



## BACKGROUND

For decades the Province of B.C. has approved coal mine developments in the Elk Valley which have been shown to impair the water quality of the Kootenay watershed.

Leadership of the Ktunaxa First Nations have expressed concerns about the cumulative effects of industrial activities in the watershed and the failure of provincial and Federal regulatory regimes to mitigate the impacts.

Ten years ago the joint councils of the KNC, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) and Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) first requested Federal action through a reference to the IJC regarding concerns for the Kootenay watershed and *ʔa-kxam̓is q̓api qapsin* (All Living Things) within it.

This spring selenium levels at the international boundary peaked at 2.4 micrograms per litre, which is three times Montana's site-specific selenium standard of 0.8 micrograms per litre.

Exceedances of this magnitude pose risk to aquatic life. In light of these risks, there is a long-standing need for Federal involvement in the non-partisan search for solutions.

The Ktunaxa First Nations and the KNC continue to support the requests made by Montana Department of Environmental Quality, CSKT and KTOI, and the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Geological Survey to have an IJC reference that evaluates and makes independent, scientifically based recommendations on the transboundary selenium contamination in this watershed.

While there has been unprecedented support from the IJC commissioners and from US Department of State, the Canadian government remains non-committal on meeting its obligations and commitments to ensure that the waters of the Kootenay watershed are healthy for the generations to come.

**The Ktunaxa First Nations stand united with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in the Ktunaxa principle of reciprocal stewardship of *ʔa-kxam̓is q̓api qapsin* and a one-river approach, irrespective of any imposed international boundary.**

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**To review the released documents:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/enSearch/detail?id=26EE74C124B8476EA280E7A3C823A2D8&recorduid=OOP-2022-21404&keyword=FOI>

*For more information regarding the IJC see:*

<https://www.state.gov/support-for-international-joint-commission-recommendations-to-address-transboundary-pollution-from-mining/>

<https://flatheadbeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IJC-Letter-to-Prime-Minister-Trudeau-and-President-Biden-RE-Selenium-Contamination-May-13-2022.pdf>

