



NEWS RELEASE

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British Columbia & Yukon Chamber of Mines

840 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, CANADA V6C 1C8 Telephone: Area Code (604) 681-5328

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WINDY CRAGGY

“ They told me there was ‘nothing there’ ”

This is indeed a sad day for all Canadians, particularly those of us in British Columbia when Federal and Provincial governments together give away control over our future wealth through the designation of the Tatshenshini area, a million hectare corner of British Columbia almost twice the size of Prince Edward Island, to a United Nations Committee by declaring it a World Heritage Site.

By carefully shielding the Windy Craggy project from rational technical, scientific or economic debate, the Harcourt government successfully turned the Windy Craggy “ore”, with potential value in the billions of dollars, into “waste”. This was accomplished through the activities of a small minority of our population, preservationists, who pressed their position through exaggeration, fear and outright lies. It is possible that, because of its isolated location and technical requirements, both for the recovery of metals and protection of the environment, Windy Craggy would not be an economically feasible mine today. But who are we to lock away its potential to future generations?

Aboriginal land claims in British Columbia complicated the matter for governments when the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations made clear their opposition to a World Heritage designation. This opposition was silenced at a December 5 meeting with elected representatives of British Columbia. Chief Birckel is quoted in the Northern Miner “And I was also told by the government officials that Windy Craggy was ‘all promotion’ and ‘a flash in the pan’. They told me there was nothing there”.

This is, of course, the biggest lie of all. It questions the competency and the integrity of the world’s most vital exploration community, many of whom are now scattered throughout the world, largely in part due to the creation of this park. If this assertion is correct, the government should call for an immediate investigation of all of the mining companies and consultants involved in perpetrating this alleged scam. The mining community would welcome such an investigation as there is no doubt as to the world class scale of the Windy Craggy copper deposit and the high potential for the discovery of similar deposits.

To make such false and misleading statements to Aboriginals seeking information and advice is of great concern to all thinking Canadians. Trading generations of economic opportunities for an international park smacks of old style colonialism.

Regardless of these strategies employed to create this World Heritage Site, one question must be asked of all Canadians. Can we keep the standard of living we now enjoy without our resource extraction industries? It goes well beyond the miners, the loggers, the fishermen. It goes to the grocery stores and gas stations, to the heart of our cities to the lawyers, bankers and accountants, who all rely heavily on these primary industries for their paycheck. Your politicians are saying the right words through the Whitehorse Mining Initiative: “Canada needs a strong mining industry”. Unfortunately, their actions, quite to the contrary, speak much louder.