

Green Colonialism

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ABSTRACT

The neoliberal state of the world is showing a definite inability to be anti-colonial and anything but state government and corporate centric. In Canada, there are the most extractive mining industries in the world and yet we have no new routes to negotiate ethical or responsible global compacts when it comes to indigenous nations and people. On top of not having a way to reign in domestic corporations internationally we are continuing down a road of colonial governance when it comes to new rare earth minerals that are needed to shift away from coal, oil and gas towards electrified vehicles and the like. Analysts will need to be looking toward the possibility of a lithium cartel that may rival OPEC. In Canada, billion-dollar companies turn the heads of state officials who attempt to control the environmental assessments, terms of reference and monetary value to First Nations. Governments scramble to get any control over the new mining industries created for the “green economy” and yet still trample on the land and rights of First Nations. The example in this paper will be negotiations around the so-called “ring of fire”, 5,000 km of land near James Bay. The Canadian government says it will make billions of dollars, meanwhile, Nishnabe Aski nations, Treaty 9 nations, that struggle with abdications, suicide, housing, water and mor, have not had input in the talks at all, and with such a dire living condition one wonders how they will “negotiate” at all with these lush companies and governments. There is no free prior or informed consent (FPIC), and the Canadian government claims they are going ahead with the project in two years.

Keywords: extraction, fourth world, first nations Canada, ring of fire, lithium, batteries, neoliberalism, free prior and informed consent

Canadian Mining

Canadian mining is very large. Canada has over half the international extractive mining companies in the world. These companies essentially live by their own rules. They seek out land that has minerals and set up mines. In the meantime, in Canada and elsewhere, women are abused by the men working these mines and the destruction of the earth and clean-up are not well planned. In an area of Canada known as the “ring of fire” there has been found lithium vital to the new economy. The Industries Committee had a meeting on the sale of a company called “Neo lithium” to a Chinese company Zijin

and were frightened about how the Chinese government may be buying up critical industries for the new green economy.¹

The issue is critical. It is likely that the US and China will compete for dominance over both lithium, mostly found in Bolivia, Argentina and Chile but also in Australia. China also controls the supply chain for turning lithium into car batteries. When the Organization for Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) formed a cartel during the Cold War, they were able to control the price of oil in the world. If countries or companies can create a Lithium Cartel, then they may be able to control the price of this new critical mineral.² It will have consequences for geopolitics and peace in the world. Nevertheless, nowhere in that Canadian government meeting did any of the politicians mention that Treaty 9 nations, where lithium was found in Canada, were not consulted about the project at all.

The Canadian lobbyist for mining called MAC (Mining Association of Canada) wants the federal government to double the mining exploration

tax credit.³ Although they claim to be the largest employer of indigenous people in Canada, there is no mention on their website of collaborating with First Nations on future mining projects, or how wealth, often generated out of indigenous land, would bring them prosperity and stability.⁴

Juno mining company which is said to be independent but may have links to Val d'Or mining in Quebec⁵, has signed an MoU with the Webequie Nation in the Ring of Fire.⁶ Yet other First Nations have publicly stated that there has been no consultation with them. Kashechewan Chief Gaius Wesley said on the TV show Nation to Nation, "[t]hey need to work with the First Nations people through a co-led and co-enforced approach to ensure that the people in our region also have their say."⁷ The Ontario Premier has stated publicly that the Ring of Fire will be mined and create the minerals needed for the new green economy.⁸ In his mind consultation with the First Nations has occurred, but three Nations, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, and Neskantaga, have called for a moratorium on mining. They will

¹ <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/zijin-mining-acquire-neo-lithium-232800654.html>

<https://www.neolithium.ca/index.php>

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-canada-is-playing-catch-up-in-global-frenzy-for-lithium-as-chinas-grip/>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rrapier/2022/01/20/is-a-lithium-cartel-inevitable/?sh=24c16b9c1b0b>

³ <https://www.timminspress.com/news/local-news/mining-association-calling-on-ottawa-to-provide-greater-support-to-industry>

<https://parlvu.parl.gc.ca/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2?fk=11475524>

⁴ <https://mining.ca/resources/>

⁵ <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/01/06/1966521/0/en/Val-d-Or-Mining-Corporation-Enters-into-Property-Sale-Agreement.html>

⁶ <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/ring-of-fires-largest-claim-holder-inks-first-nation-cooperation-agreement-3466853>

⁷ <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/chiefs-slam-feds-ring-of-fire-assessment/>

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-electric-vehicle-mining-ring-of-fire-1.6238261>

lift the moratorium if the federal and provincial governments “agree to plan and conduct the RIA [regional impact assessment] on terms that respect our rights.”⁹ It is not clear from what is going on what role corporations federal and provincial governments have.

There are 16,000 mining claims in the Ring of Fire and Juno holds most of them. In this case they made a deal with the Webequie Nation, and they claim that their consultation with them, closest to the site, was enough to satisfy their duties to consult. Other Nations in the region, however, know that Juno has these claims and will want to work with them in the future. This has been a bad start to regional development in the big picture. The colonial system has always exacerbated and created divisions among First Nations. In this era of Canadian reconciliation, it behooves us to do better and to look at an integrated picture.

One project in the USA and the World Economic Forum is what is called Multi-Stakeholder Governance (MSG). Led in large part by Harris Gleckman, the movement centres around key stakeholders in areas of trade that dominate the global economy.¹⁰ Gleckman argues, that the current multilateral system only allows for governments to negotiate. The United Nations system only allows for governments to agree and their parliaments to

ratify the agreements. When we are dealing with international mining industries, what level of participation do stakeholders get? The inevitable flaw with the approach is that indigenous people become “stakeholders”, alongside non-profits, governments and corporations. Democracy becomes about who has the money and influence to get involved. Indigenous people should not be mere stakeholders in any new global movement. We must begin to admit that we built states on top of indigenous territory and therefore they are the primary stakeholder in all discussions. Conservatives in Canada have called FPIC a “veto” and therefore displacing the power of the government. If that is what FPIC means, then so be it. It may save our planet.

The Treaty Nine Nations

Treaty Nine Nations are also called James Bay Treaty Nations by Canada. The Treaty was signed in 1905 and 1906 with both the province and the federal government. And Ojibway and Cree nations. The interpretations of this treaty differ vastly between the government of Canada information and that of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.¹¹ Determined to push the oral tradition aspect, the indigenous people in northern Ontario believe that the treaty grants them sovereignty over 2/3 of the landmass of Ontario. Although they have been neglected and starved out by Canadian policy regarding First Nations, they show fight and resilience at every turn.

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/ring-of-fire-moratorium-1.5977066>

¹⁰ <https://www.tni.org/en/profile/harris-gleckman>

¹¹ https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/UserFiles/File/jamesbaytreaty9_realoralagreement.pdf
<https://www.nan.ca/treaties/about-treaty-no-9/>
<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028863/1581293189896>

Treaty 9 was created by the Canadian government and the province of Ontario, and no one was allowed to change any of the parameters. Commissioners were sent to Ojibway and Cree lands and told to meet with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and explain the Treaty and obtain signatures. There is debate about how the treaty was explained, what the signers may have thought it said, how coercive and non-cooperative the process was.¹² In the North the Ojibway and Cree had coexisted with HBC for two centuries before this treaty was signed. The federal and provincial governments believed it was a treaty that signed these lands over to the King of England. Yet it has been proven that at each HBC post, the commissioners explained the treaty differently and were not clear in its meaning. Again, no one was allowed to be involved in any case.

There have been court cases from First Nations in the area like the Attawapiskat, who are attempting to stop Juno Corp, siting is their territory, and no consultation has been made and because the peat moss there is needed to combat climate change.¹³ First Nations have used

the courts often in Canada with varying levels of success. They are often required by law in Canada to make a "subsistence living" when it comes to hunting, fishing and trapping while billion-dollar industries stomp once again on their unceded territory. The entire system works against them gaining wealth and profit from their land.

Possible Solutions

Lukas Bednarski has some interesting propositions on the new "green economy." Juno Corp is looking for nickel in the Ring of Fire because it is a central element in the production of lithium batteries for the new electric car push.¹⁴ He makes sure that we understand that there is a huge supply chain to create lithium batteries. Right now, this post-production mining is dominated by China. The electric movement must realize that the basis of this depends on critical minerals often found in non-state territory. We must consider how we will recycle these critical minerals and look at the whole supply chain. We need to fund chemical producers as states and nations. In many parts of the world water is being used to transform the rock to usable minerals. Yet water is scarce. If we are going to change the

¹² Long, John S. "How the Commissioners Explained Treaty Number Nine to the Ojibway and Cree in 1905" <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/onhistory/1900-v1-n1-onhistory04970/1065838ar.pdf>

¹³ <https://financialpost.com/commodities/energy/electric-vehicles/even-amid-bidding-war-for-noront-many-challenges-encircle-ring-of-fire-mining-project>
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/UserFiles/File/jamesbaytreaty9_realoralagreement.pdf
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/attawapiskat-ring-of-fire-exploration-court-case-1.6200000>
<https://republicofmining.com/2021/10/05/attawapiskat-first-nation-seeks-court-injunction-against-ring-of-fire-exploration-by-erik-white-cbc-news-sudbury-october-5-2021/>

¹⁴ https://soundcloud.com/leadersincleantech/lukasz-bednarski-lithium-the-global-race-for-battery-dominance-and-the-new-energy-revolution-86?utm_source=www.hurstpublishers.com&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252Fleadersincleantech%252Flukasz-bednarski-lithium-the-global-race-for-battery-dominance-and-the-new-energy-revolution-86
<https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/lithium/>

world it should not usher in a new era of 'green colonialism', particularly when it comes to mining but also in the entire system of the battery and look at this new economy. Bednarski asks, are we making the world a better place? Will the waste and tailings created from mining create more trouble for our lives? It is not likely that we stop mining but how we mine is a major issue that we must focus on as a planet.

Webesquie signed an agreement with Juno mining corporation early in 2021. The idea is that mining will benefit First Nations and the

Webesquie will gain roads and access points.¹⁵ Yet, as other nearby Nations have said, we need a broad picture of the overall development of the ring of fire and how it may benefit and how it may cause issues for the area. Unfortunately, many First Nations on Turtle Island face poverty, lack of access to health care - food and internet, lack of clean water and housing. For these communities the prospect of wealth and a future for their children is a real pull towards development. Changes must be made in Canada, but we must find a way to create a table where all can sit.

¹⁴ https://soundcloud.com/leadersincleantech/lukasz-bednarski-lithium-the-global-race-for-battery-dominance-and-the-new-energy-revolution-86?utm_source=www.hurstpublishers.com&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252Fleadersincleantech%252Flukasz-bednarski-lithium-the-global-race-for-battery-dominance-and-the-new-energy-revolution-86
<https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/lithium/>

¹⁵ <https://www.osler.com/en/blogs/energy/september-2021/opportunity-knocks-lithium-and-graphite-development-in-canada>
<https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/ring-of-fires-largest-claim-holder-inks-first-nation-cooperation-agreement-3466853>

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Sabina was born in Kamloops BC to parents who came from India. Her PhD was a case study in Uganda, and she taught African Politics at the University of Victoria. After finishing her degree, Sabina began to research and write about connections between indigenous people throughout the world following the work of George Manuel.