

Rights Action forwards this letter from Emilie Smith to the President of Simon Fraser University concerning the \$10,000,000 "Giff" from Goldcorp Inc to Simon Fraser University.

At http://rightsaction.org/articles/Goldcorp_gift_to_university_100410.html, read Rights Action's Public Letter to Simon Fraser University Concerning Goldcorp Inc's \$10,000,000 "Giff"

Please consider writing your own letter to Simon Fraser University, concerning this issue.

- Please re-distribute and re-post this letter all around
- To get on/ off Rights Action's listserv:
<http://visitor.constantcontact.com/d.jsp?m=1103480765269>

SEE BELOW: How to support indigenous and campesino communities resisting the harms of Canadian mining companies in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Chiapas, etc,

MORE INFORMATION & QUESTIONS: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org & Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org. www.rightsaction.org

= = = = =

From: Emilie Smith [emilietsmith@hotmail.com]
Sent: October 04, 2010
To: grahame russell; guate_mining@lists.riseup.net
Subject: letter to Mr. Petter

Hi Grahame, and All, here is a little more personal letter to Mr. Petter. I would like to see it published as an "opinion piece" but don't know who would want it. Cheers, Emilie Smith (emilietsmith@hotmail.com)

* * *

Simon Fraser University
President Andrew Petter
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC, Canada, V5A-1S6
petter@sfu.ca, 250.721.8183, 778.782.4641, 778.782.4860

Dear Mr. Petter,

First let me congratulate you, belatedly, on your appointment as president of Simon Fraser University.

Although we have never met, I cherish your family. Mrs. Petter, your dear mother, was my ballet teacher in Nelson in the 70s, and once she even came to our house and made authentic Austrian apple strudel with my mother. Your sister, Marion, Miss Petter to me then and forever, was one of the most important persons in my life.

When I was in grade two, Nelson was a narrow place. I was a weird child, obsessed with reading and writing. I had decided to discard my given name, Maureen, and adopt the much more poetic, Emilie. Life was hard and people, especially boys, were mean. Your

sister released me from this constricting environment, and quite literally opened the world up, affirming my right to be me, fierce and different. She told me to read my head off, and to write, write, write.

Miss Petter's gift is the reason I find myself here, in the high, cold mountains of Guatemala. I am an Anglican priest, and a theologian, and a writer. Here I have found myself in the midst of the swirling debate around Canadian mining interests, which are prowling the country, and digging up a huge mess, just to the west of me, under the banner of Goldcorp, Inc.

We Canadians are considered in these lands to be the new conquistadores. We have come to pillage and to steal, and to leave nothing behind in our wake, but a few shaky schools, a road or two, and communities polluted and divided.

So distraught was I a few years ago to discover that Canadians are heading these rapacious and devastating practices that I pulled up short half-way through my master's degree, changed my thesis topic, and researched and wrote about Maya concepts of Sacred Land.

That is why I was shocked and horrified to read that our beloved Simon Fraser University has accepted a pay-off of \$10 million dollars from Goldcorp, ostensibly to fund its new Arts Centre in Vancouver's downtown eastside.

Let me tell you a few things I have learned about Goldcorp during my five years of engagement with this topic:

Goldcorp Inc. has stained these sacred hills where I live. Their controversial Marlin mine, built without proper community consultation, on the treasured land of the Maya-Mam and Maya-Sipakapense peoples, has caused untold strife and divisions in the area. Water sources have been contaminated, and the sheer quantity of water-used in the open-pit, cyanide-leaching process – six million litres a day – is inconceivable in a region where housewives and farmers have struggled with extreme water shortages.

There have been two murders of community activists protesting the mine, and just this past July, Diodora Hernandez, a neighbour and vocal opponent to the mine, was shot in the face by unknown gunmen. Miraculously, she survived.

The communities of Sipakapa, and San Miguel Ixtahuacan, where the mine is located, have held referendums rejecting mining, elected anti-mining mayors and councils, have visited the World Bank (who proportioned a \$45 million loan to set up the "low-cost" Marlin mine). They have undertaken countless actions to defend their land.

On May 20th of this year, the Organization of American States, through their Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, issued precautionary measures to the Guatemalan government ordering the closure of the mine. In June, the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Rights, James Anaya, declared after a visit to the mining region, his particular concern with the way Goldcorp has ignored the community consultation process. On June 26th the weak and ineffectual Guatemalan government asked Goldcorp to pretty-please shut down.

The mine has churned away, their Guatemalan and Canadian directors willfully ignoring these directives, from the highest to the most humble sources.

Goldcorp has made me ashamed to be Canadian. If people here ask where I'm from, I answer, truthfully, that I was born in Argentina. In truth, I have dedicated myself in these hills to manifesting a different kind of Canadian. One who bases her actions on listening and respect.

My region, Santa Cruz del Quiche, is gearing up this coming month to hold its consulta comunitaria de buena fe. Eighty-seven villages in the municipality will raise their hands and decide – are they going to permit the introduction of mining in their territory, on their sacred land?

The Maya have suffered – and survived – the original Spanish invasion, then the most brutal genocide when between 1978 – 1985 more than 200,000 were murdered by state forces. A Maya compadre told me that the difference between the Maya before the genocide and now, is that now the communities know and understand about their rights – their nationally and internationally-recognized rights to be who they are, to act and to think differently from the dominant culture.

Goldcorp sees the mountain, and dollar signs glow in their eyes. The Maya are in love with their treasured Mother Earth, they know how to tend to her, to care for her, to coax her time and again to share her abundance with her often ungrateful children.

Now then, dear Mr. Petter, I ask you in the name of all Guatemalans hurt now by the Marlin mine and its horrendous practices, and those who will be damaged in the future, to say no thank you to Goldcorp's blood money. And next time you see Miss Petter, please tell her that her gift to me, the gift of free and responsible thinking to a seven-year old, has never been forgotten.

Emilie

= = = = =

WHAT TO DO

1- FUNDS NEEDED

Over the past 7 years, Rights Action has regularly channeled funds to indigenous and campesino organizations in Honduras and Guatemala, and also in El Salvador and Chiapas, that are protecting local environments and promoting community development project, resisting harms and violations caused by North American mining companies. Getting funds to community based groups is an important act of activism and solidarity – they are at the forefront of resisting the harms and violations and promoting global human rights, community controlled development and protection of the environment.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS - Make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: www.rightsaction.org/contributions.htm

DONATION OF STOCK: info@rightsaction.org

* * *

2- WRITE YOUR MEDIA, POLITICIANS & GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Please write your own letters, based on this and other information, to your own politicians and media, denouncing the on-going harms and violations caused by Goldcorp's mine. Demand:

- 1- that the Canadian government, politicians and investors publicly support the suspension of Goldcorp's mine in Guatemala, as ordered by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights
- 2- a public, comprehensive Canadian/ international inquiry into the harms and violations caused by Goldcorp's mining in Guatemala and Honduras
- 3- compensation and reparations for Mayan and campesino communities and families harmed by gold mining
- 4- the passing of comprehensive criminal and civil law reform in Canada, so as to be able to hold Canadian companies and investors fully accountable in Canada for environmental and health harms and other human rights violations in their operations in other countries

* * *

3- SPEAKERS: Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community, school, place of worship, home (info@rightsaction.org)

4- EDUCATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO CENTRAL AMERICA: Form your own group and/ or join one of our educational delegation-seminars to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles (info@rightsaction.org)

MORE INFORMATION & QUESTIONS: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org & Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org. www.rightsaction.org

= = = = =