

Hearing ... Behchoko, October 11, 2012

My name is Lucy Lafferty and this is what I heard at the hearing in Behchoko by those who spoke and some are my issues and concerns. It is hard to be impartial when the articles on the internet are telling only one side of the story.

This biggest concern I have with all this process is **Communication**. Did the elders, who are unilingual, understand the concepts through interpretation? What was the quality of the English used to interpret elders and Tlicho speakers' words?

Tlicho language is still strong among Tlicho elders and many adults in all Tlicho region. Elders and adults are fluent speakers and use Tlicho language daily. It is vital to have qualified interpreters and translators at meetings, or hearing as was done in Behchoko, for decisions that will affect the way of life for Tlicho citizens.

I am not sure how the interpretation /translation went as I was not listening to the Tlicho or English translation. I know that references had been made by an elder that that is the only means they have for communicating and expressing their views and concerns.

I hope that your recorder was able to record "the words" of our elders, youth and adults from the Tlicho region.

Because I am concerned about the interpreting and translation I would like to share what I heard at the hearing;

- 1) **Water** ... water is the most precious commodity and that the north is seen as the last frontier where the purest water can be found and they do not want it to be contaminated or polluted ...

(from internet) They said water is a far more important resource for them than the cobalt, gold and bismuth Fortune wants to mine 50 kilometres northeast of Whati.

The company maintains that its open pit mine would not cause any water contamination.



Rick Schryer, Fortune Minerals' director of regulatory and environmental affairs, says the Nico project would not cause any water contamination. (CBC)

Rick Schryer, Fortune Minerals' director of regulatory and environmental affairs, said Rayrock was a different era.

"It's a different world, a different reality, when it comes to mining," he said. "We're very serious about protecting the environment. We've heard a lot of concerns today about water — 'Protect the water,' 'make sure the water is safe,' 'we want to be able to use the land as we have in the past' — and that is our primary goal.

"We're going to be using a reverse osmosis system for water treatment during operations and it's basically the best water treatment system you can have. At closure we'll have treatment wetlands to deal with any potential water quality issues. So the water will be protected."

Water can be damaged through contamination and pollution. How much water will be used? As mentioned at the hearing, the mining will have ripple effect ... contamination and pollution at the mine site, contamination and pollution caused by proposed road access (spills, trucks going into ditches, vehicle collision –possible loss of life, road maintenance, long winter – trucks and machinery, buildings using more fossil fuel –exhaust into environment, etc. I thought the mine also included underground mining? If so water has to be pumped out. The water is not confined to just around the mining location.

- 2) **Tlicho LAND** Tlicho love their land. It is obvious through the TK presentation and personal stories. The area where the proposed mine location will be is in the HEART of Tlicho land. When I looked at the display of the before, during and after the mine, I felt sick to my stomach. As, steward of Tlicho land, and as a woman, I saw Mother Earth being raped, spoiled and ravished. A woman or a man, a girl or a boy, who have been rape never forget the experience and they are reminded constantly through sounds, smells and flashbacks. As Tlicho people we will be reminded forever with what was done. There will forever be concrete evidence. The mining company, the federal government and territorial government will move on with their lives. As Tlicho people, our language is tied to the land.
- 3) **Process** ... I heard that the consultation and negotiation has been ongoing for 15 years. I wonder what type of consultation had been taking place, especially when I see updates on the website about Fortune Mineral. Where is Tlicho input or responses? I take offence to the Toronto, April 10, 2012 article that stated, “ J.R, former GrandChief of Tlicho Government has joined NICO Company ... and that Dr. Richard Schryer paints him as “highly respected leader”. J.R. has “gently” been ousted out of the office and as an elder had said, he remembers J.R. as Grand Chief chasing Fortune Mineral out of his office. The other former chiefs lost their election because people had lost confidence in them. Look where they are. With NICO company. I find NICO’s tactic of “divide and conquer” as dishonest. I heard and felt that GNWT and the Federal government are operating the same way as the mining company. With the comments on websites and in newspapers, I have a bad feeling that NICO are jumping through loopholes that have been created for them by the territorial and federal government. I smell something very “fishy” with this whole process. The mining company has spent over \$100 million dollars even before the mine opens. (source – person from mining company). According to website information the mining company are confident they will be given the go ahead. I think the NWT Environmental Assessment has already been “prejudice” because on on-site activity that has already taken place.
- 4) **Experimental mining ... small mine**
One thing I kept hearing is that the way this small mine will be using **new** experimental methods. My concern is that “our land” will be a guinea pig. What I am afraid of is “oops” we didn’t know that was going to happen or “oops” my mistake. The “OOPS” could be very costly. Who will paid for the “OOPS”?
- 5) **Access Road** ... currently not feasible ... climate change, permafrost melting & thawing, will increase social problems in communities ... look at current state of road from Behchoko to YK. Every year the road needs to be maintained. Every year there are accidents. Every year someone

runs into wild life from Bison to many small animals (rabbit, fox, porcupine, ptarmigan, etc.) Pollution from vehicles, spills, and so much more that will affect; water, land, animals, people, plants, fish and the environment. An elder said that he thought there might be more discussion on road access because they have concerns they wanted to express. It was his understanding (not sure where this was said – radio, interpretation, others?)

6) **Who will have the most financial gain?**

This is a no brainer ... the company will gain the most, then the federal government, then the province of Saskatchewan, then territorial government then Tlicho government. Where is the fairness? Where is the balance? Tlicho will end up with the mess and who knows if the mine will have to be monitored for a long time.

7) **Question of "ownership, rights"?** possible lawsuit against the company

There is strong evidence that Tlicho people had trapped and hunted in the area of the proposed mine. It was a Tlicho man, who was checking his trap or hunting or going for wood, when he came across the strange rock. He took the rock and took it back home. Through his daughter Madeline Chocolate's story at the hearing (October 11, 2012 Behchoko hearing), we know this to be true. Madeline talked of her father taking out a wrapped object and when he took it out that it was a rock. When "CC" (non-Native) heard about the rock he tried many times to get the location of the rock from David Chocolate, Madeline's father. Finally, through an interpreter (can't remember his name) CC got the information. At the hearing, Madeline first asked the mining company if CC staked the claim and was part owner. Then Madeline said, CC stole the mineral (rights/claim) from her dad. This is a strong revelation as to who has the "right" ownership of the mineral and its location. It is possible that David Chocolate's family could seek legal conjunction to claim full or partial rights to the mine. This would create an unsettled issue which could still divide the "financial gain" from the mine further.

8) **David and Goliath** ... if there's ever a David and Goliath story today, this is it ...

Tlicho standing up to the Mining Company (\$\$\$\$ & technical words) and the Federal Government (\$\$\$ & power) ... even though the mining company said that it has been consulting with Tlicho for over 15 years – my concern is what was communicated and how was it communicated? There are many technical mining words that cannot be translated into Tlicho language. I truly believe that the consultation has been lopsided with the heavy end on the mining side. Like Goliath, the mining company look invincible, but the Tlicho elders, youth and community members spoke from their heart. They are putting their trust in "the review board and the system".

Attached are a few articles that I used.

Articles on the website

TORONTO, Sept. 18, 2012 /CNW/ - **Fortune Minerals Limited (TSX-FT) (OTCQX-FTMDF) ("Fortune" or the "Company")** (www.fortuneminerals.com) is pleased to report that it has completed a key public hearings session related to the Environmental Assessment ("EA") review process for the permitting of the

mine and mill for the Company's 100% owned NICO gold-cobalt-bismuth-copper project in the Northwest Territories ("NT"). With the EA review nearly concluded, the project is advancing towards the preparation of the final report and recommendation. After the public registry closes on October 22, 2012, the Mackenzie Valley Review Board ("MVRB") will prepare the Report of Environmental Assessment which will contain the recommendation on the project to the Federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Dr. Richard Schryer, Fortune's Director of Regulatory and Environmental Affairs, commented that, "it has been a long and thorough review process and we eagerly anticipate its completion in the coming months." "With over 1 million ounces of gold, significant cobalt and 15% of global bismuth reserves, NICO is well positioned to become a reliable Canadian source of metals of critical importance to the world economy" said Robin Goad, Fortune's President and CEO.

Fortune Minerals Completes Additional Community Meetings for its NICO Project in the Northwest Territories 04/10/2012

[Download this Press Release](#)

Positive momentum as project approaches the Public Hearing phase of Environmental Assessment

Issued Capital: 117,076,976

TORONTO, April 10, 2012 /CNW/ - **Fortune Minerals Limited (TSX: FT)** ("Fortune" or the "Company") (www.fortuneminerals.com) is pleased to report that it has completed an additional round of successful public meetings and open houses in Yellowknife and the four Tlicho communities surrounding the Company's NICO gold-cobalt-bismuth-copper project in the Northwest Territories ("NT"). Joseph (Joe) Rabesca, former Grand Chief of the Tlicho Government, has also joined Fortune as NICO Community Relations Coordinator. Fortune is very pleased to be working more closely with Joe Rabesca and also with the positive momentum it has received with the Tlicho people as the NICO project advances to the Public Hearing phase of the Environmental Assessment ("EA") to permit the proposed mine and mill.

Dr. Richard Schryer, Fortune's Director of Regulatory and Environmental Affairs, commented that, "the opportunity to provide an open forum to exchange information with the Tlicho people in their language and communities was well received. The addition of Joe Rabesca to our team also enhances our presence in the Tlicho community with a highly respected leader to help communicate the Company's plans and receive valuable feedback as we approach the end of the EA process and plan for the development."

Fortune Mineral Mine

K'agoti (Hislop Lake)

My name is Lucy Lafferty and I was born at K'agoti in October. Because of that I hold K'agoti in my heart.

My thoughts go back to what life would have been like for me, as a baby, and for my family at K'agoti in the 50s. My parents had 7 children at that time. Later two of the children passed away at an early age. These two I do not remember at all. It was much later that I found out their names: Rosa and Elizabeth.

I am sure my mother and father did all they could for us. I can imagine all the hard work both my parents had to do especially in the late fall, with a brand new baby, and winter approaching.

I wonder just what kind of worries my mom and dad had because they had to feed, clothe and shelter 9 people. It wasn't just the nine people. I am sure my parents had other people they had to help like my uncles, aunties, grandparents, orphans and relatives who may have been living with us in the tent or had their tents near us.

Can you imagine trying to provide for that many people without a job? Even though there was no income coming in the land provided for us. I am sure that every day from morning to night my parents were busy getting food from the land, getting wood, working on the hides for clothing and equipment, fixing & mending tools and equipment for the winter, and so much more. Whenever I think of all what my parents had done for us I feel very humble and very grateful.

As a baby at K'agoti, I was surrounded by Tlicho yati (language) DoNaawo (culture) and Gonaawok'e (our way of life). Everything on the land, the sounds of daily activities and of the land are engrained in my being and had shaped who I am today. The smell of fish and meat cooked over fire, seeing women working on hide, people going hunting, all these activities remind me of living out on the land and of my parents.

My life was traumatized when I was literally "kidnapped" at a young age and sent to residential school in Fort Smith. I was there for 10 months. For the next 13 years I only spend 2 years and 2 months with my parents and family. I didn't know my grandmother had passed away. Nobody told me. I found out only when I came back home for the summer. During the 13 years I had lost family, relatives and most importantly my Tlicho Yati (language) and DoNaawo (culture).

It was very hard to fit back into my Tlicho culture when I've been away from my family for so long. I often wondered what my parents and relative thought about me. I remember helping my mom with her hide one summer when I was home. She wanted to stretch the caribou hide so we had to hold the hide and pull it. I thought, no problem, I can do it. Once we start to pull the hide I fell forward and landed at my mom's feet. I was so embarrassed because I thought I was strong but my mom, a tiny woman, was so much stronger.

Whenever I travel to Gameti in the winter I always stop at Hislop Lake to reflect and to give thanks to our creator for the people who help my parents and to the land for having provided for us. I get very special feelings because of my connection to the land.

K'agoti is a pristine place ... clean water, fresh air, home to the wild life (caribou, fish, ducks, etc), beautiful scenery in all season and most of all ... the serenity A place where there is spiritual connection, especially for those of us who lived in the area.

I know that mining will bring in money to the people, to the company and to the governments BUT I am so afraid of the damage the mine will do to the land. **I am speaking for the land.** The land will always remain with us and K'agoti is at the heart of Tlicho land with the four Tlicho communities surrounding it. If the heart of the land is damaged then the surrounding areas will also be damaged.

At the Fortune Mineral proposal meeting in Behchoko, I heard that poisonous chemicals will be not used. I would like to know if that is true? If it is true then I would like to know how the minerals would be processed. What alternative methods will be used?

The other concern I have is the life time of the mine. The number I heard was 18 years. In 18 years a lot of damage can be done to the land. How many years do people have to clean up to make the area as pristine as it was before the mine?

The other thing I heard was that the mine would provide employment for over 200 people. It is great that there will be employment but just how many "jobs" will be available for Tlicho people. Most of the jobs at the mine will be for certified people and for contractors. I feel that many of our people have not been trained and will probably not be hired.

My greatest concern is environmental assessment and monitoring. Again I feel that the best people to do environmental assessment and monitoring would be our own people. We need Tlicho people trained so that there will always be environmental assessment and monitoring taking place no matter if there are mines in operation or not.

Many Dene people in the NWT have cancer. What is causing it? Our people need to do research and find out why so many of our people are diagnosed with cancer. Is it our water? Water flows and connects to rivers and streams in the NWT water system. The cause could be related to mining from other regions. Is it the wild life? Animals and birds travel all over NWT. They don't know if lakes, ponds or streams are polluted. These animals are killed for food source and also used for clothing & tools. Is it the new lifestyle? Too much of everything ... easier access to processed food, cell phones, TV, electricity and so much more. Why are so many people in the NWT dying of cancer?

I say NO to mining at K'agoti. I think that Tlicho should wait. The minerals at K'agoti will be there. It will be there for future generation. Maybe in the future there will be technologies that will make mining safer, healthier and cleaner and that we, the Tlicho people, will be able to manage the mine, with our people, for the people, by our people using Tlicho Traditional Knowledge.

Masicho ...

Like Water for Gold in El Salvador

Friday, July 15, 2011

By Robin Broad and John Cavanagh

This article appeared in the [August 1-8, 2011 edition of The Nation](#).

Thirty years ago, several thousand civilians in the northern Salvadoran community of Santa Marta quickly gathered a few belongings and fled the US-funded Salvadoran military as it burned their houses and fields in an early stage of the country's twelve-year civil war. Dozens were killed as they crossed the Lempa River into refugee camps in Honduras.

Today, residents of this area, some born in those Honduran refugee camps, are fighting US and Canadian mining companies eager to extract the rich veins of gold buried near the Lempa River, the water source for more than half of El Salvador's 6.2 million people. Once again, civilians have been killed or are receiving death threats.

The communities' goal: to make El Salvador the first nation to ban gold mining. We traveled to El Salvador in April to find out if this struggle to keep gold in the ground can be won. Our investigation led us from rural communities in the country's gold belt to ministries of the new progressive government in San Salvador and ultimately to free trade agreements and a tribunal tucked away inside the World Bank in Washington, DC.

We were greeted at the airport by Miguel Rivera, a quiet man in his early 30s whose face is dominated by dark, sad eyes. Miguel is the brother of anti-mining community leader Marcelo Rivera, who was disappeared—tortured and assassinated—in June 2009 in a manner reminiscent of the death squads of the 1980s civil war. We had first met Miguel in October 2009, when he and four others active in El Salvador's National Roundtable on Mining traveled to Washington to receive the Institute for Policy Studies' Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award, a prize that brought international recognition to this struggle.

As we drove on the mountainous roads that lead to Santa Marta and other towns in the northern department of Cabañas, we commented on the starkly eroded parched hills that look like landslides waiting to happen. "We are the second most environmentally degraded country in the Americas after Haiti," Miguel explained through an interpreter. "How did you come to oppose mining?" we asked. Miguel pointed to our water bottle and said simply: "Just like you, water is our priority." Over the next days, we would hear testimonies from dozens of people in Cabañas, many of whom are risking their lives in the struggle against mining. Almost all started or ended their stories with some variation of Miguel's answer: "Water for life," for drinking, for fishing, for farming—and not just for Cabañas but for the whole country.

Miguel drove us to the office of his employer, ADES (the Social and Economic Development Association), where local people talked with us late into the night about how they had come to oppose mining. ADES organizer Vidalina Morales acknowledged that "initially, we thought mining was good and it was going to help us out of poverty...through jobs and development."

The mining corporation that had come to Cabañas was the Vancouver-based Pacific Rim, one of several dozen companies interested in obtaining mining "exploitation" permits in the Lempa River watershed. In 2002 Pacific Rim acquired a firm that

already had an exploration license for a Cabañas site bearing the promising name El Dorado. That license gave Pacific Rim the right to use such techniques as sinking exploratory wells to determine just how lucrative the site would be.

Francisco Pineda, a corn farmer and charismatic organizer with the Environmental Committee of Cabañas, invited us to spend an afternoon with eighteen of his fellow committee members, some of whom had walked or been driven a long way to join us. One after another, each stood up to tell his or her story. Francisco, who received the 2011 Goldman Environmental Award (which some call the Environmental Nobel Prize), kicked off what became a five-hour session. He talked about watching the river near his farm dry up: “This was very strange, as it had never done this before. So we walked up the river to see why.... And then I found a pump from Pacific Rim that was pumping water for exploratory wells. All of us began to wonder, if they are using this much water in the exploration stage, how much will they use if they actually start mining?”

Francisco, Marcelo, Miguel, Vidalina and others then set out to learn everything they could about gold mining. From experience, they already knew that Cabañas was prone to earthquakes potentially strong enough to crack open the containers that mining companies build to hold the cyanide-laced water used to separate gold from the surrounding rock. Community members traveled to mining communities in neighboring Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala, returning home with stories about the contamination of rivers and lands by cyanide and other toxic chemicals. They turned to water experts, university researchers and international groups like Oxfam. A number of people attended seminars on mining in San Salvador.

They also discovered that only a tiny share of Pacific Rim’s profits would stay in the country, and that the El Dorado mine was projected to have an operational life of only about six years, with many of the promised jobs requiring skills that few local people had. And, as a study by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature pointed out, people in Cabañas “living near mining exploration activities began to notice environmental impacts from the mining exploration—reduced access to water, polluted waters, impacts to agriculture, and health issues.”

In community meetings, Pacific Rim officials claimed they would leave the water cleaner than they found it. (The Pacific Rim website is filled with promises about “social and environmental responsibility.”) But many local people were wary of the company’s intentions and honesty. Three people recounted how a Pacific Rim official boasted that cyanide was so safe that the official was willing to drink a glass of a favorite local beverage laced with the chemical. The official, we were told, backed down when community members insisted on authentication of the cyanide. “The company thought we’re just ignorant farmers with big hats who don’t know what we’re doing,” Miguel said. “But they’re the ones who are lying.”

Environmental Martyrs

As the anti-mining coalition strengthened with support from leaders in the Catholic Church, small businesses and the general public (a 2007 national poll showed that 62.4 percent opposed mining), tensions within Cabañas grew. These emerged in the context of other challenges, including the increasing use of Cabañas as an international drug trans-shipment route, with the attendant problems of corruption and violence. While questions remain, many activists believe that pro-mining forces—including local politicians who stood to benefit if Pacific Rim started mining—are ultimately responsible for the 2009 murder of Miguel’s brother, Marcelo Rivera. Marcelo, a cultural worker and popular educator from the Cabañas town of San Isidro, was an early and vibrant public face of the anti-mining movement.

In San Isidro, Rina Navarrete, director of the Friends of San Isidro Association (ASIC), whose founders included Marcelo, stressed that his work lives on through the focus of local groups on cultural work and youth leadership development. Members of another citizens group, MUFRAS-32, led us on a walking tour of this small farming town. At the renamed Marcelo Rivera Community Center, a yellow and red mural with Marcelo's face above a line of dancing children covers the front wall.

Four other murals painted by youths, on the outside walls of houses owned by sympathetic residents, make it impossible to forget Marcelo's mission or his assassination. One, for example, offers a dramatic contrast between two alternative paths of development: On the mural's right side, dark and gloomy "monster" projects, including gold mines, dump waste into a river that bisects the wall. On the other side of the mural's river, sunlight bathes healthy agricultural land and trees.

ASIC, MUFRAS-32 and other groups continue to organize theater and artistic festivals. Jaime Sánchez, a former theater student of Marcelo's now in his mid-20s, told us more: "We use theater, songs, murals and other cultural forms to show resistance. We use laughter." Jaime described ADES's creation of a radio station, Radio Victoria, which teaches young people to become deejays, production engineers and the other roles of running a station. These young people also took courses on mining, and spread what they learned over the airwaves.

Over a six-day period in late 2009, two other local activists were killed, one a woman who was eight months pregnant; the 2-year-old in her arms was wounded. ADES's Nelson Ventura barely escaped an attack. Hector Berrios and Zenayda Serrano, lawyers and leaders of MUFRAS-32, had their home broken into while they and their daughter slept, and documents related to their work were stolen. As Hector lamented, "Clandestine organizations still operate with impunity in this country."

Many of the people we interviewed, including youths at Radio Victoria, have received death threats. One person told us he turned down a \$30-a-week offer to meet with representatives of Pacific Rim to inform on anti-mining activists. Mourned another: "Now in our communities, you don't trust people you've trusted your entire life. That's one of the things the mining companies have done."

Democratic Spaces

We traveled from mining country to San Salvador, visiting the sprawling Cuscatlán Park. Along one wall is the Salvadoran version of the US Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in this case etched with the names of about 30,000 of the roughly 75,000 killed in the civil war. Thousands of them, including the dozens killed in the Lempa River massacre of 1981, were victims of massacres perpetrated by the US-backed—often US-trained—government forces and the death squads associated with them.

Peace accords were signed in 1992, and successive elections delivered the presidency to the conservative and pro-free trade ARENA party until 2009, when the progressive Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) won the largest bloc in the Congress and, two months later, the presidency. Anti-mining sentiment was already so strong in 2009 that both the reigning ARENA president and the successful FMLN candidate, Mauricio Funes, came out against mining during the campaign.

Much of the credit for this goes to the National Roundtable on Mining, formed in 2005 as leaders in Cabañas began meeting with groups from other departments where mining companies were seeking permits, as well as with research, development, legal aid and human rights groups in San Salvador. Roundtable facilitator Rodolfo Calles enumerated the goals they collectively agreed

upon after arduous deliberations: to help resistance at the community level; to win a national law banning metals mining; to link with anti-mining struggles in Honduras and Guatemala, since the Lempa River also winds through those two countries; and to take on the international tribunal in which Pacific Rim is suing El Salvador. Part of what moved the Roundtable to the “complete ban” position, Francisco Pineda explained, “was the realization that the government lacked the ability to regulate the mining activities of giant global firms.”

We were eager to understand how the still relatively young FMLN-led government was deciding whether to ban metals mining. Roundtable members told us the Funes government had announced it would grant no new permits during his five-year term and that it was considering a permanent ban. They also told us the government had initiated a major “strategic environmental review” to help set longer-term policy on mining.

We visited the ministry of the economy, which, along with the environment ministry, is leading the review. The man overseeing it, an engineer named Carlos Duarte, explained that the goal was to do a “scientific” analysis, with the help of a Spanish consulting firm (with Spanish funding). We pushed further, trying to understand how a technical analysis could decide a matter with such high stakes. On the one hand, we posed to Duarte, gold’s price has skyrocketed from less than \$300 an ounce a decade ago to more than \$1,500 an ounce today, increasing the temptation in a nation of deep poverty to consider mining. We quoted former Salvadoran finance minister and Pacific Rim economic adviser Manuel Hinds, who said, “Renouncing gold mining would be unjustifiable and globally unprecedented.” On the other hand, we quoted the head of the human rights group and Roundtable member FESPAD, Maria Silvia Guillen: “El Salvador is a small beach with a big river that runs through it. If the river dies, the entire country dies.”

Duarte explained that the Spanish firm, backed by four technical experts from other countries, had carried out a lengthy study of the issues and was consulting with people affected by mining, ranging from mining companies to the Roundtable groups. While he hoped this process would produce a consensus, Duarte admitted it was more likely the government and the firm would have to lay out “the interests of the majority,” after which the two ministries would then make their policy recommendation. (Roundtable members had told us that the first group consultation, about ten days earlier in San Salvador, had turned into a pitched debate between them and representatives of the mining companies.) “If new laws are necessary,” Duarte informed us, “then it will go to the legislature.”

We proceeded to the national legislature, its hallways a cacophony of red posters bearing the photos of FMLN leaders (and the ever-present martyr Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, assassinated in 1980 by the right) competing with offices adorned with posters of the leading opposition party, ARENA. We came to meet FMLN members of the legislature’s environment and climate change committee, including Lourdes Palacios, a three-term member from San Salvador with purple glasses and an easy smile. Palacios explained that they were ready with a bill to ban metals mining, but at the request of the executive branch, they were waiting for the outcome of the review before introducing it.

A representative from the department of Chalatenango, just west of Cabañas and an FMLN stronghold, expressed impatience at how long the review was taking and his conviction that “economic and political powers” were “putting pressure on non-FMLN legislators.” For the FMLN legislators, he stressed, “the pressure is the will of the people, and we are convinced that the majority of the people don’t want mining.” The FMLN does not have an absolute majority in the legislature; still, those present expressed

confidence that the ban could pass if the executive branch recommended it. One legislator suggested that El Salvador might have an easier time saying no than countries already dependent on revenues from gold exports.

Given the human rights situation in Cabañas, we interviewed the government's human rights ombudsman, a post created after the 1992 peace accords, to be selected by, and report directly to, the legislature. The current ombudsman is Oscar Luna, a former law professor and fierce defender of human rights—for which he too has received death threats. We asked Luna if he agreed with allegations that the killings in Cabañas were “assassinations organized and protected by economic and social powers.” Luna replied with his own phrasing: “There is still a climate of impunity in this country that we are trying to end.” He is pressing El Salvador's attorney general to conduct investigations into the “intellectual” authors of the killings. Several people have been arrested in connection with Marcelo Rivera's assassination, but the attorney general's office appears to be dragging its feet in digging deeper into who ordered and paid for the killings. Critics told us that the attorney general, appointed by the legislature as a compromise candidate between ARENA and the FMLN, has failed to investigate aggressively a number of sensitive cases involving politicians, corruption and organized crime.

Our interactions in Cabañas and San Salvador left us appreciative of the new democratic space that strong citizen movements and a progressive presidential victory have opened up, yet aware of the fragility and complexities that abound. The government faces an epic decision about mining, amid deep divisions and with institutions of democracy that are still quite young. As Vidalina reminded us when we parted, the “complications” are even greater than what we found in Cabañas or in San Salvador, because even if the ban's proponents eventually win, “these decisions could still get trumped in Washington.”

A Tribunal That Can Trump Democracy

Protesters around the globe know the sprawling structures that house the World Bank in Washington, yet few are aware that behind these doors sits a little-known tribunal that will be central to the Salvadoran gold story. The Salvadoran government never approved Pacific Rim's environmental impact study, and thus never gave its permission to begin actual mining. In retaliation, the firm sued the government under the 2005 Central American Free Trade Agreement. Like other trade agreements, CAFTA allows foreign investors to file claims against governments over actions—including health, safety and environmental measures and regulations—that reduce the value of their investment. The affected farmers and communities are not part of the calculus. The most frequently used tribunal for such “investor-state” cases is the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, housed at the World Bank.

In the words of lawyer Marcos Orellana of the Center for International Environmental Law, who assisted the Roundtable in drafting an amicus brief for the tribunal, Pacific Rim “is trying to dictate El Salvador's environment and social policy using CAFTA's arbitration mechanism.” Pacific Rim's “claim amounts to an abuse of process.” The brief methodically lays out how Canada-headquartered Pacific Rim first incorporated in the Cayman Islands to escape taxes, then brazenly lobbied Salvadoran officials to shape policies to benefit the firm, and only after that failed, in 2007 reincorporated one of its subsidiaries in the United States to use CAFTA to sue El Salvador.

For this article we attempted to interview Pacific Rim board chair Catherine McLeod-Seltzer, but her office steered us to the CEO of Pacific Rim's US subsidiary, Thomas Shrake. In a tersely worded e-mail, he “respectfully denied” our request.

Pacific Rim is demanding \$77 million in compensation. A case brought against El Salvador by another gold-mining company, Commerce Group, was dismissed earlier this year on a technicality, but the government still had to pay close to \$1 million in legal fees and for half of the arbitration costs. Dozens of human rights, environmental and fair-trade groups across North America, from U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities and the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador (CISPES) to Oxfam, Public Citizen, Mining Watch and the Institute for Policy Studies, are pressuring Pacific Rim to withdraw the case.

Many believe that even if Pacific Rim withdraws its case or loses in this tribunal, the very existence of “investor-state” clauses in trade agreements is an affront to democracy. “For democracy to prevail,” Sarah Anderson of IPS told us, “citizens’ movements and their allies in governments must work hard to eliminate these clauses from all trade and investment agreements.”

Back in Santa Marta, citizen groups are building sustainable farming as an alternative economic base to mining. Their goal: a “solidarity economy,” or, as Vidalina termed it, a “people’s economy.” Explained Vidalina: “We reject the image of us just as anti-mining. We are for water and a positive future. We want alternatives to feed us, to clothe us.”

Elvis Nataren, a philosophy student, led us to the riverbank and pointed to communal land where organic farms will be built. Three towering greenhouses already contain plump hydroponic tomatoes, green peppers and other vegetables. Together these should make Santa Marta self-sufficient in corn, beans and vegetables. As Elvis explained, “food sovereignty” was even more urgent in the wake of CAFTA’s passage, given the cheap foreign produce that began to flood the Salvadoran market. Elvis, Vidalina, Miguel, Francisco and others we met in Cabañas were well aware that as they nurture farmlands and the river vital to this alternative future, their success also depends upon struggles and debates in San Salvador and Washington.

A month after we returned home, the death threats against individual youths at Radio Victoria escalated, with such ominous untraceable text messages as: “look oscar we aren’t kidding shut up this radio or you also die you dog...”

And in June, nearly two years after Marcelo Rivera’s murder, the body of a student volunteer with the Environmental Committee of Cabañas was found dead, with two bullets in his head. As the Roundtable press release noted: “The last time he was seen by fellow environmental activists was...distributing fliers against metallic mining in [Cabañas] in preparation for a public consultation about the mining sector taking place nearby.” “Not another mine, not another death,” implored the Roundtable.

Robin Broad is a professor at American University's School of International Service, and John Cavanagh is director of the Institute for Policy Studies. Their most recent book is Development Redefined: How the Market Met its Match.

Fifth anniversary of *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*: protection of Indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources more urgent than ever

September 12, 2012

There is urgent need to uphold international human rights standards in response to intensive resource development activities affecting the lands of Indigenous peoples at home and abroad.

Five years ago, on 13 September 2007, the United Nations adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the minimum standard for the “survival, dignity and well-being” of Indigenous peoples worldwide. As a universal human rights instrument, the *Declaration* is a beacon of hope and a blueprint for justice and reconciliation.

The rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration* include the right of Indigenous peoples to determine for themselves when, and under what conditions, resource development will be carried out on their lands and territories.

Canada officially endorsed the *Declaration* in November 2010. The federal government, however, has not collaborated with Indigenous peoples to implement the rights and related government obligations affirmed in the *Declaration*. To date the government has failed to ensure that Indigenous peoples are meaningfully involved in decisions regarding resource development. Government practice and policy, as well as new legislation brought forward by the federal government, continue to undermine Indigenous peoples' rights.

A proposed pipeline to export oil sands crude to Asia has become a flashpoint for Indigenous peoples whose territories would be crossed. Before public hearings into the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline began, government ministers declared that increased export of oil sands crude was a matter of national interest. The federal government then limited the scope of environmental impact assessments, as well as the instances in which resource development projects would be subject to federal assessment.

Reliable identification and disclosure of risks is important for protection of Indigenous peoples' rights, including the right to meaningful participation in the decision-making process. Reliance on the often perfunctory reviews carried out at the provincial level is an abdication of the federal government's responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and of its obligations to ensure that all levels of government comply with international human rights standards.

The federal government has also played a key role in opening doors for Canadian resource companies to operate in other countries. Canadian corporations account for a significant proportion of extractive activities in the global South and are especially active in the territories of Indigenous peoples. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has twice urged Canada to implement measures to hold Canadian corporations accountable for violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples. The federal government has failed to establish a mechanism with real power to hold corporations accountable or protect the rights of victims. The government has instead relied on voluntary measures and the poorly enforced weak laws of the host countries.

The Colombian Constitutional Court has concluded that at least one in three distinct Indigenous nations are in imminent danger of physical or cultural “extermination” as the consequence of armed conflict and forced displacement from their lands. Widespread human rights violations have been committed by all the warring parties as they fight over the resource-rich territories of Indigenous peoples. It was in this context that Canada negotiated a free trade agreement to promote Canadian investment in Colombia. Despite the crisis situation facing Indigenous peoples, Canada has yet to carry out a proper assessment of the impact such investment will have on human rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, has called for an independent assessment of the emergency situation facing Indigenous peoples in Colombia, including a visit by the UN Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide.

In his most recent report to the United Nations, James Anaya has drawn attention to the grave risks that resource development activities pose to Indigenous peoples throughout the world. The Special Rapporteur has said consultation and consent are necessary safeguards to ensure that government and corporate activities don’t compromise rights essential to the well-being and physical and cultural survival of Indigenous peoples. The Special Rapporteur also criticized the colonial nature of the current model of resource development in which any benefits to Indigenous peoples “typically pale in economic value in comparison to the profits gained by the corporation.”

Today, as celebrate the 5th anniversary of the UN Declaration and the promise that it holds, we draw attention to the need for good faith implementation in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

In regard to Indigenous peoples’ lands, territories and resources, our organizations are calling on governments in Canada to:

- Ensure that all processes to review and license resource development activities in Canada are consistent with the constitutional obligation to protect inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights and with international human rights standards, including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- Recognize free, prior and informed consent as an essential human rights safeguard, consistent with Indigenous peoples’ rights under Canadian constitutional and international human rights law.
- Implement measures, consistent with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to ensure the accountability of Canadian corporations operating on the lands of Indigenous peoples in other countries.
- Support the calls for the UN Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide to visit Colombia as part of an independent assessment of the emergency situation facing Indigenous peoples in that country.

Amnesty International
Canada

Canadian Friends Service
Committee (Quakers)

Chiefs of Ontario

First Nations Women
Advocating Responsible
Mining

First Nations Summit

KAIROS: Canadian
Ecumenical Justice
Initiatives

MiningWatch Canada

The Treaty Four First
Nations

Union of British Columbia
Indian Chiefs



TROUBLED WATERS

HOW MINE WASTE DUMPING IS POISONING
OUR OCEANS, RIVERS, AND LAKES

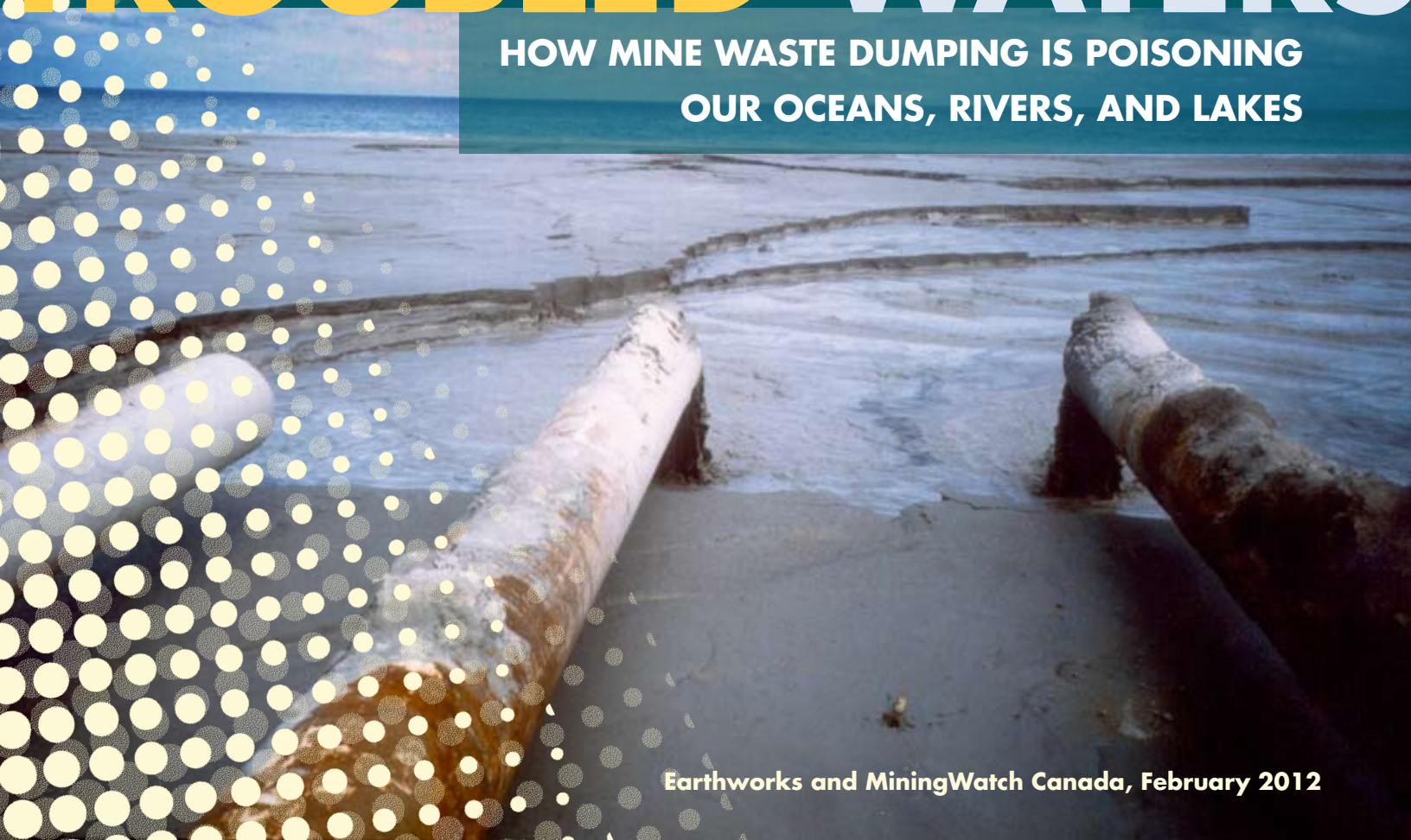




PHOTO: EARTHWORKS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOVE: Mine tailings
at Barrick Gold's
Porgera mine in Papua
New Guinea.

MINING COMPANIES are dumping more than 180 million tonnes of hazardous mine waste each year into rivers, lakes, and oceans worldwide, threatening vital bodies of water with toxic heavy metals and other chemicals poisonous to humans and wildlife. The amount of mine waste dumped annually is 1.5 times as much as all the municipal waste dumped in U.S. landfills in 2009.¹

Mine processing wastes, also known as tailings, can contain as many as three dozen dangerous chemicals including arsenic, lead, mercury and processing chemicals such as petroleum byproducts, acids and cyanide.² Waste rock, the extra rock that does not contain significant amounts of ore, can also generate acid and toxic contamination. The dumping of mine

tailings and waste rock pollutes waters around the world, threatening the drinking water, food supply and health of communities as well as aquatic life and ecosystems.

An investigation by Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada has identified the world's waters that are suffering the greatest harm or

TABLE 1. WATER BODIES IMPERILED BY CURRENT OR PROPOSED TAILINGS DUMPING, SELECTED EXAMPLES

BODY OF WATER	MINES AND LOCATION	TYPE OF ORE	TYPE OF DUMPING	COMPANY OR COMPANIES RESPONSIBLE
Basamuk (Astrolabe) Bay, Bismarck Sea	Ramu Nickel and Yandera mines, Papua New Guinea	nickel-cobalt; copper-gold	Marine (proposed)	Metallurgical Construction Corp., Highlands Pacific (Ramu); Marengo Mining (Yandera)
Norwegian Fjords	Kirkenes, Kvannevaun, Stjernøya, Hustadmarmor, Skaland, Engebøfjellet, & Repparfjorden	iron, industrial minerals, titanium, copper	Marine (proposed & actual)	Northern Iron Ltd., LNS AS, Sibelco Nordic, Omya Group, Nordic Mining, Nussir
Canadian lakes	Across Canada	gold, nickel, copper, copper-gold, copper-zinc, iron, diamonds	Lakes (proposed & actual)	Agnico-Eagle, BHP Billiton, Cleveland Cliffs, Crowflight Minerals, De Beers, Goldcorp, Taseko Mines, Imperial Metals, Jolu Central Gold, Marathon PGM, Mitsubishi Metals, Newmont, Rio Tinto, Teck, Tyhee NWT, Vale, Xstrata
Senunu Bay	Batu Hijau mine, Indonesia	copper-gold	Marine	Newmont Mining, Sumitomo Mining
Luise Harbor	Lihir mine, Papua New Guinea	gold	Marine	Newcrest Mining
Pigiput Bay	Simberi mine, Papua New Guinea	gold	Marine	Allied Gold
Black Sea	Cayeli Bakir, Turkey	copper-zinc	Marine	Inmet Mining
Otomina and Ajkwa Rivers, Arafura Sea	Grasberg mine, West Papua	copper-gold	River	Freeport McMoran, Rio Tinto
Porgera River, Fly River system	Porgera mine, Papua New Guinea	gold	River	Barrick Gold
Ok Tedi River, Fly River system	Ok Tedi mine, Papua New Guinea	copper-gold	River	Ok Tedi Mining Ltd.
Auga River	Tolukuma mine, Papua New Guinea	copper-gold	River	Petromin Holdings
Lower Slate Lake	Kensington mine, USA	gold	Lake	Coeur D'Alene Mines Corp.



PHOTO: DAMIAN BAKER

are at greatest risk from dumping of mine waste. **(See Table 1.)** Based on a review of government reports, news media accounts and more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific articles, we have catalogued the wide range of damage and hazards to ecosystems, wildlife and human health caused by tailings dumping into natural water bodies. We have also identified the leading multinational companies that continue to use this irresponsible practice. **(See Table 2.)**

Our investigation found that of the world's largest mining companies, only one – BHP Billiton of Melbourne, Australia, and London, UK – has adopted policies against dumping in rivers and oceans, and none have policies against dumping in lakes.³ (Previously, two other companies – Falconbridge, now part of

Xstrata, and WMC, now part of BHP Billiton – had adopted similar policies.) Many of these companies are also guilty of an unjust double standard: they dump toxic mine tailings in waters around the world even though the nations where many are chartered have prohibited or restricted the practice. At least half of the members of the International Council on Mining and Metals – a network of 20 mining and metals companies formed in 2001 “to address the core sustainable development challenges faced by the industry” – currently dump tailings into bodies of water or have plans to do so.⁴

In a world where climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing and recurring

ABOVE: Panguna mine, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

tragedies like the Gulf of Mexico oil spill are already disrupting water and food supplies, polluting the world's waters with mine tailings is unconscionable – and the damage it causes is largely irreversible. No feasible technology exists to remove and treat mine tailings from oceans; even partial cleanup of tailings dumped into rivers or lakes is prohibitively expensive. There is but one workable solution: *Mining companies must stop dumping into natural bodies of water.*

In some cases, safer waste management options exist: putting dry waste in lined and covered landfills (a process called dry stacking) and putting tailings back into the pits and tunnels the ore came from (called backfilling). In other cases, even land-based tailings disposal is too risky. Some places where companies want to dump tailings are simply inappropriate for mining and should be *no-go zones*. The protection of such areas must be coupled with more efficient use of metals and support for sustainable development and livelihoods that do not endanger communities' health and safety.

A number of nations have adopted prohibitions or restrictions on dumping mine tailings in natural bodies of water. Nations with some restrictions on dumping – including the United States, Canada and Australia – are home to major mining companies that use practices internationally that they wouldn't be allowed to use at home. Even these national regulations, however, are being eroded by amendments, exemptions, and loopholes that have allowed destructive dumping in lakes and streams.

Non-governmental initiatives to promote responsible mining by corporations can play an important role in helping close regulatory loopholes. Civil society organizations working to encourage more responsible mining are calling on mining companies to end water-based tailings dumping, as are consumers and retailers of mined products such as jewelry and electronics. In turn, the mining industry as a whole must share our collective responsibility to protect water and aquatic ecosystems by pledging not to dump mine wastes in Earth's most precious resource: water.

TABLE 2. MINING CORPORATIONS THAT DUMP TAILINGS INTO NATURAL WATER BODIES

COMPANY	HEADQUARTERS	MAJOR LOCATION(S) OF DUMPING
Barrick Gold	Toronto, Canada	Fly River, Papua New Guinea
BHP Billiton	Melbourne, Australia / London, UK	Long Lake, Northwest Territories, Canada
Freeport McMoRan	Phoenix, USA	Ajkwa River, West Papua
Goldcorp Inc.	Vancouver, Canada	Crazy Wind Pond, Ontario, Canada; King Richard Creek, British Columbia, Canada (proposed).
Newcrest Mining	Melbourne, Australia	Luise Harbor, Papua New Guinea; Koro Sea, Fiji (proposed)
Newmont Mining	Denver, USA	Senunu Bay, Indonesia; Tail Lake, Nunavut, Canada (proposed), Cerro Minas Conga lakes, Peru (waste rock, proposed)
Rio Tinto	London, UK / Melbourne, Australia	Ajkwa River, West Papua; Wabush Lake, Labrador, Canada; Cassidaigne Canyon, Mediterranean Sea
Teck	Vancouver, Canada	Trout Pond, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada; Garrow Lake (closed), Northwest Territories, Canada
Xstrata	Zug, Switzerland	Moose Lake, Ontario, Canada; Lake Watson, Quebec, Canada
Vale	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Sandy Pond, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, Meatbird Lake, Ontario; Thompson Lakes, Manitoba, Canada

Note: This is not a comprehensive list of companies or sites.

Hauling a load of ore during test mining at Fortune's NICO project. A concentrate produced from the NICO ore will be shipped to Saskatchewan for processing at the proposed hydrometallurgical facility.

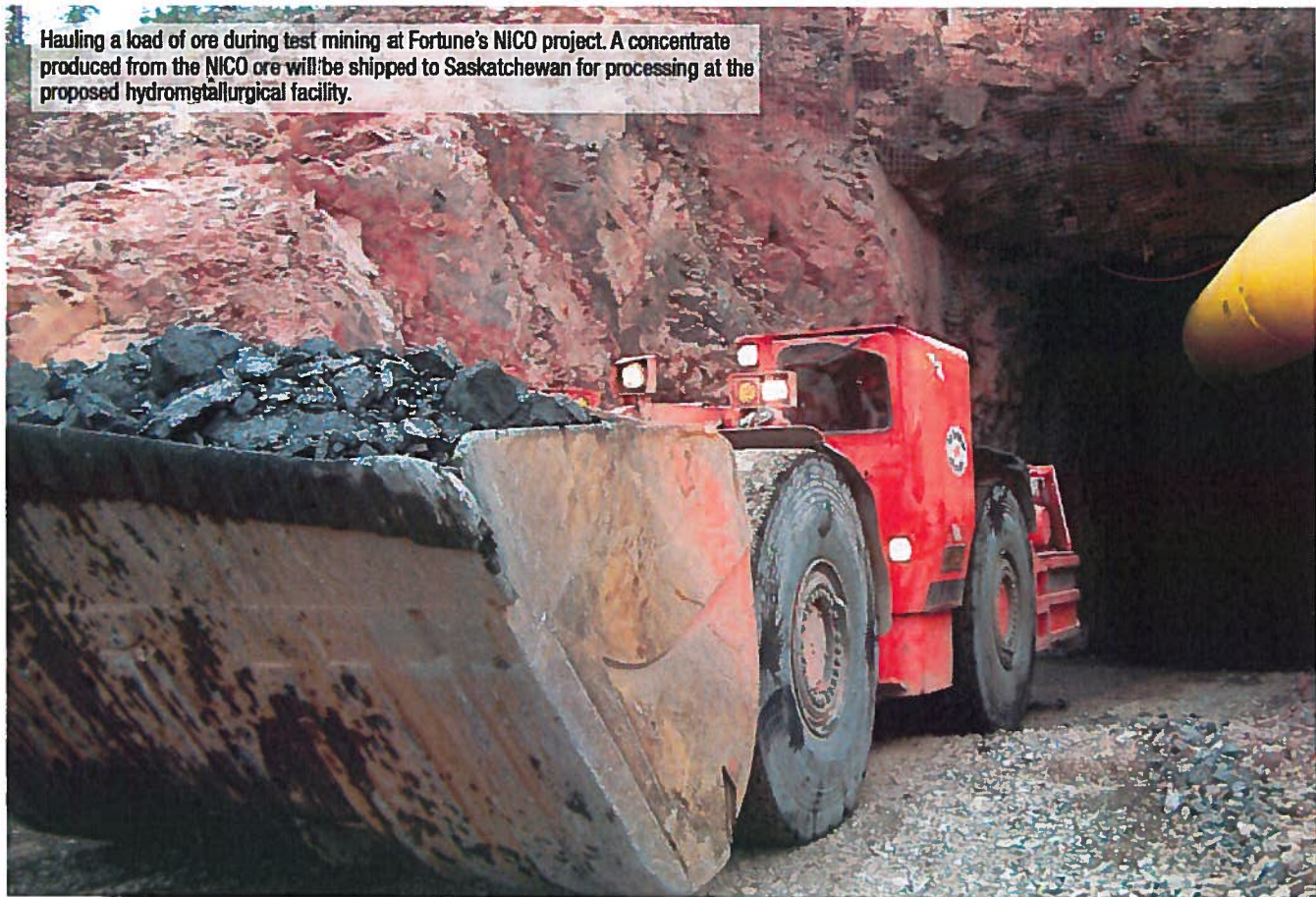


Photo provided by Fortune Minerals

Fortune Favours the Bold

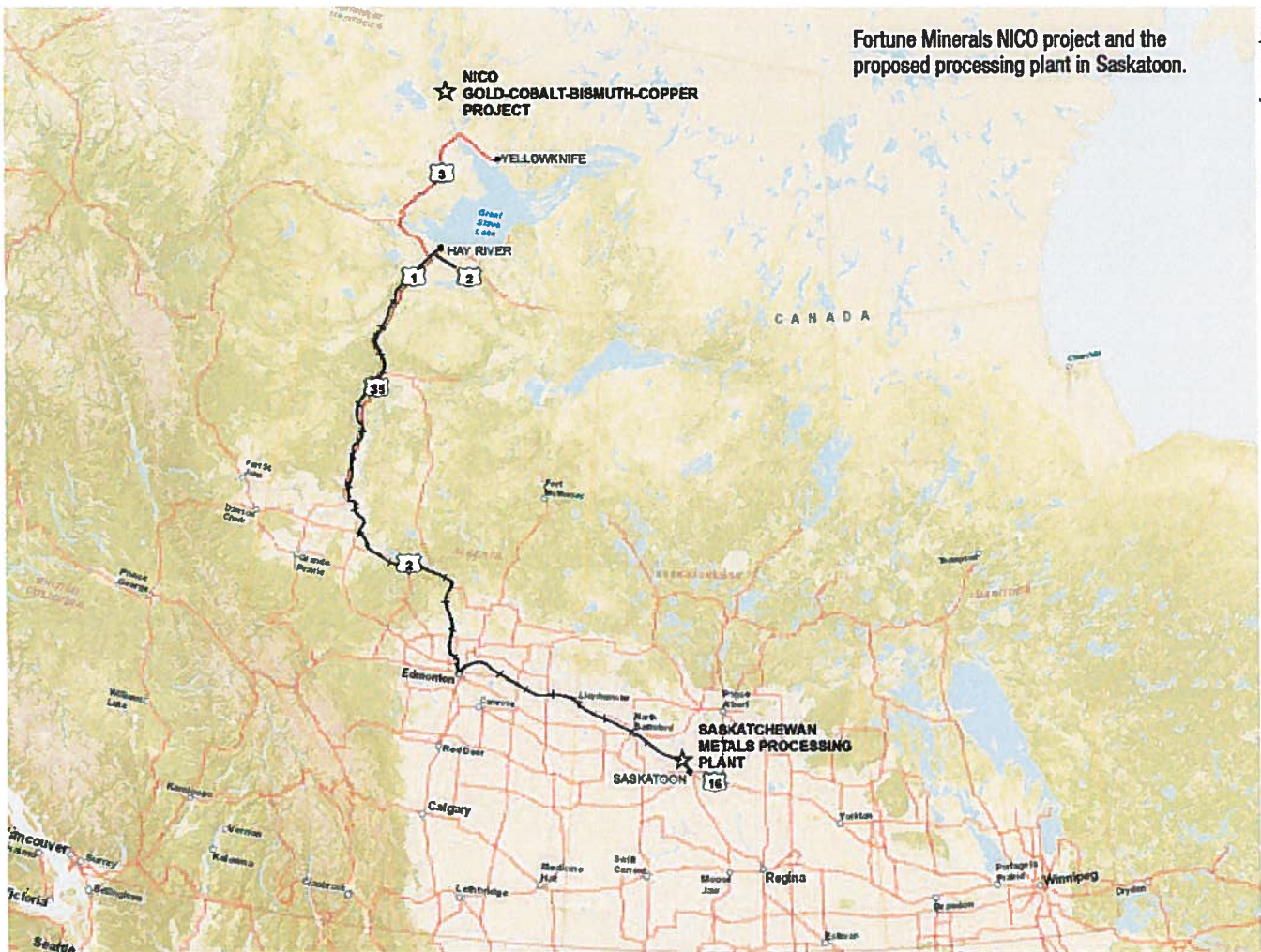
New mineral facility could open the door for custom processing in Saskatchewan

by Penny Eaton

It may be a good time for Saskatchewan residents to brush up on their chemistry because that will be the foundation of a new \$200 million minerals processing facility being permitted just east of Langham in the rural municipality of Corman Park. Fortune Minerals' proposed Saskatchewan Metals Processing Plant (SMPP) will treat about 65,000 tonnes per year of metal sulphide concentrates produced at the company's NICO project in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

Fortune Minerals, with its head office in London, Ontario, has several mineral exploration and development projects across northern Canada. Fortune's Mount Klappen project northeast of Prince Rupert, British Columbia is one of the world's largest undeveloped deposits of anthracite metallurgical coal—a high-carbon, high-energy type of coal that is a key ingredient in many steel making processes.

Their NICO project, which will supply the new plant in Saskatchewan, is located 160 kilometres from Yellowknife in the NWT, and 50 kilometres north of



Fortune Minerals NICO project and the proposed processing plant in Saskatoon.

the Tlicho community of Whatl. Fortune discovered the gold-cobalt-bismuth-copper deposit in 1996 and to date, has completed over \$100 million of work on the project. Fortune is now in the environmental assessment process, both in NWT, to permit a combined open pit and underground mine and concentrator; and in Saskatchewan, to ensure the health and environmental safety of the proposed processing plant. The plan is for NICO to be ready for production in 2014.

RUNNING BACK TO SASKATOON

So how did it come to be that minerals discovered and mined in NWT will be processed and marketed from Saskatoon?

"Our interest in the Saskatoon area starts with the fact that we will be a fully vertically-integrated project going from ore right through to high-value metal and chemical products," explains Robin Goad, president and CEO of Fortune Minerals.

To get to the high-value part, the minerals need to be processed, which is rela-

tively energy-intensive. Power costs in the NWT were going to be very high—enough to threaten the economic viability of the project, so Fortune began to examine their options elsewhere. Northern Alberta provided the closest jurisdiction, while Manitoba offered the lowest energy costs in Canada. What could Saskatchewan bring to the table? A good location, modestly-priced power and water, a logical permitting system, but most of all, a welcoming attitude on the part of local and provincial governments.

"We settled on Saskatoon largely because of the interaction with Enterprise Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority (SREDA). They were very proactive in assisting us," Goad reports.

The provincial government gave a strong indication of support for the project in December 2009, when it enacted a five-year income tax incentive for corporations that process minerals imported into the province to the prime metal stage. Among other things, to qualify for

the tax incentive, eligible corporations must maintain a minimum capital investment of \$125 million in the Saskatchewan operation and maintain a minimum incremental employment of 75 full-time employees in the province.

"Saskatchewan is already a global leader when it comes to mining, and this new operation will be a great addition to support our mining industry, and utilize the expertise that already exists in the province," said Jeremy Harrison, Minister of Enterprise Saskatchewan. "Our goal is to encourage more economic growth by attracting more high-skilled and high-paying jobs to the province."

The incentive was a good idea, says Tim LeClair, president and CEO of SREDA, not only because it helped bring the company to Saskatchewan, but also because it's not simply a giveaway. "The incentives provided are directly related to the success of the project."

Another reason for locating the plant in Langham is its proximity to Saskatoon and the University of Saskatchewan.

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"You've got a skilled pool of engineers and plant workers and a great university," Goad observes. "One of the challenges of operating in places like the North West Territories is that these types of skills need to be imported at significant cost. You can attract good people there with a paycheck, but you can't keep them if they're not happy. If you've got a chemical engineer or mechanical engineer or a process technician, these people can now commute from their homes in Saskatoon to their workplace. They can go to work every day and then go home and watch their kids play hockey at night. That's a huge advantage that mitigates our risk of staff turnover."

TURNING ROCK INTO GOLD

While mining is certainly nothing new for Saskatchewan, value-added mineral processing is something we don't do a lot of here, and certainly not for ore that is mined outside of the province.

"It's a new concept for Saskatchewan; we generally mine and mill onsite," says LeClair. "In this case, we're bringing resources from somewhere else, adding some value and then moving it off to market. It's creating a different capacity for the province, something we don't really have now: custom milling."

Simply put, the Saskatchewan Metals Processing Plant (SMPP) is going to turn rock into gold and other metals. The ore is mined in NWT, then goes through an initial crushing process that decreases the amount of material that must be further processed.

"We're very fortunate that our ores have a very high concentration ratio, which means that we can process 4,650 tonnes of ore per day and reduce that to only 180 tonnes of concentrate containing all the valuable metal," notes Robin Goad.

From the mine site, the concentrate will be trucked to the railhead at Hay River, NWT, where it will be loaded onto rail cars and shipped along CN's northern line directly to the plant in Langham. That's where the SMPP begins its work. Every day, the plant will receive 180 tonnes of bulk concentrate from NWT. The material will be re-ground before going through a secondary flotation process to separate the material into cobalt and bismuth concentrates, both of

which are gold-bearing. Once the cobalt and bismuth are extracted using a leaching process, the remaining material goes through an additional step of cyanidation to extract the gold.

The plant will use a series of hydrometallurgical processes to remove impurities and generate specific products, like cobalt cathodes used in high-quality metal superalloys, or cobalt sulphates, which are the raw material for lithium ion and nickel metal hydride batteries.

Bismuth will be processed to a high grade metal ingot. The demand for bismuth has been steadily rising as a non-toxic and environmentally safe replacement for lead. Bismuth is so safe that its traditional use has been for cosmetic and pharmaceutical products; in fact, bismuth subsalicylate is the active ingredient in Pepto-Bismol™. A heightened sensitivity to lead toxicity has led many jurisdictions to enact legislation to eliminate lead in plumbing and electronic solders and with free cutting steel. This is contributing to a significant growth in the demand for bismuth.

By value, 35 per cent of the metal contained in the NICO deposit is gold; 33 per cent is bismuth; 30 per cent cobalt, and 2 per cent copper, along with trace amounts of nickel and zinc.

Goad is optimistic about his company's prospects for the future. For one thing, Fortune Minerals owns 15 per cent of the global reserves of bismuth. For another, three of the metals Fortune will be producing (gold, bismuth and cobalt) are in strong demand around the world and are among those at highest risk for supply disruptions as a result of scarcity, resource nationalism and political issues. For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo accounts for over 50 per cent of the global cobalt supply while China dominates the bismuth market with approximately 80 per cent of global reserves. This means Fortune is in a good position to become a reliable North American source of supply for these important industrial metals.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The new plant will create 85 permanent jobs ranging from metallurgical and chemical engineering and process technologies to tradespersons and support staff. This doesn't include all of the addi-



Reinforcing the mine ventilation shaft collar at Fortune's NICO project in the NWT.

Photo provided by Fortune Minerals

tional workers who will be needed to build and supply the new facility.

Before reaching the construction phase, the project still has to complete environmental assessments in both the NWT and Saskatchewan. Corman Park residents and others naturally want to ensure that the processing plant will be a safe and positive addition to the region.

To that end, the company had to conduct soil investigations to demonstrate the design for the plant foundations and earthworks for the storage ponds and residue facilities, as well as to show how groundwater, water supply, vegetation, and wildlife will be affected.

"We can't have development at any cost," Tim LeClair points out. "That's why we have processes in place to make sure that any of the projects that are proposed will pass the test."

Saskatchewan's Environmental Assessment Review Panel is currently reviewing Fortune Minerals' project proposal to see if it meets provincial environmental requirements. If deficiencies are noted, Fortune has the opportunity to propose ways to address them before additional public review and governmental recommendations. Then the

Minister of Environment renders a decision about whether or not the project goes ahead.

It's a long process, but one that those in the mining sector are familiar with. "We've been at this for four years in the NWT," Goad says of the NICO project. "We're hoping to be permitted in Saskatchewan in 2012 and in the North West Territories in 2013, which would have us on track to start operations in 2014."

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

At this point, the NICO mine is estimated to have an 18-year lifespan, but the processing plant could go on much longer if it becomes a custom processor for materials sourced from other projects. There is also potential to enter into recycling of mineral products.

"It's not just digging materials out of the ground and sending them away. We're developing a value-added business in Saskatchewan," Goad says.

And the SMPP shows the potential in a new area for the province. "It creates additional capacity in our mining sector in Saskatchewan," LeClair points out. "We can do custom processing here. The door is open for similar opportunities." SMJ