



# Remember the Land: Global Ecumenical Voices on Mining

## STUDY GUIDE

Canada is home to 75% of the world's mining and exploration companies. Canadian stock exchanges raise 40% of all mineral exploration capital worldwide. In May 2011, 150 people --church leaders and grass roots activists-- from around the world gathered in Toronto to consider the impact of Canadian mining on the environment and the people who seek to protect it.

*Remember the Land* is the story of that gathering. It raises questions that KAIROS encourages you to explore as individuals, as congregations, as members of institutional churches and as citizens.

We encourage you to show this 11-minute video in your church context, either as the regular Sunday

reflection or in a coffee-time or other group discussion setting. We have prepared this resource to help you navigate the conversation that we hope will ensue.

### OUTLINE FOR A VIDEO SHOWING AND DISCUSSION

This process can be used in a variety of group settings. It is designed for an hour but could easily be expanded to take more time – simply expand the discussion periods. A small group of 10-12 could do it in an hour, with everyone having a chance to speak to at least one of the questions. For larger groups, you will either have to plan for more time, or facilitate in such a way that not everyone speaks to all questions.

*Required materials:*

- Copy of the video
- DVD/TV or computer/projector/ screen
- Flip chart and markers to record any plans that emerge

### STEP 1: Welcome and Context-Setting (15 minutes – more if you have the time)

Welcome the gathered group.

Ask them to think of a place that has great meaning to them.

- Why is it so important to them?
- Is it threatened by anything? What?
- What would they be willing to do to protect it?

Have the group share their thoughts briefly.



Share this quotation from American theologian and activist Ched Myers, who argues that as activists for ecological justice it is very important that we understand the land we are trying to protect:

*We won't save a place we don't love; we can't love a place we don't know; and we can't know a place we haven't learned.*

Explain that peoples all over the world, particularly Indigenous peoples, are engaged in struggles to protect the land that they know and love; the land that sustains them materially, culturally and spiritually; the land that has its own deep, inherent worth. Introduce *Remember the Land* as a video about that struggle, and its relevance to our faith.

## STEP 2: Video Viewing (15 minutes)

After the video has finished, ask participants to remove what they have with or on them that came from mining and place it in front of them.

This will include change, cellphones, wedding rings and other jewelry. Ask them to leave the objects there throughout the discussion.

## STEP 3: Discussion (15 minutes – or more if you have the time)

Open up discussion of the video by choosing 2 or 3 of the questions below – or all of them if you have the time.

- Chief Stan Beardy of the Anishnabe Aski Nation in Northern Ontario and Naty Atz Sunuc of Guatemala speak powerfully about what the land means to their people. Does what they say resonate with any of the values that surfaced in your discussion before the film?
- Bishop Jo Seoka of South Africa and Rev. Suzanne Matale of Zambia raise important theological principles which underlie their activism in mining-affected communities. Does what they say either resonate with or offer challenge to your understanding of the notions of stewardship and loving one's neighbour?

- Bishop Mark MacDonald, Canada's National Anglican Indigenous Bishop, and Vidalina Morales of El Salvador ask us to reconsider our understanding of and relationships with Indigenous peoples. What does this mean for us as consumers of products of resource extraction?
- Most of the examples in *Remember the Land* are from outside of Canada. Can you think of any current Canadian examples of resource extraction and industrial development that pose similar dilemmas as those expressed in this film?

## STEP 4: Moving Forward (15 minutes – or more if you have the time)

For this step, make sure you record on the flip chart any concrete plans for action and who will take it forward.

Consult the materials on pp. 3–4 and share with the group what your national church and KAIROS have already done on mining issues.

Share with the group the fundamentals of ethical investment on p. 3.

Remind the group of Rev. Rex Reyes' challenge in *Remember the Land* that if the churches want to be in solidarity with mining-affected communities then "it's going to be ... a choice between churches remaining as monuments, or being movements."

- How might we take action as individuals?
- As a congregation/parish?
- At the regional or national level of our church?
- How will we follow through on these actions?

Invite people to take back their belongings, and close the session with this prayer, adapted from Louise Bakala Koumouno of the Republic of Congo:

*Guns, tailings ponds and wastelands,  
O God!  
We would transform them into places  
where we can meet with mutual respect  
We are blessed when differences  
become riches,  
disagreement introduces dialogue  
and the storm breaks,  
For such moments announce a  
rainbow of hope in our lives.*

## WHAT ABOUT ETHICAL INVESTING?

Most Canadians who have contributed to a pension plan, such as the Canada Pension Plan, or who hold stocks or mutual funds are invested in mining companies. In fact, the resource extraction sector represents roughly 42% of the market value of the Toronto Stock Exchange, or \$805 billion in 2011.

Investors concerned about the social and environmental impacts of resource extraction can make their voices heard. Options include:

- Writing to companies of concerns and calling for better performance with respect to human rights, Indigenous relations and the environment.
- Choosing ethical mutual funds that screen out the worst companies in the resource extraction sector and engage in dialogue with the leaders to improve performance even further. (Do your homework. Not all mutual funds marketed as “ethical” do these things.)
- Working within your church bodies – locally, provincially or nationally – to pursue your mission through investment decisions, by



implementing policies for investment screening and shareholder dialogue.

- Contacting the Canada Pension Plan to ask how they can ensure your retirement savings are not financing poor human rights or environmental practices.

## THE KAIROS POSITION ON MINING JUSTICE

### As of November 2012

KAIROS is concerned that Canadian mining companies have been involved in an increasing number of social conflicts, both in Canada and the global South. At present, these companies are not held legally accountable in Canada when they are complicit in human rights abuses or ecological destruction overseas. While voluntary measures have been put forward, they have failed to curb the worst abuses and conflicts.

Poor countries that are rich in natural resources have too often seen the well-being of their people and ecosystems deteriorate as a result of

destructive, irresponsible resource extraction. This is commonly known as the “resource curse,” whereby foreign investors and local elites extract great wealth from poor countries while leaving behind a legacy of social inequality, political corruption, and ecological damage. KAIROS works with our global partners to play our part in breaking this curse.

KAIROS believes that communities have the right to exercise free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) over developments that will affect their well-being, their enjoyment of human rights, and the integrity of local ecosystems. Our global partners are working to empower poor and marginalized populations in resource-rich countries to participate in decision-making on projects that affect their lives. They are opening up democratic space in their countries to debate the role of resource extraction in reducing poverty, and are challenging economic policies that promote foreign-owned resource extraction as the only path towards

development. In some cases, they are advocating for stronger regulatory regimes to maximize fiscal and economic benefits to the local population, and hold companies responsible for cleaning up their environmental messes. In other cases, they are rejecting resource extraction and embracing alternative economic development paths such as sustainable agriculture and forestry, ecotourism and other activities. This movement to “keep the oil in the soil” and promote food sovereignty is emerging as a popular response to the triple crisis of hunger, poverty and climate change.

## CANADIAN CHURCH ACTIONS ON MINING JUSTICE

- Over 150 church leaders and members gathered in Toronto for an Ecumenical Conference on Mining in May 2011. Fifty of the delegates were church leaders and community leaders from countries in the global South that are affected by Canadian mining companies. The conference was organized by KAIROS and its member organizations, in partnership with Norwegian Church Aid.
- KAIROS has led delegations of Canadian church leaders and global partners to visit communities affected by resource extraction, including Mexico (2005) and the Athabasca tar sands (2009).
- KAIROS supported Bill C-300, a private member’s bill on mining and corporate accountability that was narrowly defeated at Third Reading in the House of Commons in 2011.
- KAIROS has urged governments to protect the rights of community activists and other human rights defenders who have been targeted, threatened or attacked for speaking out on mining related issues.
- Development and Peace led a three-year public engagement campaign calling on the federal government to hold Canadian mining companies accountable for their international operations.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) adopted a resolution at its 2011 national convention to explore ethical investment as it relates to mining companies.
- Mennonite Central Committee Canada deepened its constituency’s understanding of mining justice issues through national education campaigns that included global partner visits.
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada has voiced concern over the impacts of Canadian mining in Guatemala.
- The United Church of Canada Pension Plan has engaged in shareholder dialogue with Goldcorp Inc. regarding social and environmental issues at the company’s mines in Latin America.
- KAIROS, Development and Peace, Mennonite Central Committee Canada and the United Church of Canada are members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), Canada’s civil society network advocating for mining justice internationally.

## WANT TO GO A LITTLE DEEPER?

Visit [www.kairoscanada.org/RememberTheLand](http://www.kairoscanada.org/RememberTheLand) to download other resources:

- A community mapping activity that helps you imagine what it would be like to have a mine imposed in your community
- A workshop on Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Keep on top of KAIROS work on resource extraction issues on our website at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/sustainability/resource-extraction/>, and on Facebook and Twitter.

More information may also be found on the websites of Mining Watch: [www.miningwatch.ca](http://www.miningwatch.ca) and the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability: [www.cnca-rcrce.ca](http://www.cnca-rcrce.ca)

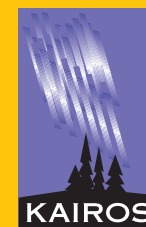
Your church might also have its own educational resources on this issue.

### PHOTO CREDITS:

Cover: The impacts of mining in Guatemala.  
Photo: [www.mimundo.org](http://www.mimundo.org)

Page 2: Tailings Pond, Lago Agrio, Ecuador.  
Photo: KAIROS/Sara Stratton

Page 3: Open pit tar sands mine, Alberta.  
Photo: Sara Stratton



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