



# Annual Report 2023

Santurbán páramo in Colombia, a vital water source that communities are fighting to protect from mining. (Photo: Viviana Herrera)

## Highlights of 2023

### International Campaigns:

#### ***Holding government and industry accountable for mining abuses abroad***

##### **Demanding a commitment from Canada to protect the deep seabed**

This year, international negotiations advanced to open the deep seabed to industrial mining for the first time in history. In January, we released [undercover footage](#) and testimonies from scientists aboard a ship conducting large-scale collector tests for The Metals Company and Allseas, [exposing](#) unreported waste dumping and flawed monitoring. At the IMPAC5 global oceans conference in Vancouver, we responded to Canada's lukewarm promises for ocean protection with [calls for a commitment not to mine the deep seabed](#). Despite growing international momentum for a moratorium, Canada continues to push forward regulations at the International Seabed Authority to allow for mining as early as 2025. As a leading voice in Canadian media on this issue, we will [keep pressuring Canada](#) for decisive action to protect the high seas, insisting on a full commitment to a moratorium before it's too late.

##### **Calling for the release of jailed water defenders in El Salvador**

In January, five water defenders colloquially known as the "Santa Marta 5" were arbitrarily detained and arrested in El Salvador. All five have long championed water protection and played key roles in El Salvador's historic 2017 decision to ban mining. They face trumped-up charges dating back to the country's armed conflict over 30 years ago. Social movements in El Salvador denounce their arrests violate the Peace Accords and are politically-motivated, coming at a time when the country looks to overturn the ban on mining. We helped coordinate an [international week of action](#) calling for their release.

##### **Reporting on forced evictions at Barrick's North Mara mine in Tanzania**

We released a [comprehensive report](#) documenting severe human rights violations at Barrick Gold's North Mara Gold Mine in Tanzania, based on extensive in-person interviews conducted with affected Kuria families around the mine site in October and November. The report exposes the forced eviction of thousands of Indigenous Kuria to make way for mine expansion, resulting in homelessness, food insecurity, and many

other significant mental and physical health impacts. Despite our [prior warnings](#) to Barrick about the high risk of human rights violations, the company's staunch denial is perpetuating harm to affected families and putting others at risk as the mine expands. Successful media coverage of our [report launch](#) and follow-up is helping keep this on the radar.

##### **Providing access to risk analysis for Barrick's expansion in the Dominican Republic**

After months of seeking access to Barrick Gold's Environmental and Social Impact Assessment for the Pueblo Viejo gold mine expansion, we [enlisted](#) dam safety expert Dr. Steven Emerman to conduct an [independent review](#). His review revealed extreme and unreported risks linked to the El Naranjo Tailings Storage Facility (TSF), proposed to store nearly 645 million cubic metres of tailings and potentially acid generating waste rock in an area of nearly 16 square kilometres. The TSF would be built in a flood-prone and seismically active area and would rely on a 48-storey tall dam, requiring close monitoring and care generations after operations ceased. We published Dr. Emerman's 65-page review in [Spanish](#) and [English](#), making it accessible to local communities as they demand transparency from Barrick.

##### **Looking internationally for justice for the murder of Mexican leader, Mariano Abarca**

Since 2018, we have pursued every legal avenue in Canada to get the Canadian Embassy in Mexico investigated for endangering the life of Mariano Abarca – a Mexican environmental defender killed in 2009 while speaking out against the Canadian company Blackfire Exploration. When the Supreme Court of Canada [denied our leave to appeal](#) in January, we supported Mariano's family in [lodging a landmark petition](#) with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against Canada, a first of its kind to challenge the harm caused by Canada's approach to economic diplomacy. Inviting [José Luis Abarca](#) (Mariano's son) to Canada, we strategically utilized his visit to spotlight Canada's failure to address corporate abuse, even as it vies for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. We amplified this issue through a bilingual [webinar](#), looking towards next steps for justice for Mariano.

## **Regulatory effectiveness: Strengthening laws that uphold environmental, social & economic standards**

### **Challenging clawbacks to the federal Impact Assessment Act**

In March, we [headed to the Supreme Court of Canada](#) as intervenors to defend the federal Impact Assessment Act (IAA), which the Alberta Court of Appeal found unconstitutional last year. Weak as it may be, the IAA continues to be one of Canada's most fundamental environmental laws and the primary tool for assessing major environmental and social impacts of large projects such as mines, providing important oversight and public access that provincial assessments do not. Disappointingly, the Court ruled in October that the IAA overstepped federal authority, and we will be advocating to improve the amendments introduced as part of the 2024 omnibus federal budget implementation bill.

### **Advocating for mining reform in Quebec**

In response to years of advocacy, the Quebec government initiated a public consultation in 2023 to review its laws and policies governing mining. With little notice, we mobilized to support residents in attending consultations across the province, offering model questions and our own [brief](#) to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests (MNRF). Our brief included sixty recommendations, urging reforms including obtaining consent before mining claims are issued, establishing mechanisms to revoke existing claims, adopting binding standards, and more. We [challenged the MNRF](#) in June when it announced its 2023-2027 strategic plan prior to the publication of public consultation results. In October, when the [consultation results were published](#), Indigenous nations, civil society, and municipalities made clear the need for ambitious and comprehensive reform, setting the stage for significant battles in 2024 when we expect a bill to be presented to reform the Mining Act.

### **Supporting Gitxaala and Ehattesaht First Nations' challenge to Free Entry**

The Gitxaala and Ehattesaht First Nations took the decades-long struggle against "free entry" mining to a new level by challenging British Columbia's Mineral Tenure Act in court as a violation of their sovereignty. The province committed to modernize this colonial-era law under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) but has yet to do so. MiningWatch intervened in support of Gitxaala alongside several of our BC Mining Law Reform network partners. In September, the court ruled that the province must reform its free entry mineral claim system within 18 months to meet the Canadian Constitution's Section 35 consultation requirements – but not the UNDRIP standard of consent. We [applauded the commitment](#) to mining reform, but stand by the Nations in their ongoing struggle.

### **Testifying before Parliament on the need for binding accountability mechanisms**

In February, we addressed the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade on environmental and human rights abuses linked to Canadian mining firms. Our [testimony](#) and [accompanying brief](#) underscored how harm caused or contributed to by Canadian mining companies and their subsidiaries and contractors overseas is widespread and persistent globally – and includes environmental degradation that will persist for hundreds of years, a wide range of human rights violations, abuses of Indigenous rights, and adverse economic impacts. We urgently called on Canada to strengthen judicial and non-judicial accountability mechanisms, including adopting mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation.

## **Movement building and community support: Working in solidarity to effect change**

### **Mapping the mining boom and advocating for local decision-making power**

A jaw-dropping eleven percent of the entire province of Quebec is currently staked by mineral claims. We continued our work this year alongside the Coalition Québec meilleure mine to map the mining boom currently underway, highlighting the most-claimed region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which has seen a 45% increase in claims. We supported [ten municipalities](#) to create a province-wide movement to advocate for stronger municipal powers to define no-go zones for mining – "territories incompatible with mining activity" – to better protect water, biodiversity, and local populations.

### **Advocating that Ecuadorians be consulted on a trade deal**

When Canada announced it was intending to advance negotiations with Ecuador to secure a Free Trade Agreement, we submitted a [brief](#) as part of civil society consultations. We amplified concerns from our Ecuadorian partners – who were excluded from consultations – warning that a

trade deal will only increase Canadian mining investment when [existing investment](#) is already fuelling social division, conflict, and police violence. We coordinated [an open letter](#) from Ecuadorian organizations denouncing the upcoming trade deal, prompting other Canadian organizations to make their own submissions underscoring these demands.

### **Facilitating a regional exchange of women defending water in Colombia and Ecuador**

We helped coordinate a 7-day regional exchange between women-led agroecology schools from the Kimsakocha páramo in Ecuador and the Santurbán páramo in Colombia, two areas where women are defending páramos – fragile high-altitude wetlands – from the threat of Canadian mining projects. Held in Colombia, the women shared experiences using agroecology techniques to manage and care for the land that sustains them and shared knowledge about the intricacies of the páramo ecosystem. The exchange helped strengthen a regional movement for water protection in the face of mining, leading to the production of several blogs and a [podcast series](#) to amplify key reflections from the exchange with other communities in Colombia and Ecuador.

# Communications & advocacy:

## Getting the word out, reinforcing credibility, ensuring relevance

### Publishing a practical how-to guide for protecting water from mining

Together with Eau Secours and the Coalition Québec meilleure mine, MiningWatch published a first-of-its-kind guide addressing the impacts of mining activities on water, designed specifically to support collective action. With nearly 60% of the province's 338,000 active mining claims overlapping with lakes and rivers, the guide aims to empower the public with knowledge about their rights in the face of expanding mining operations. Accessible in both [French](#) and [English](#), the 50-page guide outlines key mining activities, associated water risks and mitigation measures, related laws, and provides practical steps for communities to protect water at any stage of mining development. Already, over a hundred copies have been printed and distributed across the province to mining-affected communities and allied organizations.

### Informing the UN Special Rapporteur about mining impacts on water

Ahead of the official visit to Canada by Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, we produced a [brief](#) about the abuses committed by mining companies in Canada and by Canadian mining companies overseas. We highlighted key impacts like contamination of surface and ground water from toxic spills and reduced water supply, using emblematic examples in Canada and abroad such as Quebec Iron Ore's dumping of mine waste into Lac Bloom, ongoing environmental contamination from the

abandoned Tulsequah Chief Mine in northern BC, and Baru Gold's efforts to turn the tiny island of Sangihe in Indonesia into an open-pit gold mine. We provided recommendations for action, including requirements for community consent, legal reforms to better determine "no go zones" for mining, meaningful accountability mechanisms, and better protection for the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

### Highlighting Canada's corporate accountability problem at the UN

Canada was in the spotlight this year at the United Nations as it underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the UN Human Rights Council. Ahead of the review, we supported the Justice and Corporate Accountability Project (JCAP) in [making a submission](#) drawing on five well-documented case studies from Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Ecuador to illustrate Canada's diplomatic approach to mining conflicts abroad – a [submission that was endorsed](#) by 27 Canadian civil society organizations and 39 professors, lawyers, and legal scholars. Despite persistent allegations of abuse tied to Canadian mining companies abroad, Canada had little to say in its country report about how it is addressing serious gaps in corporate accountability. The UPR will review Canada's compliance with its human rights commitments and make specific recommendations, with the onus on Canada to implement changes when the UN concludes its review in 2024.

#### Members in 2023

1. Alternatives North
2. Bathurst Sustainable Development
3. Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)
4. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)
5. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
6. Development and Peace
7. Friends of the Earth Canada
8. Friends of the Stikine Society
9. Innu Nation
10. Inter Pares
11. Kairos - Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
12. Mixedwood Forest Society
13. Nature Canada
14. Northwatch
15. Ontario Public Service Employees Union) Social Justice Fund
16. Polaris Institute
17. Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
18. Quebec Native Women
19. Rivers Without Borders
20. Sierra Club of Canada
21. Steelworkers Humanity Fund
22. Unifor Social Justice Fund
23. United Church of Canada
24. Watershed Sentinel Educational Society
25. Yukon Conservation Society (YCS)

#### Board of Directors in 2023

Co-chairs: Elysia Petrone Reitberger, Thunder Bay, Ontario  
Donna Ashamock, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug  
Alexandra Pedersen, Kingston, Ontario  
Treasurer: Jean Symes, Ottawa, Ontario  
Secretary: Esperanza Moreno, Montreal, Québec  
Directors: Natalie Clifford, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Justin Connidis, Kingston, Ontario  
Tracy Glynn, Fredericton, New Brunswick  
Blaine Grinder, Tl'etinqox, British Columbia  
Tara Lamothe, Victoria, British Columbia  
Isabelle Ménard, Montréal, Québec  
Hilu Tagoona, Baker Lake, Nunavut

#### Staff in 2023

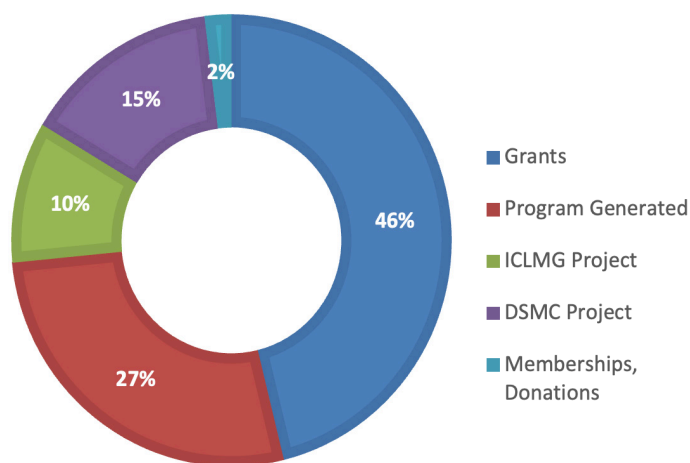
Catherine Coumans, Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator  
Val Croft, Communications Coordinator  
Viviana Herrera, Latin America Program Coordinator  
Alexandra Kazakova, Fundraising & Operations Coordinator  
(Interim)  
Jamie Kneen, Canada Program Co-Lead  
Diana Martin, Fundraising & Operations Coordinator  
Rodrigue Turgeon, Canada Program Co-Lead

## MININGWATCH CANADA / MINES ALERTE CANADA

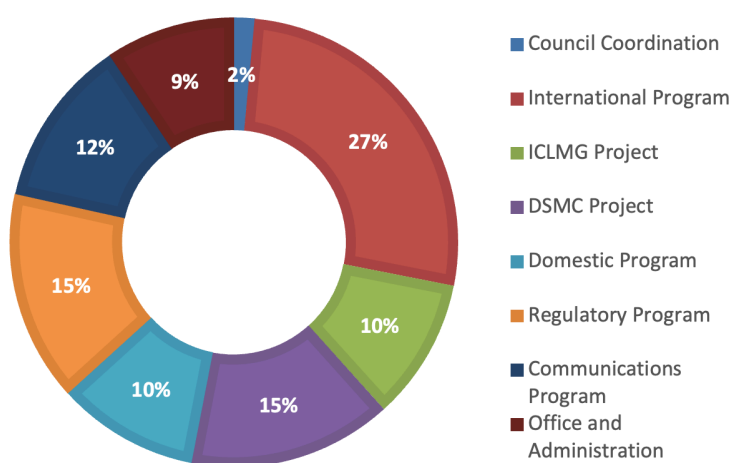
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2023

	2023	2022
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$ 760,439	\$ 543,916
Short-term investments	-	118,298
Accounts receivable	179,332	19,848
Due from Canary Research Institute	110,580	173,279
Prepaid expenses	9,413	14,277
	1,059,764	869,618
<b>CAPITAL ASSETS</b>		
	5,812	4,935
	\$ 1,065,576	\$ 874,553
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 39,115	\$ 68,748
Government remittances payable	20,802	17,632
Deferred revenue	655,247	463,622
	715,164	550,002
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Reserve fund - internally restricted	218,123	213,123
Legal fund - internally restricted	25,000	25,000
Unrestricted net assets	107,289	86,428
	350,412	324,551
	\$ 1,065,576	\$ 874,553

#### TOTAL REVENUE \$1,323,642



#### TOTAL EXPENSES \$1,297,781



(Please note that the audited financial statements are available on request.)

#### MiningWatch is thankful for support from the following organizations:

The 11th Hour Project of The Schmidt Family Foundation  
 Canadian Union of Public Employees  
 Echo Foundation  
 Fidelity Gift Fund  
 Ford Foundation  
 Global Greengrants Fund

Inter Pares  
 Ontario Public Service Employees Union  
 Primate's World Relief and Development Fund  
 Public Service Alliance of Canada  
 United Church of Canada  
 Western Organization of Resource Councils Education Project

4 Florence St., Suite 210  
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2P 0W7  
 +1 (613) 569-3439 – info@miningwatch.ca – www.miningwatch.ca – @miningwatch