

## Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award? -/- Part 3

- **Below:** Letters sent to YWCA, concerning their funding from and award to Goldcorp Inc.

Rights Action shares these, to encourage folks to write their own letters, and as examples of what we can all do, regularly, to challenge corporations as they often make “philanthropic” donations that serve to whitewash their corporate images and cover-up environmental and health harms, repression and human rights violations that corporations often cause in their operations around the world, with impunity.

- **What to do:** see below

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From: Carlos Sr [[cascvictoria@shaw.ca](mailto:cascvictoria@shaw.ca)]  
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015  
To: [ckrish@ywcavan.org](mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org)  
Cc: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)  
Subject: letter to YMCA regarding award to Goldcorp.

YWCA Metro Vancouver  
Janet Austin, C.E.O.  
Chantelle Krish, Manager, Advocacy and Public Relations  
535 Hornby Street  
Vancouver BC, V6C-2E8

Dear Mrs. Austin

I've read your reply to the letter sent by Grahame Russell, director, Rights Action, protesting the award given to Goldcorp by the YMCA. I find your reply to Rights Action did not address the fundamental issue: you have given an award to a business with a murderous record around the world.

Your award to a company that have committed crimes against women and children is either the product of supine ignorance or the implicit distinction that you make between the value of lives of Canadian women and children and the lives of those living outside Canada. Would you have acted in the same way if the crimes and abuses of Goldcorp would have been committed in Surrey, Yellow Knife or Halifax?

As a Christian organization, I remind you that all lives matters, regardless of its geographical location. I further remind you that:

[Para 6] “the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”. - Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'* Of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home

Your award is a sign of congratulations and complicity with a business that disregard life and nature.

Yours truly



Carlos Flores Sr.  
Victoria, BC

Copy/ Rights Action, CASC

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From: Sara Kendall [[kendall.ms@gmail.com](mailto:kendall.ms@gmail.com)]  
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2015  
To: [enquire@ywcavan.org](mailto:enquire@ywcavan.org)  
Cc: [sherry.tryssenaar@tenpeakscoffee.ca](mailto:sherry.tryssenaar@tenpeakscoffee.ca); [nilusha.alibhai@scotiabank.com](mailto:nilusha.alibhai@scotiabank.com); [wanda.costuros@shaw.ca](mailto:wanda.costuros@shaw.ca); [debbie.nagle@bchydro.com](mailto:debbie.nagle@bchydro.com)  
Subject: Open Letter to the YWCA: Committed to Goldcorp or Community?

YWCA Metro Vancouver  
Janet Austin, C.E.O.  
cc: Directors and Board of Directors  
535 Hornby Street  
Vancouver BC, V6C-2E8  
(604) 895 5800, [enquire@ywcavan.org](mailto:enquire@ywcavan.org), <http://ywcavan.org/>

An Open Letter to the YWCA: Committed to Goldcorp or Community? Where is your integrity?

Dear Janet Austin and the team of Directors of the YWCA Metro Vancouver, Members of the Board and YWCA supporters,

My name is Sara Kendall; I am a multi-generational Vancouverite and a social services worker with a decade and a half of experience in non-profit organizations of the Lower Mainland. I am also a professional paramedic and a medical school student. Throughout my childhood, youth and working life in Vancouver, I have connected with the programs of the YWCA, and I see the importance of your work. I particularly commend you on the framework of advocacy that you are forwarding and the specific attention to supporting women and girls who face issues of housing, violence, sexualization and life without legal status, all of which pertain to my reasons for writing you today.

Undermining the work that YWCA has done (and continues to do) is its relationship with Goldcorp. This relationship began with Goldcorp being a funder and has now escalated as it is the recipient of the recent YWCA "Workplace" award.

For the YWCA to deepen its ties to the company can only be described as an arrogant dismissal of the mass violence committed by Goldcorp. This is extremely concerning from a professional perspective. From a personal perspective it is frankly disgusting.

Two years ago, I met with two of your YWCA Program Coordinators and presented documentation, testimonials and avenues for more information about Goldcorp and their impact in Canada and Latin

America (Goldcorp operates in other regions of the world, as well, the reports from those sites are devastating, but I know less about them). The information I presented at this meeting was four years of my research and first-hand witnessing. I now learn from your own staff that not only did upper level management do basically nothing to actually investigate the situation, but also you have bestowed the company with an award of distinction.

To recap, let me explain the gist of it: Goldcorp is a major human rights and environmental abuser. The testimonies and reports from community members, doctors, civil society organizations and legal organizations are unequivocally expressive of what has and continues to occur where Goldcorp operates: toxic levels of heavy metals in human bloodstreams and bodies of water; disappearance of primary water sources for entire communities; appearance of grave illnesses such as massive skin lesions; cancers; miscarriages and children born with partial brains; brutal assassinations and physical intimidations or murder attempts of community members who oppose the Goldcorp mines in their communities; disruption of community based democratic assembly and decision processes; rises in sexual violence and in prostitution; rises in alcoholism and intra-community violence; destruction of private property (especially homes cracked and destroyed because of tremors from mine operations); and out-migration and displacement of families (in some cases entire communities) after the loss of agricultural production because of the mines... heartbreakingly, the list goes on.

Let's be simple about this. In exchange for being a funder of the YMCA, Goldcorp gets social capital and good PR. Goldcorp is a multi-billion dollar company. They don't need the money they donate; it's an irrelevant fraction of their profits. What a human rights abuser like Goldcorp does need, however, is a good cover-up face, and the community, environment, and arts programs that Goldcorp funds in BC provide exactly that.

Let's get personal, too. While you as the YWCA offer praise and advertisement for Goldcorp in Vancouver, you are dealing a blow to the indigenous and campesino (peasant farmer) communities where the company actually operates. And, from one non-profit employee to another, that means that you are personally making your own very comfortable salaries at the literal cost of the well being of people who are already very (financially) poor.

This is not an invitation to debate some abstract philosophical question of "isn't all money dirty money"? This is also not a question of naming you as "bad people who don't care" or oversimplifying the important conversation about where money for social services will come from. I myself come from a family with a long history of work in the mining industry, and I too have been the Director of Programming and the fundraiser for non-profits. This is a serious alert about a direct relationship that you have to a very powerful company that is destroying people and their homes, right now. And it is most definitely a request of you (and all of us in similar positions), to check your privilege and your decision-making.

Call me stubborn, but I believe that there is still chance to bring some more consciousness and courage into the way we work. Indeed the people who are risking and at times losing their lives to this company aren't going to stop in their struggles. Maybe I'm wrong, but I'm writing to give you the benefit of the doubt that at least some of your staff will step up. I'm hoping that while you may have missed the seriousness of this situation before, your principles as a long-standing organization that works to serve marginal populations will kick in and Vancouver will see some positive leadership from the YWCA.

And of course, I am happy to connect further to support such leadership.

Sara Kendall  
[Kendall.ms@gmail.com](mailto:Kendall.ms@gmail.com)

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From: Eleanor Millard [[emillard@northwestel.net](mailto:emillard@northwestel.net)]  
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015  
To: "[enquire@ywcavan.org](mailto:enquire@ywcavan.org)"; [ckrish@ywcavan.org](mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org)  
Cc: Rights Action  
Subject: Outstanding Workplace award

ATTENTION:  
YWCA Metro Vancouver  
Janet Austin, C.E.O.  
Chantelle Krish, Manager, Advocacy and Public Relations  
535 Hornby Street  
Vancouver BC, V6C-2E8

Dear Ladies,

I am emailing you in support of the letters you have received from Rights Action's Grahame Russell concerning the award you have given to Goldcorp for having an "outstanding workplace". I am in full agreement with the contents of his letters and I am offended at the tone of your reply to his first letter, which reeks of indifference. As a longtime supporter of the Y, I find your callous attitude embarrassing and ignorant.

I have seen the conditions first hand in Guatemala for women who are forced to live alongside mines that originate from Canadian mining companies, of which Goldcorp is only one example. I have visited a woman who was shot in the face for refusing to give up her small plot of land to a mine; I have talked with a woman who has suffered the death of her husband by goons hired by a mine; I have eaten a meal with village members who have been courageous enough to block road access to mining development despite the fact that their leader--a woman--was shot by thugs hired by the company and barely survived. I saw many more examples of brave, inspiring Guatemalan women who are fighting for their families and their community's future which is threatened by mines such as Goldcorp.

As a woman's organization, I think it is vital that the YWCA support all women whether they live in comparative luxury working in offices in Vancouver, or if they live in poverty and extreme danger as in Guatemala.

I ask you to withdraw this award, or at least advise Goldcorp publicly that you are aware of the practices they support in their company. Please assure me that you will do proper research on the companies you give such an important award to, and that you will never give another award to any company that supports murder, terror, and intimidation with impunity.

I look forward to your reply and I hope it isn't the pallid, innocuous tripe that you replied to Mr. Russell's letter with.

Eleanor Millard, M.Ad Ed, M.A (TESL)  
Box 165  
Carcross YT  
Y0B 1B0  
(867) 821-3821  
[emillard@northwestel.net](mailto:emillard@northwestel.net)

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From: Elizabeth Ballantyne-Jackson [[lizballantynejackson@gmail.com](mailto:lizballantynejackson@gmail.com)]  
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015  
To: [ckrish@ywcavan.org](mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org)  
Subject: Reply to Letter To Rights Action regarding GoldCorp Mine in Guatemala

Hello Chantelle - I am a volunteer with a small NGO that helps impoverished families in Guatemala. I travel every year to Guatemala and I can tell you first hand that the women and families of San Marcos Department are afraid of the GoldCorp Mining Company. GoldCorp may very well be supportive to their workers in Canada, but they exploit the women and families in other regions of the world where they mine. Perhaps you should ask GoldCorp about this double standard in their business practices.

Sincerely, Liz Ballantyne-Jackson, Ottawa, Ontario.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead

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From: Marie-Dominik Langlois [[mariedominik@hotmail.com](mailto:mariedominik@hotmail.com)]  
Sent: Thursday, August 6, 2015  
To: [enquire@ywcavan.org](mailto:enquire@ywcavan.org); [ckrish@ywcavan.org](mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org)  
Cc: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org); [jen@miningwatch.ca](mailto:jen@miningwatch.ca)  
Subject: Goldcorp

Good afternoon Ms. Austin and Krish,

I'm writing you to support Graham Russel's letter sharing his concerns about the award you gave to Goldcorp. I am also very concerned about this announcement.

I worked for 8 years as director of human rights NGOs for Latin America, especially around natural resources and territory, the last two years focusing entirely on Guatemala. Over the years, I received various complaints about Goldcorp from grassroots organizations based in Mexico (Guerrero), the Dominican Republic, but mostly from Guatemala.

The YMCA metro website displays the organization's vision as "to work tirelessly to achieve women's equality" and its mission "is to touch lives and build better futures for women and their families through advocacy and integrated services that foster economic independence, wellness, and equal opportunities".

It strikes me that you didn't consider Guatemalan women, mothers, children and families in your overall analysis of Goldcorp before granting the award. While Goldcorp may have achieved good results for women's equality in its workplace, it has only been possible through the suffering of Guatemalan women.

As you should know, socioeconomic consequences of mining activities affect disproportionately women, since they are the first provider of water, food, health, and reproduction to all family members and communities. Water access and quality is badly affected by mining exploitation. Reports have indicated the drying of wells as well as water contamination near Marlin Mine site. Given this situation, mothers who have denounced these impacts and their opposition to the mine have faced criminalization and physical attacks against them.

Also, Goldcorp's investment in Tahoe Resources is another source of major preoccupation and also the target of awareness-raising campaigns asking public institutions to divest from Goldcorp and Tahoe Resources. The former chief of security is currently facing charges of assault and obstruction of justice for ordering attacks against community members on April 27, 2013, injuring 6 of them. The case is being analyzed in courts in Canada and Guatemala.

A few days following this event, a state of siege was imposed by the State of Guatemala in 4 municipalities where there was the strongest resistance to Tahoe's mine. 3500 members from the army and the national police were deployed to silence opposition and intimidate community members. Various constitutional rights were suspended. Women from local communities reported to have been raped during the state of siege.

During my fieldwork part of my graduate studies in international relations, I had the chance to visit communities and organizations throughout the last year. Community members and leaders are still living with the consequences of the violence of the siege, and defending their right to consultation. Minera San Rafael (Tahoe's subsidiary in Guatemala) has acquired various mining licenses in the south-east of the country without undertaking the due consultation process. Also, the company did not seek consent nor consult with local indigenous peoples, the Xinkas, which have voiced major concerns and refusal of mining operations in or near their territory.

These are aspects you should have considered before granting an award for "outstanding workplace" for women's equality to Goldcorp. Goldcorp do work against women's equality in Guatemala and it is sincerely a shame for a non-profit with such a long history working against poverty as YMCA to greenwash this corporation by "congratulate" it on minor administrative details while abstaining to touch much more crucial issues such as the serious negative impacts Goldcorp is causing to women - and especially indigenous - in Latin America.

For the sake of YMCA integrity, coherence and respect for women's equality and dignity all over the world, I firmly believe you should withdraw Goldcorp's award and send a public letter explaining that you've received further information about Goldcorp which get in contradiction with YWCA's mission and work.

Marie-Dominik Langlois  
Graduate student - UQAM  
Montreal, Quebec.

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From: Kathleen Ruff [kruff@bulkley.net]  
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2015 2:58 PM  
To: enquire@ywcavan.org  
Cc: Grahame Russell  
Subject: Re: My serious concerns about your award to Goldcorp Inc.

Dear Janet Austin and Metro Vancouver YWCA Board Members,

May I please have a response to my letter below?

I trust that the Metro Vancouver YWCA supports the equal dignity and rights of women no matter where they live and no matter what their social and economic class may be. It is well recognized that women and

girls who are targets of the worst abuse are women and girls who do not possess economic or political power. There is therefore a particular responsibility on all of us – and especially on an organisation such as the YWCA, whose mission is to uphold and advance the dignity and rights of women and girls – to take care not to be indifferent to or to be complicit in abuse against women and girls who are particularly vulnerable and particularly subjected to abuse.

I request that you please show solidarity with the women and girls in Honduras and Guatemala and elsewhere who are being subjected to harm from Goldcorp's mining operations. Please do not have a double standard whereby you defend the rights and dignity of women and girls in Canada, but collude in abuse of women and girls outside Canada.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ruff

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#### **Tax-Deductible Donations**

To support mining harmed campesino and indigenous communities, in Honduras and Guatemala, struggling for community-controlled development, human rights and the environment, struggling against the impunity and corruption of global mining companies and their governments, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8
- Credit-Card Donations (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>
- To donate stock, contact: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

#### **Delegation to Honduras, November 7-15, 2015**

##### **“Connecting the Dots from the Global to the Local: Understanding the Environmental, Human Rights, Poverty and Impunity Crisis in Honduras”**

Rights Action and the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College invite you to join this educational seminar trip to Honduras (including a visit with communities suffering on-going health harms due to Goldcorp's 2000-2008 mining operation).

- Flyer: <http://rightsaction.org/action-content/honduras-education-seminar-trip>
- More info: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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Get on/off listserv: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)  
[www.facebook.com/rightsaction.org](http://www.facebook.com/rightsaction.org)  
<https://twitter.com/RightsAction>, @RightsAction

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