

# **KASKA TRIBAL COUNCIL**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

For immediate release: January 9, 2003

### **KASKA NATION CAUTIONS PROSPECTORS THAT CONSULTATION AND ACCOMMODATION ARE REQUIRED**

ROSS RIVER -- The Kaska Nation is concerned about the lack of consultation associated with the current staking rush underway in the Finlayson Lake area, north of Ross River.

The Kaska have formally recognized (but unsettled) land claims in the Finlayson Lake area and the Kaska say that the federal government has an obligation to settle those claims before they open the Kaska territory up to third party interests.

“We are concerned that the mining industry may hold some false assumptions about their ability to exploit resources in our traditional territory,” said Kaska Tribal Council Chief Hammond Dick. “While we are optimistic that following proper consultation, mining development could bring benefits to our communities, these projects cannot move forward without consultation and accommodation of Kaska interests. These are unsundered lands.”

The federal government and companies have a fiduciary duty to consult with first nations with unsettled land claims before allowing development in their territory, regardless of whether aboriginal title has been proven.

Although the Kaska prefer to resolve these issues through the negotiating process, they are also preparing legal action to protect their rights, titles and interests.

“We hold every hope that we will be able to resolve these matters efficiently, without going before the courts,” said Ross River Chief Jack Caesar. “The Kaska are not opposed to mining but we have to be involved.”

Companies with prospects in the Finlayson Lake area are invited to contact the Ross River Dena Council office.

The Kaska Nation includes five First Nations in the southeast Yukon and northern British Columbia. Their traditional territory covers about 25 per cent of the Yukon, adjacent areas of Northwest Territories and about 10 per cent of B.C. The Kaska land claims are part of the first comprehensive claim accepted by Canada under its 1973 policy.

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