



Report

MiningWatch Canada, Eau Secours, and the David Suzuki Foundation visited Matimekush-Lac John and Kawawachikamach to provide independent information and listen to local concerns regarding Torngat Metals' Strange Lake rare earths mining project.

June 2026



Summary

At the invitation of Kamamuit Papakassik^u (“the Assembly” of Papakassik, the Master of the Caribou), a delegation visited the Innu community of Matimekush–Lac John and the Naskapi community of Kawawachikamach to provide independent information about the Strange Lake mining project being developed by Torngat Metals. The delegation was made up of hunters and custodians of Nitassinan – the territory of the Innu Nation – as well as representatives from MiningWatch Canada, Eau Secours, and the David Suzuki Foundation. The information and solidarity tour was coordinated by the Takuaimatishun Applied Research Laboratory.

This brief report-back contains:

- Summaries of the information sessions and other meetings held;
- General findings from conversations and observations on-site;
- Links to recordings and the content presented.

The representatives from the organizations on the tour include:

- **Rodrigue Turgeon**, Canada Program Co-Lead for MiningWatch Canada and a lawyer;
- **Émile Cloutier-Brassard**, mining issues coordinator at Eau Secours;
- **Albert Lalonde**, lawyer and researcher working simultaneously for the David Suzuki Foundation and the Takuaimatishun Research Laboratory.

The following local representatives also participated in all tour activities:

- **Noël André**, hunter and spokesperson for Kamamuit Papakassik^u, an expert on the territory;
- **Donat Jean-Pierre**, member of Kamamuit Papakassik^u and interpreter for Innu-Aimun;
- **Johanne Roussy**, representative of Sept-Îles Sans Uranium (Sept-Îles Free of Uranium) – a leading organization in the region’s struggles against radioactive activities.



Photo: Matimekush—Lac John ©Johanne Roussy

Information and Discussion Session on June 5, 2026

Matimekush—Lac John

On June 5, 2026, at the Kanatamat School in Matimekush—Lac John, Noël André, Émile Cloutier-Brassard, Rodrigue Turgeon, and Albert Lalonde held an information session and led a discussion on the development and impacts of the Strange Lake mining project. The evening provided an opportunity to discuss the project's history, its technical parameters, foreseeable impacts, and the links between project developer Torngat Metals and the Trump Administration and military. It was also an opportunity to examine the legislative, political, and geopolitical forces supporting the project's development over the rights of Indigenous peoples, local communities, and the environment. The session concluded with a brief presentation on potential avenues for upholding the Innu legal system and opened space for remarks from community members – particularly elders. Simultaneous translation into Innu-Aimun was provided by members of Kamamuit Papakassik^u. Representatives from *Sept-Îles Sans Uranium* (Sept-Îles Free of Uranium) further contributed to the discussion with additional information and insight.



In-person attendance: 60 people



**Online audience (Facebook Live):
50 - 80 people**

Public Meeting on June 6, 2026

Matimekush–Lac John

On June 6, 2026, also at Kanatamat School in Matimekush–Lac John, the public was invited to build on the previous day's discussion about the mining project and foster more participatory dialogue. This second session was not streamed online in order to foster transparent dialogue and the honest sharing of diverse experiences. This space allowed the organizations to learn more about the concerns and priorities of community members. These discussions – carried out alternately in Innu-Aimun and French – provided space to explore the questions that are more complex in nature, such as the legal and technical aspects. The discussion centered on the next steps community members could take to exercise their right to self-determination in the face of the mining project.



In-person attendance: 25 people

Information Sharing Through Community Radio, June 6, 2026

Matimekush–Lac John

On the evening of June 6, 2026, delegation representatives including Kamamuit Papakassik^u spokesperson Noël André participated in a special one-hour program on Matimekush–Lac John community radio. This brief segment provided an opportunity to summarize the content of the June 5 information session. The discussion, which began and ended in Innu-Aimun and was conducted in French, served to raise broader awareness among community members and those in the surrounding area about the actions taken by Kamamuit Papakassik^u, as well as the issues associated with the Strange Lake mining project. It also provided an opportunity for Kamamuit Papakassik^u to invite community members to join the effort, notably by announcing the launch of a petition.



Photo: Radio CRKA ©Rodrigue Turgeon

Meeting with the Matimekush Band Council, June 8, 2026

Matimekush–Lac John

On June 8, 2026, representatives from the previously-mentioned organizations, along with members of Kamamuit Papakassik^u, were invited to meet with the Chief and several members of the Matimekush–Lac John Band Council to discuss the impacts of the Strange Lake mining project.



Photo: Kawawachikamach ©Rodrigue Turgeon

Information and Discussion Session on June 8, 2026

Kawawachikamach

On June 8, 2026, the delegation met with members of the Naskapi community of Kawawachikamach at the invitation of Councillor Louise Mameanskum. An information session was held in English and Innu-Aimun, followed by dinner and a question-and-answer period and open discussion lasting approximately three hours. The entire event was simultaneously translated into liyuw-lyimuuun (Naskapi) and livestreamed on social media. The topics covered were largely the same as those discussed at the information session held three days earlier in Matimekush–Lac John. The audience consisted mainly of community elders.



In-person attendance: 30 people

Content of the Presentations and Discussions

- Explanation of why our organizations are here;
- History of mining development in the Strange Lake project area;
- History of the development of the mining company, from Quest Uranium to Torngat Metals;
- Description of the mining project and its primary foreseeable impacts, explaining in plain language the issues associated with the radioactivity of the rock proposed to be mined;
- Description of the global geopolitical and national political context surrounding the development of this mining project;
- Description of the legal framework under which the mining project operates;
- Discussions regarding the Crown's obligation to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples and the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent;
- Discussions regarding Indigenous legal systems and their recognition;
- Sharing of experiences related to citizen mobilization in response to mining and uranium projects;
- Sessions for questions, discussion, and collective reflection.



A Reaffirmation of Solidarity with the Communities Affected by the Development of this Mining Project



Photo: Matimekush—Lac John ©Johanne Roussy

Representatives from MiningWatch Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Takuaimatishun Laboratory, and Eau Secours were deeply moved by the ecological grief experienced by many members of the affected communities – but even more so by the deep connection to the land they witnessed and felt firsthand, and the resolute determination to protect it. The organizations therefore wish to reaffirm their ongoing, wholehearted, and steadfast support for local initiatives—particularly those of the Kamamuit Papakassik^u—aimed at ensuring respect for the rights, values, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples in the face of mining projects that directly affect them.

Latest Developments Following Our Visit



Photo: Nitassinan ©Émile Cloutier-Brassard

Opposition from the Matimekush–Lac John and Uashat mak Mani-utenam Communities

On June 12, 2026, four days after the delegation’s departure, Chief Jonathan Shetush of Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam and Chief Pako Vachon of the Innu Nation Council of Matimekush–Lac John, accompanied by members of their councils, publicly announced their firm opposition to Torngat Metals’ Strange Lake mining project. The statement, leaving no room for interpretation, emphasized that:

“Both Councils are concerned about the project’s impacts on the territory, the environment, wildlife—particularly the George River caribou herd—traditional activities, the population’s quality of life, and the negative impacts of the proposed processing plant in Pointe-Noire. The Councils will mandate their teams to develop a strategy to oppose the project.”

Petition Against the Strange Lake Mining Project

On June 30, 2026, members of Kamamuit Papakassik^u began collecting signatures from members of the Matimekush–Lac John community for their petition against the Strange Lake mining project. Here is the text of the petition in Innu-Aimun and English.

INNU-AIMUN

*Meshinatautishuiat eka menuenitamikuiat ua natshi-nutashinet
ue Torngat anite tshitassinat*

*Apu tapuetamat tshetshi ne Strange shakaikan Métaux Torngat natshi-
nutashinet anite Napeu Kainiut.*

Ninan, Innuat Matimekush-Lac-John, nuitenashpit eka tiapuetutshit
Métaux Torngat tshetshi utinak ashininu anite nenua assia meshanit
assikumannu anite ne Napeu Kainiut (Brisson shakaikan) mak e tapuetatishuiat
tshetshi nakaikanit ne atusseun. Ne uet eka tapuetamat anite utshipanu pet
shashish nikanishinanat ka tshishpeuatahk Tshikauinu Assinu ut anutshish mak
nikan kaianishkat tshitauassiminuat.

Menu-tshitapatakaniti umenua :

- Ne ashini ua natuapatakanit uemut tshika ui pikunakanu mak
pitshissipitakanu ne ashini anite tekuak tshekuan kueshtikuak, tshe ut
unuipaniti umenua uranium mak thorium eshinikateti anite e pitshitepannit
mak anite nipit tshe ishpanniti, ashit ne nakana eshpaniuet ne ashini
(metshi-natukunut acide eshi-uitakanit, ka kushikuaki assikumana);
- Anite tekuak tshekuan kueshtikuak anite meshta-mishat assikuman uemut
tshe kushtikuak anite mishue auenitshenat uminuinniunnuat ute assit ka
taht, nipit ka taht kie ma anite tshishikut, iapit e uinakaniht anitshenat anite
nanitam ka ituteht anite nenua assia kie ma anite netauht;
- Anite ka kuashkuekashakanit ishpishau 1,5 kilomètre tshipa ishpishinakuan
30 mètres anite ut shakaikanit;

- Ne atusseun ua tutakanit kushtikuannu anite ka taht aueshishat mak anite tshe pinetikuht atikuat anite Mushuau shipit, shash meshta-nashapanit 99% anite nishtunnuepipuna e tshitapatakanit, anite ut 800 000 nuash 8000 atikuat;
- Nenua mitshet tshiash-assia ka nutashinenanut, ka nakatakaniti kie ma ka utinakanit ashini anite uashka Matimekush, kie eshku nukuan eshpaniuet ne kanutashiniuenanut shash pet mitshet aianishkat;
- Ua nakatuenimakanit Chine-assi anite nenua assia eshku eka shuka natuapatakaniti, tshishe-utshimauat uitshieuat nenua Métaux Torngat tshetshi shaputuepanniti tshetshi upassikanniti (tshissinuaimatsheu-passikana, ka tshishipaniht uepashtamakana F-35, atamipekut-ishkuteuta...);
- Napeu Kainiut mak anite uashka ne anu e uitakanit Mushuau-shipu, ka tshitimauenitakuaki tshimushuminuat utassiuaua ka ut ashu-pathitinakanit innu-aitun, kanataunanut mak kamamuitunanut, shash mitshet tatutshishemitashumitannuepipuna anite ka tananut.
- Takuan anite tshitatusseunnu tshetshi tshishpeuatamaku Tshikauinu Assi anitshenat ut pietashtamiteht aianishkat tshitauassiminuat;

Ninatuenitenan tshetshi shaputue nakaikanit mak natshishk tshetshi eka takuak ne atusseun ua tutakanit ua nutashinenanut ue Strange shakaikan Métaux Torngat.

Tshetshi tshishpeuatakanit Tshikauinu Assi, utishinikashunnuat tshitauassiminuat aianishkat.

ENGLISH

Petition

No to Torngat Metals' Strange Lake mining project in Napeu Kainiut.

We, as Innuat of Matimekush-Lac John, declare our firm opposition to Torngat Metals' rare earth mining project at Napeu Kainiut (Lake Brisson) and our determination to see it abandoned. This opposition stems from our ancestral obligation to protect Tshikauinu Assi for present and future generations.

In view of the following:

- The ore in question cannot be mined without crushing and grinding radioactive rock (uranium and thorium), thereby releasing dangerous dust and particles into the air and water, in addition to the usual impacts of mining (acid contamination, heavy metals...);
- The radioactivity of the deposit poses an indisputable risk to the health of all terrestrial, aquatic, and airborne creatures, as well as to humans who visit or hunt in the area;
- The 1.5-kilometre-long open-pit mine is set to be dug at a 'minimum' of only 30 metres from the lake;
- The project threatens the habitat and calving grounds of the George River caribou, whose population has declined by 99% over the past thirty years, from 800,000 to 8,000 individuals;
- The numerous closed, abandoned, or active mining sites near Matimekush-Lac John demonstrate that the consequences of mining persist for generations;
- Faced with China's control over rare earth metals, governments are prioritizing support for Torngat Metals largely for military production (guided missiles, F-35 fighter jets, submarines...);
- Napeu Kainiut and its surrounding areas, particularly Mushuau Shipu, are sacred ancestral sites of cultural transmission, hunting, and gathering that have been inhabited for thousands of years.
- We have a responsibility to protect Tshikauinu Assi (Mother Earth) for future generations;

We demand the immediate halt and permanent rejection of Torngat Metals' Strange Lake mining project.

Together, we protect Tshikauinu Assi for the benefit of future generations.



Photo: 2026-07-07 ©Noël André

Operations Halted at the Mining Site

On July 7, sixteen (16) members of Kamamuit Papakassik^u flew to the Strange Lake mining project site to reaffirm their opposition and formally demand that “all activities cease and the site be restored to its original condition.” Just as some of them had done a few months earlier in the middle of winter – when they journeyed for several days by snowmobile to reach the site – they planted a new flag there to remind everyone that the project is located on their ancestral territory. The following text is an English translation of the formal notice delivered to the company director present at the site:

FORMAL NOTICE*

Subject: Request to Cease Exploration Activities on the Ancestral Territory of Napeu Kainiut (Lac Brisson)

To the management of Torngat Metals,

By way of this notice, we, the Innuat of Matimekush, members of Kamamuit Papakassik^u present today at **Napeu Kainiut**, formally request that you cease all activities and restore the site to its original condition. Since time immemorial, the Innuat have exercised **Innu Tipenitamun**, the ancestral authority and responsibility to watch over Nitassinan. This responsibility, which predates modern states and the arrival of Europeans, compels us to protect **Tshikauinu Assi (Mother Earth)**, the waters, the animals, the plants, and all living beings for the benefit of present and future generations.

Our opposition to the project, rooted in Innu Tipenitamun, is based on the following concerns:

- The project aims to mine a rare earths deposit containing radioactive elements, notably uranium and thorium, which could lead to contamination—particularly radioactive contamination—through dust, water, and mining waste;
- The project involves open-pit mining in the immediate vicinity of Lake Napeu Kainiut, posing a significant risk to aquatic ecosystems;
- The territory serves as critical habitat for the George River caribou, whose population has suffered a catastrophic decline over the past few decades;
- Napeu Kainiut and Mushuau Shipu are sites of great cultural, spiritual, and historical importance to the Innuat, who have frequented them for millennia for hunting, travel, gatherings, and the transmission of knowledge;
- Our experience with numerous mining sites—both abandoned and still active—shows that environmental impacts can persist for several generations.

Therefore, we ask that you **immediately cease all exploration activities on this territory**, including motorized travel, drilling, fieldwork, the installation of equipment, and any other activities related to the Strange Lake project. We demand that all activities be **suspended within a reasonable timeframe** to allow for the complete withdrawal of personnel, aircraft, equipment, and materials. This request is made in accordance with our ancestral responsibilities and our inherent rights over Nitassinan. We ask that you recognize the seriousness of this request and take the necessary measures to prevent any further escalation of the conflict.

We reaffirm our determination to protect Tshikauinu Assi and Napeu Kainiut for present and future generations.

Contact: Kamamuit Papakassik^u
Email: kamamuitpapakassiku@gmail.com

**Translation into English done by MiningWatch Canada. See the following page for the original in French.*

AVIS FORMEL

Objet : Demande de cessation des activités d'exploration sur le territoire ancestral de Napeu Kainiut (lac Brisson)

À la direction de Métaux Torngat,

Par le présent avis, nous, Innuat de Matimekush membres de Kamamuit Papakassik^u, présents aujourd'hui à **Napeu Kainiut**, vous demandons formellement de cesser toute activité et de réhabiliter les lieux dans leur état d'origine. Depuis des temps immémoriaux, les Innuat exercent l'**Innu Tipenitamun**, l'autorité et la responsabilité ancestrales de veiller sur le Nitassinan. Cette responsabilité, qui précède les États modernes et l'arrivée des Européens, nous oblige à protéger **Tshikauinu Assi (la Terre-Mère)**, les eaux, les animaux, les plantes et tous les êtres vivants au bénéfice des générations présentes et futures.

Notre refus du projet, ancré dans l'**Innu Tipenitamun**, repose notamment sur les préoccupations suivantes :

- Le projet vise l'exploitation d'un gisement de terres rares contenant des éléments radioactifs, notamment de l'uranium et du thorium, susceptibles d'entraîner une contamination notamment radioactive par les poussières, les eaux et les résidus miniers;
- Le projet prévoit une exploitation à ciel ouvert à proximité immédiate du lac Napeu Kainiut, créant un risque important pour les écosystèmes aquatiques;
- Le territoire constitue un habitat essentiel pour le caribou de la rivière George, dont la population a subi un déclin catastrophique au cours des dernières décennies;
- Napeu Kainiut et Mushuau Shipu sont des lieux de grande importance culturelle, spirituelle et historique pour les Innuat, fréquentés depuis des millénaires pour la chasse, les déplacements, les rassemblements et la transmission des savoirs;
- Notre expérience des nombreux sites miniers, abandonnés ou encore actifs, démontre que les conséquences environnementales peuvent perdurer pendant plusieurs générations.

En conséquence, **nous vous demandons de cesser immédiatement toutes les activités d'exploration sur ce territoire**, notamment les déplacements motorisés, les forages, les travaux de terrain, l'installation d'équipements ainsi que toute autre intervention liée au projet Strange Lake. Nous exigeons que toutes les activités soient interrompues **dans un délai raisonnable** permettant le retrait complet du personnel, des aéronefs, des équipements et du matériel. Cette demande est formulée dans le respect de nos responsabilités ancestrales et de nos droits inhérents sur le Nitassinan. Nous vous demandons de reconnaître le caractère fondamental de cette démarche et de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour éviter toute aggravation du conflit.

Nous réaffirmons notre détermination à protéger Tshikauinu Assi et Napeu Kainiut pour les générations présentes et futures.

Contact: Kamamuit Papakassik^u
Email: kamamuitpapakassiku@gmail.com



**Kamamuit
Papakassik^u**

Tshinashkumitinau
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Merci
Thank you



Links to the PowerPoint Presentation

- [In English](#)
- [In French](#)