



THE PKKP ABORIGINAL  
CORPORATION RNTBC

ICN 7638

## Message from Burchell Hayes, Chair of the PKKP Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

### **The damage is done, but our work is not – Two years on from Juukan Gorge disaster**

The second anniversary of the blasting of Juukan Gorge by Rio Tinto which destroyed the culturally significant caves and irreplaceable artefacts on our country, is a powerful reminder of the need for a meaningful overhaul of land use agreements as well as tough cultural heritage laws to prevent similar disasters.

In the wake of the Federal election, the anniversary is a sad and powerful reminder of the need for strong cultural heritage protection for all First Nations people in Australia, and around the world. It has been two incredibly painful years for our people, and PKKP has put in a lot of effort to rebuild a relationship with Rio Tinto and work with them on the remediation works at Juukan Gorge.

But the damage has been done, and there is no amount of money in the world that can bring back what was destroyed by the blasts two years ago, and all we can do now is work with governments and industry to protect our Country. Hopefully, this will in turn help deliver protection for the culturally significant places and lands of other First Nations people.

The rebuilding of PKKP's relationship with Rio Tinto is still a work in progress and moving in the right direction, as shown by the recent signing of a Non – Binding Heads of Agreement between us which sets out the principles for co-management of mining on PKKP lands.

We are in the process of building a level of trust with Rio Tinto, and the heads of agreement and progress with the remediation is a tangible sign they are, to date, committed to working with PKKP.

Co-management will give our people greater input on operational decisions which may impact our lands and create a stronger, fairer working relationship with Rio Tinto.

The Juukan Gorge disaster and the devastation it has caused to the PKKP should be in the forefront of all politicians' minds when they are considering any proposed legislation or policies that deal with the preservation of culturally significant places.

The only people who have the right to decide how their lands are treated are the people who have inhabited them for tens of thousands of years.