Globethics Repository



MiningWatch Canada / Mines Alerte Newsletter [No. 7, Autumn 2001]

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Journal volume
Authors	MiningWatch Canada
Publisher	MiningWatch Canada
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-08 23:05:47
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/184521

MiningWatch Canada
Mines Alerte

Newsletter

Number 7: Autumn 2001

Contents:

- Western Mining Activist Network Meets in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Mining's Privileged Access to Land Challenged: Bedford Mine Alert
- Save the Boreal Forest
- Kanak Chiefs from New Caledonia Tour Canada
- African Mining Activists and Researchers Meet in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
- Making Connections in Kenya
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation Invited to UN Human Rights Workshop
- Mining and Water Pollution in Canada:
  - Metal Mining Effluent Regulations
  - Toxicological Investigations into Mining Effluent
- Canadian Mining in the Philippines:
  - Placer Dome Subject of Congressional Inquiry: Ordered to Fix Dams at Former Operations
  - Crew Development Corporation's Mining Permit Revoked for Environmental and Social Reasons
- Board News

Western Mining Activist Network Meets in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Imagine a gathering of 125 mining activists from all over the western USA and Canada, environmentalists, biologists, geologists, community organisers, First Nations and Native American people, researchers and academics. The combination of creativity and determination would be phenomenal. Well, every two years, the Western Mining Activist Network (WMAN) brings together just such a diversity of people. This year, twenty-two Canadians, many of them First Nations, joined our colleagues from the US in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the beginning of November.

Prior to the conference, some participants toured the decommissioned Jackpile uranium mine in Paguate, Laguna Pueblo, just 60 miles west of Albuquerque. (It's literally ***in*** the town of Paguate, right in the middle of the village, and was once the world's largest uranium mine. Laguna Pueblo is still feeling the effects through illness and death) The focus of the conference is on sharing information and strategies, as well as networking and just having fun. Workshop topics included working with the media, tracking and targeting mining investment and corporate structures, Native/non-Native solidarity, and dealing with community divisions.

It was a rewarding experience for all involved.

If you are interested in WMAN, contact MiningWatch Canada for further information.

Mining's Privileged Access to Land Challenged: Bedford Mine Alert

Cottagers and residents of Bedford County, Ontario have found out what it means to lose the mineral rights to your property. If someone wants to prospect or develop a mine in your front yard, you are only entitled to compensation, not to stop it.

Bedford is in the Rideau Lakes area of the province about a half hour north of Kingston, near Westport. It is a mixture of local people and cottagers. Many of the cottagers have had their property for years and intend to retire there. Tourism is a major economic generator in the region.

The community, including the Mayor, is upset because a company — Graphite Mountain — has obtained some 12-year-old claims and staked a number of new ones on local properties, and wants to build a graphite mine.

All of the landowners had surrendered the subsurface rights to the Crown when they bought their properties.

They say they want two things: to stop the mine, and to change the Mining Act. They have no interest in any financial compensation for their land. Many of them have planted trees and use it recreationally. The county of South Frontenac is opposed because it thinks the mine will affect property assessment, tourism and water.

The mine will be on a lake, and the lake drains into the Tay River and from there to the Rideau Canal. The Tay is already under threat from OMYA's operation near Perth. The area is of great environmental interest (see the "OMYA in

Canada" web site, http://www.vtce.org/omyaincanada.html).

There was a graphite mine in the region previously — the Stewart Lake Mine — which had made promises of jobs and economic benefits, but closed down quite quickly and left behind only the abandoned mine, so there are no illusions about mine benefits.

The committee (Bedford Mine Alert) has 70-80 signed up members, and a strong steering committee. They have written to the Minister of Mines on a number of occasions, and many of them appealed the new claims under Section 32 of the Mining Act to the Registrar of Mines. He wrote back to them saying he would allow the mining claims and that they should negotiate with the company owner so that he might avoid mining their gardens, house or crops. They are going to appeal this decision.

The Ottawa Citizen published a story on December 17.

Save the Boreal Forest

Canada's boreal is the largest intact forest in the world. A new foundation, the Canadian Boreal Trust, has been established to coordinate research and activities to preserve this magnificent wilderness.

MiningWatch Canada has been contracted to develop a report on threats to the boreal forest posed by mining developments.

On October 19-22, MiningWatch Canada attended a gathering of environmental organizations and First Nations at Quetico Centre near Thunder Bay to discuss strategy.

Kanak Chiefs from New Caledonia Tour Canada

In October MiningWatch Canada hosted a delegation of four from New Caledonia.

Two members of the NGO Action Biosphere and two indigenous Kanak chiefs (the President and the Secretary General of the Senat Coutumier) came to Canada to better understand the nickel mine INCO is planning to build in Goro, New Caledonia and to learn from community members in Canada who have experience with existing, or proposed, INCO mines.

The delegation met with INCO officials in Toronto where they expressed frustration over the lack of information they are receiving about the project locally and the lack of effort on INCO's part to consult with indigenous Kanak leadership. They also met with members of the ethical investment community, the Anglican Church, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the media and others.

In Sudbury they established relationships with, among others, unionised workers at the INCO mine, and in Davis Inlet, Labrador they were the guests of the Innu Nation. In Ottawa the delegation met with members of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

At the end of their trip they decided to seek an independent assessment of INCO's Environmental Impact Assessment that should be released at the end of December or the beginning of January. A few days ago, while on a high-profile visit to INCO's proposed mine site, the French Overseas Minister Christian Paul was met by a delegation of Kanak villagers who presented him with a booklet of their demands and wishes. These included:

1. That the project be delayed for two years;
2. That there be an independent EIA;
3. That there be a sociological baseline study;
4. That INCO present concrete contract offers with locals for sub-contracting, etc.; and
5. That the laws be modified to give locals a right to hold the company responsible if something goes wrong.

(For more information see our backgrounder "What's Inco Doing in New Caledonia?")

African Mining Activists and Researchers Meet in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

From October 28-31, Third World Network-Africa and HAKIARDHI (the Lands and Resources Research Institute) hosted an Africa-wide strategy meeting on mining in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. The meeting concluded with a statement of principles and a strategy to ensure concerns about mining impacts are on the agenda at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio + 10) in Johannesburg in September 2002. Joan Kuyek attended on behalf of MiningWatch Canada.

Mining exploration and mine development investment in Africa have more than doubled between 1990 and 1997. The boom has caused adverse environmental, social, security and human rights effects for countries and communities that host mining projects. Incidence of community dissent against mining projects is widespread and growing in Africa. This dissent centres mainly on sharing of benefits of mining projects and environmental pollution, which together deepen the plight and poverty level of the people. This is a situation that constrains the efforts of the people towards a decent condition of life.

It is also important to note that in spite of the mining boom in Africa its role in the economic development of the continent on the whole is suspect. For instance, while the sector accounts for 60% of foreign exchange earnings; it contributes on the average less than 10% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of mineral endowed African countries and accounts for, on average, about 2% employment of the region.

The policy paper for the meeting stated: "These issues persist and get worse in many communities affected by mining in the continent because even in the face of the growing investment in the mining sector, very few African countries have in place comprehensive environmental protection and management legislation to regulate the mining industry. To most African governments, stringent environmental policies would deny them the benefits of mining and therefore ruin their hope of attracting capital for faster economic growth and development. The tendency has been that governments place high priority on capital inflows from mining but have little actual interest in environmental protection and community concerns."

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Invited to UN Human Rights Workshop

Delegation invited to United Nations workshop

By Kenora Miner and News Staff – December 5, 2001

A delegation from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation is in Geneva, Switzerland, attending a workshop hosted by the United Nation's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The workshop which runs Dec. 5 & 7 is being attended by indigenous peoples, private sector natural resource, energy and mining companies. The purpose of the workshop is to gather information from around the world about resource development issues and how they impact on indigenous peoples and human rights. The Nishnawbe Aski Nation makes its presentation on Friday.

It was chosen as one of the four case studies from around the world. The other case studies focus on forestry in South Africa, mining in the Philippines and mining in Ecuador.

The members of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation delegation are Deputy Grand Chief Raymond Ferris, land resources co-ordinator Evelyn Baxter Robinson, Elder John White and Chief Dwight Sutherland of New Post First Nation.

"We are very pleased and surprised that Nishnawbe Aski Nation was chosen as a case study from so many other areas of the world. It is a great honour to be attending such an event, and we look forward to the discussion we will be having with the participants. Hopefully, some worthwhile recommendations or results will ultimately come out of the process," said Ferris.

The workshop's objective is to contribute to ongoing the UN working group's examination of the activities of transnational corporations, with an eye to develop human right guidelines for these companies. The working group is preparing for a World Summit on Sustainable Development slated for September, 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation was asked to prepare a paper outlining resource development activities and indigenous rights issues in keeping with the theme of the workshop.

"The workshop is especially timely since the Nishnawbe Aski Nation chiefs passed resolutions directing the Nishnawbe Aski Nation organization to find ways to take our peoples' issues to the international level in light of the lack of adequate results and recognition we are getting in Canada," said Ferris.

Making Connections in Kenya

On November 4-7, Joan Kuyek was in Kenya as a guest of Action Aid Kenya and the Coast Rights Forum. She made presentations on Canadian Mining Law and Regulation in Mombasa and in Nairobi, and visited with farmers in Kwale who are fighting their relocation to make room for a titanium mine owned by Tiomin Resources of Canada.

The mine will damage the Tiwi aquifer which supplies water for the region, displace farmers and destroy their cashew trees they have planted, and jeopardize the coral reefs at Shimoni. At present there is an injunction in place holding up development of the mine.

[See "Canadian Resources Company Creating Conflict in Eastern Kenya" on our web site.]



Frank Mutua with other farmers (Kwale, Kenya) – J. Kuyek photo

Mining and Water Pollution in Canada

There is growing public concern about the condition of fresh water in Canada. Mining affects fresh water through heavy use of water in processing ore, and through water pollution from discharged mine effluent and seepage from tailings and waste rock impoundments. There are various regulatory and voluntary efforts underway to deal with the problem of water pollution from mining.

Metal Mining Effluent Regulations: On July 28, 2001, the proposed Metal Mining Effluent Regulation (MMER) was posted on Canada Gazette Part I, for a 60-day comment period, ending September 26, 2001. The MMERs are an attempt to update the Metal Mining Liquid Effluent Regulations, which were promulgated under the Fisheries Act in 1977.

Among others things, the MMERs regulate the levels of metals and suspended solids in mine effluent. MiningWatch Canada has submitted comments on the proposed regulations, as well as a public statement.

[See "Feds Fall Short on New Regulations to Protect Water from Mine Toxins" on our web site.]

***Toxicological Investigations into Mining Effluent*:** In late 1999 the TIME Network was formed to address toxicological issues related to the proposed MMER. TIME is a multi-stakeholder (Government, industry and non-governmental organisations) effort to consolidate existing research on mine effluent toxicity and to propose and carry out research into areas that are not yet well understood.

TIME also aims to develop methodologies to reduce or eliminate toxicants and to provide a mechanism for information dissemination. Catherine Coumans attended the most recent meeting of TIME on November 22-23, 2001. She reports that it is clear that new provisions under the MMERs are driving scientific and technological efforts to achieve non-acutely lethal effluent for Rainbow Trout (as mandated) and to reduce the acute lethality of effluent for water fleas (***Daphnia Magna***), which must now be monitored and reported.

Canadian Mining in the Philippines:

In early October, Catherine Coumans visited the Philippines to work with three partner communities. We report on two issues: Placer Dome's responsibility for the perilous situation in Marinduque, and Crew Development Corporation's efforts to establish a nickel mine in Mindoro despite determined local opposition.

Placer Dome Subject of Congressional Inquiry: Ordered to Fix Dams at Former Operations

On October 3, Catherine went with a delegation of elected officials from mining-affected municipalities in Marinduque to visit Ian Lewis, President of Placer Dome's subsidiary (PDTS) in Manila. The three main topics of discussion were: 1) lack of progress on the clean-up of the 1996 tailings spill into the Boac River, 2) another request for a copy of a report by consultants Klohn Crippen on the status of dams and structures at the Marcopper mine site, and 3) the need for compensation for fishermen from the municipality of Mogpog who were affected by the 1996 spill of mine tailings into the Boac River and nearby coastal areas.

Lewis told the delegation that despite strong opposition by Marinduqueños to Placer Dome's plan to dump the spilled tailings into the sea as "Submarine Tailings Disposal" (STD), PDI is again considering using this option. An Environmental Compliance Certificate for STD, which had been cancelled in January by the new Arroyo administration, had mysteriously been hand-delivered to the PDTS office.

Lewis agreed that Placer Dome had commissioned and paid for the Klohn Crippen report, but again refused to provide a copy. Lewis also stated that no compensation would be given to fishermen affected by the 1996 spill outside the municipality of Boac.

On October 9, 2001, Congressman Edmund Reyes of the Island of Marinduque called a Congressional Inquiry to address these and other ongoing concerns related to Placer Dome's history of mining on the island.

The evening before the Congressional Inquiry, a letter by Vancouver engineering firm Klohn Crippen was leaked to Congressman Reyes. This letter warns of imminent danger of collapse of two of four mine structures, and notes the need for extensive repairs to two other structures. The letter expresses concern for potential loss of life when the mine top structures collapse releasing tons of toxic waste on to nearby lower-lying villages.

On October 18 the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources threatened Placer Dome, PDTS and Marcopper (the firm Placer Dome divested to in 1997) with criminal prosecution if they do not carry out the 35 recommendations in the Klohn Crippen report. The work was to start November 1. To date Placer Dome has not acted on this order.

Crew Development Corporation's Mining Permit Revoked for Environmental and Social Reasons

On October 5, Catherine spoke at a symposium organized by local villagers, NGOs, government officials and clergy on the island of Mindoro in the Philippines. These Mindoreños oppose the plans of Canada's Crew Development Corporation to mine nickel high in the mountains on their island, and to dump the waste into the sea ("Submarine Tailings Disposal").

Earlier this year the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had revoked Crew's permit to mine on the basis of social unacceptability and the need to protect critical watersheds, among other reasons. This is believed to be the first time a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement has been revoked in the Philippines.

Supported ***in person*** by the Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines, Crew appealed directly to the Office of the Philippine President. On November 1, however, President Macapagal Arroyo upheld the decision of the DENR saying, among other things, that mining should only proceed if it is supported by the local community.

Board news

The MiningWatch Canada Board of Directors met in Ottawa on October 12-15 to evaluate progress to date and to talk about strategy for the coming year.

The Board welcomes new members Lorraine Michael and Evelyn Baxter Robinson. From St. John's, Newfoundland, Lorraine is Executive Director of Women in Resource Development, and served as the Innu nominee on the ground-breaking Voisey's Bay Environmental Assessment Panel. Evelyn is a Nishnawbe lawyer working as Lands and Resources Coordinator for Nishnawbe Aski Nation in northern Ontario.

The date for the Annual Meeting has been set for March 3, 2002 in Vancouver.

Work for the coming year be focused on national network development, abandoned mines and the full costs of mining. We will also continue to support the Global Network of Communities Affected by Mining.



Village in Kwale, Kenya in Tiomin concession area – J. Kuyek photo