



# MiningWatch Canada

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## Mines Alerte

### Newsletter

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#### *MiningWatch Canada Annual Meeting*

On March 21, MiningWatch Canada held its Annual Meeting in Ottawa, followed by a two-day Board meeting.

Our directors for 2003-4 are: Evelyn Baxter Robinson, Laura Calmwind, Will David, Sarah Johnnie, Brennain Lloyd, Ken Luckhardt, Ron Maurice, François Meloche, John McInnis, Lorraine Michael, Sue Moodie, Richard Nuna, Kevin O'Reilly, and Jean Symes.

Thanks were expressed to retiring Board members Serge Ashini-Goupil, Yasmin Jiwani and Alan Young. Alan has been our Co-chair from the very beginning and worked extremely hard to get MiningWatch Canada up and running. He was presented with a cherry-wood canoe paddle and roundly applauded. He will keep his connection with us as MiningWatch Canada advisor.

Brennain Lloyd also stepped down as Co-chair, but will remain on the Board. Gratitude for her energy and skill were expressed by the members.

The new executive committee consists of Co-chairs Kevin O'Reilly and Lorraine Michael, Treasurer Jean Symes and



March for Aysen and its Dignity, without Alumysa, Coyhaique, Chile, December 2001. (Peter Hartmann photo)

Secretary Will David. Biographies of all Board members are on our web site.

We used the occasion of the Annual Meeting to evaluate our progress with colleagues who have worked closely with us since our beginnings, and to discuss threats and opportunities for our work in the coming years.

It was generally agreed that the presence of MiningWatch Canada had changed the nature of the debate about mining in Canada, and has been able to present a substantial challenge to the industry.

Participants said that we create a place for an on-going conversation with other mining activists, and bring new resources to the work. The network of diverse people and organizations enables people to act locally in an intelligent way. We bring a mixture of research, science, law and activism that is credible and unique. We are an indispensable resource to the other coalitions in which we work.

#### *First Nations Leaders Gather in Thunder Bay to Discuss Mining Issues*

On April 2nd and 3rd, twenty representatives from First Nations in Northern Ontario gathered at Matawa First Nations Management in Thunder Bay to discuss issues around mining. This meeting was organized in collaboration with Matawa

First Nations Management, Nibinamik First Nation, and MiningWatch Canada in response to a need expressed by Nibinamik for communities to know more about mining issues and work together on common strategy. Although there is current-

ly only one working mine in Nishnawbe-Aski Nation territory (Placer Dome's Musselwhite gold mine), prospectors and exploration companies are actively staking claims and affecting many First Nations' traditional territories.

Presentations were given on mining activities in Nishnawbe-Aski Nation territory, meaningful consultation in lands and resources, diamond mining and the environment, interacting with mining companies, and negotiating impact-

benefit agreements.

MiningWatch would like to extend its gratitude to the presenters (Evelyn Baxter-Robinson, Tony Pearce, and Rick Salter) and the participants for making this meeting a great success.

If your community wishes to have a workshop on mining, please contact Mel Quevillon at the MiningWatch office or by e-mail: [mel@miningwatch.ca](mailto:mel@miningwatch.ca).

## *Towards a New Approach for Minerals Stewardship*

Canadian mineral policy and regulations currently favour an old economic model that maximizes the extraction and use of virgin resources. A more progressive stewardship approach could reduce the generation of waste, reduce sector-wide energy demand, increase recycling and re-use and result in more economic and social benefits from metal products. There are examples emerging from the European Union and the work of analysts like Rocky Mountain Institute that suggest that alternatives are as possible as they are urgent.

In response to this challenge, the Mineral Efficiency Research Group (MERG) – linked with the Polis Project on

Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria – has launched the Canadian Mineral Efficiency Initiative to promote integrated stewardship policies and practices for Canada. The first phase, now underway, will include publishing a collection of strategic essays from key players in the sector. The second phase, during the winter of 2003/2004, will involve solutions-oriented forums to identify practical steps forward.

For more information contact Alan Young, Director, Mineral Efficiency Research Group, via e-mail: [alan.young@sympatico.ca](mailto:alan.young@sympatico.ca).

## *Chilean Activist Builds Solidarity with Canadian Noranda Workers, Students, and Politicians*

MiningWatch Canada, in coordination with the Halifax Initiative, hosted Chilean activist Peter Hartmann from February 22nd to March 7th. Peter comes from Aysén in the Chilean Patagonia, and is fighting Noranda's proposed \$2.75 billion Alumysa aluminum smelter.

Peter visited striking Noranda workers in Rouyn-Noranda, representatives from CSN (La Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux) and the Métallos (Steelworkers) in Montréal, and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Social Justice Fund and the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Humanity Fund in Toronto. Representatives from CAW Mine Mill Local 598 (Sudbury) and Local 599 (Timmins) met Peter in Toronto to build solidarity and share Noranda/Falconbridge stories. Peter also presented to groups of students at CERLAC (the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean at York University), Carleton University, Cornell University, and the CÉGEP du Vieux-Montréal.

Along with Chilean Deputy Alejandro Navarro, Peter met

with the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and various other Members of Parliament. He also met with environmental organizations, technical experts, media, and famous Québec singer Richard Desjardins.

It is exciting to see the momentum build on an International No-Alumysa campaign. Peter's tour sparked a number of North American groups to organize interventions at Noranda's Annual General Meeting on April 23rd, and also prompted a meeting of Chilean and North American groups in Victoria on May 8th and 9th.

For more details on the Alumysa project, please refer to the article "Noranda's Alumysa Aluminum Smelter Threatens Chilean Environment" in Newsletter No.11 or contact Mel ([mel@miningwatch.ca](mailto:mel@miningwatch.ca)).

MiningWatch would like to thank the Halifax Initiative and the Steelworkers Humanity Fund for sponsoring Peter's visit, and Gastón Ancelovici for his collaboration.

## *Citizens Stand Up to Niobium Mine in Oka*

The community of Oka, Québec, continues to battle the niobium mine planned by Niocan (see "Citizens oppose Niocan's proposed niobium mine in Oka, Québec" in Newsletter No. 3, Spring 2000). Oka residents are demanding a federal environmental assessment. They are convinced that the mine will increase radioactivity in the region, dewater farms, pollute water in the Rousse Brook and underground aquifers, and create dust and safety hazards with its trucks.

The region boasts thriving vegetable gardens and apple orchards with a large Montréal-based market. The parish has voted by more than 60% to oppose the mine.

The mine – owned by Niocan, a Québec company in which the Québec government has an equity investment – is on

the same property as an abandoned columbium mine. One of the attractions of the project is the company's promise to clean up the mess left behind by St. Lawrence Columbian when it closed. The company plans to put the tailings in the old open pits (with no liner) and then to paste back-fill the shafts with the new tailings and radioactive slag.

The mine has managed to avoid a proper environmental assessment, because the BAPE (le Bureau d'Audiences Publiques sur l'Environnement), Québec's environmental assessment agency, exempts mines with production less than 7000 tonnes per day. However, it does have to obtain a certificate of authorization to proceed. In April 2002, responding to an outcry from the parish, the Citizens' Committee, and the

Mohawk Council of Kahnésatake, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Environment and Water, authorized the BAPE to evaluate the potential effects the radioactivity that will result from the mine and mill. That study was released August 24, 2003. It is available at: [www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/rapports/publications/bape167.pdf](http://www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/rapports/publications/bape167.pdf)

The study only looked at radioactivity issues, but it referred to a number of other serious problems: acid mine drainage, the release of polluted water directly into the river and from there to a marsh in Lake of Two Mountains, and the storage of tailings in the old pits, where the rock is known to be fractured – among other issues. In addition, the refining process – called “aluminothermie” – adds aluminium ferroxide to the concentrate thereby substituting the niobium with a molecule of aluminum. This allows the niobium to combine with iron. Each 4,200 kg batch of concentrate requires the addition of 2,179 kg of reactive agents. The reaction produces 2,109 kg of ferroniobium in the form of fumes and 4,270 kg of radioactive slag. More waste is produced than the amount of the original concentrate!

## *Cheviot Mine Proposal on Hold: Action Alert!*

On April 2, after six years of saying the Cheviot mine would be developed despite public opposition, owners of the Fording Coal Partnership announced they will not develop the mine after all and have shelved it for an indefinite period. They’ve pulled the plug on what was to be a massive open-pit coal mine located on critical wildlife habitat adjacent to Jasper National Park and in the core of the proposed Mountain Park.

However, the company continues to hold the leases for the coal below this public wildland – blocking park establishment. Conservation organizations have already written the owners, encouraging them to drop the leases and facilitate park establishment.

Making Mountain Park a park in reality would preserve a 247 square mile (461 sq km) wildland rich in history and home to rare and threatened wildlife. It includes habitat crucial for

the survival of specific wildlife species and is key to securing a future for grizzly bears in the region. Grizzly bears belonging to a population shared by Jasper National Park and the Hinton region are being killed outside the national park at a rate the population cannot sustain.

Ask the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan, Fording Canadian Coal Trust and Teck-Cominco (key owners of the company holding the Cheviot coal leases), to drop Cheviot for good and instead be the catalyst for a park. More letters will make a significant difference.

Click on [www.wildcanada.net/cheviot/fax.asp](http://www.wildcanada.net/cheviot/fax.asp) to send a quick fax at no cost through the Action Centre provided by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and WildCanada.net. See [www.cpaws-edmonton.org/cheviot](http://www.cpaws-edmonton.org/cheviot) for more information.

See the Urgent Action from March, 2002, in French (“Appuyez les Mohawks de Kanesatake – Arrêtez Niocan”) and in English (“Support the Mohawks of Kanesatake – Demand Action to Stop Niocan”) on our web site.

## *New Kenyan Government Holds Tiomin to Account*

The new government in Kenya is treating the Kwale titanium project with healthy suspicion.

In early March, the Kenyan High Court restrained the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) from issuing an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) licence to Tiomin Resources Inc. of Canada for its titanium mining project, pursuant to section 63 of the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act. The order remains in force until NEMA complies with section 59 of the Act which provides for public review of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

Mr Justice Andrew Hayanga issued the order based on a civil case filled by the Centre for Environmental Legal Research and Education (CREEL).

On April 10, 2003, Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Hon. Prof. Wangari Maathai – former chairperson of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya – met with mine opponents, including the Coast Mining Rights Forum. This was the first meeting of its kind, indeed of any kind, between members of civil society and the Government over the

issue of titanium mining in Kwale. According to Kenyan sources, “the mood during the meeting was upbeat and for the first time, we were able to explore the issues surrounding the titanium mining, highlighting what went wrong and what needs to be done.”

All the issues that the Coast Mining Rights Forum have been raising about the mine – groundwater exploitation, the development of a shipping facility at Shimoni, economic benefits, compensation and resettlement, and rehabilitation and radiation control – were addressed. The Coast Mining Rights Forum also learned that Tiomin intends to dredge the Wasini channel, which it had previously denied. This would be necessitated by the weight of the ore to be exported.

Tiomin has not received an Environmental Impact Assessment licence. What it has received is an approval letter of its EIA, issued by the former Director General of NEMA. This situation is a result of the failure of the former Moi government to promulgate the guidelines and regulations for EIA. The Commissioner of Mines and Geology cannot therefore

issue a special mining lease until Tiomin presents an EIA License issued under the not-yet existent Guidelines. The Guidelines are supposed to be gazetted and possibly debated.

As well, the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) presented by Tiomin and approved by NEMA late last year was incomplete. The EMP is part of an EIA process; what was presented was merely an EMP Report. It did not include a comprehensive action plan specifying costs, time and responsible persons for the mitigation of identified impacts. A complete EMP must be submitted prior to approval of the mining lease. The EMP would then be subjected to public scrutiny.

The government early this year sent a fact finding team

headed by Prof. Wangari to visit a titanium mine in South Africa to study the activity's effect on the environment. The team was to visit the Richard's Bay mining area, and arrangements were made to meet NGOs in South Africa who have been challenging the titanium issue there. Environment Minister Kulundu said the government wanted the ore processed in Kenya and not exported raw as had been envisaged by Tiomin. The government has also indicated that the compensation offered to relocate farmers was completely inadequate.

Two public forums will be organised to develop consensus on the issues after the team reports.

## *Three Communities Protest at Placer Dome AGM*

At Placer Dome's Annual General Meeting held on April 30th in Toronto, interventions were made by and on behalf of the indigenous Dayak Meratus of Indonesia, the Western Shoshone of Newe Segobia (Nevada, USA), and the people of the Philippine island of Marinduque.

Both the Dayak Meratus and the Western Shoshone feel strongly that Placer Dome's operating and proposed mines on their lands threaten their environments and their very existence as indigenous peoples. The people of Marinduque are still waiting for Placer Dome to fulfill its promises to clean up the Boac River and compensate affected villagers for a 1996 spill.

Statements were read by Catherine Coumans of Mining-Watch Canada on behalf the Dayak Meratus and the Western Shoshone as community representatives were unable to attend.

The Dayak Meratus live in the last remaining native forest in Kalimantan, Indonesia, which has enjoyed protected status since 1928. Placer Dome proposes to build a gold mine in the Meratus Mountain Range Protected Forest, which would violate Forestry Law 41 and would require a special exemption from the Indonesian government. The Dayaks have already made unequivocal statements opposing this mine.

The Western Shoshone have protested the environmental and cultural impacts of Placer Dome/Cortez Joint Venture

mines on their land for years. Western Shoshone Elder Carrie Dann and her niece Mary Gibson wrote open letters to the directors and shareholders of Placer Dome regarding the company's plans to build a new mine called the Pediment Mine, an open-pit cyanide heap leach mine on Mt. Tenabo, the tallest mountain in the Cortez Range and a traditional sacred site and source of food and medicinal plants.

The people of the small Philippine island of Marinduque are suffering the results of almost 30 years of mining by Placer Dome: an ocean bay filled with 200 million tons of mine tailings dumped there over 16 years; two rivers heavily polluted with toxic acid-generating and metal-leaching tailings; and a mine site in the mountains with five hazardous dams and structures, two of which are likely to fail in the near future. After a major mine disaster in 1996 filled the 26-km long Boac River with mine waste, Placer Dome divested from the Marcopper Mining Corporation and eventually left the Philippines. It has not fulfilled its promises to clean up the river and compensate affected villagers. Marinduqueño Ned Santo Domingo read a statement from Marinduque International and the Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns.

For a full report and the statements presented at the AGM, please see [www.miningwatch.ca/issues.html](http://www.miningwatch.ca/issues.html).

## *High Level Kanak Delegation Visits Canada*

From March 9-19 an eight-member delegation visited Canada from the French "overseas territory" of New Caledonia, also known as Kanaky, in the southwestern Pacific.

The trip, billed as a "fact-finding" mission, arose from deep concern in the indigenous Kanak community over Inco's plans to build a massive nickel mine in the island territory.

The delegation that visited Canada in March included two members of the Senat Coutumier, Vincent Akaro and past president Georges Mandaoué, as well as four members of the Rheebeu Nuu Committee: Raphaël Mapou, Chairman of the committee (Mr. Mapou was formerly a Minister in the territorial government); Roch Wamytan, who is also High Chief of St. Louis tribe and Minister for Customary Affairs in the New Caledonian Territorial Government; Sylvestre Newedou, also a member of the Southern Province Assembly; and François Vouty, who is also deputy-mayor of the municipality of Yate where the proposed mine is located. The delegation was completed by consultants Jacques Saramin Boengkih and Christian Doncieux.

The delegation met with Assembly of First Nations

National Chief Matthew Coon Come, the Grand Council of the Crees, Makivik Corporation, and a lawyer for the Innu Nation. The group also met with Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific David Kilgour, officials in Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Nault's office, Export Development Canada, and Paul Bernier of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency as well as independent experts, including geographer Peter Usher. The delegation also presented before two Parliamentary Standing Committees (Environment and Sustainable Development, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade).

The delegation also met with Falconbridge and Inco – both companies plan to mine in Kanaky-New Caledonia, and both have signed negotiated settlements with Canadian indigenous peoples. While the meeting with Falconbridge to discuss the Raglan agreement was fruitful, the meeting with Inco was disappointing. Inco CEO Scott Hand would not commit to discuss Kanak cultural, economic, and environmental concerns.

For a full report on the visit and background information, please see [www.miningwatch.ca/issues.html](http://www.miningwatch.ca/issues.html).

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