **Tsilhqot’in** peoples
- In 2014, the Premier of British Columbia (Christy Clark) stated the following: “*We confirm without reservation that these six Tsilhqot’in chiefs are fully exonerated for any crime or wrongdoing.*”



# Great Coal strike of 1912 - Nanaimo



- Started when miners in Cumberland / Nanaimo areas **declared** a “holiday” to protest the firing of Oscar Mottishaw (the Union organizer), and following gas explosions that killed hundreds.
- In the Nanaimo area, employers tried to get **Indian** (and Chinese) workers to act as **strike-breakers**;
- On refusal, they were **blacklisted** from future employment;
- No mention of Indian coal handlers in government reports after 1912;
- Observed in 1916 that Nanaimo Reserve population was **hard-**pressed and sustained itself by subsistence fishing and casual jobs;
- Noted that mixing with coal miners had demoralizing and crushing effects on the Indian workers;



# 1858 Gold Rushes: Loss vs. Acquisition

The relationship between one resource and two different groups of people

## Indigenous Peoples

Fraser River War

Pre-emption and reserves on lands

Transfer of knowledge

Overall losses

## Colonizers

Exploit and exclude

Acquire lands

Acquiring knowledge of where minerals are found (i.e. Yakima, Thompson, Klondike, Faro, Cassiar)





# Marginalization vs. Expansion

The relationship between one resource and two different groups of people

## Indigenous Peoples

No involvement

Silent spectators

No lawyers from 1927 to 1951

Used when convenient

No vote until 1949 (&1960)

## Colonizers

Steady development of new mines, including:

Sullivan

Highland Valley

Bralorne

Keno Hill



# Moving Forwards



# Indigenous Peoples and Court Rulings



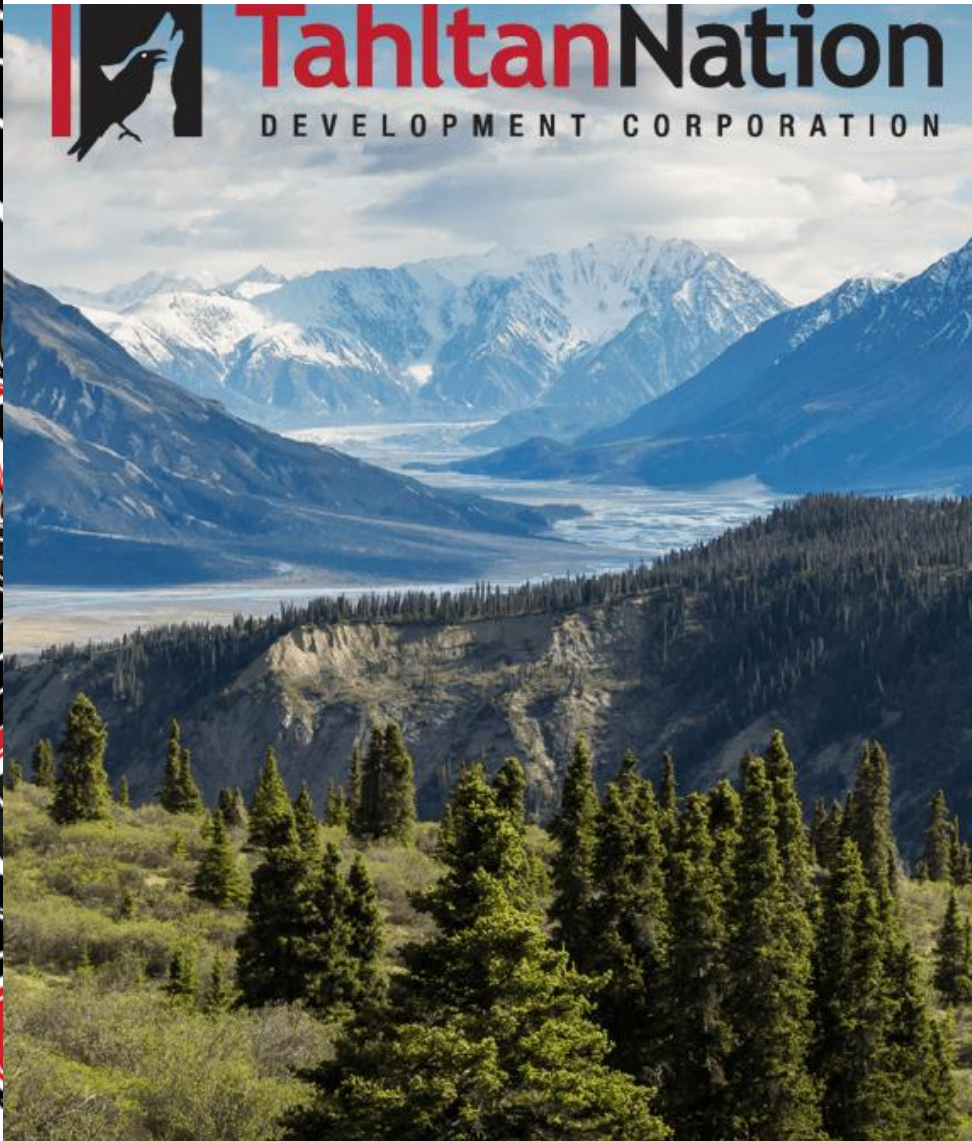
# Changing World Attitudes



- **Past:** mines had a profound economic impact, social concerns developed and communities were ignored;
- **Traditional Enclave Model:** existed with the mine dominant and the peripheral community dependent;
- **International labor Organization 169 and UN Declaration re. Indigenous Peoples:** they should benefit from extraction of resources in their territories
- **Present:** commercial success combined with environmental and social responsibility and using a sustainability model;
- **Technology is omnipresent:** capital/expertise totally mobile; Internet;



# Tahltan First Nation and Golden Bear Mine, 1988



- Tahltan (*tall-tan*) Native Development Corporation (TNDC) dealing with North American Metals Company (NORAMCO);
- Responsible for change from 98% unemployment on reserves in the winter, 65% in the summer to 5% unemployment in the winter and 0% in the summer;
- First IBA (Impact Benefit Agreement) in BC (and 5th in Canada) became a template for many other First Nations;
- One negotiation tactic: *"at one point, after some equipment was surreptitiously moved onto the mine site, Tahltan women blocked the road to the reserve thereby preventing the workers from accessing the mine site. It was announced there would be an auction for about \$1 million worth of equipment that was "...littering our reserve."*



# Basic Principles of Engagement



- Respect
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Inclusion
- Transparency
- Communication
- Sustainable Development



# AME Aboriginal Engagement Guidebook



## ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT GUIDEBOOK FOR MINERAL EXPLORERS: A Practical and Principled Approach



1. Mutually beneficial relationship based on respective rights and interests
2. Respect Indigenous rights
3. Respect asserted territories
4. Respect interests and cultures, relationships and views
5. Assist governments and accommodate Indigenous Peoples re. government decisions
6. Ensure early and timely discussions
7. Provide information needed for meaningful dialogue
8. Encourage a balance between Indigenous rights and AME BC member interests



# Map of Agreements (Mining & Indigenous Groups)





# Indigenous Inclusion: Yukon Government



- Yukon Government and 11 of the Territory First Nations vowed to work together on a “one government approach” to the Yukon Mining Sector
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at RoundUp in Vancouver on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017
- *"We had made a commitment to the mining industry and First Nations that we could bring a different approach to the [mining] industry and the sector in the Yukon," said Mines Minister Ranj Pillai. "We have a lot of trust that's just been put in us to re-set this. So we've got to get this right."*
- *"It seemed with the last government, we were almost hitting the point of divorce at times. And after a **long silent treatment**, Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government are once again **reconciling**. You have to work through the bad days in order to keep the good marriage going." (Roberta Joseph, Tr'ondek Hwech'in Chief)*