



PRESS RELEASE

Yellowknives Dene First Nation Launch Renewed Call for Giant Mine Apology and Compensation

December 2, 2020

YELLOWKNIFE – Located in the heart of the traditional territory of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN), Giant Mine created a decades-long toxic legacy of broken promises, displacement, arsenic contamination, and ongoing social, environmental, and economic harm to the Yellowknives Dene people.

As a result, today YKDFN brought together community leaders and Giant Mine survivors to formally call on Canada to provide an apology and compensation for the damage and long-lasting impact to their lands and people caused by Giant Mine’s operations.

YKDFN launched a website – www.GiantMineMonster.ca – with information about Giant Mine and its impacts on YKDFN, as well as a petition to the Government of Canada which will be made available by email when you subscribe to email updates here : <http://eepurl.com/hkutaT>

Resolution of this matter must include a commitment to do better going forward, including a formal role in benefiting from the investments in the remediation of Giant Mine, the creation of employment, and a skills base that can benefit other similar mining and industrial sites across the territories. This is similar in principle to the precedent set through the set-aside procurement agreement that the Mi’kmaq received for the clean-up of the Sydney Tar Ponds.

The event included opening remarks by the Chiefs, an opening Prayer Song conducted by Yellowknives Dene Drummers, a Feeding the Fire ceremony, speeches by the Chiefs and YKDFN senior management, and ended with closing remarks by YKDFN.

Quotes:

“Giant Mine was established within the Yellowknife Preserve, which Canada promised to protect for the exclusive use of Indigenous hunters and trappers. Canada failed to honour that promise. It allowed the Yellowknife Preserve to be summarily abolished 1955, and it permitted the operators of Giant Mine to take the gold, and create a toxic legacy of contamination of the land and interference with our rights to hunt, trap and gather food and medicine, without any compensation or consultation with us. We are

calling on Canada to sit at a table with us to determine just, fair and equitable compensation for these historic wrongs.”

- Chief Edward Sangris, Dettah Chief of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

“During the time Giant Mine was operating, Canada did not protect us from the arsenic poisoning coming from Giant Mine. Our community remembers the illnesses and deaths caused by the mine, but Canada did not warn us of the contamination of our food and water. Our land is spoiled. It is not like what it was. We are fearful of harvesting anything near Giant Mine. We are fearful of fishing in the Yellowknife Bay and gathering berries close by. We call on the Government of Canada to come to the table to ensure that after so many decades of this toxic legacy, the Yellowknives Dene people will benefit from the clean-up of the lands, and create a new legacy of skills, jobs, and a healing of the land.”

- Chief Ernest Betsina, Ndilo Chief of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

“Giant Mine is a monster that has loomed over many generations of Yellowknives Dene. It is constantly changing shape--one minute it takes the form of dust that blows over us, another it is in the dirt that our children play in, or in the despair it has caused us--but its legacy is always destruction and death. Canada's apology and compensation to us for creating this monster is long overdue. If we are to confront the legacy of the Giant Mine, we must have our rights to manage and steward our environment respected. For Canada and YKDFN to move forward in the spirit of reconciliation and healing requires an apology supported by a commitment to repair the harms suffered. To be most meaningful, this apology must come from Canada while our elders who lived through the harms caused during Giant Mine's active operations are still living.”

- Johanne Black, Director – Treaty, Rights, & Governance, Yellowknives Dene First Nation

“Giant Mine has never benefitted the Yellowknives Dene. We did not receive any revenue from its operation, or any compensation for the damage it caused to the Yellowknives Dene way of life. We call upon the Government of Canada to ensure a set-aside contract arrangement for the Yellowknives Dene to address aggregate provision, water treatment, and long-term environmental consulting and monitoring of the Giant Mine Remediation Project. While the Mi'kmaq received a set-aside procurement contract for the clean-up of the Sydney Tar Ponds, no such arrangement has been made with YKDFN, and we are already seeing southern companies benefiting from the remediation contracts. Why is a set-aside agreement good enough for one First Nation, but not for another? Canada has an opportunity now to reconcile the wrongs of the past and do justice for the future generations who will be the caretakers of the Giant Mine site in perpetuity.”

- Jason Snaggs, CEO, Yellowknives Dene First Nation

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Background

www.GiantMineMonster.ca

About YKDFN

Long before the first explorers, fur traders, or prospectors had ventured into the north, the *Tatsôt'iné* people (“metal people”) occupied a vast area around *Tinde'e* (Great Slave Lake). These people are the ancestors of today's Yellowknives Dene. Numerous traditional villages, the largest being Dettah, were located along the east shore of Yellowknife Bay, while the west shore, and in particular the valley of Baker Creek, was reserved for moose hunting, berry picking, and medicinal plant harvesting. Today, YKDFN has two communities: Dettah and Ndilo both located on the north shore of Great Slave Lake. YKDFN is a signatory to Treaty 8.

About Giant Mine

The Giant Mine site is located on the west side of Yellowknife Bay. Giant Mine began full scale production in 1948 and, over the course of the next 50 years, removed approximately 7 million ounces of gold. As a byproduct of the process of removing gold from the ore, vast amounts of arsenic contaminated dust were released into the atmosphere from the roaster stacks at the mine. When this dust was deposited it contaminated the surrounding land, water and plant and animal life, including drinking water sources relied upon by the Yellowknives Dene. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of arsenic contaminated dust were also collected and stored. The site is currently under care and maintenance to manage ongoing risks, and remediation planning is underway. As currently planned, however, even after remediation, 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide dust will remain stored at the site in perpetuity.