



## **KASKA NATION MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Kaska Communities Sign Historic Kaska Collaboration Agreement (KCA)**

**Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Watson Lake, Yukon – For Immediate Release**

Kaska Communities in B.C. and Yukon today celebrated the signing of the Kaska Collaboration Agreement and related documents, establishing a unified approach to resource developments within their traditional territory. The Kaska leaders were joined by Elders, community members and representatives of Government and Industry in a celebration which included a ceremonial signing, a feast, entertainment and traditional Kaska games.

Chief Jack Caesar of Ross River Dena Council said of the KCA, “The Kaska once again stand united as one people sharing one land. We want to encourage responsible development in our territory and the KCA commits us all to work together as a Nation to ensure our lands are protected. Where we agree to developments proceeding, we will ensure that Kaska people benefit from extraction of resources from our lands.”

The KCA is a comprehensive document which sets out how the Kaska communities will engage with industry and governments with respect to proposed developments in Kaska traditional territory. It includes provisions on how agreements will be negotiated, how they will be approved and how the benefits, including business employment and financial participation will be shared among the Kaska communities.

Chief Liard McMillan of Liard First Nation noted that this unified approach is something resource proponents, including mining and oil and gas companies, will welcome. “Essentially, we are creating a ‘one window – one table’ opportunity for companies seeking to operate in Kaska Territory. The KCA also creates an internal Kaska agreement to move ahead with Oil and Gas development in the far SE YT.” said Chief McMillan.

Agreements contemplated under the KCA will include mining, forestry, energy, oil and gas and pipeline projects. Kaska will be briefing Government and Industry at the ceremony and organizing private meetings with Industry and Government throughout the Fall to discuss current and future resource projects in Kaska Territory.

Chief Don Van Somer of Kwadacha First Nation said, “While we have established a path forward to collectively participate in resource developments in our territory, we will always be mindful of our sacred trust to protect our land for future generations. There will be no environmental blank cheques given to companies.”

“The Kaska have not surrendered their Aboriginal Rights and Title to lands in Yukon, BC and NWT. We have tremendous amounts of development in Kaska Territory. This can be

a great opportunity for Kaska people, but only if Government and Industry sign Agreements with us that respect our title, the environment and culture as well as our right to benefit economically from use of our resources, “said Chief Carol Ann Johnny of Dease River First Nation.

“Kaska Leadership and our communities are also sending a message with the KCA that the Nation is adamant that alienation of our lands cannot continue by those who choose to ignore our unsurrendered aboriginal title. Those companies that do respect our title are welcome to work with us in Kaska Territory and to mutually prosper for many years to come!” said Deputy Chief Peter Stone of Daylu Dena Council.

The Kaska Traditional Territory stretches south in BC to just West of Fort Nelson and to Central Eastern Yukon. There are five major communities within the Kaska Nation which include Kwadacha in Fort Ware, BC; Ross River Dena Council, Dease River First Nation based in Good Hope Lake, BC, Liard First Nation and Daylu Dena Council based in Watson Lake Yukon and Lower Post, BC. Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council are two of the three remaining Yukon based First Nations who have not negotiated a Land Claim Settlement with Canada and Yukon.

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