

Mining and Canadian companies – A Franciscan concern

by Andrew Conradi, ofs, CTK Province JPIC Animator

I attended the 2014 OFM JPIC Animators Course at the Antonianum. One of the issues of concern was mining which was echoed by two other JPIC meetings in 2014: the OFM International Council for JPIC meeting in Jakarta & the OFM JPIC Animators Continental Meeting of the Americas in Bogota. The Jakarta meeting's decision, ratified by the Bogota meeting, was to adopt three issues to focus awareness and action: *lifestyle, mining & hunger*. In Bogota I met Amanda Lyons, Advocacy Officer of Franciscans International (FI) at the United Nations (UN) in New York and we discussed how we could collaborate, especially on mining.

How have Canadian Franciscans been engaged in this issue? Most of our friaries and parish pastors and brothers & sisters are involved through collaboration with the annual Fall Education and Action campaign of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (D&P). In four out of the last nine years, this campaign has been about mining. In 2013, in the *Voice for Justice* campaign, we were requested to ask our MP's for the creation of a legislated, extractive sector *ombudsman* in Canada; i.e. an independent official to investigate & address complaints of violation of rights.

St Paul University, Ottawa, held a mining symposium in November 2014 which I also attended. A letter to the Prime Minister was signed by the symposium participants, including me, asking him to create an independent extractive-sector Ombudsman in Canada and provide legislated access to Canadian courts for people who have been seriously harmed by the international operations of Canadian companies. This was a follow up to the 2013 D&P *Voice for Justice* campaign which was done in concert with the other 23 members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), whose campaign *Open for Justice* also calls for access to justice here in Canada for those suffering violations of their rights through the actions of Canadian companies in the extractive sector overseas. The Symposium then asked us to take the letter back to our parishes, schools and congregations and use it as a basis for our own action.

Many organisations, including FI at the UN, have criticized Canadian Government complicity or lack of action in countering Canadian mining companies' detrimental actions. I suggest that we Western Canadian Franciscans (OFM & OFS) join a campaign in support of FI at the UN and in Canada in collaboration with CNCA. In July 2015 Canada will be reviewed by the UN Human Rights Committee for its compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, one of the most important international human rights treaties. The Canadian government has already submitted its own report documenting how it believes it has fulfilled its obligations on civil and political rights.

However, as requested by FI, the UN has decided to ask Canada for further information on: "Right to effective remedy (art. 2) 1. Please inform the Committee on any measures taken or envisaged to monitor the human rights conduct of Canadian oil, mining, and gas companies operating abroad. Please also inform what the available legal venues are in the State party for victims of human rights abuses arising from overseas operations of Canadian extractive firms." The UN review will conclude with an outcome document (a sort of "judgment") including recommendations to be implemented.

The main advocacy opportunities coming from the UN process (nationally and at the UN) will be leading up to and following the July 2015 comprehensive review by the UN.

Fr Dennis has given me the go-ahead to draft a Franciscan letter to the PM and so has the Canadian National Council of the OFS. I feel that in order for the brothers to support this letter that they should see the draft and be invited to offer comments and suggestions on it. The draft will be circulated in the near future. I hope to get the support of Bishop Corriveau, OFM Cap, (Nelson); the Archbishop of Vancouver & OMI & OFM parishes.

One example. The province of Chumbivilcas in the Cusco region of Peru is a key mining area, and as of 2009, 95% of the territory was granted as concessions to mining companies. The increase in mining concessions places huge strains on local water supplies. Farmers, & the availability & cost of food to locals are obviously affected.

In March 2012, Canadian mining company Hudbay, owner of the Constancia project in Peru, negotiated a contract to lease community lands in Uchucarco. The company agreed to promote community development through a series of projects concerning education, health, housing and other issues for which it was given an award for sustainable development. Slightly more than a year later, the residents of Uchucarco condemn the company's failure to comply with its agreements. The community calls for an end to the contract, and demands the withdrawal of the company and the return of its communal land.

Two protestors were arrested 10 Nov 2014 by the significant police force that protects the camp at the mine after local residents converged on the \$1.7 billion open-pit copper project to protest Hudbay's failure to fulfill its commitments to the local community, including payments of \$1.9 million in salaries to community members, and an additional \$7.75 million in other payments owed to the community.

Hudbay also angered the community over its failure to implement an environmental management plan, resulting in the destruction of ecosystems, native flora and fauna, the contamination of the river Makaray, and the disappearance of streams and wetlands. Approximately 400 protestors from rural communities have camped on property planned for the open pit copper mine.

One Human Family, Food for All (Caritas) - Extreme poverty and the excluded & Food: security and sovereignty (OFS) - Eradication of Hunger (OFM)

This year's D&P fall education & action campaign was in line with the Holy Father's & Caritas Internationalis' concern for sustainable food production methods and structures to help eradicate hunger. Did your friary participate? If not there is still time. Just google Development and Peace Sow Much Love. This focus on hunger/food/agriculture fits with identified key issues by the Canadian OFS JPIC plan as well as the OFM's current three major concerns, although under different names (see subtitle above).