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Information and analysis  
bulletin on extractivism  
here and in Colombia

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## Ilnu women, territoriality and resistance

During the tour of the *Des-terres-minées* project in the spring of 2016, we had the opportunity to participate in a circle of discussion at the Shaputuan museum, in Uashat. Here, we want to relay and disseminate the inspiring speech of Ilnu women we met on that occasion.

*The Ilnus have occupied the Nitassinan for millennia. The animals question us: "Are you still Ilnu? Are you going to hunt us?"*

The Québécois speak of the territory in a very different way. You speak of the land "as if just buying a chair." Even if there is a will to protect the land, there is a self-destructive dynamic attached to the way in which the Québécois see it. For us, we don't think solely about the present; we also need to think about the 7 future generations.

The individuality of an Ilnu is always in relation to the land. If we don't have land, we will no longer be Ilnu. I am neither Canadian nor Québécois; I am Ilnu. And I refuse to have Canadian and Québec laws govern me.

You should have heard my father when he spoke of the land - he would always have tears in his eyes. It was so moving. We haven't lived on our land as our parents did. With settling, something has been

lost. I was raised in the woods until the age of 7. That's my history, the values of my parents; all that is rich for me. I learnt my culture and to keep my language, and I will never renounce them. I get up for the land because it's part of my identity, of my dignity. I am proud to be an Ilnu woman: I saw my mother make Moccasins, my big sister go to boarding school; my father continued to live by hunting.

*The Ilnu living in the territory of 'Québec' have neither signed a treaty nor ceded their territories, aboriginal title, and ancestral rights by any other means.*

We have never learned how to do a good negotiation; these things are always imposed upon us. We have always occupied second place. The oppression is perpetual.

The negotiations involve the renunciation of rights. We are in the process of renouncing our traditional practices; we are in the process of our own extinction by signing agreements with developers.

I asked our leader how it so happened that he accepted it.



Nobody listens to us,. The elites grease their pockets while our children are malnourished. The populations are not even consulted for exploration projects. We aren't kept up to date with anything. When I look at the Band Council, it hasn't had all the financial compensation promised. (*Among many others: the agreement signed for the construction of the Sainte-Marguerite 3 dam; the agreement signed with Hydro-Québec for the Romaine hydro-electric dam; the current treaty of the Petapan global territorial negotiation, with five Inuit communities.*)

What I see today in my community is really a disastrous scene because we are involved in the mines. When we go in the forest, it becomes a labyrinth; there are holes everywhere. All the destroyers have departed and we are left with the ruined land. Dynamiting produces radon. There is another mine attached to the city which is active. It affects our lakes; our water... It's sad, there are many consequences; the dust is really red. Older people, children; this affects everybody. It's a vicious circle – there is poverty even where there are natural resources.

*Since the Whites/Europeans stepped foot there, struggles have occurred to protect the Nitassinan, especially faced with extraction projects: the hydro-electric Saint-Marguerite 3 complex, the Romaine dam and the adjoining infrastructures, the Plan North, the iron ore mines in Schefferville, the Arnaud mine; not to mention the daily struggle against the pursuit of colonisation which swallows not only the land, but the culture, the thought, the people...*

Who can do it? The answer is women, by working together. It's normal that women rise in the community. The men should have been the fighters, but presently, it's the women who are the fighters. It's the word with which I identify; it's a word which gives me strength.

*In 2012, the Band Council of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam organised referendums for the Hydro-Québec agreement with regards to the Romain project. On two occasions, the agreement was rejected. Hydro-Québec and the Band Council persisted. In the third referendum, the 'yes' won. Throughout the process, blockades were organised. The colonial state and companies increase the injunctions against and criminalisation of opponents.*

But at that moment when you are imprisoned, a collective battle becomes individual. It's a form of repression which de-collectivises our struggle. When they put you in prison, you have a criminal record for having protected the river of salmon during the blockade.

*Colonisation doesn't only leave its traces on the land, but on the inhabitants also. The first nations speak about post-colonial stress.*

The stakes are many and it's difficult to advance. We are still in poverty; our children are malnourished. We are kept in survival mode; the only employer is the Band Council.

I asked my father why there were suicides. Before the settling, there were few. Today, there are many rapes. The youth is perishing. It hurts when I see the youth, there is a certain lack when it comes to their history, their culture; they are unwell. Our youth are lost, they no longer know where to go, they walk with their head down.

How do we wake up people who no longer dream; who are experiencing an identity crisis?

My roots are the land. Solid roots make solid people. I believe in my generation and the next one.

When defending something, it's necessary to understand what's being defended.

We must never discourage each other, because I know that our land is here. It's our identity, our children, our ancestors, our history.

The forest will always be there, we just need to go and look for it.

*Full article on our website.*

# Colombia's second bid at a peace accord

The Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia signed a modified peace agreement that seeks to end decades of armed conflict between them. The “new final accord” comes after marathon negotiations in Havana and just weeks after the original agreement was narrowly rejected in a national referendum.

The latest agreement aims to address the concerns from the ultra-conservative sector that led the No vote. According to the Colombian government, the new deal is testament to what can be “achieved through dialogue and compromise”.

Some of the modifications to the agreement were related to justice, punishment for combatants accused of war crimes and reparations for the conflict’s victims. This includes requiring the rebels to present an inventory of acquired money and holdings, and the provision of safeguards for private owners and property during reforms carried out in the countryside.

The new and final accord does not go as far as the original one to protect women’s and LGBTI communities’ human rights who have disproportionately been affected by the conflict. Also unlike the original deal, only parts of the new agreement will be incorporated into the country’s Constitution.

The new peace accord has to be debated in Congress before it is approved and passed into law.

Regardless of the limitations of the new deal, the Colombian Working Group recognizes the agreement constitutes an important initial step forward for the country as it seeks to find a long lasting peace with social justice.

It is equally important that the Santos government undertake public and genuine peace negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN) and The Popular Liberation Army (EPL).

It is also critical that the Colombian government



address the issue of paramilitary groups in the country which have begun to proliferate in areas left vacant by the FARC, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia.

We ask the Colombian state to take measures to protect human rights defenders, and members of social organizations and to put an end to impunity for cases of violence against human rights defenders which are at an alarming 95% impunity.

We call on the Colombian government to urgently implement this new agreement.

We call on the Canadian government to support the implementation process and assist in strengthening victims’ access to justice and pressuring the Colombian government into taking action in cases of human rights violations.

*The Colombia Working Group is a platform of Canadian unions, NGOs, and social organizations focused on human rights in Colombia.*

*See our website for more information on the peace agreement (in French).*

## International accompaniers in Colombia

The PASC has been promoting an anti-imperialistic vision of international solidarity for 13 years now. Accompaniment serves as a means of protection for community and organizations, and creates a space for creating links of solidarity between here and Colombia.

If you’re interested by accompaniment in Colombia, contact us or visit our website.

# The fight continues for the protection of the Sumapaz páramo

Up to recently, PASC was denouncing the threat caused by Alange Energy in the páramo of Sumapaz. Thanks to the local movements, the Colombian authorities have refused to issue the environmental license necessary to pursue exploration activities in the territory. However, the company still has the opportunity to reapply for this license by adjusting its request. Thus, even though the Alange Energy COR-33 project is now suspended, we cannot loosen our alertness. Indeed, the Sumapaz ecosystem, considered as one of the most important fresh water reserve of the world, is threatened by two other oil projects; COR-04 and COR-II. Both of them are owned by another Canadian oil company named Canacol Energy Ltd.

Canacol has its headquarter in Alberta, its activities are mainly in Colombia : natural gas and oil exploitation. On the board of directors is Anthony Zaidi, who has previously held important responsibilities within Pacific E&P and within Petromagdalen Energy (Alange Energy). Moreover, Canacol knows well Pacific E&P practices, as they have been partners in an oil exploration and exploitation contract in Portofino. The USO, Union of Oil Workers, has confronted Canacol on its opposition of the creation of a union in the city of Sahagun (Crucero). Many have criticized Canacol's wages policies. The population mobilized against the company to ask for more social responsibilities, Canacol refused any discussion with the local actors. It is rather police brutality that awaited the mobilized populations.

Moreover, Canacol is particularly criticized for its environmental practices. Along with the American oil company ConocoPhillips Colombia Ventures Ltd, Canacol is one of the first company to use the fracking method in order to exploit non-conventional oil basins - a method that was prohibited in many countries for its disastrous consequences on the environment and on the human health. Fracking increases the risk of earthquakes by altering the tectonic plates, pollutes the water sources with radioactive elements and contaminates the atmosphere. In the Sumpaz páramo context, this water contamination would be very dangerous. The underground hydraulic network in this area is not mapped, and it is virtually impossible to ensure that chemicals do not contaminate these interconnected sources that supply water to thousands of people in the surrounding departments. The water contamination would also have huge impacts of the agricultural activities in the Sumapaz region which are the main sources of food for the country's capital city. Let's remember here the páramos are recognized for their important role in the absorption and release of water. They represent 75% of Colombia's water reserves and are home to a variety of fauna and flora, many of which live exclusively in these ecosystems.

If we have win a fight against Alange Energy, the war for the protection of the Sumapaz region is not over. We will stay alert to any kind of development in regards to the COR-33, COR-04 and COR-II and solidary to any struggles seeking to protect the land.

*References and full article on our website.*

*Piedra*, it is the rock of resistance, the rock which, placed in the powerful's shoe, bothers. It is the one that, in all its diversity, constitutes our habitat, vital to our existence. It is the rock we throw. And, of course, it is the exploited rock. Extractivism, an economic model based on the exploitation of resources, ravages always increasingly here and elsewhere. It is in "Canada", on colonized lands, that the majority of mining companies hold their headquarters. As so, the Canadian companies deploy their activities in Colombia in all impunity, and take advantage and participate in the political and social violence that hits this country living in war.

The Project Accompaniment Solidarity Colombia is a collective which realizes accompaniment with Colombian communities and organizations since 2003, while also creating links here and in Colombia of groups and individuals struggling against the imposition of mega-projects of resource extraction.