

Canadian Mining Industry Abuses in Guatemala. And How Indigenous Communities are Fighting Back

Global Research News Hour Episode 106

By [Michael Welch](#) and [MiningWatch Canada](#)

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Region: [Canada](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

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“As far as I can tell, the Canadian Ambassador here is a representative for Canadian mining companies.” – Dr. Tony Bevington, paraphrasing a Latin American Minister of Energy and Mines in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development [1]

The Canadian Mining Industry is a major player on the world stage.

In 2008, 75% of all mining companies in the world were headquartered in Canada, with 57% of all mining companies in the world are traded on the Canadian TSX and TSX-Venture Stock Exchanges. [2]

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The industry boasts of the Canadian mining sector's contribution to the Canadian economy, noting it contributed \$54 billion to Canada's GDP in 2013. It claims to have contributed \$74 billion in taxes and royalties to federal, provincial and territorial governments throughout the decade leading to 2012. [3]

The Canadian government also makes a show of advancing Corporate Social Responsibility. In their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy, noting that “the Government of Canada has already taken significant steps to promote and support corporate social responsibility by Canadian companies operating abroad.” [4]

Numerous citizen groups have raised objections to the extreme environmental devastation and social violence for which these companies are responsible. They note how mining companies are pursuing projects over the objections of residents of affected areas. They note how mining companies are implicated in rape, killing and intimidation of people in affected communities who resist.

Numerous lawsuits have been levelled against mining giants like GoldCorp and Tahoe Resources, but are generally unsuccessful.

Among the citizen groups speaking against Canada's Mining practices are Ottawa-based Mining Watch Canada and Kairos, the Canada-based ecumenical organization KAIROS.

It was Mining Watch that uncovered a suppressed report from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) in 2009 which concluded, "Canadian companies have been the most significant group involved in unfortunate incidents in the developing world. Canadian companies have played a much more major role than their peers from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Canadian companies are more likely to be engaged in community conflict, environmental and unethical behaviour..." [5]

Significantly, the majority of the Canadian mining companies implicated in these abuses of human rights and the environment supposedly have CSR policies in place! [6]

But on the positive side, an impressive resistance is being waged against these companies. Indigenous peoples, those most affected by mining projects have mobilized tens of thousands in opposition to projects such as Tahoe's Escobal mine in Southeastern Guatemala. [7]

This week's episode of the Global Research News Hour takes a dedicated look at the abusive practices of Canada's mining sector, and the efforts by communities in Guatemala and their partners abroad to fight back against them.

Anna Guadalupe Matzir Miculax is Maya Kaqchikel from Chimaltenango, Guatemala. She is a student of legal and social sciences and works with [CEIBA](#), the Association for Community Development and Promotion in Guatemala, a KAIROS partner. Since the age of 13, Ana Guadalupe has been involved in issues related to Indigenous rights including the rights of women, youth, land rights and the construction of a collective proposal of "buen vivir" in Guatemala. She is involved in the Indigenous and campesino movements including the Waqib Kejand Marcha Indigena y Campesina.

On May 27, 2015, she spoke to an audience at the University of Winnipeg alongside Rachel Warden, Latin American Partnerships and GenderJustice program coordinator for KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. They spoke in the first half hour.

Jen Moore is the Latin America Program Coordinator for MiningWatch Canada. She spoke in the second half hour.

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Notes:

1. <http://www.miningwatch.ca/fr/node/6912>
2. <http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/topics-domaines/other-autre/csr-strat-rse-2009.aspx?lang=eng>
3. <http://mining.ca/resources/mining-facts>
4. <http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/topics-domaines/other-autre/csr-strat-rse-2009.aspx?lang=eng>
5. <http://www.miningwatch.ca/fr/node/6598>
6. ibid
7. <http://www.miningwatch.ca/news/tens-thousands-oppose-tahoe-resource-s-escobal-project-guatemala>

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