

# Redfern Resources

## Gets the Go-Ahead on the Tulsequah Chief Project

1/2

By Julie Domvile

**R**edfern Resources (RFR-TSE) has climbed Mount Olympus. It has been granted the Project Approval Certificate allowing the Tulsequah Chief Project to go ahead.

It was not an easy conquest. B.C. is well recognized as having some of the most stringent standards for environmental assessment in the country and even in the world. Redfern had already been accepted for review under the B.C. Mine Development Assessment Process, but the government moved the goal posts when in 1995 they introduced the more exhaustive regulatory standards in the B.C. Environmental Assessment Act. Redfern is one of the first companies to be granted approval under the new Act and has set an industry standard.

The company spent \$8 million over 3.5 years identifying and studying environmental, technical and socio-economic issues. Open houses, public meetings, and stakeholder consultations were held in the communities of Atlin, B.C.; Whitehorse, Yukon; Skagway and Juneau, Alaska. The company opened an office in Atlin to provide residents with information and to receive community input. The community of Atlin has been supportive of the project and the company believes Atlin "made an important contribution to the company's successful review."

The Tulsequah Chief Project is located within the traditional territory of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN). Redfern and the TRTFN are working towards an Impact and Benefits Agreement which would provide TRTFN members with employment



and training opportunities. Terry Chandler, president of Redfern, says, "We are on a path now to reaching an agreement with the Taku River Tlingit First Nations. We are participating in a tri-partite discussion between the Taku River Tlingit First Nations, ourselves and the government. The government is involved because the area is under comprehensive land claims negotiations." Mr. Chandler anticipates an agreement could be in place by the fall of 1998. Redfern has hired an Aboriginal Liaison Officer and the TRTFN had a seat on the Tulsequah Chief Project Assessment Committee. "I think there is always a bit of fear about new developments and potential change, so the issue here is to make sure we have the mechanisms in place to ensure the TRTFN's way of life is not unduly changed or is changed for the better."

A project such as the Tulsequah Chief is the economic equivalent to a lifeline to the northwestern corner of B.C. and the Yukon. It is estimated that the two year construction phase

will create 365 direct jobs and 730 spin-off jobs. Mine operations will create an average of 200 jobs for a period of nine years at a per annum average wage of \$77,000. In addition, 400 jobs are expected to be created with contractors, suppliers and businesses that will benefit from the increased demand on their services. On top of all this, contracting agreements valued at over \$32 million annually for trucking, fuel supply, transportation, equipment maintenance and related services will be established.

The Tulsequah Region is not unfamiliar with boom times brought on by successful mining ventures. It was, after all, on one access route to the Klondike gold rush. References to the Chief date back to 1910. The property was staked in 1923 by the Juneau Gold Mining company. The Tulsequah Chief was successfully mined between 1951 and 1957 but, like many other operations, closed down due to low metal prices.



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Redfern Resources picked up the pieces in 1981 when it staked claims surrounding the old mine. Major drilling programs in 1987 and over the next eight years calculated a fully diluted mineable ore reserve totaling 7.6 million tonnes grading 6.63% zinc, 1.32% copper, 1.23% lead, 2.51 grams per tonne gold and 105.25 grams per tonne silver. This reserve remains open to depth and on strike, providing a strong probability of significantly increasing the planned mine life.

As the Tulsequah Chief will be an underground mining and milling operation, the entire mine development, including the 160 km access road, will affect just 500 hectares, or 1/30 of one percent of the Taku River watershed. Upon closure, all disturbed lands, including the access road, will be returned to a natural state.

The mining plan calls for potentially acid generating material from the mine operations to be separated, mixed with cement, and backfilled into the underground mine workings. The workings will subsequently be flooded to ensure oxidation and acid generation cannot occur. The 1950s mine site will be rehabilitated in the same manner.

Redfern Resources was aware from the very beginning that the people in the region had tough demands for environmentally sound development. Redfern Resources believes that "the B.C. Environmental Assessment process has helped us define a world-class project that protects the environment and achieves local priorities for social and economic development." ✕



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