



Native Women's Association Training Centre

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July 31st, 2008

Re: Giant Mine Environmental Assessment

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

PO Box 938

Yellowknife, NWT

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To Whom It May Concern:

Since the exploration and extraction of precious metals in and around the city of Yellowknife began it is clear that members of the Yellowknife Dene First Nation continue to suffer the negative consequences of such mining activities. From the contamination of traditional hunting, fishing, and berry picking lands, to the cultural upheaval brought on by rapid industrial and urban growth, the YK Dene have too frequently not been consulted in development decisions that will affect them into perpetuity. As 'Southerners' come and go in tune with the economics of the day, the first peoples of this region remain and are left to clean-up and live with the results of poor decisions made by others.

At this time in the Northwest Territories there are very limited educational opportunities available to study the field of environmental science. Indeed, the word 'contamination' is not found once in the descriptions of courses offered at Aurora College (As a side note, other scientific concepts such as 'climate change' are also conspicuously absent). As a result, many Northern residents are not fully aware of the risks involved with the Giant Mine remediation or other environmental issues threatening the Arctic Region and its Peoples.

As part of the Environmental Assessment for Giant Mine I believe it is imperative that INAC consider this as an opportunity to empower Northerners to reclaim their rights and responsibilities over Northern lands and waters. The lack of critical awareness of resource extraction and development, past and present, in the North continues to limit our ability to make decisions that consider factors other than economic growth. To resolve this issue INAC must earmark funds for developing environmental education curriculum to be utilized at all levels of education throughout the Northwest Territories. If INAC is willing and able to cover all costs into perpetuity associated with the 'frozen block method' they too should be able to provide funding that ensures future generations are knowledgeable on the potential hazards associated with large-scale resource extraction.

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Of specific concern should be a focus on introducing environmental and traditional knowledge into the Developmental Education Curriculum (formerly Adult Basic Education). Many students studying at this level hold a great deal of traditional environmental knowledge yet are often unable to engage in the debate around environmental issues as they are lacking contemporary scientific understanding of key words and concepts. Through adequately investing today in developing and delivering accessible environmental education to all, we are making certain to avoid another 'Giant Mine' in the future.

I have been in discussion with INAC officials regarding funding proposals that consider environmental education specifically related to Giant Mine and have been met with very little support or enthusiasm. Given the scale and expense of the Giant Mine Reclamation I am astounded that the potential for training and education associated with the clean-up has been overlooked. As a not-for-profit adult education organization concerned with the well-being of Northerners we cannot endorse an environmental remediation plan that does not clearly focus on improving the lives of those that have been so severely disrupted by the mining industry in the first place.

On behalf of the Native Women's Association Training Centre thank you for providing this opportunity to voice our concerns on this issue.

Sincerely,

Spencer Tracy
Instructor and Training Centre Coordinator
Native Women's Association of the NWT

CCed: Nancy Peel, Executive Director, Native Women's Association of the NWT