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## From Buried Treasure and Risky Adventure to Sobering Matters of Concern: the Ring of Fire Discourse in Ontario Mining Events

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Anthropology

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Ontario Ring of Fire is a potential mining project that is located in the far north of the province, within Matawa First Nations homelands and traditional territory. My thesis examines how the Ring of Fire is continually shaped by the conflicting discourses that surround it. To study this, I observed how the Ring of Fire was situated within five mining events. Events were held by different organizations, for different audiences, and had different purposes; varying widely in size and scale. While some actors deployed spectacularly streamlined messages to entice investors and propel the project towards a predetermined future, others unraveled these messages by exploring the complications and revealing a wider range of possibilities. However, events largely acted as silos, and the observed encounters across difference mostly took place through the media. This allowed some organizations that were represented at multiple events to significantly shift their message between audiences. My hope is that this research provides a historical account of how the Ring of Fire was (or wasn't) conjured into being during a time of widespread political change. It may also contribute to the field of event anthropology, and it may provide an account of the changing face of CSR.

**Keywords:** Mining, Spectacle, Corporate Social Responsibility, Futures, Event Anthropology, Ontario Ring of Fire

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend sincere thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Dan Jorgensen, whose Resource Frontiers course inspired this research, and whose ongoing encouragement, patience, support, and optimism got me through it. Dan provided crucial insight, wisdom and guidance, while allowing me the space to be creative, build confidence, and write in my own voice – for which I am grateful.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Adriana Premat, for much encouragement, support, and insightful feedback. I especially appreciate the effort Adriana put into the Political Ecology course that I took with her, which was challenging, enjoyable, and led me to think in different directions.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my other examiners, professors, and those from the department and university who have helped me out along the way. Thank you to Dr. Janice Forsyth and Dr. Lindsay Bell for taking the time to read my work and provide me with valuable feedback, and thank you to Dr. Sherrie Larkin for chairing my exam and providing me with guidance during my first TA course. Thank you to my professors, Dr. Lisa Hodgetts, Dr. Randa Farah, Dr. Jean-Francois Millaire, and Dr. Rick Fehr who were always kind, helpful, and made course work interesting and enjoyable. Thank you to Christine Wall who was always happy to help me navigate the forms and processes involved with being a graduate student. Thank you to Dr. Kim Clark for the letter of support and encouragement that you wrote me when I was deciding whether or not to enter the program while pregnant. Thank you to my fellow students from two cohorts who shared my passion for anthropology and whose contributions and insights enhanced our classes.

I would like to thank those who helped fund this research. Thank you to Dr. Regna Darnell and the Award Committee. The Darnell Award provided me with the funds to purchase a ticket to Mines and Money – an event that was key in shaping this research. Thank you to the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund, who funded my ticket to the Mining Summit and whose staff were always welcoming and kind. This event taught me much about Treaty 9 and Aboriginal businesses. Thank you to PSAC Local 610, who advocated on my behalf for my rightful maternity leave pay.

I would like to extend thanks to all of those who took time out of their busy schedule to meet with me and talk about the Ring of Fire. I would like to highlight the contribution of Glenn Nolan and Alan Coutts, who kindly met with me, knowing that their words would be shared through the critical lens of academia. My hope is that your company will embody its friendly corporate image through actions, rather than jumping on the bulldozer alongside Premier Ford.

I would like to thank my family members and friends who have provided me with encouragement and support while completing this thesis. Thank you to my mom and dad, Trudy and Brian Vescio, for visiting frequently, attending mining-related events for me in

Thunder Bay, sending me countless news articles, and embracing their new roles as grandparents. Thank you to my grandma and grandpa, Betty and Ted Vescio, who were both so wonderful and who both left this world soon after I began this program. Thank you to my mother-in-law Phyllis Fredin, whose kindness and help with childcare is always appreciated. I would not have been able to submit this thesis without her. Thank you to my husband Scott, who is encouraging and supportive of my endeavors. He was always happy to read my work, provide me with feedback, and drive me to (nearly) all corners of Ontario to attend mining events. And finally, thank you to my son Soren, who always added a (literal) kick to my presentations, during what was my first semester and his third trimester. He brightens up even the most challenging of days with his laughter and curiosity, and he inspired me to keep moving forward with my work. This thesis is dedicated to Soren.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In the far north of Ontario, deep beneath the muskeg swamp of the James Bay Lowlands, lies a vast expanse of minerals known as the Ring of Fire. Copper, nickel, zinc, platinum, vanadium, gold, and chromite deposits expand across hundreds of square kilometers in a ring-like arc (Mining Matters 2013). Once extracted from the earth, these minerals can be refined and polished to enhance their lustre. One surface may reflect the light and shine brightly, while another casts a shadow. If the light source shines from a different angle, the appearance of the rock can drastically change – especially if there is a surface that has been left unpolished.

Although lustre is considered to be a property of the minerals within the earth, it also captures an important element of the discourses relating to the Ring of Fire that circulate above ground. Like the minerals, talk about the Ring of Fire can also be refined and polished. Some narratives can be reflected into the public eye, while others remain in the shadows. Adjusting the spotlight (or turning on the floodlights) can highlight cracks in what seems to be flawless and it can illuminate an underbelly that some prefer not to see. This shift changes the appearance of the discourse and broadens the spectrum of possibilities.

The narrative about the Ring of Fire typically begins with the discovery tale of a small group of geologists who were in search of diamonds. They braved the cold, sub-arctic air and harsh terrain. The muskeg has been known to swallow the

very equipment that strives to tame it, and a quick Google search brings fourth images of excavators, bulldozers, and other heavy machinery sinking deep into the swamp. Their odds of finding something worthwhile were incredibly low, yet the men continued to search. Mining giant DeBeers provided them with a glimmer of hope – they had found diamonds to the east and were in the process of opening Victor, Ontario’s first diamond mine, so perhaps there were more...

The search uncovered something big, but it wasn’t diamonds. In August 2007, the discovery was announced: the geologists came across a huge expanse of minerals, including what would soon be considered one of the largest chromite deposits in the world. Since the magnetic image of the minerals resembled a ring and the geologists were Johnny Cash fans, they decided to name their discovery after the famous song, “Ring of Fire” (Novak 2014). Within days, the small airport of Webequie First Nation was said to resemble Toronto’s Pearson International Airport because of the amount of traffic flying in and out (ibid). It was a staking rush, and the geologists were able to raise millions of dollars for further exploration with ease (ibid).

Excitement about the Ring of Fire’s potential for a multi-sited mining project spread fast. It was fueled by claims that it was worth up to \$120 billion, and that it would become “Canada’s next oil sands” (Tencer 2013). However, as time went on and tangible steps towards creating the project had not materialized, talk of the Ring of Fire began to read like a roller coaster ride – with public support and investment fluctuating between enthusiastic highs and bitter lows; rattling back and

forth between optimism and skepticism. Things like lack of infrastructure to the region, including roads, rail, and power grid connection, unsettled land claims, broken political promises and an oscillating global market for precious and base metals are often cited as reasons for skepticism.

In 2013, skepticism about the project intensified when the Ring of Fire's "largest player," senior mining company Cliffs, suspended operations in the region after numerous delays (Northern Miner Staff 2015). In 2015 Cliffs left Canada entirely, selling the Ring of Fire claims that they had purchased for \$240 million to junior mining company Noront for \$20 million – a 92% price reduction (ibid). During this time, prices for metals, and their corresponding hope and optimism, descended into what is considered the 'trough' of the commodity cycle. Stakeholders wanting to move the project forward quickly were now in a position where they had to work harder to generate the investment dollars and public support that used to flow naturally in the gold rush atmosphere that lingered after the Ring of Fire's discovery.

With Cliffs out of the picture, only junior mining companies remain in the Ring of Fire. Junior mining companies are commonly called junior exploration companies, since they aren't actually involved in operating a mine – they explore for mineral deposits with the hopes that they will find something that can one day become a mine. Ideally, if the exploration company finds a "deposit attractive enough" a major company will purchase it (Cole 2015). If this does not happen and

the company moves into the production phase, they would then be considered a mid-tier company (PDAC, as cited by Junior Miners 2017).

Since junior mining companies aren't actually mining, they don't make any money, they just spend it. Drilling core samples costs an average of \$150/metre, and 120 000 metres of drilling is typically needed before a mine can be put into production, costing approximately \$18 million (Cole 2015). The high cost of exploration and the low odds of finding something worthwhile (about 1 in 10 000) have led many large mining companies to opt out of exploration and leave it up to the juniors (ibid). This makes it necessary for the junior companies to depend on investors, which is why a crucial aspect of junior mining is enticing investors with "euphoria," where investors pay a junior to prove a deposit exists, or more commonly with hope – "And that hope comes packaged in stories" (ibid).

### **Theoretical Framework**

For the Ring of Fire, its discovery story was the initial hook for investment – the untapped potential of remote, Northern Ontario, the persevering geologists, the rugged landscape, and of course, the 'buried treasure.' The narrative draws people in and allows them space to imagine wealth in a way that is uninterrupted by details, evoking "a world more dreamlike and sweeter than anything that exists" (Tsing 2005, p. 58). It also demonstrates the interconnectedness of drama and dollars. Anna Tsing (2005) describes this as "the economy of appearances" – the performance that is simultaneously dramatic and economic, in which the "self-conscious making of a spectacle is a necessary aid to gathering investment funds"

(p. 57). She explains that this is typical for “investment-oriented entrepreneurship,” like junior exploration companies, but also for countries and regions that “must dramatize their potential as places for investment” (ibid). With the economy of appearances, the spotlight shines on the dramatic spectacle in a way that hides the narrative’s flaws in the shadows.

An important element to the dramatic spectacle surrounding the Ring of Fire is the landscape upon which the potential mining project has been mapped. To tell the story of the Ring of Fire, the land must be reconstructed – emptied of its inhabitants, transmuted into commodities, and parceled to be sold. Edward Said (2000) labels this process “imaginative geography.” It is a process in which the invention and construction of a geographic space pays little attention to the actual geography or the people within it (Said 2000, p. 181). It works with mapping and the annexation of territory, invoking ideas of discovery and conquest (ibid). With imaginative geography, the Ring of Fire is reconstructed as a ‘resource frontier.’ Resource frontiers “appear as the ‘discovery’ of global supplies” in ‘far away’ places; but if you adjust the spotlight, you can see how they replace existing human and ecological dynamics with the cultural apparatus of capitalist expansion” (Tsing 2003, p. 5100).

With the economy of appearances and imaginative geography, the Ring of Fire is constructed as a big development on the economic horizon that we can all look forward to. The sunny picture is maintained by filtering out any unpleasant complexities that may tarnish our dreams. However, this is no easy task, as the neat

and tidy picture is continuously unraveling into something messy. When you look at the perspectives of different humans and non-humans involved in the Ring of Fire, alongside the historical context, the Ring of Fire becomes a “highly complex, historically situated, and richly diverse” entanglement where things and politics can be added and compromises negotiated – what Bruno Latour describes as ‘matters of concern’ (Latour 2004 p. 237; Latour 2012 1:12:35). When the complex issues are neatly bundled up, they become ‘matters of fact;’ which are closed and fixed, partial, polemical, political representations of things that can easily be disarmed or debunked (Latour 2004).

Imagining futures is an inherent part of the sunny picture I have described above, since the Ring of Fire is a *potential* multi-sited mining project. Although there have been material effects occurring even without a mine (for example, drilling core samples), talk largely circulates around the mine’s future existence or non-existence. When the Ring of Fire is assembled into a ‘matter of fact,’ the vision of the future is narrowed. This makes some futures seem inevitable, while others are excluded from the conversation – thereby projecting power into the present and having tangible effects (Westman 2013, p. 118). If certain possibilities are not even part of the conversation, it becomes much more difficult to take the steps necessary to make those futures happen. However, a ‘matter of fact’ can crumble into ‘matters of concern,’ and the future may not play out according to plan.

So, narratives and images about the Ring of Fire are moving and working to build a mining-ready landscape, they are producing a space to dream of wealth, and

they are shaping the future. At the same time, other narratives are pushing to open spaces for new possibilities.

### **Who is involved?**

There is a wide range of stakeholder groups involved in the Ring of Fire. For most of these groups the stakes are high – in terms of risk, and in terms of reward. Each group strives to negotiate in the best possible outcome, but the best possible outcome varies, sometimes widely, from group to group. Even when outcomes are agreed upon, groups may envision the outcome in different ways. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the groups described below.

#### *Industry*

Mining in Canada is big – so big that Toronto is considered the “mining finance capital of the world” (Government of Ontario 2017). Ontario’s Mineral Development Strategy proudly explains that “62% of all equity capital raised by the world’s public mining companies was done through the TSX [Toronto Stock Exchange] and TSX-V [TSX Venture Exchange] in 2014” (Northern Development and Mines 2015, p.6). Not only does Canada finance mining, it is home to “a wealth of resources beneath the ground” with \$11 billion of that being produced in Ontario, in 2014 (ibid). With these numbers, it should be no surprise that a large proportion of mining companies are headquartered in Canada, many of them in downtown Toronto (Block 2017). Toronto is where mining deals happen.

The prominent mining companies currently active in the Ring of Fire area are Noront Resources and KWG Resources Inc. Both are headquartered in Toronto, and Noront has a satellite office in Thunder Bay, Ontario. As mentioned above, all companies with claims in the Ring of Fire are junior mining companies, and therefore they all need financing.

Financers play an important role in the Ring of Fire, surfacing periodically in the news when they are connected to an important development. For example, royalty and streaming company Franco-Nevada provided Noront with \$22.5 million to purchase Cliffs in exchange for 7% interest and royalties (Northern Miner Staff 2015). There is also talk in the media about KWG making deals with potential buyers in China who want to build a rail line to the Ring of Fire and purchase chromite to make stainless steel (Hadley 2016). Although financers are often working behind the scenes, the junior mining companies would not exist without them.

Secondary industries that connect with mining are also involved in the Ring of Fire. They can be seen as actors that help make some of the dreams come to life. Examples include infrastructure companies involved in planning roads into the region, such as SNC Lavalin, and educational programs that have been created to get people 'mining-ready.'

Various mining industry lobby groups have a peripheral role in the Ring of Fire. These groups include PDAC, the Ontario Mining Association (OMA), the Canadian Association of Mining (CAM), and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce



(OCC). These organizations advocate for a mining-friendly business environment, facilitate networking, and provide various groups with information on mining. For example, all of these activities occur at PDAC's annual convention, which provides a space for various stakeholders to connect, share information, and conduct business.

### *First Nations*

In terms of risk, stakes are (arguably) highest for First Nations groups, since they reside in the area of the proposed mining project, and must deal with any negative impacts first hand. The Ring of Fire is located within the un-ceded territory of Treaty 9. Although the area is labeled Treaty 9, the territory remains un-ceded because the treaty's written words were drastically different than what was explained by commissioners to First Nations signatories. At the 2017 Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Convention and at the 2016 Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF) Mining Summit, Mushkegowuk Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon explained that the people who signed the treaty agreed to share the land not surrender it, as the federal and provincial governments claim. His presentations outlined how this is supported by Treaty 9 Commissioner McMartin's diaries and by Elders who say that they never gave up the land. Treaty 9 Commissioner Scott's diary also reports misleading First Nations signatories (Long 2010, p. 333). For the Ring of Fire, the difference between sharing and surrendering the land would have an impact on questions of consultation versus consent from First Nations groups and for impact benefit negotiations (among other things). However, shifts in power dynamics do not usually happen with ease.

Communities closest to the proposed mining operations and associated infrastructure include Aroland First Nation, Constance Lake First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, Ginoogaming First Nation, Long Lake #58 First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, Webequie First Nation, and Mishkeegogamang First Nation. All of these communities belong to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) (Nishnawbe Aski Nation 2017b). NAN is described as “a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within northern Ontario” (Nishnawbe Aski Nation 2017a). Communities are grouped into Tribal Councils, although 6 communities do not affiliate with a Tribal Council (ibid). The communities listed above belong to Matawa First Nations Management, with the exception of Mishkeegogamang First Nation, which is not affiliated with a Tribal Council (Matawa First Nations Management 2013; Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation 2010). In regard to the Ring of Fire, Matawa’s Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS) is partnered with Noront and Confederation College to provide training and employment in the mining industry through the Ring of Fire Aboriginal Training Alliance (RoFATA) (ibid). Matawa’s Four Rivers Environmental Service Group “coordinates advisory and support programs which aim to support lands and resource initiatives at the community level” (Four Rivers 2017). Four Rivers’ services are geared towards the unique needs of each Matawa community, and they offer programs such as “Mineral Development Support, Mapping Support, Environmental Monitoring, and Outreach and Capacity Building” (ibid). Most

communities downstream from the Ring of Fire belong to the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council (and also NAN).

When the Ring of Fire spotlight shifts away from the dominant narratives and towards those living near the Ring of Fire, the picture expands. Assimilation policies, the intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools, and inadequate funding have created great disparities between the general population of Ontario and the First Nations people – disparities which are intensified for those in the far north of the province, including those living near the Ring of Fire (TRC 2015; Long 2010). Common issues that affect people living in these communities include (but are not limited to) long term boil water advisories, lack of health services, high suicide rates, high violent crime rates, poor housing conditions, inadequate access to education, and insufficient child welfare resources (Laberge 2015; Murray 2010; Perkel 2016; Porter 2016a; Porter 2016b; Stastna 2011; TRC 2015). Because of such issues, some communities living near the Ring of Fire have been experiencing crises so severe that there have been several instances in which they had to declare a state of emergency (For example, see Garrick 2015; Porter 2016c; Woods 2016). In 2016, a Health and Public Health Emergency was declared for First Nations throughout NAN territory because of “The chronic failure of the health care system for First Nations,” which has led to many deaths that could have been prevented (Wawatay News 2016). These issues are especially significant when there is talk of extracting billions of dollars’ worth of resources from the Ring of Fire.

*Governments*

The Canadian Government and the Ontario Government are both key stakeholders, and they are often the most visible since the Ring of Fire seems to be a popular resource for politicians to draw upon. Promises to develop the Ring of Fire become loud and frequent as election times near, making their way into news headlines and political debates. However, between elections talk of the Ring of Fire becomes somewhat stagnant, with promises periodically resurfacing and growing stale (For example, see Fedeli 2017).

To maintain a prominent position in the mining finance world, Canada creates an environment that entices juniors to incorporate here, even if they are based elsewhere (Dougherty 2013, p. 350). To do so, juniors are provided with subsidized financing and tax incentives, while business takes place within a lenient and accommodating culture of corporate governance (ibid). Tax incentives for mining companies are both federal and provincial in nature, working to produce a “business friendly hub” (Government of Ontario 2017). And although the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) has mandatory rule-based guidelines, the TSX has voluntary principle-based guidelines (Dougherty 2013, p. 350). These lower standards of responsibility allow corporations here to “capture greater access to resource rents” – however, they also facilitate the “circumvention of ethical standards of accountability and transparency” (ibid).

For the Ring of Fire, the relationship between the government and junior mining companies is largely enacted through the provincial government, as things such as prospector licenses and staking mining claims are through the Ontario

Government (Government of Ontario 2015). The relationship between the government and First Nations is federal, and structured by the Indian Act. If land claims for First Nations groups are to be negotiated with the federal government, and staking land claims for mining companies are done through the provincial government – often for the same land – one starts to see how complicated this network of stakeholders is.

### *Regional Framework Agreement*

In 2014, a Regional Framework Agreement was signed by the Province of Ontario and the Chiefs of the Matawa First Nations. The agreement structured a negotiation process to discuss how mineral and infrastructure development in the area will proceed, including the negotiation of “future development, benefits, and environmental safeguards in the Ring of Fire” (Northern Ontario Business Staff 2014). Former Ontario Premier, Bob Rae, is Matawa’s lead negotiator. Rae explained that “the purpose of the agreements is to improve conditions on-reserve and to assist communities in their desire to improve the lives of their citizens and to gain control of the lands that they occupy” (Baxter 2017). He goes on to state that this includes figuring out how to implement the principle of consent in relation to things like exploration permits and mining permits (ibid). Through this process, the Chiefs and Premier Wynne have met several times to engage in direct dialogue. Rae reported that they are trying to improve negotiations by involving citizens more directly (Baxter 2017). Marten Falls First Nation’s Chief Bruce Achneepineskum explains that there has not been enough information provided to community

citizens at the negotiations, and that they need to find a way to better include the input of citizens in this process (Baxter 2017). Although these talks are significant, they take place behind closed doors, and my access to information relating to them is limited to occasional news reports.

### *NGO's*

NGO's involved in mining activism are largely concerned with environmental issues and/or human rights issues that stem from mining activities. Groups involved in activism relating to the Ring of Fire include the Wildlands League, the David Suzuki Foundation, and MiningWatch Canada. The Wildlands League is advocating that a regional strategic environmental assessment (RSEA) be conducted to “properly protect the ecological and cultural values of this region before any new mines or infrastructure corridors are built” – which would involve public hearings and full involvement of First Nations and include examining cumulative effects on environment and culture (Wildlands League 2017). The David Suzuki Foundation website talks about the interconnection between ecological and social justice, and states that they are “working with communities in the Ring of Fire to support their capacity to engage in decision-making processes” (David Suzuki Foundation 2014). MiningWatch Canada has released a report analyzing economic issues and concerns about chromite mining in the Ring of Fire (Kuyek 2011).

### *The general public and the media*

For the general public, stories of the Ring of Fire often evoke dreams of good paying mining jobs, jobs related to new refineries that will process metals locally,

and a prosperous economy. The picture that people may have in mind might be similar to how the softwood lumber industry in Northern Ontario used to look; which many can still recall as an industry that was thriving in the region throughout the previous century. In Canada, more than a third of all forestry related jobs were lost between 2004 and 2014, with the biggest decline in the pulp and paper industry – an economic staple of Northwestern Ontario (Keenan et al. 2014). The city of Thunder Bay and many of the small towns throughout Northern Ontario have been hit hard by this decline. At first, promises of a mining boom looked like it could fill the gaps of the dwindling forestry industry, but after a decade of promises relating to the Ring of Fire and the continued decline of forestry, people are weary and optimism alternates with skepticism. However, “hope comes packaged in stories,” and the media can provide these stories (Cole 2015).

News media and social media have an important role to play in the Ring of Fire. They provide the stage upon which stakeholders are able to spread excitement or concern about the Ring of Fire and connect with their audience. Different types of media can help generate public support or public opposition for the mining project; and both situations can be seen as having the power to affect the project’s development.

## **Research**

To examine the discourse surrounding the Ring of Fire, I conducted participant observation research at various mining events where talk of the Ring of Fire was likely to occur. I also conducted eight semi-structured interviews with

people that have positions relating to the Ring of Fire, between September 2016 and April 2017.

The events that I attended include the Inaugural Ontario Natural Resources Forum (ONRF), Mines and Money Americas 2016, the NADF 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Mining Summit, the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (CAMA), and the PDAC 2017 Convention. I chose to attend these five events based on the presence of stakeholders in the Ring of Fire that were listed on their websites as speakers, panelists, trade show displays, and/or sponsors. Although other relevant mining events occurred while I was conducting my research, these five events varied in scale – from regional, to provincial, national, and international – they were geared towards different (yet overlapping) audiences, and they addressed a wide range of topics. I was interested in studying how various stakeholders presented the Ring of Fire to different audiences at these events. I was also interested in seeing how the Ring of Fire fit within the broader context of Canadian mining.

#### *Ontario Natural Resources Forum*

The ONRF was a two-day conference held in downtown Toronto. It was managed by two public relations firms; however, the group organizing the event was kept secret. The conference is described on its website as an opportunity to bring together individuals from different sectors and communities “to collaborate and explore ways to develop our resource sector, grow our economy and provide benefits to communities” (Ontario Natural Resources Forum 2017). The event



looked at natural resources in Ontario, but talk largely focused on mining. Initially, I was expecting a large event, especially since Premier Kathleen Wynne was scheduled to give the keynote address, but when I entered the conference room, I was surprised to see that there were only about 150 people present. The Ring of Fire was referenced periodically throughout this event – with Ontario Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Michael Gravelle, Ontario Minister of Finance, Charles Sousa, and Noront Resources CEO Alan Coutts talking about it at greater length, and representatives from Mushkegowuk Council asking related questions during question and answer periods.

The underlying message at the ONRF was that Ontario is a good place to invest in natural resources. What stood out to me was the talk of “aligning interests” and references to “reconciliation” which were woven throughout the forum. To portray a good investment environment, organizers attempted to construct Ontario as a place where there are positive, cooperative, forward-looking relationships between First Nations people, government, and industry. This production was not seamless however, and I will discuss these complexities throughout this paper.

### *Mines and Money Americas 2016*

Mines and Money Americas 2016 took place over two days at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, in downtown Toronto, with roughly 1000 people in attendance. Mines and Money Americas is promoted as a gathering where “deals get done” and it aims to “connect miners with money and investors with opportunity” (Mines and Money Americas 2017). Although “Americas” is referenced in the conference title, mining

companies based here operate throughout the world, so the event was global in scale. Speakers, trade show booths, and delegates were largely representatives from mining companies, finance companies, various levels of government, and mining industry lobby organizations. Information about the Ring of Fire was available at the Ontario Government and Noront Resources exhibition booths, and during presentations by government and Noront representatives. First Nations representatives did not have a visible presence at Mines and Money, and discussions around issues relating to First Nations people were kept brief.

The event title “Mines and Money” encapsulates the purpose of the event, and the subtitle “where deals get done” is even more direct. Several weeks before the conference, delegates were invited to download a Mines and Money app, which allowed them to see who else would be at the conference, message them, and arrange meetings beforehand. Private meeting rooms lined the hall so that business could be conducted in a convenient and confidential setting. In the room where presentations were held, the atmosphere was dramatic, and talk was optimistic and quick. Presenters encouraged the risk-taking excitement and impulsivity of gambling that is necessary to get deals done. At Mines and Money, business deals were to be performed with ease, and the conference was constructed to promote this.

#### *Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Mining Summit*

The NADF Mining Summit was a small, one-day conference and trade show in Timmins – a city in Northern Ontario with a long history of mining. The summit is

organized by NADF to prepare Aboriginal communities for business opportunities in the mining sector, providing people with “a learning and networking experience,” as well as strengthening capacity “to explore and develop meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and businesses” (Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund 2017). NADF serves First Nations throughout Northern Ontario. Presenters included representatives from First Nations businesses, mining company representatives, a provincial government representative, people from educational institutions, a business consultant, and the Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief. The audience was made up largely of representatives from First Nations communities and businesses, and also some government and industry representatives. Talk of the Ring of Fire surfaced periodically throughout the Mining Summit – ranging from an entire presentation on it by KWG Resources, to audience requests for the Ontario government representative to stop talking about it, to awkward jokes from other presenters about not mentioning “the elephant in the room” (i.e., the Ring of Fire).

Optimism was generated at the conference through discussions on First Nations business success stories and strategies, yet serious obstacles and concerns were also an important part of the conversation. For example, Grand Chief Solomon demonstrated how poverty and lack of basic services (such as health care and education) are central to discussion on Treaty 9, and how addressing problems with Treaty 9 are necessary when discussing the area’s natural resource extraction. At the NADF Mining Summit, the optimism was entangled with the complexities.

*Canadian Aboriginal Mineral Association’s 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*

CAMA's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was a three-day event in downtown Ottawa, with almost 500 people in attendance. The association is a network of Aboriginal people from across Canada "that are concerned with and interested in the resource industries," while the conference promotes "community to community learning, sharing, and relations" (CAMA 2017). At the CAMA conference, a wide range of perspectives was voiced during presentations, panel discussions, and question and answer periods. Speakers included Aboriginal leaders, youth, Elders, legal/judicial representatives, government officials, and industry representatives. Talk of the Ring of Fire was minimal, but it included a panel discussion with Neskantaga Chief Wayne Moonias talking about his community's experience with Ring of Fire matters, and a trade show booth from Matawa First Nations Management. Discussion topics at CAMA were also relevant to the Ring of Fire, such as Impact/Benefit Agreements, environmental issues, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These important issues (and many others) were explored carefully and thoroughly, often leading to further questions. Complex problems and concerns were not explained away with quick, easy answers; and mining in general was not given the simplistic labels of being "good" or "bad."

*Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada 2017 Convention*

Lastly, I attended the PDAC 2017 Convention, which took place over four days at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. With over 24 000 people in attendance this year (PDAC 2017), it is known as "the biggest and most important event of its kind in the world" (Cole 2015). To say there is a lot going on at the PDAC

convention is an understatement – there were over 1300 booths included in the two Trade Shows and the Investor’s Exchange, 472 speakers in 35 presentation/reception rooms, and a schedule that ran roughly from about 8:30am to late in the evening with networking events (PDAC 2017). In addition to that, large trade show areas seemed to have their own events and speakers, such as the Ontario pavilion and the Northern Ontario showcase area. It was relatively easy to find information on the Ring of Fire at the convention. Many of the stakeholders had Trade Show or Investors Exchange booths, including the Ontario Government, the Government of Canada, Matawa First Nations Management, Noront Resources, and Bold Ventures Inc. (a junior mining company with claims in the Ring of Fire). Government and industry representatives also mentioned the Ring of Fire during presentations. Since programs and ‘event series’ occurred concurrently, I was not able to attend them all, and it is quite possible that other stakeholders discussed the Ring of Fire during presentations that I was unable to attend.

The purpose of PDAC is similar to that of Mines and Money, but it attempts to create a happier, more relaxed environment for investment. Convention goers wore suits and dresses, but also t-shirts and jeans – and it was not uncommon to see people casually walking the trade show floor with a beer in hand. Unlike Mines and Money, PDAC also has a wide range of delegates attending, a wide range of topics presented, and there was usually adequate time for question and answer periods following presentations. This made it feel as if the conference was inclusive to a broad spectrum of perspectives; however, program presentations were somewhat narrow in scope and largely excluded relevant but disturbing information (for

example, talk of mining related human rights violations was taboo). The views expressed by some activists also strayed too far from the limits accepted at the convention, and they were escorted out by police or security.

## CHAPTER 2 – SETTING THE SCENE

At first glance, the landscape for the Ring of Fire may seem to be the most neutral, natural part of the story: the vast, empty, sub-arctic James Bay Lowlands. It provides the backdrop for the narratives of discovery and wealth, blending with the story to the point where it almost disappears. Yet this backdrop plays an important role, as it is crafted to set the scene for resource extraction.

Before the stretch of land in the far north of Ontario could be packaged and sold as a potential investment, it had to be emptied of its human and non-human inhabitants and reconstructed as a resource frontier. Tsing (2005) describes this transformation:

“A distinctive feature of this frontier regionality is its magical vision; it asks participants to see a landscape that doesn’t exist, at least not yet. It must continually erase old residents’ rights to create its wild and empty spaces where discovering resources, not stealing them is possible.” (p. 68)

The ‘magical vision’ begins to brew with the discovery story – lone prospectors hunting for buried treasure, trekking across muskeg swamp until they find the massive deposit. When word of the discovery got out, the Ring of Fire was born. Time quickened as people and investment dollars swarmed the region to stake claims, and emptiness expanded to make room for mining (Tsing 2005, p. 32). When the setting is a “far away” place that few investors on Bay Street or members of the general public will ever visit, it becomes easy to share this vision (Tsing 2003, p. 5100). With every promise of a booming mining-based economy, with each

announcement proclaiming ‘progress,’ and with every reference to the unimaginable wealth waiting to be unearthed, the Ring of Fire materializes within our imaginations.

This process of “imaginative geography” allows a geographic space to be re-imagined and shaped into the Ring of Fire, while paying little attention to the actual geography or inhabitants within it (Said 2000, p.181). Three ‘imaginative geography’ techniques used to create this new frontier stood out to me: the use of vacant imagery, mapping, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). To pave the way for mining, images of vacant landscapes and maps missing important information were methods of erasure, while CSR activities filtered people, animals, and other elements through a corporate lens and returned them to the scene. All three of these techniques were used as promotional tools that simplified the scene, removing any ‘complications’ that could interfere with mining investment. Throughout this chapter, I will be analyzing images relating to these three techniques to demonstrate how they are used to construct mining-friendly landscapes.

### **Vacant Imagery**

When the lively landscape transforms into the empty space of a resource frontier, it becomes easy to inscribe the Ring of Fire onto the landscape. A popular method of erasure is the circulation of imagery portraying desolate landscapes. For the Ring of Fire, emptiness is conjured with pictures of endless, snow dusted trees -- photos that are taken from a distance, emphasizing both the vastness and the void



of the space. The large coniferous trees look small and blur together, non-human animals are nowhere to be seen, and the only human activity is mining-related activity. Corporate promotional materials and articles about the Ring of Fire use these images repeatedly and position them prominently, often next to brand names and headlines (See Figures 1 and 2). Such images aren't unique to the Ring of Fire, and reflect an industry-wide trend (For example, see Figures 3-6). At Mines and Money and PDAC, it was difficult to find a junior mining company that did *not* use similar pictures to promote their finds. While the repetitive use of aerial landscape images is a convenient way to show the world what the mining landscape looks like, the pictures are uniform and the lens does not adjust to show different perspectives. Instead, the landscape is transformed and frozen into a vacant space, where a “totalizing perspective” creates “the impression of unity and control” – subduing the dynamic actor into a passive role (Escobar 1999, p.6).

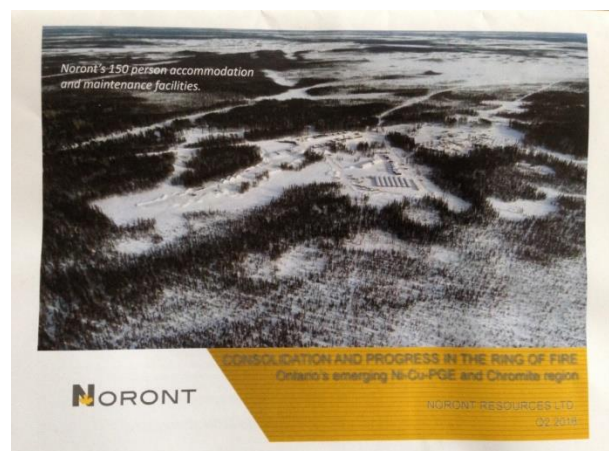
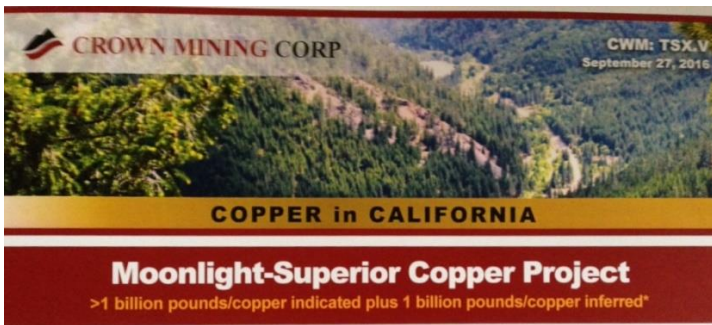
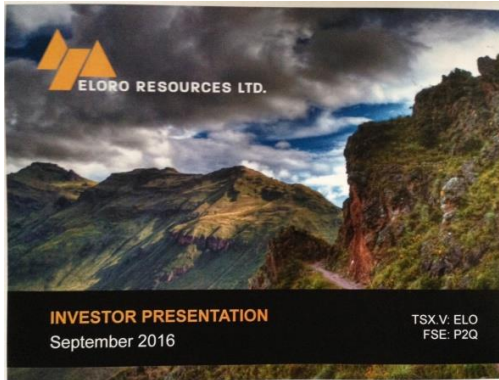


Figure 1 (Left): An article in 'Mining Journal' displays two aerial landscape photos along the headline for their article on the Ring of Fire (Scales 2017, p. 16-17); Figure 2 (Right): The cover for Noront's handout/presentation from Mines and Money.



**Sudbury Platinum Corporation**  
PGM-Ni-Cu

**Aer-Kidd Project**

- Best property position along the mineral-rich, highly productive Worthington Offset Dyke
- Aer-Kidd sits between two Mines:
  - Vale Totten: 10.1 Mt @ 1.5% Ni, 1.97% Cu, 4.8 g/t PGM
  - KGHM Victoria deep: 14.5 Mt @ 2.5% Ni, 2.8% Cu, 7.8 g/t PGM
- Property hosts the former producing Howland, Robinson and Rosen Mines
- Numerous untested 'high-conductance' EM targets
- Drill Hole AK-14-001A : 8.10m @ 1.04% Ni, 0.75% Cu & 2.40g/t PGM, including 1.67m @ 2.2% Ni, 0.8% Cu & 10.8 g/t PGM

**2016 Exploration Program**

- 18 000 metre drill campaign

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loma Pelada</li> <li>• Campo el Abra</li> <li>• Juan Carlos</li> <li>• Joyita</li> <li>• Pampa El Coco</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Santa Gertrudis</li> <li>• Flor Morada</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Smith</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Executive Director</li> <li>• Company Secretary</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>CAPITAL STRUCTURE (as at 16/09/2016)</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shares on issue</td> <td>1,553.4m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Options/ Rights on issue</td> <td>174m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Market Capitalisation</td> <td>\$18.64m</td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Smith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Executive Director</li> <li>• Company Secretary</li> </ul>	<b>CAPITAL STRUCTURE (as at 16/09/2016)</b>		Shares on issue	1,553.4m	Options/ Rights on issue	174m	Market Capitalisation	\$18.64m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Smith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Executive Director</li> <li>• Company Secretary</li> </ul>											
<b>CAPITAL STRUCTURE (as at 16/09/2016)</b>												
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Figure 3 (Top): Eldoro Resources handout/presentation from Mines and Money;  
Figure 4 (Second from Top): Crown Mining Corp. handout from Mines and Money;  
Figure 5 (Third from Top): Sudbury Platinum Corporation handout from Mines and Money;  
Figure 6 (Bottom): Latin Resources Limited handout from Mines and Money

Images have meanings that can be read through the context in which they are situated, referencing various ideological messages and discourses with systems of connotation (Hall 2003, p. 4). Their assemblage is an example of representation, which is “*an act of reconstruction* rather than reflection” (ibid; emphasis in original). The association between components of the assemblage seem “solid, commonsensical, and agreed-upon, when they are in fact contested, uncertain and in flux” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, p. 12). In the images I describe, the Ring of Fire landscape is portrayed as empty and suspended in time, appearing neutral while disseminating powerful discourses (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

One such discourse entwined with landscape emptiness is the idea of ‘unproductive’ land. In colonial times, the concepts of *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery were drawn upon to declare lands empty and open to claims, equating land ownership with “European-style agriculture” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) 2015, p.46). If Indigenous populations were sparse and the landscapes were forested, colonial regimes took it as a sign that the “land was neither used nor owned” (Li 2014, p.13). In Canada, British Crown officials drew upon this as the legal basis to claim “sovereignty over Indigenous peoples” and extinguish “their inherent rights to their territories, lands, and resources” (TRC 2015, p.191). One can still find these ideas alive and well in Canadian laws,

government policies, and litigation strategies, where they continue to erase Indigenous rights to land and resources (TRC 2015, p.200). Development planners further extend this colonial narrative into the future by considering “frontier spaces as “underutilized” resources that should be put to efficient and productive use” (Li 2014, p.13). Once the emptiness of a resource frontier is crafted, it is much easier to sell the land as unproductive, unused, and open for business.

When aerial pictures of endless trees are the dominant images used to represent the Ring of Fire, they help construct an empty land where mining is the only activity on the horizon. If these same images are situated within a different assemblage their meaning can drastically change. For example, Matawa First Nations Management uses similar pictures on their websites and in their information pamphlets, which I collected at PDAC and CAMA (Matawa First Nations Management 2018). These pictures sit alongside other images that depict the landscape through multiple lenses. They zoom in to show people, young and old, engaging with the land and waters in a multitude of ways. They include pictures of mining activity, alongside many other pictures of non-mining activities. They adjust the focus to capture nonhumans: a moose walking through water, a deer standing in the bush, a bird sitting in a tree, a chipmunk foraging through pine needles, a butterfly resting on the ground, and leaves soaking up the sun. Water glistens, shadows stretch, snow settles, and dust stirs. Fluffy dandelions stand tall alongside grave markers. Historical photos are shuffled with contemporary ones. Time expands to unite past, present, and future generations. In their assemblage, Matawa’s images coalesce to portray a landscape that is productive, dynamic, and

full of life – building a world for Ring of Fire narratives that run counter to those of the resource frontier.

The scene of emptiness and the scene of life diverge to the point where they appear as polar opposites, yet they represent the same place. One contracts, while the other expands. One is simple, the other is complicated. One is for taking, the other for collaborating. When the two scenes are viewed together, erasures are highlighted and the constructed and contested nature of the landscape appears. The many actors that are revealed when the lens is adjusted are in conflict with the space fulfilling its role as a resource frontier – demonstrating the “power of making absent” (Escobar 2014, p. 374).

Power emerges when associations are dissolved and relationships are ruptured; sedimenting in assemblages (Escobar 2014, p. 377). For the junior mining companies, the assemblage usually includes an aerial landscape image, a map, a diagram of the deposit, pictures of company employees, and sometimes pictures of the minerals they propose to unearth, like chromite. Excluded from this picture is the dynamic landscape depicted by Matawa. For a resource frontier, the lively landscape is “an unwelcome nature, an obstacle standing between the present state and a desired future one” (Escobar 2014, p. 371). The landscape is purified of “humans and nature,” following a specific “aesthetical criterion” that allows the space to function as a site for mining and investment, guaranteed to make a lot of money (ibid, p. 375). The emptiness ensures that human rights abuses and environmental catastrophes are not possible within the space – how could they be

when the space is empty – guaranteeing that business will run smoothly, without complications.

## **Mapping**

After walking among the hundreds of trade show booths, watching countless presentations, and sifting through the mountain of pamphlets that I picked up at mining events, it became quite clear that when there is mining there is mapping. The two are so enmeshed that the maps almost go unnoticed. They are the basic tool used to communicate exactly where in ‘the middle of nowhere’ the wealth is buried and the proposed mine will be. Maps appear at various scales and in various forms, depending on their intended purpose. They may appear as a colonial treasure map entwined with a corporate image, they may be splashed with the entire colour spectrum from magnetic resonance imaging, or they may tell the story of a trip down the river. The maps may be empty or full, simple or layered, static or fluid, and they help shape the Ring of Fire.

To create a ‘mining-ready’ landscape, maps draw upon the “capitalist construction of nature,” ordering nature as a resource to be divided, extracted, and sold (Escobar 1999, p. 6). The landscape is simplified, regularized and managed, becoming the object of expert knowledge and transforming into a commodity (ibid). Through such methods, maps employ authority and consolidate power, facilitating “large scale accumulation strategies,” like the Ring of Fire (Peluso 1995, p.383). The collections of maps distributed by government bodies, junior mining companies, and other industry representatives reflect this process, and they “exert a social

influence through their omissions as much as by the features they depict and emphasize” (J.B. Harley, 1992, cited in Peluso p.385).

### *Blank Slate Mapping*

Like the aerial landscape pictures, several of the maps that I came across at mining events were almost completely empty. They appeared as a blank slate, wiped clean of any features that one might expect to see on a map. One such map was on a pamphlet distributed by the Ontario Government at Mines and Money. The top of the pamphlet reads “Number of hectares of Ontario land that are still open for staking: 70, 000, 000” (Fig. 7). The number 70 million is written in extra-large font and hovers over a shadowy outline of the province of Ontario. Beside this image, the government boasts about the province’s mining exploration in the Ring of Fire, stating that it “reinforces the continued potential for new discoveries of metals in Ontario.” In case the reader had any doubts about Ontario’s mining potential, more impressive claims jump off the page, like: “\$10 Billion Average Ontario Mineral Production 2011-2015,” “#1 Toronto is the mining finance capital of the world” and “\$180 billion mining market capitalization in 2015.” The shadowy map in the background provides the reader with a visual representation of a province where millions of hectares of land are sitting vacant, waiting to be claimed. It helps enable the dreams of making a find and striking it rich. The other side of this pamphlet depicts another Ontario map (Fig. 8). Unlike the first map, this one is not completely empty. It is coloured in shades of pink, green, brown, and red, which are assumed to represent geological land formations, although this is not explained in the legend.

“Mining Operations” and “Top Exploration Projects” are indicated by circles and squares, coloured based on resource, and numbered based on mining company. The names of a few cities, like Toronto, London, and Thunder Bay, are marked on the map, along with some small towns that are big names in mining, like Red Lake and Kirkland Lake. “Ring of Fire” is written as if there is a corresponding town nearby with the same name, but instead sits next to a red crescent and a ‘top exploration project’ square. First Nations communities, First Nations territories, detailed waterways, and infrastructure (i.e. roads, rail) are omitted from the map – components that are associated with social, environmental, and logistical concerns connected to the Ring of Fire (and other mining projects). By excluding such information from the map, the Ontario Government maintains much of the idea that the province is ‘empty but full of minerals.’

Other homogeneous, ‘blank slate’ maps are similarly used to conjure interest in money-making minerals within an uncomplicated landscape. For example, one PDAC publication I came across included a blank image of each province, marked with symbols and their corresponding word bubbles, to depict the “positive impact of the industry in communities across the country” (PDAC 2016, p.6). For the Ontario map, 5/8 bubbles list big dollar amounts and impressive stock market information, while the other 3 communicate numbers relating to labour and active mines (PDAC 2016, p. 7). Junior mining company, Fancamp Exploration Ltd, provides another example of this type of



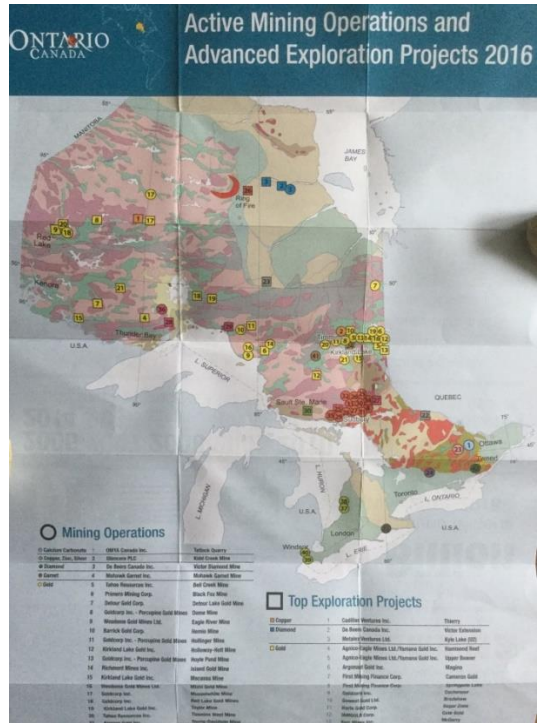


Figure 7 (Left) and Figure 8 (Right): The front and back of an Ontario Government handout distributed at Mines and Money and PDAC

map. Fancamp utilized an empty map of Ontario and Quebec on the company information handout that was available at PDAC. The empty provinces are marked with Fancamp's "Main Project Locations" and the substances they are seeking to mine at each – including a chromite project in the Ring of Fire. By choosing this strategy, the junior company creates a picture that highlights their projects and erases any potential complications.

*Infrastructure Mapping*

An infrastructure deficit to the Ring of Fire has been identified as one of the biggest obstacles to mining in the region, and has been the object of several studies

(Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2014; Northern Ontario Business Staff 2016). Maps of the proposed infrastructure emphasize that this problem can be easily overcome and that mining the Ring of Fire is possible. Maps depicting the proposed road and rail corridors were available from the Ontario Government pavilion at PDAC, the Noront booths at both Mines and Money and PDAC, and one was displayed during a presentation by KWG Resources at the NADF Mining Summit.

The Ring of Fire infrastructure maps are usually regional in scale. The maps consistently include the Victor Mine to the east of the Ring of Fire and Musselwhite Mine to the west, demonstrating that mining in the region is feasible. They highlight how the road and rail networks will connect to the Ring of Fire and also to towns, cities, and First Nations communities. However, upon closer examination it becomes apparent that not all First Nations communities in the region link with the future infrastructure, and the ones that do connect are through winter roads (which have a rapidly shrinking season). Omitted from the maps is Matawa territory. Even though all of the proposed infrastructure would be located within this large territory, it is not marked on the map, and instead First Nations communities are represented by points. By excluding this information, the map minimizes Matawa's involvement in decision making processes for the proposed infrastructure – an element that mirrors Premier Wynne's "divisive" announcement that road construction will begin in 2019, even though an agreement had not been made with several First Nations (CBC News 2017; also see Chapter 4). Rather than reflecting processes of cooperation, consultation, and consent, the maps' omissions create a simplified

landscape where the obstacle of insufficient infrastructure can easily be overcome and resources can be shipped out.

### *Geologic and Claim Holder Mapping*

Geological maps for the Ring of Fire are used to display the science behind the promises of wealth. 'Expert knowledge' is required to read and understand what the swaths of colour mean on these highly technical maps. To the untrained eye these maps may appear chaotic and overwhelming. One such map, distributed by Noront, is splashed with colour to show magnetic imaging of a section of the land where they have staked claims (Fig. 9). Deposits are labelled and lines point towards where they sit amongst the striations of colour. The map has a narrow focus and gets straight to the point: there are viable minerals here and lots of them. The result is a map that appears entirely technical, without any room for human activity (unless, of course it's mining). Nearby communities, waterways, roads, and anything else one may expect to see on a map are washed away by the wave of magnetic imaging. Geologists use this technical information to make predictions about the value of the minerals lying beneath the earth, making comparisons to similar, high performing deposits around the world.

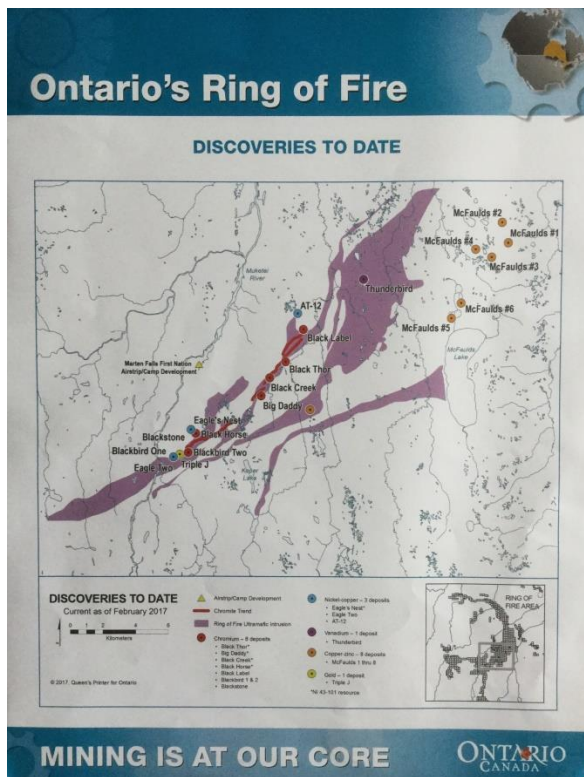
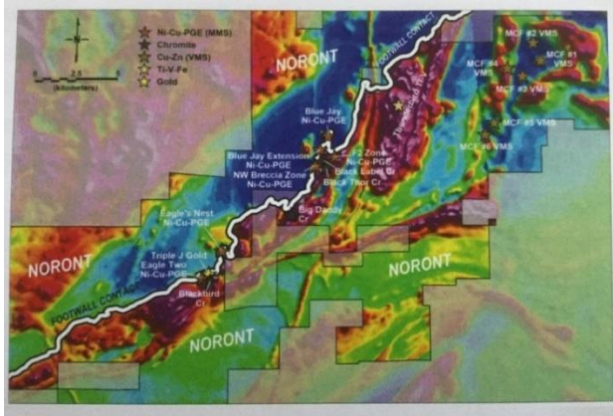


Figure 9 (Left): Magnetic imaging map distributed by Noront Resources at Mines and Money (Noront 2016, p.20); Figure 10 (Right): 'Discoveries to Date' map distributed by the Ontario Government at PDAC

Along with the highly technical maps, there are also simplified versions – simple enough to read at a glance if you are a geologist. For example, the Ontario pavilion at PDAC provided me with a 'Discovery Map' of the Ring of Fire (Fig. 10). Deposits were represented by dots, coloured according to mineral, and labelled

with catchy names, like “Black Thor,” “Eagle’s Nest” and “Thunderbird.” A thick red line is drawn to indicate the “chromite trend” while a vast stretch is highlighted in purple to show the “ultramafic intrusion.” A small triangle represents Martin Falls First Nation, which seems to be included on the map because of the airstrip and “camp development.” Like the more technically complicated map, the features represented on the map are narrow in scope and keep the viewer focused on the mineral deposits.

Claim holder maps are probably the maps that evoke the ideas of ‘capitalist construction of nature’ the most, indicating ownership with grid-like representation and transforming the landscape into a commodity. These maps often include geological information, which can range from deposit information appearing in a list to a mining claims/magnetic resonance imaging hybrid map. Each claim that has been staked is represented by a colour-coded square. The Ontario Government claim holders map colour-codes the mining claims by deposit, emphasizing the presence of numerous companies in a highly active region. On the other hand, Noront tends to colour-code the squares by company, emphasizing their monopoly in the region with a picture that is almost entirely ‘Noront gold’ (Fig. 11). Like all other maps I have discussed thus far, these maps did not show that the deposits are all within Matawa territory – a factor that is particularly significant on maps communicating resource ownership.

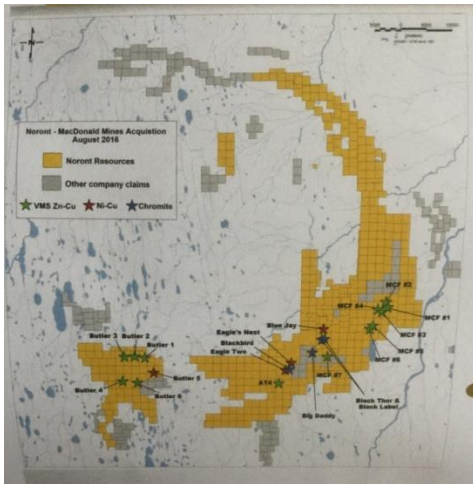


Figure 11: Mining claims map distributed by Noront Resources at Mines and Money (Noront 2016, p. 4)

The geologic and claim holder maps are central to resource extraction in the Ring of Fire. They provide investors with a ‘mining-ready’ landscape, where ownership has been established and geologic anomalies prove that their money will grow. Like the infrastructure maps and the blank slate maps, complications are excluded and dreams of wealth become possible.

### *Counter Mapping*

Although the resource maps I have outlined are consistent in their patterns of simplification and exclusion, there are groups distributing maps that challenge these representations of the Ring of Fire. “Counter maps” expand the landscape to include what is *and* what isn’t represented on “standard” maps (Peluso p.386). They are tools that can challenge omissions, contest the homogenization of space, alter categories, and express social relationships within a space “rather than depicting abstract space itself” (Peluso 1995, p.387).

Matawa First Nations Management had trade show booths at both PDAC and CAMA, where they distributed maps along with other information to delegates. One of these was entitled “Matawa First Nations Homelands and Traditional Territory Mineral Exploration” (Figure 12). This map depicts the grid-like squares of mining claims and labels three mineral exploration projects within a large green, shaded area marked as “Matawa Homelands and Traditional Territory.” Rather than appearing as points, Matawa member communities are outlined and shaded a darker green. Waterways appear prominently, and many are labelled. Another map, entitled “Northern Ontario First Nations,” divides the land into Treaties, listing their names and dates, while also marking NAN territory with a thick black line (Figure 13). Ninety-nine First Nations communities are numbered and named alongside several towns and cities, with waterways again appearing prominently. Other maps from the Matawa booths included one that depicted Matawa homelands and traditional territory without mining activity, a “Ring of Fire Mineral Exploration Map,” a “Comprehensive Treaty Map of Canada,” and a “Watersheds within the Matawa Shared Traditional Territory” map. Of all the maps that I came across at the mining events, the watershed map was the only one that focused entirely on water – a feature that is routinely omitted, minimized, and blended with the background on most resource-related maps. This map depicts the extensive network of creeks, rivers, and lakes, and how they flow. Watersheds are named and coloured shades of blue, and Matawa First Nations shared traditional territory is outlined in black (Figure 14).

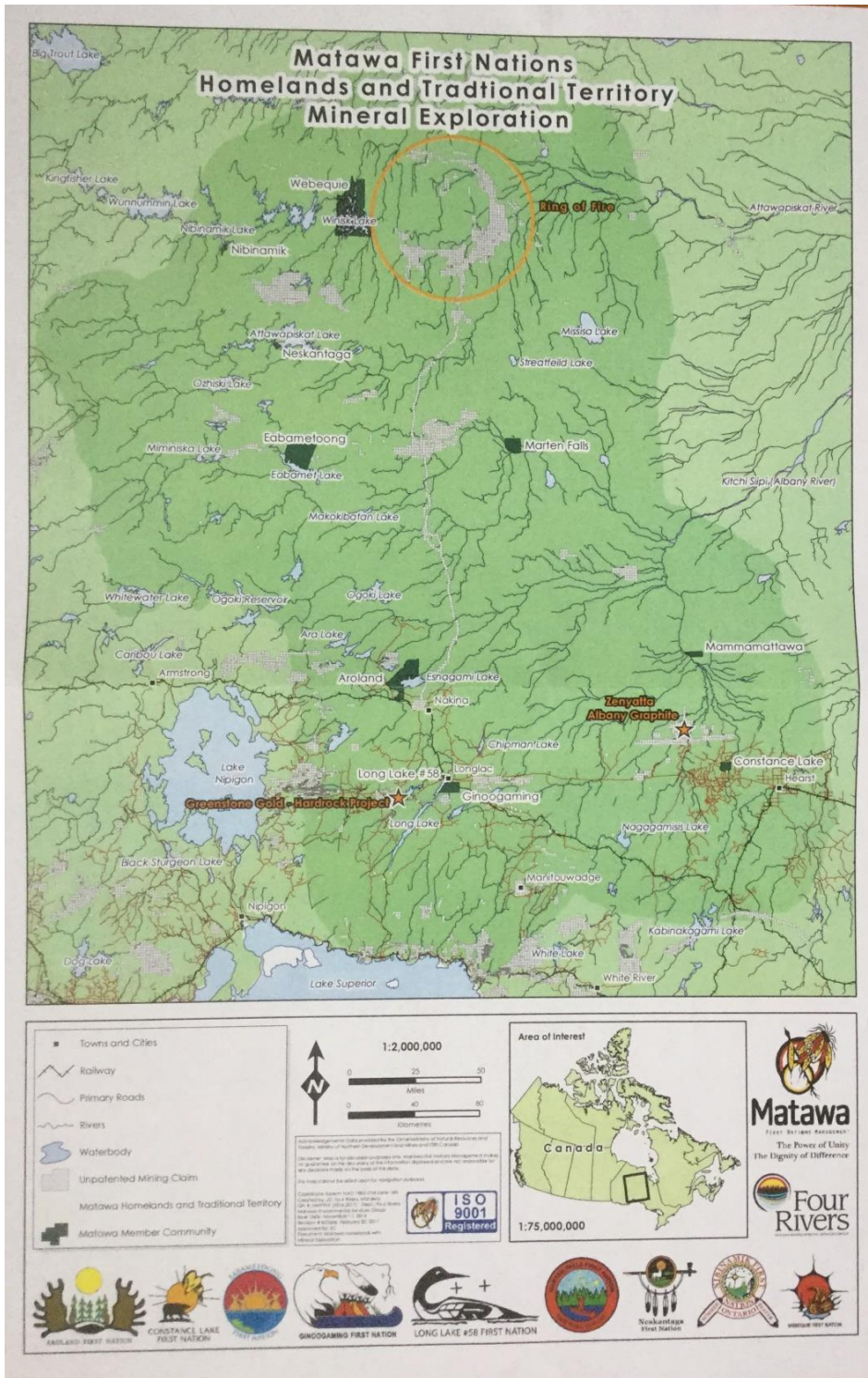


Figure 12: 'Matawa First Nations Homelands and Traditional Territory Mineral Exploration' map, distributed by Matawa First Nations Management at CAMA and PDAC



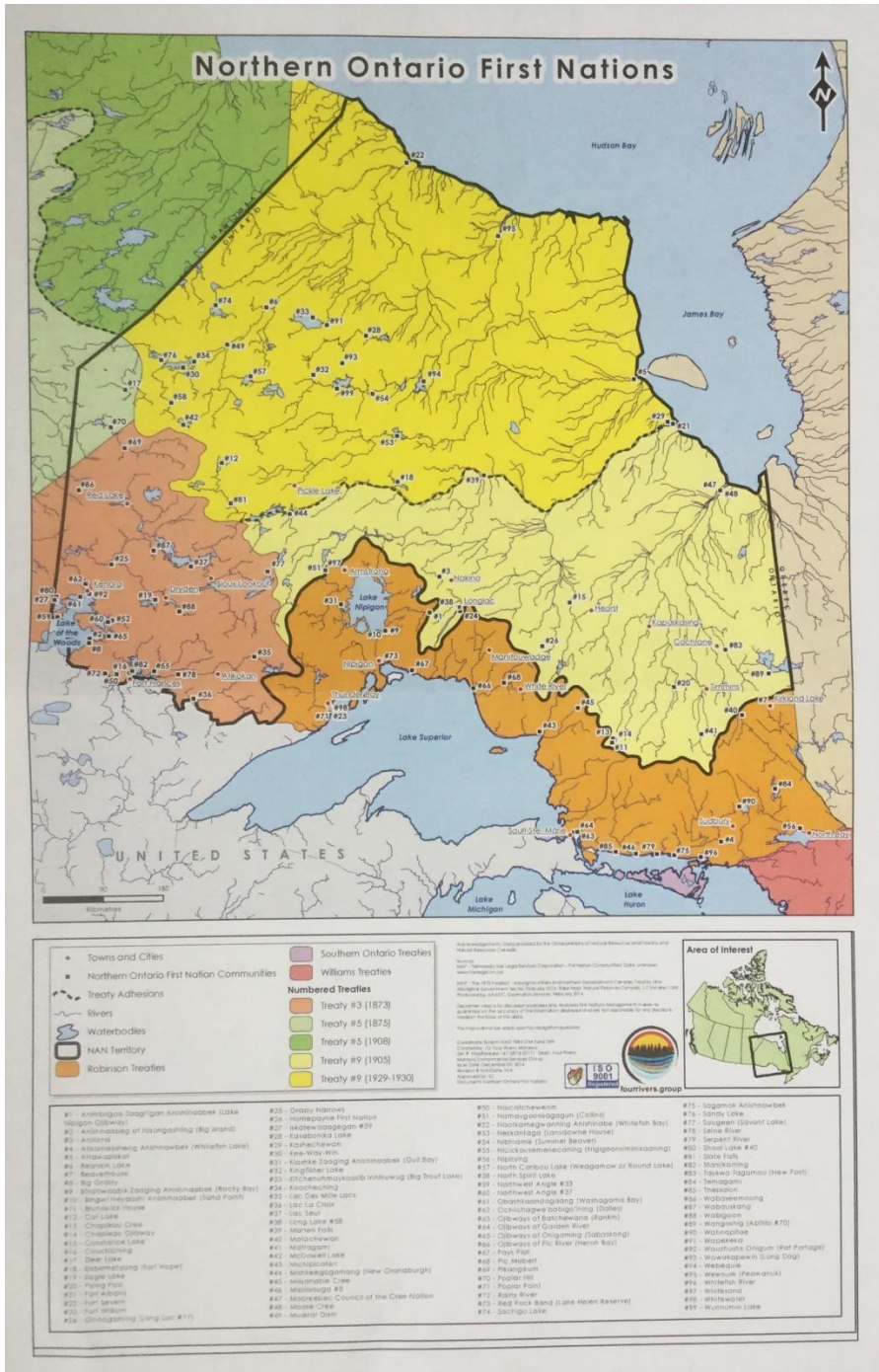


Figure 13: 'Northern Ontario First Nations' map, distributed by Matawa First Nations Management at CAMA and PDAC

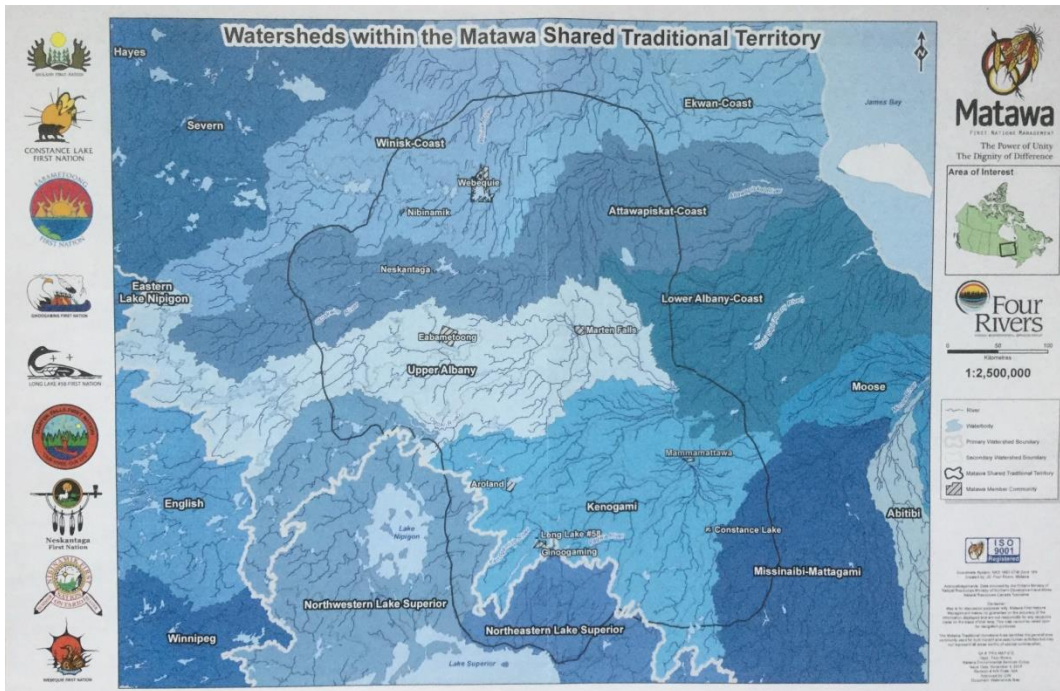


Figure 14: 'Watersheds within the Matawa Shared Traditional Territory' map, distributed by Matawa First Nations Management at CAMA and PDAC

The Four Rivers Environmental Service Group, a department of Matawa, has several interactive maps on their website, along with .pdf copies of the printed maps that were available at the mining events. The online interactive maps include a mining information map, a map of First Nations communities, a map of traplines, and a map entitled "2013 Albany River Trip" (Four Rivers 2018). This last map was created by Xavier Sagutch, who travelled along the Albany River in search of culturally valuable places that have been identified by Elders (ibid). He used GPS data and photos to create a "story map" that was "derived from the data he collected and the story he had to tell when he returned" (ibid).

The story map follows Sagutch's journey from Eabametoong First Nation, up and down the river. It recounts his experiences navigating rough and fast waters,

watching a beautiful sunrise, struggling with strenuous portages, catching walleye for dinner, taking cover from high winds, and racing against a thunder storm. The map documents his encounters with various animals along the river, including a moose and her calf, sandhill cranes, a muskrat, a beaver, a sturgeon, and flocks of geese. In one encounter, Sagutch describes seeing what appeared to be a black fox. However, after getting a closer look he noticed that the animal did not have the tail of a fox and was not large enough to be a timber wolf. He wondered if it could be a wild dog or coyote before remembering that Elders had talked of “small wolves in the area” (Four Rivers 2018, Point 12). Along with animals, the map records plants and insects, such as false morels, dwarf Canadian primrose, and a Canadian tiger swallowtail (butterfly). The pictures of the plants, animals and insects are labelled with binomial nomenclature alongside their common names (other than the small wolf, whose species could not be determined). The story also tells of human activity along the river, as Sagutch comes across a plane landing at a wilderness lodge, an active commercial fishery, family camp sites, a chapel, and two cemeteries. At one of the cemeteries, he notes that “this place should be highly respected and preserved because the ancestors of the people buried here still reside in the community of Eabametoong” (Four Rivers 2018, Point 15). He explains that maintaining the site is necessary “so that future generations can know and understand their history” (ibid). Through this story map, Sagutch revealed a dynamic scene along the Albany River that is full of motion and life.

Another story map that adds to the Ring of Fire landscape is the “Caribou and Mining Story Map” by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada. This map

aims to “track the cumulative disturbance from mineral exploration on the ranges of boreal caribou in Ontario” (WCS Canada 2018). It is a layered, interactive map that provides viewers with information on caribou, their historic and contemporary ranges, range loss, and factors contributing to range loss. Its focus is boreal caribou, a threatened species that resides in Northern Ontario, including the area surrounding the Ring of Fire. The map layers detailed information on mining claims and mineral exploration activity with caribou ranges, so that users can access this information “all in one place, and track this [caribou] disturbance over time and space” (ibid). By combining detailed information on caribou with detailed information on mining, the map demonstrates how the two are interconnected.

These examples of counter mapping shine light on several important factors that are omitted or minimized in the other maps. The vast areas that appear empty and unused on the ‘standard’ mining maps are actually full of life, productive and in constant motion. Waterways are extensive in the area, they are vital to life, relevant to mining/infrastructure projects, and they show where pollutants will flow. Matawa First Nations homeland and traditional territory is important to include in Ring of Fire mining and infrastructure maps, as its omission condenses First Nations’ land into tiny points on the map (when it *is* represented) instead of the vast stretch of land that actually makes up the territory – an area that encompasses the entire Ring of Fire and its proposed infrastructure.

Along with the divergences between the ‘standard’ and ‘counter’ maps, areas of convergence are also important. The common ground between the maps allows

them to conflict within the same arena. Here, they illustrate what de la Cadena (2010) calls 'pluriversal politics' – “partially connected, heterogeneous, socio-natural worlds negotiating their ontological disagreements politically” (p. 360). Standing alone, the assemblages of 'standard' resource maps communicate a homogeneous message of optimism, where obstacles to mining are minimized and future profits maximized. When viewed alongside 'counter map' assemblages, the picture expands, transforming a 'mining-ready' landscape into a more than mining landscape. Together, this “plurality of natures” opens up “a rich field of choices, possibilities, and potential re-combinations” (Escobar 1999, p.3; Rocheleau's comments, in Escobar 1999, p.23).

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

### *The Art of Mining*

Visual arts and mining seem to be a strange pairing, which is why I was interested in attending the PDAC-related event, The Art of Mining. This lavish evening event was held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and organized by public relations giant, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC). Tickets were free to PDAC delegates who RSVP'd to an email invite... but why? What was the point of this gathering?

I soon discovered that The Art of Mining is a flashy photo contest, “that highlights the positive impact of the Canadian mining community both in Canada and around the world” (PwC 2018). The challenge was for mining companies to submit a photo that answered the question: “How is your organization transforming

the face of mining through diversity and innovation?” Those in attendance voted for the winner, and cash prizes were to be donated to charity.

Through the photo entries and their corresponding write-ups, mining companies were able to craft a positive image of themselves. Some focused on social contributions. For example, Hudbay Minerals submitted a photo of a ‘local’ man splashing water from a fountain, alongside a paragraph explaining the contributions Hudbay has made to basic sanitation infrastructure in Peru, touting an “innovative approach to community development” and “mining’s capacity to transform for the better” (Hudbay Minerals Inc. 2017; Fig. 25). Major Drilling Group International Inc. depicted a site manager distributing donated shoes to children in Indonesia (Fig. 15), while Pan American Silver Corp. focused on education and submitted a picture of a smiling student (Fig. 16). Local people were also depicted as mine workers, while the adjacent paragraphs describe companies empowering them to make decisions, providing them with jobs, and sharing ownership with them. If mine employees in the photos were not ‘local’ they were female, highlighting diversity in a predominantly male workforce. To maximize the positive impact within a single submission, write-ups often described the token woman’s environmental contributions. In BHP Billiton’s photo, a woman is sampling water at a potash mine with a paragraph explaining that she assists the company in maintaining “a dynamic environment for the local community, flora and fauna” (BHP Billiton 2017; Fig. 17).



Figure 15: Major Drilling International's Art of Mining 2017 photo



Figure 16: Pan American Silver's Art of Mining 2017 photo



Figure 17: BHP Billiton's Art of Mining 2017 photo

Other photos focused on environmental innovations. For example, Denison Mines Corp. wrote that they take pride in “achieving engineering balance with nature,” and displayed an idyllic picture of trees, water, and a tailings dam that

contained “tailings from 35 years of active uranium mining in the region” (Denison Mines Corp. 2017; Fig. 29). Several companies used similar techniques to blend mining activity with the surrounding environment, capturing a pretty mining landscape photo, while others chose to zoom in on environmental innovation instead. Sherritt International Corporation’s entry was a close up shot of a tiny fish in a tiny fish tank, held by a smiling worker, alongside a paragraph explaining that “even the smallest species are cared for” (Sherritt International Corp. 2017; Fig. 18); while Alamos Gold Inc. zoomed in on the plastic, snowflake-like contraptions used to grow waste water cleaning bacteria (Fig. 19).

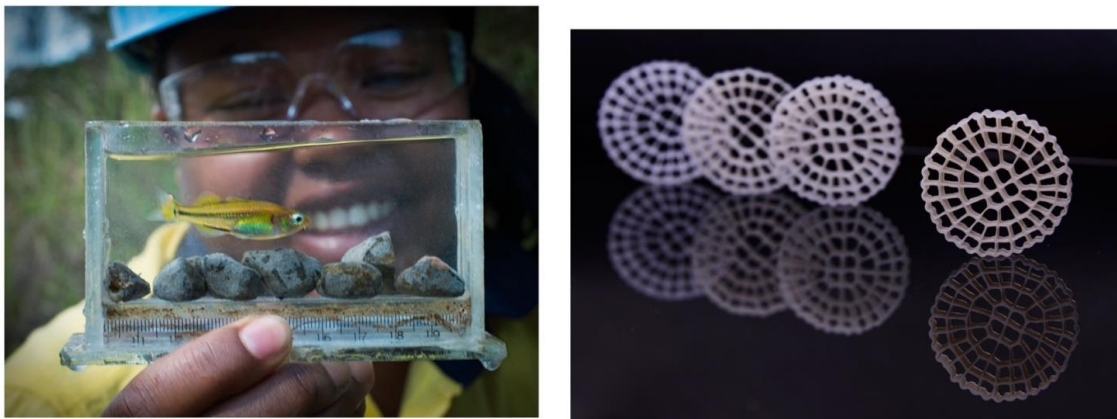


Figure 18 (Left): Sherritt International’s Art of Mining 2017 photo; Figure 19 (Right): Alamos Gold’s Art of Mining 2017 photo

At the Art of Mining, the vacant landscapes of extraction disappeared as smiling people, lush greenery, thriving animals, and flowing water emerged onto the scene. As an assemblage, the photos painted a homogeneously cheery picture of the mining industry – which is no secret, since that was the whole point of the swanky



event. To capture this picture, mining companies changed their focus and used a different lens: that of Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR.

### *CSR and Mining*

There is much value in projecting the image of good corporate citizenship. The Art of Mining seemed like an over-the-top event, but the money and time that went into it was converted into the “symbolic capital” of CSR (Bourdieu 1977). Through the photo collection, the mining industry is portrayed as being benevolent; nurturing the people and the environments that it comes into contact with. This grand advertisement showed those seeking to make money in mining that it is okay to take pleasure in profiting from the industry, as “it is ‘moral and not immoral’” (Manohka 2004, p. 59). At The Art of Mining, industry was “loudly ethical,” which is good for business, as “it cheers up investors, workers and customers” (The Economist 2002). Since symbolic capital is “readily converted” into economic capital, the glossy images celebrated at the event will likely transform into future profits (Bourdieu 1977, p. 179).

In contrast to the photo collection displayed at the Art of Mining, Benson and Kirsch (2010) describe mining as a ‘harm industry’ that is sometimes viewed more negatively in public polls than the tobacco industry (Danielson 2006:26, 52, cited in Benson and Kirsch 2010 p. 471). They explain that mining harms,

“both in its destructive transformation of the environment and in the toxic exposure of workers and other people living nearby to health threats from the minerals themselves, such as lead, asbestos, and uranium, or the chemicals used to process minerals, including cyanide and mercury” (p. 471).

To justify this harm, mining activities are defended on economic grounds (i.e.: wealth and job creation), technological grounds (i.e.: the need for metals), and also as a form of development to help alleviate poverty, even though companies often “return very little to state or local communities” (Ferguson 2006, cited in Benson and Kirsch 2010). When the industry was threatened, they intensified their defensive strategies with CSR.

The mining industry began drawing upon CSR about twenty years ago, marking a major shift in how companies define their responsibilities (Luning 2012). With this shift, ‘responsibility’ went from a term used only on employee matters, to one that encouraged corporations to act responsibly within the areas they operated in (ibid). This includes being accountable for any damage their presence may cause to people living nearby and implementing community development initiatives (ibid). This shift took place following several “high-profile conflicts between mining companies and indigenous communities” that occurred around the same time – a tipping point in the “larger relationship between the mining industry and the public” (Ballard and Banks 2003, cited in Benson and Kirsch 2010, p. 473). In one high profile case, outlined by Benson and Kirsch (2010), a group of people living within the catchment area of the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea took legal action against mining company Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP, later to become BHP Billiton) for the “massive environmental degradation” caused by dumping tailings and waste rock into the Ok Tedi and Fly rivers (ibid, p. 472). As a result, “Negative publicity from the case affected BHP’s public image, contributed to the cancellation of its proposed copper project in the Caribbean, and jeopardized a billion-dollar

diamond concession” (ibid, p.472). To mitigate effects on their reputations and prevent future scandals, companies began adopting a set of voluntary principles of CSR – something that soon became an industry-wide practice (Luning 2012, p. 206). The World Bank developed voluntary principles and benchmarks that aim to improve the lives of the people living in communities affected by mining activity, but also to improve business, since CSR enhances the “reputation and brand value of companies” (Luning 2012, p. 207). During a CSR Event Series presentation at PDAC, Lisa Stadelbauer from Global Affairs Canada echoed this sentiment, stating, “We know that mining conflicts are increasing, and are very costly; and the social acceptance of mining is key, otherwise activity at the mine stops.” The adoption of voluntary CSR principals is now an industry wide practice. CSR principals remain voluntary, as mandatory benchmarks may increase mine expenditures, affecting profits. In her discussion, Stadelbauer advocated against mandatory benchmarks for this reason, and instead promoted a voluntary reporting system where companies share what steps they have taken towards things like local procurement and local representation in the workforce.

The widespread adoption of CSR within the mining industry reflects what Benson and Kirsch (2010) label “phase 3” of corporate response to critique, crisis management (p. 466). In this phase, corporations actively engage with critics as a “last resort,” when operations are threatened by “catastrophic loss, bankruptcy, industry collapse, or complete loss of legitimacy” (ibid). Strategies include appropriating discourse of opposing movements, developing certification programs that mask processes with a seal of approval, or assimilating critics within the

corporation (for example, by including them on boards of directors, as public relation advisors, or through partnerships with NGOs) (ibid). By engaging with critics, industry can manage resistance, establishing “sensible and reasonable” limits to reforms (ibid). Corporations promote ideals of ‘harmony,’ ‘compromise,’ and ‘responsibility;’ while those who continue to critique the industry are labelled as “inefficient troublemakers” in order to justify the limited reforms (ibid). Brosius (1999) describes similar rhetoric used in the Malaysian timber industry as a form of wedge politics to create “a distinction between “sincere” environmentalists willing to work together,” and “irresponsible “radicals” interested only in confrontation” (p. 49). This type of response “inhibits the formation of critique” and rearticulates “structural contradictions, social conflict, and alienated subjectivities” (Hall 1986, as cited in Benson and Kirsch 2010, p. 467). It is what enables a scenic photo of a tailings dam holding radioactive waste to represent a responsible company that is in harmony with nature, rather than an ecological hazard. With CSR, critique is contained and converted into a money making opportunity (Benson and Kirsch 2010).

#### *Noront’s Award-Winning CSR*

One company that is considered to be a mining industry leader in CSR is Noront Resources. In 2015, Noront won the PDAC Environmental and Social Responsibility Award, honouring the company for its “accomplishments and commitment to social initiatives in Northern Ontario” (Napier 2015, p. 7). Noront also ranked first in the 2013 Socially Responsible Junior Mine Index (Diniz 2014).

While junior mining companies have typically shied away from CSR initiatives, Noront has used CSR to distinguish themselves from the hundreds of other investment-seeking juniors (Vella 2014).

To become a leader in CSR, Noront has been involved in several initiatives aimed at helping First Nations communities surrounding the Ring of Fire. Pictures and posts about these projects flood the company's Twitter and Facebook pages, while their corporate website describes some of them in detail under the heading "Community." Noront's major CSR projects focus largely on education and employment; while their involvement in smaller projects and their support for other select initiatives enhance their socially responsible corporate image.

Since 2009, Noront has been sending toys, food, and Santa Claus to some of the communities surrounding the Ring of Fire with the Ring of Fire Christmas Fund. Noront's corporate website and social media pages capture this event through heartwarming pictures of smiling children, enthusiastic volunteers, and mountains of Christmas presents. As one of the company's first CSR initiatives in the area, the annual Christmas events likely helped Noront 'break the ice,' and make a good impression through a friendly and generous corporate identity.

Noront began working with DAREarts in 2010, an organization that had already been working with youth in the area (Noront 2018a; DAREarts n.d.). DAREarts is an organization that works to promote leadership and empowerment through the arts, including music, visual art, digital art, film, photography, storytelling, and fashion (DAREarts n.d.). Noront is listed as a DAREarts 'gold

sponsor,' and has its name on some high-profile initiatives, including a documentary that was filmed at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival and a project that was presented at the 2017 Stratford Festival. This partnership has helped spark an interest in mining with 'Mining Movie Making Youth Camps' – which allowed participants to create videos for the Ontario Mining Association's 'So You Think You Know Mining' film competition (Noront 2018a). To further an interest in mining amongst youth, Noront has partnered with Mining Matters (the registered charity branch of PDAC) to deliver the 'Mining Rocks' program, an education and outreach program for students in Indigenous communities (ibid). Participants learn about geoscience, mining, and careers in mining, while connecting with industry professionals.

In regards to employment, Noront aims to have a high proportion of Indigenous employees. This has been publicized in a CBC news story about the company and through the employee profiles of Indigenous people that are regularly featured in the company's community newsletter and social media sites (Walters 2016). To train people for these jobs, the company partnered with Matawa First Nations' Kiiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services and Confederation College to establish The Ring of Fire Aboriginal Training Alliance, which ran from 2013-2015. This program provided people from nine Matawa communities with mining-related job training and apprenticeships (Noront 2018b; RoFATA n.d.). To help fund education, Noront has established a scholarship and bursary program through Indspire, an "Indigenous-led registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people" (Indspire 2018).

Along with the larger CSR initiatives, Noront has also been using social media to enhance their socially responsible image in more subtle ways. For example, on Orange Shirt Day, the company posted several pictures of employees wearing orange shirts on its Twitter and Facebook pages, “to honour children who attended residential schools” (Sept 29, 2017). Earlier this year, the company re-tweeted a post for “Walking With Our Sisters,” a memorial art installation project to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (Jan 8, 2018). Noront has also tweeted about National Aboriginal Day (June 21, 2018; 2016; 2013), the Invictus Games flag ceremony (Sept. 25, 2017), and winter clothing donations going to Webequie First Nation (Jan 20, 2015).

These CSR initiatives, large and small, all contribute to building Noront’s corporate identity as a friendly and generous company that cares about First Nations people. Some of the projects conjure interest and excitement about mining in the communities surrounding the Ring of Fire, allowing people to dream of working in the field. The mining readiness educational programs and other ‘capacity building’ initiatives help solidify these possibilities, as people are able to take concrete steps towards this future. Other projects create opportunities for Noront to build relationships with local people in ways that don’t appear to be pushing a mining agenda, like the Christmas celebrations. By publicizing particular CSR efforts, Noront depicts a harmonious relationship with the First Nations communities surrounding the Ring of Fire – a factor that is important to investors. Through the assemblage of CSR project descriptions and their corresponding pictures, Noront appears as a company that has obtained a ‘social license to

operate,' while the projects themselves help the company work towards and maintain this 'license.'

A 'social license to operate' (SLO) stems from the concept of CSR, and "refers to the level of acceptance or approval by local communities and stakeholders of mining companies and their operations" (Miningfacts.org 2012). With a social license, mining companies obtain "social permission" to conduct business in an area – an expense that "ultimately adds to the bottom line" (ibid). In Ontario, uncertainty surrounding land claims has been cited by the business community as a major deterrent to mining investment (Quesnel and Green 2017; Bains and Jackson 2015). At the ONRF, Ontario Finance Minister, Charles Sousa described how establishing partnerships with First Nations is "essential" for investment. He explained that "this will help us attract proponents" in the Ring of Fire, creating a stable system with no surprises and "no political risks." When a junior mining company like Noront demonstrates a social license to operate and a commitment to CSR, it becomes "more attractive to investors who seek minimal-risk projects" (Vella 2014).

In addition to the much publicized CSR initiatives, Noront reports that it is also involved in activities connected with infrastructure. When I interviewed Noront Vice President of Government Affairs and former PDAC President, Glenn Nolan, he stated that the company is assisting some communities with water and housing. Although these activities likely further the company's social license to operate, I was unable to find any information about them on the company's websites like the other CSR projects. At PDAC, mining industry representatives advocated against these



forms of CSR during panel discussions, explaining that the private sector can be good for “capacity building,” but should not “assume the role of government,” by becoming involved with things like infrastructure.

During the interview, Nolan also mentioned some of the other serious issues people living near the Ring of Fire face, such as suicides, domestic violence, and addiction. When I asked if Noront has done anything to address such issues, Nolan responded that suicide is “not our area of expertise,” although the company is able to offer “hope” and provide people with “something to do.” According to Nolan, the company may also have an impact on domestic violence and sexual assault “by creating a safe culture in our workplace [that] will spin off into a safer home environment.” He went on to explain that communities will be “able to support their own community development” because of the “direct and meaningful benefits” associated with the mining project itself; including direct jobs, contracts for other businesses, and revenues. By focusing CSR on capacity building and obtaining a social license to operate, Noront is able to participate in various projects and appear socially responsible, while maintaining a distance from that which is deemed political.

Drawing upon concerning issues to promote mining, while simultaneously dismissing them as being unrelated to Noront’s “area of expertise” reflects how development projects like the Ring of Fire act as an ‘antipolitics machine’ (Ferguson 1990). Political questions are transformed into technical interventions, and political realities are whisked “out of sight” (Ferguson 1990, p. xv). Vast inequalities in

wealth, infrastructure, and basic human services like school and medical care are diverted to the government's realm of expertise, while at the same time, the mine is considered to be an overarching but technical solution that will close these gaps. This reasoning is typical of development discourse, which works "backward from the necessary conclusions" – allowing problems to 'coemerge' with the solution (Ferguson 1990, p. 259; Li 2007). Instead of addressing political issues directly through CSR, they are postponed to the future. Local people will (supposedly) see positive change within their community if and when Noront's goal of a fully operational mine comes to fruition. With such discourse, there is an "endless deferral of the promise of development," allowing critics to focus on changing project specifics, rather than the conditions of accumulation and impoverishment (Li 2007, p. 276, 277). 'Antipolitics' are also evident in programs that are designed "as a deliberate measure to contain a challenge to the status quo" (Li 2007, p. 8). This is particularly visible when looking at the business case for CSR and SLO. For Noront, their social license and award-winning CSR program help to contain any "political risks" that may deter investment and hinder mining plans. Without the complications of political matters, CSR remains a light-hearted activity and Noront maintains their friendly appearance.

### *The Art of Meme-ing*

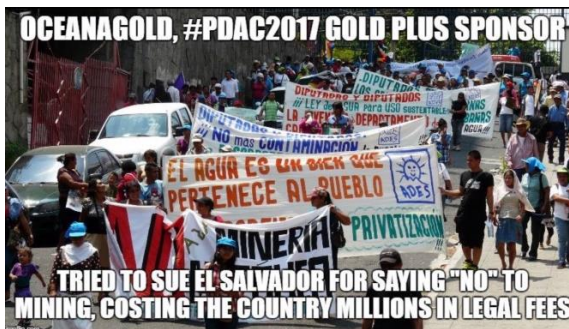
While CSR returns human and non-human actors to the mining landscape, they reappear through a corporate lens. The polished corporate selfies on display at the Art of Mining have filtered out any complications that may conflict with the

utopian landscapes they portray – where benevolent mining companies live in harmony with local people and environments. When the spotlight is adjusted to shine on these complications, the dissonance resonates.

In their online campaign to protest PDAC, the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN) posted several memes on Twitter and Facebook to highlight the dark side of mining. One meme states that mining company Vale was accused of spying on employees and infiltrating social and environmental movements (Fig. 20). This contrasts with Vale's Art of Mining entry, which depicts a flowing river next to a description of how Vale is "searching for new and better ways to preserve the balance between human progress and the natural environment" (Vale 2017; Fig. 21). Oceana Gold's photo contest entry depicts a group of smiling women standing in front of a dump truck in the Philippines, and describes how the company provides opportunities for women to become leaders (Fig. 23). However, MISN's meme for Oceana Gold depicts a more ruthless corporation that has cost El Salvador millions in legal fees "for saying "no" to mining" (Fig. 22).



Figure 20 (Left): MISN’s meme for Vale; Figure 21 (Right): Vale’s Art of Mining 2017 photo.



Figures 22 (Left): MISN’s meme for Oceanagold; Figure 23 (Right): Oceana Gold’s Art of Mining 2017 photo

MISN has also posted several pictures of signs displayed by activists while protesting, which provides further juxtaposition to the Art of Mining photos. For example, in its contest entry write up, Hudbay Minerals talks of “mining’s capacity to transform for the better” (Hudbay Minerals Inc. 2017; Fig. 25) However, in MISN’s photo protestors hold a sign stating “HUBBAY MINERALS GANG RAPES &

ASSASSINATES” (Fig. 24). Similarly, Goldcorp’s 2016 Art of Mining entry states “We are accountable for leaving a positive economic, social, and environmental legacy everywhere that we operate,” and describes the company as “tireless advocates of human rights” (Goldcorp Inc. 2016; Fig. 27) – while MISN has posted a photo of protest signs reading, “NO MORE GOLDCORP, NO MORE MURDERS” and “Rest in Power Topacio” (Fig. 26) alongside a drawing of Topacio Reynoso Pacheco, “a 16 year old mining resistance activist,” who was murdered for her activism against a mine jointly owned by Goldcorp and Tahoe Resources (MISN 2015). In another photo, activists hold a sign next to the Denison Mines booth at PDAC, which states: “Uranium mines have polluted the traditional lands and waters of the Serpent River First Nation,” (Fig. 28) and a video that was also posted by MISN (but has since been removed) showed security escorting these activists out of the convention. The sign contrasts with Denison’s photo entry (Fig. 29), and its claims of “achieving balance with nature” (Denison Mines Corp. 2017).



Figure 24 (Left): MISN’s photo of a sign used to protest Hubday Minerals; Figure 25 (Right): Hubday Minerals’ Art of Mining 2017 photo



Figure 26 (Left): MISN's photo of signs used to protest Goldcorp; Figure 27 (Right): Goldcorp's Art of Mining 2016 photo



Figure 28 (Left): MISN's photo of a sign used to protest Denison's uranium mining at PDAC; Figure 29 (Right): Denison's Art of Mining 2017 photo

When the memes and protest signs are viewed alongside the contest photos, they challenge the representations put forth by the mining industry – piercing through the magic of the Art of Mining and calling into question just how 'socially responsible' the corporations are. When these voices enter the scene, critique is no

longer contained, and it becomes apparent that the Art of Mining portrays a world that is too good to be true.

### CHAPTER 3 - DRAMATIC SPECTACLE

The stage is set. It has been transformed into a mining-ready landscape. The audience awaits the show, hoping that it will be a good one. If it is, it will be an escape, providing people with a space to dream and imagine the riches that the future may hold. In junior mining, “profit must be imagined before it can be extracted; the possibility of economic performance must be conjured like a spirit to draw an audience of potential investors” (Tsing 2005 p. 57). This “magic show” (Tsing) was performed at the mining investment events I attended: Mines and Money and PDAC. Here, the spotlight plays up the risky adventure and buried treasure, while the smoke and mirrors mask complications that are not considered to be part of the fun, like human rights issues and environmental violations. The magic show is a spectacle that is better than reality, “sweeter than anything that exists” (Tsing 2005, p. 58), and the more seamless it is, the more likely investment dollars will flow. This is the ‘economy of appearances’ – a performance that is “simultaneously dramatic and economic” (Tsing 2005, p. 57).

To illustrate the economy of appearances, Tsing (2005) tells the story of Bre-X, a Canadian junior mining company whose “miracle” gold deposit in Busang, Indonesia took the company and its investors on a wild ride – quickly rising from a penny stock, to over \$6 billion in market capitalization, and then crashing when it was discovered that the gold had never existed (p. 61-62). The Bre-X story starred a charismatic underdog who was wrapped up in a plot of buried treasure, corruption, and a suspicious death. It was full of “mystery, rumor, and drama” from start to



finish (p. 63). This spectacle attracted investors, enabling Bre-X to balloon into a multi-billion dollar company even though there was never any gold. The tale also attracted Hollywood filmmakers and inspired the 2016 movie 'Gold,' starring Matthew McConaughey. Screenwriter Patrick Massett explained that, "The most fantastical elements of the story are the most accurate. They're the true parts!" (Freeman 2017). The spectacle that surrounded Bre-X is analogous to the concept of an 'aesthetic trap' (Gell 1998; Miller 2000). As an aesthetic trap, it captivates the audience and draws its intended targets into relationships of commercial exchange. As the spectacle circulates, it carries the names of the companies and regions associated with it, expanding the 'net' and attracting investors like magnets (Gell 1998). This helps build the momentum that is necessary for potential mining projects to come into being. The dramatic performance of Bre-X accounts for the company's economic performance, which is made clear by the fact that the gold deposit was non-existent. If Bre-X had not created "a dramatic exposition of the possibilities of gold," no one would have invested in it (Tsing 2005, p. 57). Artistry, drama, spectacle, and mystery establish "the winning reality of performance" and make it difficult to differentiate "the real" from "the fake;" the "companies with long-term production potential" from "those merely good at being on stage" (Tsing 2005, p. 64). All of this could be observed in the magic of Mines and Money and PDAC, where a sea of companies and regions competed for investors' attention. The ambiguity and compatibility between reality and illusion is also characteristic of leviathans, a "black box" of sorts that contains a multitude of elements acting as one

potent and constructed actor (Golub 2014). When the magic of the economy of appearances is contained within a 'black box' it looks seamless and becomes real.

Of the mining events that I attended, the dramatic spectacle was by far the most visible and pervasive at the two mining investment events. At Mines and Money, the spectacle was so polished that it was as if the event took place in a bubble – free from any factors that could complicate the scene. With close to 25 000 people in attendance (PDAC 2017) PDAC is so large that it is often compared to events that are synonymous with 'spectacle,' like the circus, the Superbowl, and the Oscars (for example, see: Canadian Junior Report 2017, Klein et. al 2017). At both Mines and Money and PDAC, the promotion of excitement and impulsivity were key components of the events. Combined, these elements built the momentum required for economic performance within each event. Enthusiastic optimism ran high with the thrills of fast (and vast) money, while thorough decision making processes were disarmed by risk promotion, a sense of urgency, and trust. The success of the dramatic performance depended upon the event's ability to maintain these feelings and filter out any messages that threatened to disrupt them. Situated within both of these events were companies and governments promoting the Ring of Fire, attempting to attract the investment and support needed to make the potential mining project materialize. To examine this further, I will focus on the two mining investment events.

## **Building Excitement**

The presentations for Mines and Money took place in the Klondike Theatre of Toronto's Ritz Carleton Hotel. Before I even sat down, these names brought to mind the riches and the rush associated with mining – the opulent wealth that is synonymous with the Ritz and one of most famous mining bonanzas, the Klondike Gold Rush. Event director Andrew Thake opened Mines and Money with a fast, high-energy declaration, which was reminiscent of the bell that opens the stock markets. Michael White of IBK Capital had the floor for the following 5 minutes, exclaiming “Mining is back!” encouraging the audience to embrace disruption and competition, and expressing his pride in the industry. After his short talk the lights of the theatre were dimmed dramatically and Don Coxe, a Global Capital Market Strategist, had 20 minutes to speak. He spoke of the Klondike gold rush, and how China's recent boom saved the economic system. He made predictions about stock prices, gave advice on how to survive the upcoming recession, and shared his thoughts on whether or not there will be a second economic “miracle” (with China being the first). This talk set the tone for the rest of the conference, as many presentations that followed also drew upon tales of discovery, treasure, and a little adventure, while weaving together the money and the rush with predictions and advice. Building excitement like this transformed dull business talk into dazzling possibilities, and many of the presenters understood this well.

Robert Friedland of Ivanhoe Mines was given a lifetime achievement award before his Mines and Money keynote address... and probably would have won the

'best dramatic performance' award too, had there been one. Friedland was introduced as a man who has raised billions of dollars and who "turns junior companies into major success stories." He opened his speech telling the audience, "I'm here to get you excited" about copper and other metals Ivanhoe is mining, and he did. His speech drew the largest crowd and his predictions lingered in the atmosphere like no others – echoing in hallway conversations and reappearing in subsequent presentations. What stood out about his talk was that he conjured fear and danger, offering miracle solutions made out of the metals he was selling. He suggested that a major industry "disruption" is on the horizon, and described the disasters that could propel this change. He spoke extensively about the air pollution affecting billions of people in urban centres, connecting this "airpocalypse" with stroke, Alzheimer's, asthma, and mental illness. He described "code red" days in China where air pollution was so bad that schools were closed. Alongside this gloomy picture he mentioned how electric vehicles have improved fuel cells that are made with *platinum*. He also warned people to stay away from hospitals because they are breeding ground for superbugs – before explaining that *copper* kills superbugs within 2 hours, the U.S. army is coating hospital rails in copper, and that we will soon be covering everything in copper. Adrenaline was triggered with the fear of these dark, unfolding futures, and spiked as Friedland shared his thoughts on how to make money solving them, advising the audience to "find commodities that the world needs."

Impressive numbers and awards were used to punctuate presentations and displays and wow the audience at both Mines and Money and PDAC. Billion dollar

price tags were mentioned to build up a person, company, region, a specific mineral, or the mining industry as a whole. For example, Friedland and several other “legends” were introduced as having made X billions of dollars (or for some younger legends, hundreds of millions of dollars). At Mines and Money, Ontario Minister of Finance, Charles Sousa, boasted about Ontario mines making \$10.8 billion, and the Ontario pavilion at PDAC included a large display showing a picture of minerals extracted in the province, with billion dollar figures beside each of them (Fig. 30). Impressive numbers were also used to rank discoveries, deposits, mines, jurisdictions, and markets, usually on a world scale (i.e. the 4<sup>th</sup> largest chromium deposit in the world, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest grade lithium deposit in the world, etc.). Noront proudly ranked itself as “First in the Ring of Fire” on their displays at both events. Along with impressive numbers, past awards were also frequently cited. For example, at Mines and Money, Sean Rousson of Osisko Gold Royalties was introduced as “Mining Man of the Year 2009” and Friedland discussed his company’s award winning copper deposit. Both conferences hold black tie award galas in order to further celebrate notable people, companies and other achievements in mining – awards that are likely to resurface in future introductions, presentations, and displays.



Figure 30: “Mining is at our Core” (Ontario Government)

Another element that PDAC drew upon to excite the crowds was the imagery of wealth, often presented as ‘treasure.’ At the Barrick Gold exhibition booth, a large gold nugget sat alongside gold artifacts within a glass display case, gold nuggets sparkled from screens providing the backdrop to presentations, and one company’s display was styled like a colonial era treasure map, with X ‘marking the spot’ over deposits in “The Lost Cities” (Figs. 31, 32). These displays of wealth were not new to PDAC. Previous conferences exhibited a massive 616 carat diamond and gold bars that delegates could hold (PDAC 2005, Cole 2015). For several years, PDAC attendees also had the chance to win a diamond valued at \$15000 or more, depending on the year (PDAC 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009). An atmosphere of wealth and excess was also created through the swanky evening events. For example, the Art of Mining event was held at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), with elaborate

security procedures, fresh flower arrangements stretching up to the ceiling, an open bar with signature drinks named 'gold rush' and 'diamond fizz,' hors d'oeuvres circulating through the crowds, a lavish dessert buffet with a coffee/tea bar, prominently displayed photos by contest finalists, an AGO collection viewing room, a photo booth, a photo backdrop, a wandering saxophone player, and over-sized checks for the contest winners (Figs 33-36). Thompson Reuters (2015) describes what delegates might expect at PDAC, stating that "They're accustomed to finding oyster bars, rowdy parties, open bars with high-end liquor and elegant hotel suites." One CEO's reaction to extravagance cut-backs at PDAC (due to the market trough) captures these expectations: "We're seeing far less prime rib, far more chips, far more salsa... I'm really depressed that I have to drink bourbon versus single malt scotch, it just doesn't do it for me" (ibid). Although I did not attend the black-tie Awards Gala, PDAC (2005) describes the gala as "a glittering evening that reminded the many attending that this industry creates wealth but that wealth does not come easily – it is created with hard work and effort and is not without risk." Images of wealth serve as reminders that treasure hunting is full of excitement and adventure – the imagined pay offs of a rough and risky business.

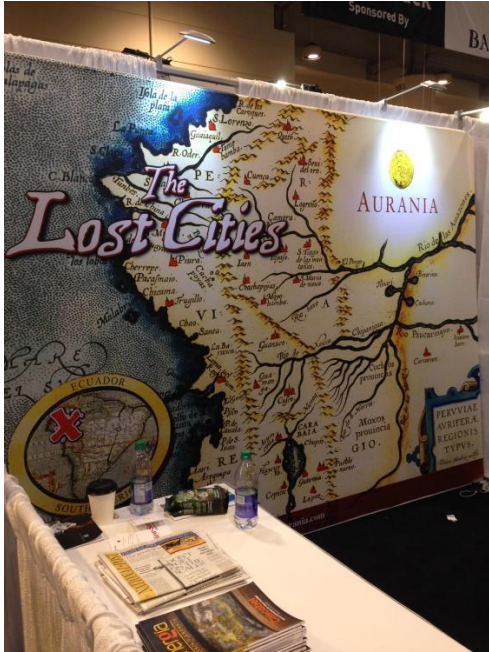


Figure 31 (Left): Colonial treasure map as part of the Aurania display at PDAC;  
 Figure 32 (Right): Barrick displaying treasure at the company's PDAC booth



Figure 33 (Left): Signature drinks, Gold Rush and Diamond Fizz, at the Art of Mining; Figure 34 (Right): Fresh flowers and open bar at the Art of Mining





Figure 35 (Left): Saxophone player wandering through the crowd at the Art of Mining; Figure 36 (Right): Oversized cheque presented to winners at the Art of Mining

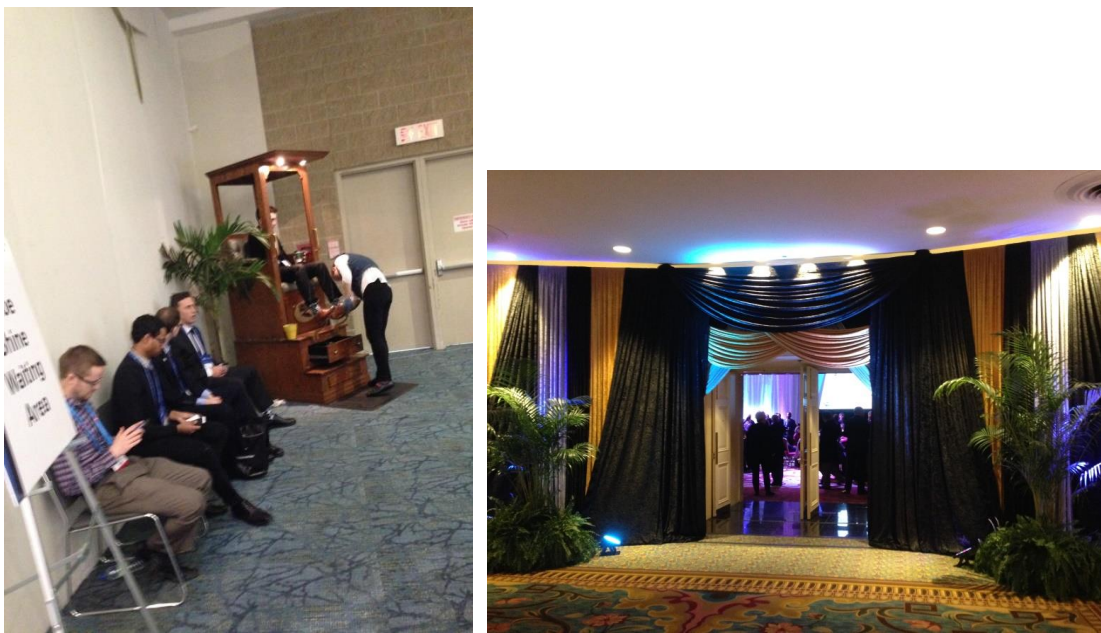


Figure 37 (Left): PDAC delegates waiting to be pampered with a free shoe shine; Figure 38 (Right): The dramatically crafted entrance to PDAC’s Grand Finale, held at the Royal York Hotel

Along with its reputation as the world’s largest mining event, PDAC is also notorious for being a big party, where the “hangovers are legendary” (Kiladze

2013). Free drinks (with tickets) are served at lunch events, pretty much everywhere around 4 o'clock, and during evening events. With long lineups at scarce food vendors, it was often easier to obtain an alcoholic drink than it was to get actual food. According to one geologist, at PDAC "There's this whole sprawling mass of humanity that is going from one party to another... It's very PDACesque, that is. You don't get it at other conferences" (Cole 2015). Being known as a four-day party allows PDAC to build excitement and anticipation before delegates arrive, creating an environment where business is also expected to be social and fun. This helps foster networking; creating relationships that "often translate into deals or sales down the road" (Thomson Reuters 2015). Past President of PDAC, Rod Thomas explains, "It's the one time of year when people in the industry can count on seeing all their colleagues from around the world, face to face, and a lot of deals get done as a result" (McGugan 2016). The intoxicating atmosphere of PDAC can even help conjure business deals when the market is down. The Canadian Junior Report (2017) tells readers that "even in tough times there is plenty of booze flowing at PDAC as hospitality suites seem to leave a year long good taste in peoples mouths [sic] and whet their appetite for investing in these often quite risky deals." In that sense, the PDAC party stirs up excitement while also encouraging the impulsivity needed to move risky mining deals forward.

Even more intoxicating than alcohol is the copious amounts optimism consumed at the two mining investment events. Optimism is crucial when constructing a picture that is "sweeter than anything that exists" (Tsing 2005, p. 58). It has the transformative power of turning problems and difficulties into

opportunities. As Benson and Kirsch (2010) explain, neoliberalism “is a structure of feeling in which perpetual optimism converts inequality and contradictions into a promised future that is said to be already happening” (p. 463). With enough optimism, negatives are reconfigured into positives and anything is possible.

At the mining investment events optimism surfaced in introductions, flowed through speeches, and was tacked onto conclusions. “If you’re on anti-depressants, I hope they’re pro-optimism,” quipped keynote speaker Frank Holmes at the end of his speech at Mines and Money. Oftentimes, optimism was used to highlight ways to make money in bleak situations. For example, Friedland’s descriptive disasters always provided a silver lining from which the audience could profit. Speakers encouraged investment in the base metal market since it had been “beat up,” and in precious metals since the worst of the cycle was said to be over. Noront CEO, Alan Coutts, described how the difficulties that preceded Cliffs’ withdrawal from the Ring of Fire were both a “blessing” and a “curse.” While this was publicized as a major setback in the Ring of Fire (Financial Post Staff 2013; Blizzard 2013), Noront purchased Cliffs’ properties at discount prices, climbing to their position as ‘First in the Ring of Fire.’ One company’s tragedy quickly became another’s victory, and at Mines and Money, Coutts concluded that Noront “can build a major mining house.” Another way that speakers at both events drew upon optimism was through their predictions. For example, Coxe stated that a recession is coming “but not for precious metals,” while David Harquail indicated that he thinks “there’s a growth wave in front of us.” Many presenters encouraged audience members to ride out the trough that the industry is facing, as this is seen as a normal part of a cycle in which

prices will one day rise again. At PDAC's Ontario pavilion ribbon cutting ceremony, Ontario Mining Association president, Chris Hodgson, proclaimed that "we look forward to the innovations that are going to make mining even better" and (temporary) Minister of Northern Development and Mines Bill Mauro, repeated numerous times that things look "promising." These forecasts indicate that even in bad times, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and the future is bright for those who tough it out. Optimism was especially easy to find when someone was promoting a specific company or commodity. For instance, Neolithium chairman, Constantine Karayannopoulos, described one project as having an "extraordinary" acid base, being of a "spectacular grade," with a "lack of impurities," and "truly outstanding characteristics." Year after year, optimism consistently makes it into the headlines of news articles about PDAC. In 2014 "Miners maintain optimism despite rough market," in 2015 "Optimism clashes with reality on day one of conference," in 2016 "a sense of optimism returns" and in 2017 optimism "returns" (again) and "abounds" at PDAC (Koven 2014b; Koven 2015; McGugan 2016; Posadzki 2017; Bell 2017). The flood of optimism at mining investment events draws people into their dreams of wealth and keeps them there, subduing worry and doubt in an inherently risky, speculative, and competitive business.

### **Promoting Impulsivity**

Conjuring excitement alone is not guaranteed to make investors want to part with their money in the precarious business of junior mining. For the economy of appearances to be successful at the mining investment events, the excitement was

entangled with factors that encouraged impulsivity, such as risk promotion, a sense of urgency, and trust. While the excitement draws people in to the dream, these factors push people to act fast so that “deals get done.”

### *Risk*

One factor that could be seen as a barrier to investment at the mining events is that the junior mining industry is a risky business, where the odds are stacked against anyone trying to make money (as described in chapter 1). Even with excitement being conjured at the events, investors are not rushing to get involved with junior mining companies. One way to counter this is to promote risk as a positive factor through talk and imagery of sports, gambling, and other competitive games. Doing so adds to the excitement and fun of the events, but it also creates an atmosphere where mining investment can be conceptualized as a game.

When I walked up to the registration table at Mines and Money, I was somewhat surprised to encounter several bowls of hockey pucks lined up for delegates to help themselves. Hockey jerseys were proudly displayed at some of the exhibition booths (Figs. 40, 41), and delegates were encouraged to attend a networking event entitled “Hockey Night in Toronto” at a sports bar, beside the Hockey Hall of Fame, complete with NHL hockey players. Many of the conference speakers integrated hockey and sport references into their talks. For example, Charles Sousa welcomed the audience to the “hockey capital” in his speech. He even sounded like a sports broadcaster as he paused dramatically, lowered his voice, and uttered the words “the Ring of Fire,” before resuming a speedy pace to promote the

potential mining project and inform the audience that the province is “working to help investors succeed.” Other speakers talked of “junior mining champions,” “winning conditions for investment,” players, teams, strategizing, and “game changers” (ie: innovations). Gambling talk was also on the table at Mines and Money. John Kaiser, CEO of Kaiser Research Online, compared his crowd-sourced model for valuing exploration projects to “fantasy sports betting.” He explained that this system would get funding to junior mining companies through a “slow gambling” opportunity for the public. Noront’s Chief Finance Officer, Greg Rieveley, also drew upon gambling during a panel discussion, and advised the audience to “hedge bets” when investing in distressed mining companies.

PDAC constructed its scene using elements of sport and game as well. In recent years, the convention has kicked off with an annual Mining Matters Hockey Tournament, where companies form teams and compete with one another for the Caracle Cup (Mining Matters 2018). Outside the entrance to the Investors Exchange Forum and Trade Show, Business News Network (BNN) had set up a stage where they were broadcasting live (Fig. 42). Interviews with people involved in the mining industry were conducted in a manner similar to the pre-game shows associated with sporting events on major television networks. Across from the BNN stage, Mining Matters, a charitable organization associated with PDAC, set up a silent auction table where delegates could bid on items that were displayed, including autographed hockey, baseball and basketball jerseys, and a famous Muhammad Ali boxing photo printed on canvas. Delegates could win prizes at numerous trade show booths by playing games or entering draws. PDAC also hosted large, flashy contests,

including #DisruptMining, where over a million dollars in prizes were awarded to winners and the Art of Mining photo competition where mining companies competed against each other. Past conventions included charity boxing matches and high-stakes poker games between “the biggest names in the mining world” (Kiladze 2013).



Figure 40 (Left): Hockey jersey on display at Zimtu Capital Corp.’s Mines and Money booth; Figure 41: Hockey jersey on display at Gran Columbia Gold’s Mines and Money booth



Figure 42 (Left): BNN stage at PDAC broadcasting live interviews; Figure 43 (Right): Mining Matters auction table at PDAC

The steady stream of sport and gambling talk and imagery at the mining investment events creates an environment where the ‘manly’ ideals of virility and courage are used to challenge delegates to accept the risk and pursue the glory associated with striking it big in junior mining. Impossible ideals of virility are tested and manifested within sports; while certain forms of courage promote risk by encouraging reckless behaviour (Bourdieu 2001, p. 51-53). These ideals of ‘manliness’ are relational; drawing upon the need to rise to the challenge and obtain honour by pursuing glory in the public sphere, while avoiding the shame of being excluded from the “world of men” (ibid, p. 51, 53). The mining investment events provided the platform to construct and perform this ‘manliness’ “in front of and for



other men” (p. 53). Men made up the overwhelming majority of delegates at both events, while all of those considered mining ‘legends’ presented as men – a ratio reflected in the title of the “Mining Man of the Year” award, and a recent article listing the “top 10 MOST important MINING MEN in Canadian history” (Sudol 2017; p. 28, caps in original).

When mining investment becomes a game to be played by men in front of men, the challenge is emphasized, risk is normalized, and dichotomies of winner/loser and player/spectator are summoned. One Mines and Money panelist explained “Winning is hard work and is something most companies don’t do.” To win in this “game,” one must be ‘exceptional’ and strategize, persevere, be brave, and take chances. Risk is a necessary component to winning, and to win you must play. The consequence of sitting out is the shame of exclusion.

### *Urgency*

Another factor that helped push people to act at Mines and Money was the sense of urgency developed through a quickened pace of time. Mining investors have to act fast or risk losing out on the imagined windfall. At the conference, delegates receive information and advice directly from the mining ‘legends.’ This leading edge information is only valuable in the present moment, and is intended to be acted upon right away. Any number of factors, such as fluctuating market prices or socio-political situations, could render the information useless, giving rise to new predictions. These predictions also lose value with time as they spread and reach larger audiences, since they are no longer considered to be new or exclusive. For

example, if everyone rushes out to buy copper before the end of the day (as was encouraged by one legend), the price could go up and anyone who waited too long would miss out on the biggest rewards. Tsing (2005) describes this aspect of “spectacular accumulation,” stating that “Investors are looking for the appearance of success. They cannot afford to find out if the product is solid; by then their chances of profit will be gone” (p. 75).

The organization of time and space at the two-day conference promoted and accommodated this rush. ‘Mining Spotlight’ presentations and other talks by company representatives typically ranged from 6-10 minutes. Most government presentations had 20 minute time slots, and panel discussions were 30 minutes. Speakers spoke fast, trying to squeeze in as much information as they could during their brief time on stage. Question and answer periods were either very short or non-existent, as there was not enough time. Outside of the presentation theatre, people moved at a hurried pace. Private meeting rooms were set up across the hall, and further down the hall there was an open ‘one-to-one meeting area’ (Figs. 44, 45). Several refreshment stations (coffee/tea/juice/water) were set up along the hallway walls, and buffet tables ran along the centre. They were almost always stocked full of food, and included an opulent breakfast feast, a gourmet popcorn bar, a cookie bar, and shots of freshly squeezed juices, while lunch to-go was neatly packed and ready to travel along with delegates to meetings (Figs. 46, 47). At one point, as I was sipping fresh kale juice, one of the mining legends rushed by, impatiently yelling at me: “Hey! Where did you get that green juice?” I pointed

towards the table with the juice and he rushed away in that direction... presumably to refuel with kale juice before attending to other important matters.



Figure 44 (Top): Private meeting room at Mines and Money; Figure 45 (Bottom): Open one-to-one meeting area at Mines and Money



Figure 46 (Left): Afternoon cookie bar at Mines and Money; Figure 47 (Right): Lunch to go awaits busy delegates at Mines and Money

At the conference, time was structured to flow at a hurried pace and space was organized to accommodate this rush. Everything delegates needed was readily available (i.e., meeting space, food, kale juice) and time was not wasted. Mines and Money reported that of the 700+ delegates at the conference, 35% attended more than ten business meetings, and 5% secured a deal on site. Quickened time facilitated a sense of urgency, pushing people to act on impulse and spend money – “if you can’t feel the rush and the intensity you are missing the point, and you’ll keep your money at home” (Tsing 2005, p. 76). At Mines and Money, people were rushing to ‘get deals done.’

*Trust*

The risk and uncertainty inherent in junior mining puts stakeholders in a position where they must take a “leap of faith” in order to move projects forward (Tsing 2005, p.76). At Mines and Money, this manifested in the trust that was bestowed upon the “legends” who spoke at the event. Perched at the pinnacle of the mining world, legends obtained their title and trustworthy status by conjuring billions of dollars. They were introduced by their well-known names, which were stated alongside the amount of money they have raised, the awards they have won, and the success that they have helped create for the companies they are associated with – proof that they are worthy of their status.

From the legends at the top, to those junior mining companies scrambling to stay afloat, the world of mining investment is structured as a hierarchy, where both individuals and companies are engaged in fierce competition. This hierarchy is conceptualized in pseudo-evolutionary terms, where “survival of the fittest” seems to be the underlying mantra. At Mines and Money, Nick Thadley (President/CEO of Global Equity Capital Markets, TMX Group) referenced “Canada’s mining financing ecosystem” and Toronto’s “good mining ecosystem;” summoning the imagery of predators and prey engaging in a food chain. Frank Holmes echoed these images by mentioning Shark Tank in his speech, a television show where entrepreneurs compete by making a pitch to the sharks (i.e. investors), and survivors sign deals with these apex predators. Throughout the conference, speakers commonly referenced ‘survival’ when talking about getting through market troughs. Holmes, for example, concluded his speech by reminding the audience to “be thankful you survived the last four years.” To deal with the overpopulation of junior mining

companies during these troughs, some analysts have suggested “culling” the juniors (See Uddin 2015, p. 28; Nickel 2017; Koven 2013). ‘Mining legend’ Rick Rule has agreed with this method, as “it would be useful if 600 or 700 of the walking wounded went to listings heaven” (Koven 2014 b). At Mines and Money, he drew upon the defunct theory of unilineal cultural evolution, stating that we often ignore “the unbroken cycle of the ascent of man;” while others stretched back in time to inform the audience of their own descent – with Lee Hodgkinson declaring “I have mining stock in my blood,” Don Coxe mentioning that his grandfather was the only missionary in the Klondike, and David Harquail, President/CEO of Noront’s major financier, Franco-Nevada Corporation, reminding the audience that “I was born into this.”

The reality game show #DisruptMining was an event that embodied the notion of ‘survival of the fittest.’ The grand finale took place on the opening night of PDAC and mirrored Shark Tank. Contestants were to come up with an innovative idea to “change the future of mining” and finalists competed in front of five “industry titans” (including Harquail) for over a million dollars in prizes (Goldcorp Inc. 2017). The premise behind the competition was to spur a revolution in mining by crowdsourcing innovative ideas.

In the mining world, ‘disruption’ is seen as something ominous but exciting looming on the horizon. Speakers at Mines and Money welcome it, encourage it, and talk as if it is inevitable. The conference opened with Michael White exclaiming that “We need disruption in mining!” In a panel discussion, Frank Holmes spoke of the

“dramatic changes” we can expect, and the need to be “quick to adapt.” Robert Friedland advised the crowd to expect disruption, as there will be “transformation through metals demand.” His crowd-pleasing speech wove together vivid scenes of disruptive disaster with innovative solutions that needed the metals his company was mining – from the ‘airpocalypse’ to the superbugs described above. In an article posted on his company’s website, Rick Rule discusses disruption in terms of an upcoming ‘reckoning’:

“I do think we have a reckoning coming. I think the reckoning will be unpleasant. They used to describe the punching power of George Foreman as, “severe but survivable.” That’s the situation I see in front of us – as no fun for most people. Ironically I see it as a lot of fun for me. Not because I enjoy the misfortune of others, but because I’ve been more prudent. There’s also a part of me that feels a reckoning is deserved.” (Da Silva 2015)

Within the mining “ecosystem,” transformation through disruption equals ‘progress.’ Casualties are harsh, but seen as inevitable, necessary, and deserved. The key to survival is ‘innovation’ – the “inseparable shadow” that travels with ‘disruption’ (Gluck and Tsing 2009, p.22). Talk of disruption fuels the desire for innovation, as innovators have an advantage over the rest. “If you want to stay relevant you need to embrace innovation,” explained Chantal Gosselin, a director of Silver Wheaton, during a panel discussion at Mines and Money. Another panel discussion was entitled “Innovate or die.” While innovation is a method of surviving disruption, it can also be its impetus. Frank Holmes referenced the film Moneyball in both his speech and during a panel discussion at Mines and Money. The movie is

based on a true story about the 2002 Oakland Athletics, an underdog team that broke the record for consecutive wins and changed the game of baseball by using statistics in an innovative way (Miller 2011). Two years later the strategy was used by the Boston Red Sox to win the World Series (ibid). With an innovative and “adaptive mindset,” as Holmes describes, one does not only survive, but can thrive within the chaos of disruption.

In junior mining, the food chain hierarchy and the constant references to an upcoming disruption evoke feelings of stress and panic in a world already rife with risk and uncertainty. To cope with the volatile future, delegates on the lower rungs of the mining “ecosystem” turned towards those at the top for answers. The men at the top were not just ‘mining legends,’ they were the prophets of profits, and provided their audience with clues about the future – what to expect and how to survive. Their words were entwined with predictions about how to make a fortune, and, if given the opportunity, the audience asked for more. “Will the gold rush take off on its own?” “Could there be an invisible hand that can be a new customer?” Moderators drew upon these fortune-telling abilities as well – asking prophets to share what hidden challenges they see “lurking around the corner,” and whether or not we will repeat the mining investment mistakes of the past.

As the prophets spoke, the atmosphere changed. When their voices boomed, brimming with confidence, the audience hushed. The whirlwind of words that raced from their mouths clashed with my expectations of what might be said from the



stage of a formal ballroom turned mining investment conference room to an audience of (mostly) white men in suits.

As they stirred together optimism, fear and predictions, some prophets connected with the audience by adding a dose of 'political incorrectness.' To help promote the metals he was selling, Friedland spoke in fake "African" and "Indian" accents in order to get a laugh from the crowd. He explained that "Oriental people think they look good in platinum" and black people look good in gold, "like Mr. T." He used hand gestures while discussing "a seriously masculine [mining] shaft," he joked about miners being asphyxiated by farts in outdated facilities, and he compared mines in Chile to "little old ladies lying in bed waiting to die." Rick Rule also used a fake accent in his speech to connect with the audience and draw laughter (although I was not sure what type of fake accent it was supposed to be). In a panel discussion entitled "Rethinking the mining industry -- Advice from current and future legends," Rule's political incorrectness took an irate tone. When this all male panel was asked by the moderator how to increase the low proportion of females in boardrooms ("14%"), Rule immediately snapped that it was "demeaning" to get into a boardroom "based on plumbing" – adding that a requirement of "indoor plumbing is idiotic." Panelist John Burzynski (President/CEO of Osisko Mining) chipped in that a "natural evolution" is taking place, so the ratio will shift and there will be more women in the boardrooms. The rest agreed, or at least did not voice any contrary opinions.

Most of the prophets also included 'anti-politics' talk in their speeches – which I found surprising since numerous politicians also spoke at the event. Rick Rule's speech was particularly rich with anti-politics. He explained that "honest politicians stay bribed." He drew laughter from the crowd as he dissected the word politic: "'poli' means many and 'tic' is a blood sucking insect." He got even more laughs when he brought up Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, citing his infamous "the budget will balance itself" quote, and pointing out that he was obviously a drama teacher rather than a math teacher. [The rest of Trudeau's sentence is, "the commitment needs to be a commitment to grow the economy and the budget will balance itself" ...but that would have ruined the joke (Wherry 2014).] Rule ended his speech with a serious tone, stating that "all tics steal," and discussed how the process of corruption is the same everywhere.

In September of 2016, while much of the outside world rolled their eyes and laughed at the prospect of Donald Trump becoming president, the prophets inside Mines and Money pondered and promoted this possibility. Don Coxe declared that there is "no win with politics" and that the "elites and power-centred fail year after year," yet he also advised the crowd to buy oil sands stocks if Trump gets elected, since without him the "pipeline won't be built." At the end of his talk, Coxe cheered, "Hopefully the rebels win!" and did a little dance on stage. He wasn't the only one who mixed anti-politics with Trump. Although Robert Friedland concluded that "Donald or Hillary, it doesn't matter" who gets elected, he also described Hillary Clinton as being in "third rate place" and suggested that his lifetime achievement award should go to Donald Trump. In his keynote speech, Frank Holmes grumbled

about a “socialist agenda,” people being “anti-money,” and a largely “socialist media.” He touched on Brexit, and explained that people in Britain feel the government controls too much. To conclude the ‘legends’ panel discussion, Holmes polled the audience on who they believed won the most recent debate: Donald or Hillary. He then asked, “Who didn’t believe Brexit would take place?”

In this fierce food chain hierarchy, with disruption looming and people and companies scrambling to “innovate or die,” the audience turns to the prophets for answers on how to survive the chaotic future. They are the industry leaders, the legends, the titans, the apex predators, the winners. They have raised billions of dollars, found buried treasure, won awards for their performance, and thrive in a volatile industry. Some are members of the exclusive ‘three comma club’ (i.e. billionaires). Amid the fortunes they predict, they share in their contempt for the political. At Mines and Money, politics were framed as an unfair obstacle to the flow of cash and equated with a parasite. The conference was almost entirely void of the political issues that are inherent in mining, such as Indigenous rights, human rights, and environmental issues. Without these issues, the mining industry resembles a large scale version of its own reality gameshow, #DisruptMining. It is transformed and its scope is narrow. Instead of spending time worrying about the complicated problems and important issues that are deemed political, ‘players’ can remain optimistic and focus on winning (or at least making it to the next round).

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I left Mines and Money feeling uneasy. Here, Donald Trump was not represented as a laughable buffoon, but as an alternative to politics. Were the prophets 'fortune telling' or were they steering the mining industry towards a particular future? They rallied for copper while they rallied for Trump – standing alongside one another in business suits instead of red ball caps. ...And how did the future unfold? Well, I don't think I need to tell you what happened in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, but copper skyrocketed less than a month after Robert Friedland's impassioned pitch (Macrotrends 2018).

## **CHAPTER 4 – FUTURES**

The scene is set for mining, empty but with smiling people. The atmosphere is right for money, full of optimistic anticipation. And the future is already in motion. The mining investment events I attended were not just about having fun and getting deals done, they functioned to pave the way for a predetermined future. These events acted as “time maps,” chaining together a sequence of choices that result in an ideal outcome (Gell 1992, p. 255; cited in Westman 2013, p. 113). Drama, dreams, done deals, mines, metals, and money... or something like that. There are many possibilities, but there’s only one future, so “we had better make sure that that future is the one we want it to be” (ibid).

To clear the path to this ideal future, the mining investment events put forth much effort – emptying space, compacting time, spreading optimism, embracing risk, and containing this world, while at the same time concealing the contradictions and complications. As delegates were propelled towards the imagined future, this future projected “power into the present” (Westman 2013, p. 111; Espeland 1993). Some knowledge was empowered, while other knowledge was either diminished or excluded entirely (Fischer 2009, p. 50; cited in Westman 2013). As a result, the mining investment events inscribe futures, rather than just describing them; some seem inevitable, while others seem impossible (Westman 2013, p. 118).

The neatly bundled world of mining investment events reflects what Latour (2004) describes as “matters of fact.” Matters of fact are closed, fixed, partial representations of things that can easily be disarmed or debunked (Latour 2004). The mining investment events work hard to maintain their matter of fact

appearance; however, if one were to shine the spotlight on that which has been so meticulously hidden away, things would begin to unravel into “matters of concern” (Latour 2004). Unlike matters of fact, matters of concern are open and fluid. They are “highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse” entanglements that are open for things and politics to be added and compromises to be negotiated (Latour 2004, p. 237; Latour 2012, 1:12:35).

This chapter focuses on examples that unravel and explore some of the issues that were hidden away at the mining investment events; thereby revealing paths to multiple futures. I begin by describing my account of CAMA – an event which explored a wide range of issues from various perspectives, and welcomed diverging opinions. I then discuss four instances relating to the Ring of Fire, in which opposing voices emerge together within news stories, mining events, or both. Although interaction between the voices is minimal and largely indirect, when they are heard alongside one another within a news story or a presentation room, they expand the issues at hand and create a space where alternative futures are possible. These interactions are snapshots in time that could potentially become more direct, leading to negotiations, court cases or protest activities for example; or they may dissolve, providing the audience with a glimpse at how these complexities and inconsistencies are bundled back up and concealed from view.

#### CAMA Conference

When I arrived at CAMA, I was greeted by a display of artwork that was to be raffled off to delegates on the last day. I stopped to take a look at the small collection, when one piece in particular captured my attention. It was a picture by

world-renowned Cape Dorset artist, Annie Pootoogook, entitled “A Friend Visits.” It depicted a woman smiling warmly at the viewer from inside a home, with a frigid winter scene outside the window. Annie’s work was seen as revolutionary, causing “a seismic shift in the way Inuit art is perceived” (Dale 2017). She created images depicting everyday life – from “the beautiful things about Cape Dorset: the sense of community, the camping, the family, the day-to-day realities,” to the serious issues of alcoholism and domestic abuse (ibid). I recognized Annie’s name, not because I was familiar with her critically acclaimed work, but because I had read about her tragic death, which was in the news only weeks prior to CAMA. Her body had been found in Ottawa’s Rideau River, and her death was deemed suspicious and remains unsolved (Trinh 2017). The news story stuck with me, as Annie’s death resembled the suspicious deaths of many Indigenous people in Thunder Bay, my hometown – where the waterways that run through the city have become known throughout the country as “the river of tears” (MacDonald 2017). As I hung up my coat and took my seat in the main conference room, the thoughts evoked by Annie’s artwork lingered.

To begin the conference, the four hundred or so delegates were welcomed by the MC and instructed to get up, walk around, and take five minutes to quickly introduce themselves to people that they didn’t know. Once everyone settled, speakers quickly became fully engaged in discussing complexities that are inherent components to mining in Canada. Instead of reducing these issues to a checklist or avoiding them altogether, like at Mines and Money, CAMA expanded them, examining different outcomes and options and hearing from a wide range of presenters. Speakers included (but were not limited to) chiefs, lawyers, judges,

youth, Elders, industry reps, government body reps, and leaders of various organizations; and discussions were situated within the context of Canada's colonial past, Treaty relationships, and the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report on residential schools.

Ecological matters were the underlying theme of Day One and stretched into the youth panel on Day Two. Peter Archibald, a Councilor from Taykwa Tagamou Nation, discussed how his community lives downstream from mines around Timmins and the struggle to get the Ministry of Mines and Northern Development to listen to how the community is impacted by tailings (including arsenic from gold tailings). He spoke about the cancers and other negative health effects caused by these pollutants, and the importance of protecting water. Industry representatives from the Dominion Diamonds Ekati Diamond Mine shared the company's experiences with Aboriginal-led monitoring programs, focusing on the caribou-monitoring program, but also discussing how they dealt with other issues concerning wildlife. For example, they talked about how the company drained lakes in order to mine diamonds, and discussed how that process included "fish outs": the process of removing the fish from the lake. A ceremony of respect was held beforehand and fish were flash frozen and shipped to communities with IBA's; the large fish were to be consumed by people, the small ones by dogs. The Dominion representatives also shared challenges and strategies used to accommodate caribou herds, as many people in the area hunt caribou and the mine was situated on their migration route. One of the strategies was to close roads for a number of hours if caribou were crossing. Throughout the presentation, industry representatives



emphasized the importance of “traditional knowledge” in mitigating ecological concerns.

In a presentation about tailings and the environment, Wayne Kaboni of Citxw Nlaka’pamux Assembly explained that “we want to define how our land will look when the mine goes away.” He explained how landmarks are used to show the effects of the mine and to figure out solutions when looking forward; for example, taking note of a hunting or fishing spot, berries that were impacted by the mine’s dust, or wildlife paths that have been blocked by the mine. While looking at strategies that can be done in the present to ensure that the community “can maintain some ties to the land” when the mine closes, Wayne did not present a glossy version of this future. He spoke of a 96 year old man who used to see lots of moose and elk together from a mountaintop, but now one can only see scavenger animals. He told the audience that he travelled to the Tar Sands and Standing Rock with his sons, and discussed the significance of water. He displayed pictures of tailings facilities in Fort McMurray, a river in a Navajo area that had turned yellow and was no longer safe to use, a “red ocean” caused by tailings in Brazil that destroyed a whole ecosystem. He discussed the disaster at Mount Polley and the need for First Nations to be part of emergency response planning, regulatory decisions, and environmental monitoring. Kaboni also explained the importance of having Aboriginal people involved in the environmental monitoring of pipelines; sharing an example of a pipeline leak that would currently take 48 hours before people in Edmonton were notified to send a team to fix it, 9.5 hours for a team to

reach the site, and in the meantime, the leak would be draining at 500 gallons per minute.

Ecological concerns were also an important component to the youth panel's discussion. When describing key objectives in deciding upon mineral projects, Éric Gosselin talked about how it's important not to disturb people's way of life, explaining that he goes duck hunting near a mine and now there are "hardly any ducks." Gregory James Perley-Francis discussed his concern about the remediation phase of projects, how the project will impact the next seven generations, as well as jobs that will be available both during and after the mine's life. When asked what is needed to mitigate the impacts of resource development, Robert Assinewe emphasized the importance of stopping disaster, and that tailings make people sick. Waawaate Fobister added that people from Grassy Narrows have been poisoned by mercury from a paper mill upstream, the land has been destroyed, the federal and provincial governments have refused to help, and as a result people have been dying, including members of Waawaate's family. Waawaate explained that "we need to be healthy," emphasizing the need to "balance the Act" with resource extraction. During the question period following the youth panel, a commenter, also from Grassy Narrows, added that "when people look at mining they look at the money, not the garbage, the deaths."

The conference also opened up discussion on respecting Indigenous laws; particularly in the "Aboriginal Leadership Armchair Panel," where the topic was explored at length. Chief Wayne Moonias of Neskantaga First Nation explained "we did not surrender land" in Treaty 9, but rather signed to coexist, share in benefits,

and share resources; posing the questions “how do we protect our rights, our homes,” and “how do we protect future generations?” Moderator and CAMA President, Hans Matthews, added that “People think the land was ceded, but no, the laws of the land are alive and well.” Chief Celia Echum of Ginoogaming First Nation reported that there are protocols for industry when they are in Ginoogaming’s traditional area. She discussed how her community has never benefitted from mining exploration or forestry, and she shared an example of a mining company that came in without informing the community until after they had already set up. Chief Moonias also discussed problems surrounding his community’s protocols for engaging with industry. Neskantaga is one of the First Nations involved in the Ring of Fire, and Chief Moonias stated that Noront had not obtained informed consent from Neskantaga for their activities. He explained “our protocol is inconsistent with their permits” – the ministry approves a permit and the company will use it to justify their presence on the land. For Neskantaga’s protocol, the community decides who can go in the area to conduct mining activities, but as Chief Moonias explained, this has been “deemed too political in nature.”

The government and industry like “to see things in writing,” but “without a relationship you don’t have the oral component,” explained Matthews – asking panelists “how can you have both?” Margaret Froh, President of Métis Nation of Ontario explained that this should not be a barrier, as some laws are written, some are oral, some are a mix, but all are valid. She advised that the focus should be on the relationship; with industry connecting early in the process to work with communities and learn the laws that are in place. Chief Echum added that the oral

laws were in place before contact. Chief Moonias explained that there are laws, but not all of them are written, such as “the way we steward,” protecting the land and animals. He described how “we instill teachings in our communities” – the respect that is included and the way things are done. He also discussed how to implement the policy of free, prior, and informed consent, defining it as “consultation with the objective of consent,” and outlining four steps that would help achieve this:

1. Addressing the power imbalance within the consultation process, as there must be a product of consensus rather than “telling.”
2. Allowing communities to have full access to information.
3. Obtaining consent at the earliest stage, before anyone does anything on the land.
4. Contacting First Nations through their own leadership structures, and following the community’s laws.

Chief Moonias emphasized that the policy should give communities the opportunity to make an informed decision; one in which they aren’t obliged to say yes, but rather one where they can “say yes or no” based on the information available.

The Legal Armchair Panel focused on the issue of consultation versus consent, and expanded the conversation further. Here panelists had diverging views on the matter and explored these from a legal standpoint. Adam Chamberlain, Partner at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, explained that Indigenous leaders understand consultation in terms of reconciliation, within the context of the original Treaty promise, while acting in good faith and addressing concerns. He stated that lots of process is dictated by the Crown and the expectations of industry, and that we don’t see government to government negotiations taking place. The Honourable Harry Slade explained that when Aboriginal title to land is claimed, the Crown has a

duty to ensure meaningful consultation and accommodation take place; a commitment that requires stakeholders to understand each other's concerns, but "not necessarily to agree." He stated that although consent is not required by law, it is a practical thing to obtain, which makes it "as good as if it were required by law." Slade suggested that if consultation is not adequate, parties can take the matter to court.

On the other hand, Alex Monem, Partner at Pape Satler Teillet LLP, explained the question of whether consent is required by Canadian law is complex. He stated that we don't know how UNDRIP will be applied – how the government will adopt it, how courts will view it, whether universal acceptance could become the international norm. He reported that PDAC has embraced these concepts, and asked what happens if the courts look at this – "Could it affect the decision? Maybe." Monem also asked what happens if in the early stages of talks, parties agree to move forward on a consent-based approach? He argued that "this will stick in court, I think," explaining that stepping away from such a promise would feel like bad faith or dishonourable conduct.

The conversation then turned to whether consent equals veto: the "elephant in the room" as Chamberlain described. He explained that industry fears veto, but that veto does not equal "an educated, enlightened decision," and having sound reasons not to proceed with a project are "different than a flat out no." In Chamberlain's opinion, free, prior, informed consent does not equal veto. The moderator of the panel, The Honourable Stephen O'Neill, asked the panel if consent is the goal, and if veto is a problem. Monem said that the idea of veto is a "huge

problem” that is used against First Nations as a scare tactic to avoid conversations and consultation/consent. He explained that courts have room for consent, but not for veto; veto is based on having no information and is conducted in bad faith, while consent is a decision making process, a public decision, the group’s decision. He continued, stating that consent is democratic, it obeys customary laws and principles, and it is “consistent with our common law.”

Slade responded by stating that it is a “waste of time to discuss veto versus consent.” He explained that “if a project won’t go ahead without consent, it’s a veto,” and stated that the real focus should be on conducting meaningful consultation and looking at how to accommodate. He said that veto or consent does not belong where parties are looking for a way forward, and that no one needs to talk of veto or consent “unless you’re staking political ground.” Chamberlain responded that veto is relevant because clients bring it up, they need to learn why there is no veto, and there are examples of modern land claim agreements that can be shared and the decision-making processes emulated, such as Nunavut.

Towards the end of the discussion, O’Neill asked panelists if the clogged courts are a “function of a failing process.” Monem replied that the judicial review applications are a symptom of inherent problems in the consultation process. He explained that they are “used as leverage in consultations,” and are a “symptom of a fundamental imbalance of power.” He continued by describing the value of a consent based model, as “consultation with the goal of obtaining consent changes negotiation footing,” as it alleviates the imbalance of power; and a negotiated

consensus-based model means there would be less need to go to court, which is good for all parties.

Something that took centre stage at the mining investment events was missing from CAMA: there was no rush for the bonanza, no buried treasure, no thrill of striking it rich. Mining was not conceptualized as a fiercely competitive game. It was a real life matter that directly affected people and required careful contemplation. As moderator, Don Richardson of Shared Value Solutions Ltd., explained, we are “dealing with real people,” with “real lives,” and you have to bring integrity, “your human selves,” to these relationships. Instead of promoting exciting highs and impulsive action, CAMA was grounded in a full range of human emotions. The charismatic MC evoked fun and laughter through jokes and interactive ice-breaking games. Speakers stirred up feelings of compassion and sorrow as they shared personal stories of illness and death. People expressed pride in the youth, worry and frustration over injustices, and hope for the future.

CAMA was also enriched by performative arts. Powerful songs were performed from the stage and screen, igniting a “collective effervescence” throughout the crowd. The music video “Home to Me” produced and performed by youth from Grassy Narrows First Nation received loud cheers and a standing ovation. Juno Award winning singer Susan Aglukark spoke about her personal experiences and sang a song for the youth entitled “Stand Up.” The song resonated with the audience, who stood up with the singer throughout her performance. To conclude the conference, delegates stood once again, alongside Elder Julie Vachon

while she shared a prayer. She advised the audience that “money can’t buy life” and ended the conference with song.

While Mines and Money created a narrow path to one particular future, CAMA expanded the possibilities. Space was created for them to participate in thorough and thoughtful discussions on issues that are typically whisked “out of sight” (Ferguson 1990, p. xv). In panel discussions, the conversations were layered with different experiences and viewpoints. Here, talk of mining opportunities was entangled with talk of mining concerns, and the doors to multiple futures, both prosperous and disastrous, were opened.

#### Friction

As the discourse surrounding the Ring of Fire expands from the compact, glitzy bubble of mining investment, to the unraveled possibilities flowing from CAMA, “zones of awkward engagement” begin to emerge (Tsing 2005, p. xi). When the other mining events I attended, news stories, social media, and additional factors connecting to the mining industry are included, these zones become even more visible. Here, the shiny veneer crumbles – sometimes a little, sometimes a lot – and complications ooze from the cracks, like the lava that flows near the earth’s subduction zones. In the zones of awkward engagement, gaps and inconsistencies are highlighted, interrupting the audience’s dreams and making things appear forced and constructed rather than authentic and natural. This “friction” enables movement, but also demonstrates that power does not operate as a well-oiled machine. Tsing (2005) explains:

“Speaking of friction is a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency. Friction is not just



about slowing things down. Friction is required to keep global power in motion.” (p. 6)

When one focuses on the encounters between diverging voices communicating “across a divide,” the movement shaping the Ring of Fire becomes visible. The following examples detail some of the areas of friction I observed while conducting my research, things that emerge because of it, and its effects.

#### *Noront and Neskantaga First Nation*

During his 6-minute sales pitch at Mines and Money, Noront President/CEO Alan Coutts mentioned the partnerships that his company has with First Nations in the Ring of Fire area. These relationships were portrayed in a homogeneously optimistic light, without complications. The communities that Noront was actively working with were highlighted in this representation, while Neskantaga First Nation and the concerns that the community has about Noront were erased – they didn’t align with the narrative the company had prepared for potential investors. When Chief Moonias shared his account of Neskantaga’s relationship with Noront from the CAMA stage, these inconsistencies and erasures emerged. Although Noront was not directly involved in the conference’s presentations or trade show that year, the company’s Manager of Community Relations, Scott Jacob, was a member of the audience and tweeted a picture of the event under the hashtag #CAMA2016Ottawa. The following year, at CAMA 2017, Noront VP of Government Affairs and former Chief of Missanabie Cree First Nation, Glenn Nolan, participated in a panel discussion about the Ring of Fire – perhaps as a corporate response to critique that had been set in motion by Chief Moonias’s words (Benson and Kirsch 2010).

This “zone of awkward engagement” is further contextualized by two CBC News articles, one that was written a few months before CAMA and the other written a few months after it. In the summer of 2016, Neskantaga received a notice from Noront stating that drilling operations would begin on their traditional land (Porter 2016d). In response, Neskantaga sent Noront a letter stating that it must “cease and desist,” as the company did not seek the community’s consent to drill (ibid). Chief Moonias reported that Noront is ignoring the community’s engagement protocol and development process, and stated that it is “unacceptable” for the government to be issuing permits to companies that don’t have the consent or involvement of First Nations (Chief Moonias, as quoted in Porter 2016d). Coutts reported that the company is “reaching out” to Neskantaga, but does not plan to delay its drilling, as the site may hold a “promising nickel-copper-platinum discovery” (ibid). He explained Noront’s position, stating that “Not all of the [First Nations] communities [in the area] are aligned and see eye-to-eye on things ... What we’ve done is work closely with Marten Falls and Webequie” (Coutts, as quoted in Porter 2016d; brackets in original).

In January 2017, the other article outlined the contradictory positions of Noront and Neskantaga, stating that the two parties “disagree even on whether they’re talking to each other” (Porter 2017a). In a news release, Noront claimed that “Beginning this month Noront will enter into a series of meetings with Neskantaga First Nation” that “will be facilitated by an experienced and respected mediator with the goal of identifying a mutually agreeable path forward for the company’s current and proposed exploration and development activities” (Noront news release dated

January 17, 2017, as cited in Porter 2017a). However, a Neskantaga representative reports that “At this time there is no mediation between Noront and Neskantaga” (Chris Moonias, as cited in Porter 2017a). The article continues, describing Noront’s stance on obtaining consent from First Nations. Coutts states:

“We’re saying, ‘let’s try to get this resource development issue separated from these larger broader issues’ such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation” (Coutts, as cited in Porter 2017a).

Regardless of whether Noront and Neskantaga are engaged in official talks, they are speaking through CAMA, communicating through news stories, and adding to the discourse surrounding the Ring of Fire that ebbs and flows between optimism and skepticism. What emerge from this indirect interaction are the inconsistencies between Noront’s actions and their corporate image. While the company puts forth much effort into constructing a “First Nations friendly” image (see Chapter 2), their actions reveal that they are not respecting community protocol in Neskantaga’s traditional territory, they use strategies of divide and conquer with the First Nations communities that are closest to the Ring of Fire, and they have advocated for resource extraction to be set apart from UNDRIP and reconciliation. The effects of this include a somewhat tarnished corporate image and a corporate response to critique, which likely includes the company’s involvement in CAMA 2017.

### *Road Announcement*

On August 21, 2017, the daytime sky darkened, and if you looked at the sun (hopefully with protective glasses) you may have been able to see a ring of fire. It was the day of the solar eclipse. It was also the day that Ontario Premier Kathleen

Wynne announced “that we have reached an agreement to build a road into the Ring of Fire” (Wynne, as quoted in Kitching and Porter 2017) During this announcement – which was held at Hillcrest Park, the park where much of Thunder Bay gathered to view the eclipse – Wynne explained that the Province has reached an agreement with Webequie First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, and Marten Falls First Nation “to develop year-round access that will link the communities to Ontario’s highway system,” while it will “also facilitate access to the Ring of Fire” (ibid). The province estimated that environmental assessments would begin by January 2018, and construction would begin in 2019 (ibid).

In her speech at the Ontario Natural Resources Forum, Premier Wynne encouraged all ministers to read the TRC’s Calls to Action. She spoke about listening to Indigenous people, and laying the foundation for ongoing discussions about the Ring of Fire by building respectful, collaborative relationships. She also explained the importance of having a social license to operate, and how growth benefits everyone. However, this talk contrasted with a letter dated May 10, 2017, sent by Premier Wynne to the chiefs of the nine First Nations closest to the Ring of Fire (Porter 2017b). In the letter, Premier Wynne told the chiefs that they “should not squander” the province’s commitment to spend \$1 billion on a road to the Ring of Fire (ibid). She went on to encourage “those First Nations that would like to pursue transportation infrastructure” to engage with the province, and insisted that “we need to see meaningful progress in weeks, not months” (ibid). The letter was written at a time when industry was increasing pressure on the province to move

forward with infrastructure, as Noront’s financiers were threatening to walk away “unless the province tables a road plan” (Ross 2017a).

Soon after Premier Wynne announced the “agreement to build a road,” two of the three First Nations said to be involved in this agreement made an announcement of their own. Webequie and Nibinimik reported that they had made an agreement to work together to study road access, not to move forward with building a road (CBC News 2017). Nibinamik Chief Johnny Yellowhead stated that “We just want to be clear that we’re not moving forward with anything [building a road] ... It’s just a study that we want to do” (Chief Yellowhead, as quoted in CBC News 2017; brackets in original). In a joint statement, Neskantaga and Eabametoong, the two communities left out of Premier Wynne’s announcement, reported that “projects will “hit a dead end” if there is no “real and concrete jurisdiction agreement with First Nations” (joint statement from August 24, 2017, as quoted in CBC News 2017).

The narratives connecting to the road announcement demonstrate an awkward zone of engagement between Premier Wynne and the First Nations communities closest to the Ring of Fire. Contradictions and exclusions emerge from this friction and the question of the road becomes more complex: the friendly appearance of the Ontario government portrayed at the ONRF transforms – as they now plan to operate with or without a social license.

#### *Mining Minute Video*

In August of 2016, while conducting research on what I described as the dramatic spectacle surrounding the Ring of Fire, everyone was asking if I had heard

about the Ring of Fire bikini video. It was one of the top national news stories around August 10<sup>th</sup>, and the “bizarre” video went viral (Baker 2016). It was part of the “Mining Minute” promotional series, in which a typical video involved “brand ambassador,” Theresa Longo, interviewing KWG Resources President Frank Smeenk in an office (Ross 2016a). However, in Episode 23, Longo and another woman listed off Ring of Fire “facts” while doing various activities at a cottage, like swimming, swinging, and barbecuing, while wearing bikinis. The video quickly went viral.

Smeenk reported that the company met Longo at PDAC, and hired her to be the hostess of a KWG event (Ross 2016a). After discussing social media with her and learning about her 70,000 Twitter followers, Smeenk asked her “to shape the company’s web messaging” (ibid). He explained:

“She said to me you guys build all these expensive websites but nobody reads them anymore. So you’re wasting your time and money. She said, everybody in my generation digests (information) in 30, 60, 90-second video clips” (Smeenk, as quoted in Ross 2016a; brackets in original).

He went on to explain how junior mining companies are “always looking to raise capital” as they have no income and they operate in an “extremely expensive” regulatory environment (ibid). When asked about the company’s reputation, he explained that he received a positive response from others, stating that “Lot [sic] of guys are saying, ‘I wish I’d thought of that’” (ibid).

However, the video was released at a time when the mining industry was actively promoting women’s participation in this male-dominated field. For example, when I attended PDAC, there was an event entitled “Mining for Diversity,” which was almost entirely about the inclusion of women in the industry. The event

was filled beyond capacity, with many people standing at the back of the room during presentations as there were not enough seats. Following awards and speeches, food and beverages were served while the crowd mingled. There were also a few trade show booths set up within the event; including booths for “Women in Mining Toronto,” “Women Who Rock,” and “Covergalls” (a company selling industrial clothes for women). Just outside of the event, large Goldcorp advertisements were displayed along the railings that overlooked the escalators. The ads were a mixture of messages, like “Our strength is people,” and large photos of smiling workers wearing hardhats and high visibility clothing. About half of the pictures were women, a proportion much higher than what you would likely find at any mine.

As an organization that is involved in improving the mining industry’s image regarding gender diversity, PDAC spoke out against the video, releasing a statement that:

“KWG is not currently a member of our association, and we find the video tasteless and unreflective of the complexities of mineral exploration in the Ring of Fire, and of the important role women play in mineral exploration.” (Porter 2016e)

The Mining Association of Canada’s director of communications, Jessica Draker described the video as “absurd and inappropriate,” explaining that “We hope that this sort of behaviour does not undermine the industry’s efforts to attract women” (Porter 2016e). (KWG was not a member of MAC either.) While Women in Mining Toronto’s co-chair Cathy Hume described Smeenk as a “passionate explorationist,” and stated that she had “no issues” with the video, Women in Mining Thunder Bay chair, Barbara Courte spoke out against it, stating that “the women are not happy

with this, and you know what? We've evolved. Why must we go back to the old days" (Ross 2016b). Chief David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO of Matawa First Nations Management also spoke out against the video, stating that "KWG really needs to be more respectful of our leadership and especially our peoples. But certainly we are very insulted on this approach" (Ross 2016c).

While Smeenk defended the video by saying "sex sells" and Longo reported that it was "fun and lighthearted," others expanded further on the harms of the video. In one scene, a woman sitting on a swing states: "First Nations is [sic] interested in sharing in the resources of Ontario's Ring of Fire" (Porter 2016f; brackets in original). "It's like Indigenous people are a joke, the way they engaged in that video," states Jennifer Wabano from Peawanuk First Nation (ibid). She goes on to explain: "It's just disgusting for them to say that especially when our lands, waters and First Nations lives are at stake ... That attitude is part of the reason our women go missing or murdered" (ibid). Pamela Palmater, the Chair of Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, made similar comments, stating that she hopes "that the national inquiry on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls takes a close look at the correlation between sexualized violence and mining/oil and extractive industry camps" (ibid). Perhaps the CBC News story outlining these perspectives is what led to the unexpected discussion on "rape culture" in my interview with Glenn Nolan of Noront. He stated that:

"Recently there was some stories [sic] going around that Canadian companies, mining companies, led to have a rape culture within the—within our projects. And that couldn't be further from the truth. You know, that doesn't happen in Canada. It doesn't happen globally. Now there are issues that happen in other places, but generally it's not a—it's just a



rhetoric that seems to come out from the media once in a while.”

He went on to discuss how Noront has programs on harassment, promotes a respectful work environment, and how both men and women love working at the company’s camp.

The narratives that emerge following KWG’s viral video highlight the movement of several groups: those working to construct the image of an industry that is welcoming and inclusive towards women; those working to establish respect for Indigenous people – for their lives and their rights; and the underlying assumption that women and First Nations are not included within the mining world and the mining investment world. Smeenk attempted some “disruptive” marketing by trying to attract the young men that follow Longo on Twitter as new investors for KWG. However, even with such a bright spotlight shining on the company, KWG’s stock prices dropped from \$.03 CAD in July and August of 2016 to \$.02 CAD by November of that year. Along with the critical attention discussed above, the video was criticized by the business world and used as an example of “a cautionary tale for marketers” (Burnett 2016). Smeenk’s response to the video’s criticism also helped earn the company a 2016 Financial Post “Bossie Award” for “management bloopers and missteps” (Andrews 2018). As a result, the video was soon removed from YouTube, and eventually all of the other Mining Minute videos were too.

#### *Question and Answer Periods*

At the mining events, speakers took the stage, either alone or as part of a panel discussion, while the audience sat and listened. Typically, the audience is only able to engage in talk if a question and answer period is included following the

discussion. At Mines and Money, question and answer periods were rare, but when they did occur they were very brief and reflected voices that were aligned with speakers (usually asking how to make money). When the audience includes a range of voices and perspectives, question and answer periods present an opportunity for people to communicate across difference. In this space, contradictions, complications, exclusions, and erasures may emerge.

As Premier Kathleen Wynne launched into her keynote speech at the Ontario Natural Resources Forum, the room still smelled of the sage used in Elder Ed Sackaney's blessing. The Premier talked quickly and enthusiastically about how Indigenous peoples in Ontario have been mining for more than ten thousand years. She explained that for the past 400 years, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians have shared a history in natural resources – declaring that in Ontario “we are loggers and miners.” She drew upon the fur trade as an example of Indigenous/non-Indigenous cooperation and emphasized the need to further this type of cooperation in the present by having an inclusive economy with a skilled young Aboriginal workforce. Through her speech she attempted to unite her audience with an idealized version of Canadian history, and promoted respectful, cooperative, relationships in which Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Canadians shared the wealth of natural resources.

However, when an audience member asked about the ecological impacts the Ring of Fire will have for First Nations people living downstream – people who had not been included in negotiations – Premier Wynne awkwardly avoided a direct answer. Instead, she stated that she has had the beginning of this conversation with

Ontario Regional Chief, Isadore Day, that she went on a canoe trip to get a sense of the land, and that she can't answer the question. This was the only question that Premier Wynne had time to answer (or not answer), before stating that she had to head back to work at Queen's Park. This interaction highlighted the inconsistency between the respectful relationships the Premier talked of and the exclusion of First Nations peoples living downstream from the Ring of Fire – it pierced through the cheery optimism of Wynne's speech and revealed one of the important issues that had been hidden away.

It was also the first of several questions asked throughout the conference that addressed matters relating to downstream concerns. Following a panel discussion on the Ring of Fire, Vern Cheechoo, Director of Lands and Resources for Mushkegowuk Council, asked about the lack of funding available to study wetlands and how the water flows in the James Bay Lowlands. Noront CEO Alan Coutts agreed with Cheechoo, explaining that cumulative effects of mining are an important issue and that the company planned to engage with Attiwapiskat (downstream) the following month. Ontario Minister Michael Gravelle responded that the Province is aware of downstream impacts, and that his ministry will be more than happy to meet. After this response Cheechoo asked the panel about becoming involved in carbon trading, as the James Bay Lowlands have the second greatest carbon sinks in the world, to which Gravelle briefly responded that he is "looking forward to those conversations," before moving on to the next question. The following day, Cheechoo addressed the federal Minister of Natural Resources, Jim Carr, stating that policies are being made, but no one from the government has come to talk with

Mushkegowuk about the Ring of Fire and the downstream impacts it will have. In response Carr gave a round-about answer talking about allowing extra time for “pipelines to talk to Indigenous communities,” new technology and opportunities, and how it can’t happen “without your help.” Like Premiere Wynne, Carr only had time for this one question before leaving the stage.

By putting the issue of downstream impacts to provincial ministers, federal ministers, and industry representatives throughout the conference, those concerned with downstream impacts were able to add their voice to the discussion on the Ring of Fire, leaving those on stage to awkwardly avoid answering the question or hastily agree to a future meeting in front of the audience. It interrupted the speakers’ narratives of positive, cooperative relationships with First Nations by confronting them with a reality that did not fit with their talk: the exclusion of those downstream. These question and answer session also highlighted the importance of having representation at such events.

In another example of friction within a question and answer session, a video filmed at PDAC 2013 reveals the limits of what can be voiced at the convention. A video posted by the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network documents the interaction between mining giant Barrick’s CEO, Jamie Sokalsky, and Sakura Saunders, the editor of protestbarrick.net, during (what was labeled) the CEO Panel, “Mining’s Contribution to Sustainable Development” (Mining Injustice Solidarity Network 2013). The video begins with Sokalsky discussing the remediation program for “some human rights things that – terrible things that happened at some operations

in the past” (ibid). He explains that this was not just a PR move, or just the right thing to do, but it “has a business imperative to it” (ibid).

While Sokalsky is talking, the video shows the viewer three articles that explain the context of the remediation program. The first is an article from The Tyee, and it displays the headline “Barrick Gold’s Offer to Rape Victims Slammed by NGOs” (ibid; from Annandale 2013). Part of the article is visible, and it explains that Barrick is “under fire for attaching strings to a ‘remediation framework’ offered to women raped by employees of its Papua New Guinea mine” (Mining Injustice Solidarity Network 2013). The second was a statement by MiningWatch Canada, Rights & Accountability in Development, and EarthRights International. A line in the document is highlighted and reads: “In order to receive a remedy package, women must enter into an agreement in which ‘the claimant agrees that she will not pursue or participate in any legal action against PJV [Porgera Joint Venture], PRFA (Porgera Remediation Framework Association Inc.) or Barrick” (Mining Injustice Solidarity Network 2013).

When Saunders stands up to speak during the question and answer period, she begins by providing some context for her question, stating that “CSR does not work when companies are allowed to lie, and there are no consequences for lying” (ibid). She talks of small scale miners being displaced and shot at for trespassing at Barrick mines in Tanzania and Papua New Guinea. She describes the effects that Barrick’s Porgera Mine in Papua New Guinea has on the villages located between the mine and the waste dump. She explains that, “waste has turned this valley into a marshland of quicksand” and how homes and a school were destroyed by landslides

(ibid). At this point security guards hover behind Saunders, and the moderator tells her to make her point. She then asks: “When you examine these mine sites in the context of unavoidable conflict and unavoidable environmental devastation, how can you define CSR?” (ibid) As Saunders is escorted out of the room by security, Sokalsky responds by stating:

“Well in essence there is an awful lot of misinformation that is propagating in the market and unfortunately it gets distorted and ultimately gets credited in terms of falsehoods. There are so many things that were described that just aren’t right, but you know, ultimately you know, we just got to continue to do what we do” (ibid).

The video concludes with a clip from an interview that Saunders had conducted with people in Tanzania who reported that they had witnessed/experienced Barrick’s violence first hand. They described shootings, bombings, and the deaths they caused. One man rolled up his pant leg to reveal his scars to the camera.

In a panel discussion that is being used to enhance Barrick’s corporate image by discussing CSR, Saunders introduces words that challenge this image, calling into question the concept of CSR and Barrick’s credibility to participate in the panel. While Barrick narrows the story surrounding remediation, Saunders expands and challenges it – only to be whisked away by security guards for crossing an invisible line.

## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

### *Streaming Within*

When I first bought my ticket to PDAC, I had no idea what to expect. Online the event appeared inclusive of all stakeholder groups, with the Capital Markets Program and the Corporate Presentation Forum for Investors held alongside the CSR Event Series and the Aboriginal Program. Since the conference took place over 4 days, I was hoping to observe a bit of everything. When I arrived, however, I was lost. I missed out on several presentations because I couldn't find them. 'Trade Show North' was so big that I did not even consider that it wasn't the convention's main trade show. Even after asking for directions, I couldn't find the other tower, so I gave up and wandered around Trade Show North (See Fig. 49). The next day I finally found the sprawling main event, about 20 minutes away from the 'little' trade show – up and down numerous escalators, over a skyway, and through dense crowds. Needless to say, attending different streams of programming and events was no easy task. The preferred strategy with this format was to choose one and follow the same schedule and (basically) the same crowd of people. This seemed to be what most people did, as delegates commonly asked one another about what program they were attending.

At the World Conservation Congress (WCC), a similar structure was used to stream attendees into 12 separate programs called 'journeys' (Brosius and Campbell 2010). Brosius and Campbell (2010) explain:

“While attendees undoubtedly appreciated the organization the journeys provided, journeys were also disciplining; most of us noted

that, consistently, the same people showed up to similarly themed sessions. Thus the journey structure acted as a barrier to the kind of communication and interaction that might encourage dialogue between actors with different ideological orientations toward conservation.” (p. 250)

This type of structure minimizes the friction within a large-scale event like PDAC, where various groups of stakeholders gather.

With PDAC programs and events taking place simultaneously, in separate ‘silos’ (sometimes a 20 min walk away), it is likely that those who could have benefitted most from the information presented during the Aboriginal Program were probably busy attending something that was more in line with their own ideology. Even within this program, the presentation that would probably be considered the most controversial was given the most marginalized timeslot: Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Solomon’s presentation on Treaty 9. I had listed this talk as the highlight of the NADF summit on a post-conference survey, and I was interested in listening to it again. However, although this presentation played a significant role in expanding the discourse at PDAC, it took place in the late afternoon, on the last day of the convention. The once crowded hallways were desolate and heavy machinery began taking apart Trade Show exhibits at noon (Fig. 50). About 3 hours after most things shut down and most people left, a group of just over 50 people gathered to learn that the First Nations in Treaty 9 did not extinguish their land rights. Chief Solomon discussed these treaty negotiations in detail, spoke about why mining projects in the area require consent, and gave the small audience the opportunity to participate in a lengthy question and answer period and engage across difference.



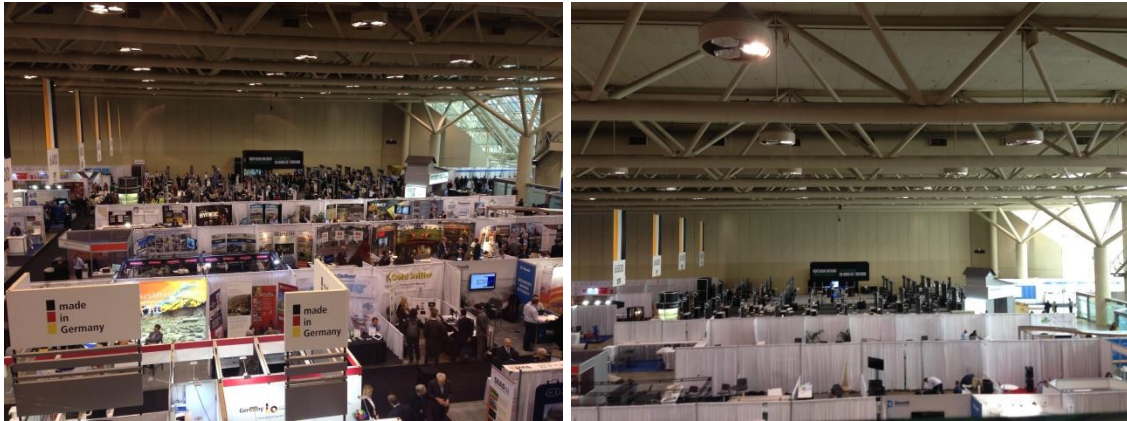


Figure 48 (Left): The 'little' trade show, Trade Show North, on Day 1 of PDAC; Figure 49 (Right): Trade Show North at 12:40 pm on Day 4 of PDAC

### *Shifting Between Silos*

"You were at Mines and Money?" I was asked, several times, while discussing my research with delegates at PDAC – always with a look of surprise and an emphasis on the 'you,' and sometimes followed by a series of questions asking how I paid for my ticket. Although I found it irritating, these repetitious lines of questioning underscored the exclusivity/exclusion of the event. (It also brought to mind the many food-related questions I was asked while there, like how to use a toaster... I wonder if anyone has ever asked Rick Rule how to use a toaster.) The event had a narrow scope, a relatively low profile, and a ridiculously high price tag for non-investors (well over \$3000 CAD for a standard ticket, less for students, and free for those who successfully applied as investors). For most people, attending this event would be a waste of time and money. Mines and Money was meant to attract only those looking to conjure large sums of money for mining activity, and

those looking to invest large sums of money into mining activity – and for the most part, anyone that did not fit this profile was filtered out, creating the largely homogeneous crowd of white businessmen. Deals could be done happily in this bubble.

The striking differences between this mining investment conference and CAMA are prominent throughout this thesis. When looking at the two events alongside PDAC, their separateness resembles the program/event series streaming. Indigenous groups were not represented within the mining investment world of Mines and Money – or at least they were not listed on conference documents. CAMA was an event organized by and for Indigenous peoples – one that expanded and explored important issues relating to mining in Canada with a wide range of speakers, and welcomed outsiders like me. However, even though this was an important, mid-sized mining event, provincial and federal cabinet ministers were notably absent, and less powerful ministry representatives attended instead. Ministers, like Kathleen Wynne, Charles Sousa, Jim Carr, Michael Gravelle, and others attended PDAC, Mines and Money, and the ONRF, while none attended CAMA or NADF. Similarly, CEO Alan Coutts pitched Noront at PDAC, Mines and Money, and participated in a panel discussion at ONRF. Although I had been trying to reach Coutts and schedule an interview for some time through email and telephone, I was finally able to talk with him face-to-face and conduct the interview on the spot at Mines and Money. For the Aboriginal Program at PDAC and at CAMA 2017, Noront was represented by Glenn Nolan, the VP of Government Affairs and former Chief of Missanabie Cree First Nation. Based on the conferences that I attended (and CAMA

2017, which I did not attend), it would appear that government and industry decision makers preferred to remain absent from events organized by Indigenous peoples, while attending to mining investment matters and ONRF themselves. This limits engagement across difference for these actors and in some cases transfers the friction to the less prominent representatives. For example, at NADF, while a ministry representative was conducting a presentation that focused largely on the Ring of Fire, audience members expressed that they did not want to hear about it, as they would rather hear about mining projects that were currently affecting communities. The representative complied, rushing through the rest of his presentation, skipping over anything relating to the Ring of Fire, and referring to the potential mining project as “the elephant in the room.” Had a minister reacted that way it probably would have ended up in the news.

Although the mining events seem to occur within silos, they are all part of the mining industry in Canada and they each provide a glimpse into this world. The events all shared some basic elements – such as speeches and panel discussions taking place in front of an audience, and the presence of trade show booths. All of them focused on mining and all of them mentioned the Ring of Fire. When looking at some of these commonalities, one can see how the messages shift with the audience.

One of the most prominent shifts is how mining in Canada is portrayed to an investor audience, versus an audience made up of mostly Indigenous people. At Mines and Money, speakers repeatedly boasted how Canada, Ontario, and Toronto were world class places to do mining and investment – listing off billion dollar

figures as proof, and describing the nation/province/city as being leaders in various categories (often number one). This talk was always brimming with excitement and optimistic opportunity. However, at CAMA, representatives from the Mining Association of Canada (MAC) and PDAC described mining in Canada with a more cautionary tone. MAC President/CEO, Pierre Gratton, explained that the state of mining is in a slump, and although it is recovering, he is concerned that Canada's position as a top mining and exploration destination is dropping and that other countries are taking the lead. He connected improving regulatory burdens and infrastructure deficits in the North with 'reconciliation' and encouraged the audience to promote efficiency in regulation. To conclude, Gratton encouraged the crowd to take the "bright" path of efficiency, partnerships, and economic development instead of a bleak path where the mining sector "erodes" and investment goes elsewhere (i.e. enhancing Indigenous participation in project reviews with UNDRIP). Executive Director of PDAC, Andrew Cheatle, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing how Canada's rank is slipping and that we have "fallen behind." He described a "dire situation" in which people lost jobs due to a massive collapse in finance. He then explained how investors see relationships with local people as being important and talked of achieving reconciliation. I did not hear any talk of reconciliation at Mines and Money, or outside of the Aboriginal Program at PDAC (although, the event is so massive that it is very likely that I missed it).

By attending numerous mining events, organized by different groups for different audiences, with varying speakers, structures, and styles, the magic that had been so carefully crafted at the mining investment events is revealed as such when

viewed alongside events that are grounded in reality and explore complexities, as was done at CAMA. The spectacle appears forced and constructed, rather than real and authentic. One can see the narrowing, the transformations, the erasures, the complications, and the lives that have been removed from the event. CAMA interrupts the dream world created within Mines and Money, where people's eyes gleam with dollar signs as they buzz about. But the separateness and relative isolation between the two allows the dramatic spectacle to flourish within Mines and Money, much like the separate programs taking place within PDAC. Where these worlds visibly engage is predominantly through the media, in zones of awkward engagement. Oftentimes, what underlies the emergence of these zones are the deals and deadlines that have been negotiated with financiers, like for Premier Wynne's road announcement and some of Coutts's public comments that stray from Noront's corporate image.

#### *Forward Looking Research*

This research can be carried forward in several different directions. It could continue to follow the discourse surrounding the Ring of Fire as presented at mining events, over time and space, to examine how the changing political discourse influences the events and changes industry standards. One could look back in time, conducting interviews with those who attended past conferences to gain further insight into the changing scene. For example, one person explained that in the past, PDAC was a very hostile atmosphere for Indigenous peoples, and that this has greatly improved since the organization has added things like the Aboriginal Program to the conference. One could also focus on one type of event over time. For

example, research could examine the production of other large scale mining events alongside PDAC, such as Diggers and Dealers in Australia, Mining & Exploration International in Las Vegas, Mining Indaba in South Africa, and the BMO Global Metals & Mining Conference in Florida. One could continue comparing the events themselves and localizing it through a specific project, or one could follow a particular commodity. For example, at Mines and Money there were presentations titled “Mining Spotlight: Placing your bet on the fundamentals of the uranium space” and “Debate: With China planning a three-fold increase in nuclear capacity and rising demand from India is now the time to invest again into Uranium?” If people were placing bets on uranium in 2016, how would uranium presentations look in the context of a world in which leaders engage in terrifying tweets about nuclear annihilation? Would this become part of the pitch? This type of research could also carry over into the events held by other industries. For example, artist Jill Gibbon has been attending international arms fairs incognito over a span of 10 years – drawing scenes of models standing next to Scud missiles and businessmen drinking (and vomiting) champagne; while also collecting material culture from expo booths, like ‘welcome to hell’ candies, and hand-grenade stress relievers (Pidd 2018). An ethnographic lens could provide further insight into these spaces of exclusivity/exclusion, comparing them with similar events in other industries, or contrasting them with the devastation their products cause on the ground.

### *Forward-Looking Questions*

While in the midst of conducting my research at mining events, Donald Trump was elected and his style of populist politics has been spreading around the

world. Ontario is no exception, as was demonstrated by the election of the new Premier, Doug Ford. Instead of using double speak like Premier Wynne, who promoted respectful relationships with First Nations but did not always practice what she preached (i.e. the road announcement discussed in Chapter 4), Premier Ford seems to prefer silence on Indigenous (and environmental) issues, and he has vowed to build roads to the Ring of Fire, even if he has to “hop on the bulldozer myself” (Ibbitson 2018; Dillman 2018). Although the Ring of Fire Regional Framework Agreement remains in place (as of November 2018), talks have “stalled” (Prokopchuk 2018a). The Government has not scheduled further meetings and funding has run out for related initiatives, such as community consultations, work for environmental assessments, and infrastructure planning (ibid; Prokopchuk 2018b). Ford has also removed the word ‘reconciliation’ from the title of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and combined it with energy and mining to become the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. However, this strategy may not bring the current government any closer to mining the Ring of Fire than its predecessors – as Chief Bruce Achneepineskum of Marten Falls First Nations points out, “A bulldozer will sink in the muskeg if you don’t know where you’re going... That’s why you need First Nations involvement” (Dehaas 2018).

The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Indigenous Affairs is Greg Rickford, a newly appointed MPP from Northern Ontario who left his position on Noront’s board of directors to return to politics (he had previously been in Prime Minister Harper’s cabinet) (Noront Resources Ltd. 2017). Perhaps this is

why Noront posted pictures of CEO Alan Coutts posing with Ford on Twitter during his political campaign (March 30, 2018). I did not come across any pictures or statements on Noront's websites that promoted the other political leaders or parties during the campaign.

These changes and connections leave me wondering what effects this will have on the Ring of Fire, the discourse that surrounds it, and the policies that affect it. Will talk of cooperative relationships and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples continue to be mentioned by government and industry at events like the ONRF, or will they only appear at events organized and attended by Indigenous people themselves? Will Noront maintain its First Nations friendly corporate image, and if so, will there be an even larger disconnect between this image and their actions under the Ford government? How will the events themselves change during these political shifts, and what direction will the mining industry move in as a result? For CAMA 2018, the large annual event, which was to be held in Toronto, will not take place, and instead CAMA will be hosting regional workshops and projects (CAMA 2018). The event's sponsors have declined from 25 in 2016, to 11 for 2018 – leaving me to wonder why the number of sponsors has dropped so dramatically. Is it connected to the changing political landscape, and was this a factor that contributed to the change in the event's structure?

This year, PDAC has made a subtle change in their format. For the 2019 conference, the CSR Event Series has been renamed the *Sustainability Program*. Although the word sustainability originally referred to “the relationship between economy and ecology,” it is used in the mining world to refer to profitability (Kirsch



2009, p. 90). Kirsch (2009) explains that, “a mine that pollutes a river and causes extensive deforestation may be considered sustainable if the profits from the project are successfully converted into manufactured capital with an economic value that equals or exceeds the value of what has been consumed or destroyed in the process” (p. 90-91). This “corporate oxymoron” is often deployed by the mining industry as a strategy “to conceal harm and neutralize critique” (Kirsch 2009, p. 92). While Corporate Social Responsibility may give the impression of being a ‘loudly ethical’ event series, this expectation is not as prominent with the more ambiguous Sustainability Program... but why the change and why now? Is this reflective of an industry that has decided to ease up on the image of being ethical? How will this new title transform the program?

And if all moves forward as planned with the Ring of Fire, how might this look? If a mine is built, and Noront and the other junior mining companies are able to overcome the odds, build a mine, and produce metals, what will become of these companies and the relationships that they have formed in order to pave the way? But junior miners don’t produce metals; they are either bought up by a larger company or in rare cases become a mid-tier miner. Coutts explains his hopes for Noront, stating “We want to be that company that was, once upon a time, the Falconbridges [now part of Glencore] and the Incos [bought by Vale for almost \$20 billion in 2006] and the Norandas [also Glencore] of Canada, and we see this as a great opportunity. All those companies had a flagship operation that vaulted them on to greater things and we see this as having the same potential” (Leeson 2017; brackets not in original). Mergers and acquisitions are a natural part of the mining

ecosystem, but this type of transformation may not be a positive development for local people. For example, Golub (2014) discusses how Barrick acquired Placer Dome in 2006 and took ownership of the Porgera Mine, explaining that “Although many of the faces at the mine remained the same, changes in policy and direction slowly became apparent” and “the relentlessly earnest emphasis on transparency was replaced by opacity” (p. 209).

During a PDAC roundtable discussion that took place as part of the CSR Event Series on the last day, one delegate commented on a question that I had asked earlier in the day about junior mining companies and mergers/acquisitions. He explained that junior miners have a limited track record compared to the giants. They don’t have a long and complicated history of human rights abuses, environmental disasters, and lawsuits. Because of this, juniors have the opportunity to create a fresh and friendly face for their company, as Noront has attempted to do with CSR. This image gives the juniors an advantage in obtaining a social license to operate. However, even if Noront’s policies and practices were to align with their friendly face, paving the way for mine construction, they are still a part of the larger mining investment world, where mergers and acquisitions are the norm and money is always the ultimate goal when seeking to survive the high stakes treasure hunting competition.

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Woods, A. (2016) 28 states of emergency are in effect in these Ontario communities. *The Hamilton Spectator*. Electronic document available at: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/6512359-28-states-of-emergency-are-in-effect-in-these-ontario-communities/>

**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Dan Jorgensen  
**Department & Institution:** Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108357  
**Study Title:** From economic dreams to environmental nightmares: Examining the dramatic spectacle surrounding Northern Ontario's Ring of Fire

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** September 01, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** September 01, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received August 22, 2016	
Recruitment Items	Telephone Script for Public Figure	2016/08/18
Advertisement	Recruitment Poster - Received August 4, 2016	
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/08/18
Letter of Information	Letter of Information for First Nations Advisory Committee	2016/07/20
Instruments	Sample semi-structured interview questions - Received August 4, 2016	

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_\_ Katelyn Harris ✓ Vikki Tran \_\_\_ Karen Gopaul \_\_\_

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# Curriculum Vitae

BRIANNE VESCIO

## EDUCATION

- 2018 M.A. Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Western University, London, ON.  
2010 Honours B.A., Department of Anthropology, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON.  
2007 B.Sc., Department of Anthropology, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON.

## EMPLOYMENT

- 2018-Present Relief Crisis Worker, Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex  
2014-2017 Teaching Assistant, Western University, Department of Anthropology  
2013-2014 Youth Gang Project Researcher, John Howard Society of Thunder Bay and District  
2011-2014 Correctional Program Officer, John Howard Society of Thunder Bay and District  
2010-2014 Direct Accountability Program Coordinator, John Howard Society of Thunder Bay and District  
2009-2010 Volunteer Coordinator, John Howard Society of London and District  
2009-2010 Proposal Writer, John Howard Society of London and District  
2008-2010 Children's Programs Coordinator, John Howard Society of London and District  
2008-2009 Hate Crimes/Anti-Racism Project Coordinator, John Howard Society of London and District  
2006-2008 Bail Supervisor, John Howard Society of London and District

## AWARDS

- 2016 Regna Darnell Graduate Award, Western University

## NON-REFEREED TECHNICAL REPORTS

Boyd, G., L. Dunbar, R. Hastings, et al.

- 2014 Asset Mapping and Program Inventory Project for Gang-Involved Youth in Custody/Detention. Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Youth Justice Services Division.

## **VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

- 2014            Presenter, Elementary School Outreach, Anthropology Department, Western University.
- 2014            Member, Hate Crimes Awareness Committee, Thunder Bay.
- 2014            Chair, Incidence Response Committee, Diversity Thunder Bay.
- 2014            Member, Executive Committee, Diversity Thunder Bay.
- 2014            Writer, One City Many Voices Column, Diversity Thunder Bay.
- 2014, 2013     Member, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Breakfast Committee, Diversity Thunder Bay.
- 2014, 2013     Member, Restorative Practice Thunder Bay.

## **RELEVANT TRAINING**

- 2013            Depression – Practical Intervention Strategies Certificate, Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute
- 2013            Biology of Loss: Recognizing the Consequences of Impaired Attachments and Fostering Resilience Workshop, Dr. Gabor Mate
- 2013, 2012     Building Bridges Conferences on Addictions and Mental Health, Kari Chiapetta Consulting
- 2013, 2012     Lakehead University Agency Field Associate Training, Lakehead University School of Social Work
- 2011            Mental Health First Aid Training, Mental Health Commission of Canada
- 2011            Community Maintenance Program Facilitator Training, Correctional Service of Canada
- 2010            Anger Management Program Facilitator Training, Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General
- 2010            Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program Facilitator Training, Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General
- 2008-2010     Outcome Evaluation Training, Centre for Community Based Research