

Rights Action
August 3, 2015

Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award? – Part 2

Below, a 2nd letter to the YWCA, with the YWCA’s response to our 1st letter. Please write your own letter to YWCA and share this information with YWCA folks you know, who might be interested.

- What to do?: See below

Letter to YWCA from Rights Action

August 3, 2015

YWCA Metro Vancouver
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Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award?

Hello Janet, Chantelle, Members of the Board and YWCA friends,

Thank-you, Chantelle, for sending the YWCA response (copied below) to my letter “Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award?”
(<http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/questioning-why-ywca-metro-vancouver-gave-goldcorp-inc-%E2%80%9Coutstanding-workplace%E2%80%9D-award>)

Here, I follow-up with a few points:

A Disconnect

I urge the YWCA to reflect on what appears to be a disconnect between awarding Goldcorp for its “outstanding workplace” (for its pro-women and family policies they are apparently implementing in their corporate headquarters in Vancouver) and, on the other hand, the widespread harms and violations occurring in and near their mining operations and workplaces in countries Guatemala and Honduras, let alone elsewhere.

These well-documented harms and violations (I summarized some of them in my original letter) are the results of corporate and investor decisions being taken in Goldcorp's Vancouver headquarters.

One can imagine a bitterly ironic scenario: As the YWCA lauds Goldcorp in Vancouver (and receiving "Gold" level donations from Goldcorp), were the YWCA to be operating in Guatemala and Honduras, its programmes might be directed at women, girls and families whose lives and community well-being were being devastated by Goldcorp's mining operations.

Enabling Impunity

I realize these are complicated and polemical issues, but such is our deeply inter-connected, often times profoundly unequal and unjust global human order.

A major, underlying problem is that Goldcorp simply denies all evidence of crimes, harms and violations caused directly or indirectly by its mine operations in Honduras and Guatemala.

They get away with these denials because of the impunity and immunity from legally accountability they operate with, in Canada, Guatemala, Honduras and elsewhere.

Nowhere has Goldcorp been held legally or politically accountable for any crimes, harms or violations related to its mining operations. Neither in the corrupted, exploitative and repressive countries of Honduras or Guatemala, nor before the underfunded and oft-times politically manipulated Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, nor in Canadian courts.

To Canada's double-standard shame, as a country that claims belief in democratic oversight, good governance and transparency, and the rule of law, Canada has chosen not to pass criminal and civil law reforms so as to hold companies criminally and civilly accountable in our courts if and when they commit crimes, violations or harms in other countries.

Thus, Goldcorp spends money and resources on its public outreach strategy ("PR") and denies and deflects all denunciations. Giving "philanthropic" donations, usually in a public way, is part of Goldcorp's PR work. These donations (into the millions of dollars in some cases: University of Ottawa, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia) are obviously of use to the recipients; at the same time, Goldcorp's image, its social capital, soars.

The donation recipients participate in this image building, and help perpetuate the lack of political and legal accountability.

Exceptions to Legal Impunity

Hudbay Minerals lawsuits

Recently, there are a few (long overdue) exceptions to the rule of legal impunity in Canada. In 2013, the Hudbay Minerals lawsuits (dealing with murder, a shooting-paralyzing and gang-rapes linked to Hudbay's former mining operation in a Mayan region of Guatemala) established a

precedent in Canadian law when the Ontario Superior Court of Justice accepted jurisdiction in Canada to hear the civil lawsuits, ruling also that Hudbay can be held accountable for harms and violations that occur at its mining operations overseas.

Tahoe Resources (Goldcorp Inc.) lawsuits

More recently, building on the Hudbay legal precedents, a civil lawsuit was filed in Vancouver courts against Tahoe Resources, for violence and repression at its mining operation in Guatemala. Tahoe is an off-spring of Goldcorp Inc. Former Goldcorp CEO Kevin MacArthur stepped down from Goldcorp in 2008, but not before incorporating Tahoe Resources, taking over a Goldcorp mining concession elsewhere in Guatemala, with Goldcorp maintaining (until recently) a 40% stake in Tahoe Resources.

Don't Take Our Word For It

Today, with increased reporting on these issues, though mainly from the “alternative” media, and with so many environment/ development/ human rights organizations – tiny ones like Rights Action, on through Vancouver’s Mining Justice Alliance and Toronto’s Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, on through the vital work of Mining Watch, as well as Council of Canadians, Amnesty International, OXFAM, Kairos, Development and Peace, and more -, it is no longer acceptable to pretend one did not know about the allegations of harms and violations occurring at Canadian mining operations around the globe, and not just with Goldcorp.

Questions for YWCA

- Is the YWCA willing to host public screenings of documentary films about Goldcorp’s mine operations and workplaces in Honduras and Guatemala (and beyond), to acknowledge how complicated these issues are, and encourage public debate about Goldcorp’s operations?
- Will the YWCA consider sending staff and supporters on educational fact-finding trips to Honduras and Guatemala to visit with Goldcorp harmed communities and families? Rights Action regularly leads such delegations, and could ensure you direct visits and communication with mining harmed communities and people.
- Will the YWCA reconsider the selection criteria it used in the Goldcorp award?
- Will the YWCA publicize how much funds it has received from Goldcorp?

The Story of Goldcorp Is Now YWCA’s Story

I paraphrase Thomas King at this point, from his book the Truth About Stories: Take the story of how Goldcorp does its business in Guatemala and Honduras. It is now YWCA’s story. Do with it what you will. Tell it to YWCA members and friends. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that the YWCA would have operated differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now.

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Letter to Rights Action From YWCA

From: Chantelle Krish [mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org]
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2015 2:31 PM
To: info@rightsaction.org
Subject: YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Hello Grahame,

Thank you for taking the time to write to us about the Women of Distinction: Innovative Workplace category. I appreciate the thought and consideration you put into your letter. The Innovative Workplace Category recognizes organizations that demonstrate a commitment to supportive workplaces for women and families in Metro Vancouver.

A diverse panel of independent judges selected the recipient based on this criteria.

The recipient demonstrated these commitments through:

- * 52% of employees are female, with over 20% in senior executive positions, including the Board of Directors.
- * Specific programs to support women's professional development in the workplace.
- * Supportive family friendly practices that includes enhanced benefits for women on maternity/parental leave
- * Endorsing the Catalyst Accord of Canada initiative to increasing women's representation on boards by 2017.

You can find a full list of YWCA donors here:

http://issuu.com/ywcametrovan/docs/ywca_ar_yr_2014_final_for_web

Thank you for your concerns and if you have any more questions don't hesitate to be in touch.

All the best,

Chantelle Krish

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What To Do

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

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.

- Flyer: <http://rightsaction.org/action-content/honduras-education-seminar-trip>
- More info: info@rightsaction.org

Get on/off listserv: www.rightsaction.org

www.facebook.com/rightsaction.org

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