



MiningWatch Canada

Mines Alerte

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July 24, 2007

Dear Mr. Naichap,

Thank you for your letter dated July 19th, 2007. It provides me with the opportunity to further clarify the work of MiningWatch Canada, and to respond to some of the important issues that you have raised.

MiningWatch Canada is a small non-governmental organization based in Ottawa. We engage in research and advocacy, and offer a space for critical information on mining, both in Canada and internationally, to be disseminated. We advocate for responsible mining, and as we have previously noted, have not transferred funding to any groups in Ecuador. Neither do we promote violence or criminal action.

MiningWatch Canada does not search out new mine proposals to target and campaign around. Instead, we respond to the needs and questions of people who are concerned about and directly affected by mining projects proposed by Canadian companies. In the case of Ecuador, we are aware that there are large numbers of people mobilizing against metal mining.

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the national Indigenous federation in Ecuador, recently released a bulletin stating that Luis Macas, president of CONAIE, “directed the national and international citizenry to reject the threats of the oil, mining and logging companies, and the colonization of the ancestral lands of the Indigenous nationalities of Ecuador.”¹

We are not responsible, in any way, for the fact that Corriente Resources had its permit for the Mirador project revoked. The responsibility for this would lie with Ecuadorian government, the local municipalities, and engaged citizens, including Indigenous people,

¹ CONAIE (2007. July 6). Caminata de la nacionalidad Awa, por la dignidad, por la vida y por la defensa de sus territorios y recursos naturales. Retrieved July 23, 2007 from http://conaie.org/es/ge_comunicados/co20070706.html.

who have peacefully protested against Corriente Resources in Ecuador, and demanded that the government revoke its permission to operate.

The role that MiningWatch Canada has played, and that we will continue to play in the actions challenging mining in Southeast Ecuador, is that of a peripheral observer and commentator. It should be – and should forever remain – in the hands of the citizens of Southeast Ecuador to decide what kind of development they choose.

You are misinformed about the benefits that mining has brought to Indigenous people in Canada. Until recently, Indigenous people received no benefits at all from mining on their traditional territories. Over the last one hundred years, huge mining and smelting operations, such as those in Sudbury (Ontario), Rouyn-Noranda (Quebec), Trail (British Columbia), Flin Flon (Manitoba) and Timmins (Ontario), displaced Indigenous peoples and destroyed their lands and waters, with no compensation whatsoever. More recently, based on comprehensive land claim agreements and legal recognition of their Constitutionally protected aboriginal rights by the Supreme Court of Canada, some Aboriginal peoples have been able to assert their rights when new mines are proposed, and been able to gain a number of benefits from mining companies through negotiated settlements.

The mine you visited in Canada is a new mine, where the First Nation has been able to influence its environmental and economic impacts. It is too bad that you were not able to meet with other First Nations who have not been so fortunate. The Tse Keh Nay people in northern British Columbia are strongly opposing a new mine called Kemess North, because it will destroy a pristine alpine lake and will not bring enough benefits to their people to compensate for its loss. The Iskut First Nation is opposing the Red Chris and Klappan mines because they will destroy the land they call their “bread basket”.

For a more balanced perspective, during your visit to Canada, you would have heard about the tough negotiations that were required for Indigenous people to win meaningful concessions from mining companies when the community decides to proceed with mining development. You would also have heard about what happens when the mine is closed, and only the wastes are left behind.

You are also wrong about the taxes paid by mining companies to governments. In Canada, there are provincial and federal taxes. The last year that all these taxes were totaled was in 1997, and at that time, all mining taxes paid to provincial and federal governments by mining companies was only \$127 million. Canadian mining companies certainly do not pay “billions of dollars” in taxes in Latin America.

Mining in Canada directly employs less than 24,000 people. The greater number of jobs is in value-added industry (smelters, refineries and manufacturing) and in the supply and services sector. It is only in the past few years that the mining industry has been hiring more Indigenous people in response to a general labour shortage as well as demands made in pre-development negotiations.

It is precisely because we are so concerned about long-term poverty that we advocate so strongly for responsible mining practices: mines that will not destroy more sustainable livelihoods, that will share revenues with affected people, and that will not damage the waters and land on which those people depend. We advocate for the right of all people to free prior and informed consent, with a collective right to veto, when mining projects are proposed on their lands.

Mines are projects with a short-term life and long-term consequences. It is up to the affected communities to decide whether the benefits being offered are real and whether those benefits are worth the ecological, economic, and social costs that can reasonably be predicted; again such decisions must be freely made and fully informed.

We have not taken any legal action against your community or your organization, although the unfounded accusations and false statements contained in your letters are defamatory and malicious in intent.

Attentively,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joan Kuyek". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Joan Kuyek
National Coordinator,
MiningWatch Canada