Uranium Mining in the Eeyou Istchee Territory

WHAT STRATECO IS NOT TELLING YOU

Indigenous Peoples from around the world have rejected uranium mining and the nuclear industry.

Across North America and around the world, Indigenous communities have rejected uranium mining and the nuclear industry because of their experience and analysis of the risks to their communities and to the global environment. The Navajo in the south-western U.S., the Lakota in the central U.S., the Ojibway of Serpent River and the Ardoch Algonquin in Ontario, the Passamaquoddy of New Brunswick, and the Wongatha of Australia are among those who have rejected uranium mining and nuclear power.

In 2006, Indigenous people from around the world met at Window Rock, Arizona, the capital of the Navajo Nation, for the Indigenous World Uranium Summit. The delegates made the following declaration:

> *We, the Peoples gathered at the Indigenous World Uranium Summit, at this critical time of intensifying nuclear threats to Mother Earth and all life, demand a worldwide ban on uranium mining, processing, enrichment, fuel use, and weapons testing and deployment, and nuclear waste dumping on Native Lands.*
>
> *Indigenous Peoples are connected spiritually and culturally to our Mother, the Earth. Accordingly, we endorse and encourage development of renewable energy sources that sustain — not destroy — Indigenous lands and the Earth's ecosystems.*

Today's uranium mines do pollute the environment.

Accidental spills and regular releases of wastes and contaminated water are a reality at modern uranium mines as they are at all mines. While uranium mines must adhere to environmental regulations, these do not prevent pollution or environmental impacts, they put limits to it based on balance between achievable technology and available science.

Reviews of the effects of mines that, by in large, meet existing standards still show effects on fish and fish habitat downstream of mines. For example in lakes downstream of the Key Lake uranium mine in Saskatchewan deformities in the eggs of pike are being caused by pollution from the mine.

In Australia there have been a number of recent environmental problems at the Ranger uranium mine. These include tailings ponds that are leaking 100,000 litres of radioactive water into the earth and rock fissures. The environmental problems have upset relations with the local Aboriginal traditional owners, the Mirarr, and are impacting nearby Kakadu National Park.

Blasting and processing millions of tonnes of radioactive rock will inevitably lead to release of radon gas and other radioactive materials into the environment. Radon decays into other, more toxic materials within a few days. These toxic radioactive solids can be taken up by plants and wildlife and can increase the exposure of people who eat them to increased radiation risks.

Mine waste disposal is an environmental risk – forever.

Though most of the uranium is removed, mill wastes called tailings still contain the radioactive elements that come from uranium as well as other toxic metals and the chemicals used to remove uranium from the rock. These wastes will pose a radioactive threat to the environment for at least 100,000 years. A common way of disposing uranium mine tailings is to put them under water to prevent the spread of radioactive dust and radon. Over the thousands of years that the wastes have to be cared for; there is a serious risk that the dams used to hold the tailings and water cover could fail, spilling wastes downstream and leaving the remaining wastes exposed. Even without a failure of a dam, the storage area for the wastes may leak, or groundwater may pass through buried tailings, contaminating surface water and groundwater with radium or other toxic metals.

Nuclear is not the solution to climate change and our energy needs.

Though there are a few individuals who claim to be environmentalists and support nuclear power, all of Canada's reputable environmental groups oppose nuclear. They do not see it as a viable response to the climate crisis for the following reasons:

1. Nuclear power stations take too long to locate, license and build.
2. Nuclear power is too expensive and dependent on government subsidies.
3. Nuclear power is not green; the mining and processing of uranium and the construction of power plants release green house gasses and other contaminants.
4. Nuclear power depends on uranium – a non-renewable resource.
5. Wastes from the nuclear fuel chain (mining, processing, and use of uranium in a reactor) represent a significant hazard to present and future generations.
6. Other options for renewable, flexible and truly green power exist.

More uranium is not needed for medical uses.

The amount of uranium currently needed for isotope production is very small and could be easily met from existing supplies; supply problems are related to the technology to produce the isotopes and not the supply of uranium. Canada's Chalk River reactor that supplied isotopes for medical applications has been expensive and unreliable and is scheduled to fully shut down by 2016. The Federal government is now funding research into alternative ways of producing isotopes that do not require uranium and nuclear reactors.

Matoush has real differences from Saskatchewan

When comparing Saskatchewan to Matoush it is important to recognize that the uranium in the Otish Mountains is found in concentrations that are only 10% of the average found in Saskatchewan. This means that Strateco's ability to generate a profit and have revenues to share with the community will be much more limited than the companies that are mining the world's richest uranium deposits in Saskatchewan. Strateco cannot make enough profit at current uranium prices for them to start mining. The lower concentration of uranium at Matoush also means that there will be much more waste generated and left in the north for every barrel of yellowcake uranium that is sent south.

Produced by MiningWatch Canada

For references and additional information visit www.miningwatch.ca/Matoush