

Kickstart

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

STUFF vs. sacred spaces

Helping young people understand the connection between material possessions and mining. By Emma Seamone

CANADA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST MINING nations on the planet. Almost 60 per cent of mining companies globally are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, or Toronto Venture Exchange. And Canadian Embassies promote our mining companies overseas as a pathway to economic development. But for Indigenous communities around the world, Canadian mining is becoming the next colonizer. What is our response to their calls for solidarity?

This workshop helps to illustrate the very real struggle between our lust for stuff, and the sacredness of space. As resources become scarce, our young people will be faced with difficult questions. This workshop will help empower them with the knowledge they'll need to chart Canada's future in mining.

GETTING STARTED

It's important to remember participants may have, or know, family members who are miners, or whose employment (construction, hospitality, etc.) comes from the mining industry. Many churches, such as the Bralorne Community Church in British Columbia, were build out of

the proceeds from profitable mining operations; in some cases, mining jobs are why a community exists. This is one of many reasons not to vilify miners or mining.

While mining is destructive, it is also how we get the materials that give us a comfortable lifestyle, such as silicon used in computer chips. On the other hand, we need to acknowledge that mining is often forced on communities in the developing world. Mining companies do not always consult with local residents or leaders, and if they do, the discussions, outcomes, and concerns raised may be dismissed. For healthy reconciliation, we must also recognize that Canadian mining practices have encroached on Indigenous rights in this country.

THIS PROGRAM IS BEST SUITED to youth ages 8 to 14 years old. Participants will come away with several insights, including:

- The process of mining and reclamation.
- Material possessions are created from mined materials.
- Mining takes place in communities, and it changes the landscapes that are important to people who live in these communities.



Photo: Dan Prat

THE WORKSHOP

In 2001, Natural Resources Canada estimated that approximately 1,200 indigenous communities in Canada are within 200km of a major mineral deposit. The Assembly of First Nations has stated that 36 per cent of its communities are within 50km of an active mine. In 2014 when the Mount Polley mine in British Columbia had a tailings pond breach, the traditional Secwepemc Nation was most effected.

You may wish to discuss some of these issues with your group. If you do, ask everyone to be respectful of other opinions when sharing their thoughts and ideas.

SUPPLIES REQUIRED:

- 3 Large pieces of paper for the group to write on and graph paper (one sheet for every three to five participants.)
- Markers, pencil crayons or pens.
- Toothpicks and paper clips.
- Potato mashers (or another object you could crush a cookie with.)
- Copy of cookie worksheets.
- Play money, a timer, a calculator.
- Three types of chocolate chip cookies: a bargain variety with few chocolate chips; a regular one with a normal amount of chips; and a premium brand with many chips. You will need one cookie of each kind for each group of 3-5 participants in order to give groups options.
- Bibles (one for each participant)
- Pictures of strip and underground mining. The Canadian Encyclopedia has a few on its site: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca

To do in advance of the workshop: Each cookie needs to be frosted with sprinkles. Ideally brown/green frosting, and sprinkles that represent flowers and or trees.

GROUP EXERCISE: OUR THINGS (10 minutes)

Participants sit in a circle with a large piece of paper in the middle. Ask young people to think about their favourite things, and to draw or list these items on the group's piece of paper. If they struggle to come up with items, offer suggestions (mobile phone) and ask questions (Do you like to play video games?) that prompt them to think about things they enjoy. Once there is a complete list, talk about how each

object is made, and where its materials come from.

Tablets, TVs, game consoles, etc. have components that are created using mined material. Many objects also include metal components, derived from mining. Plastics and rubber are made from petrochemicals that come from oil. Paper and wood comes from trees, another natural resource that we “mine.”

Your group is now ready to learn more about mining. Young people will make the connection between mining and some of their favourite things.

EXERCISE: COOKIE MINING (30 minutes)

This is the main activity in the workshop, and it is important to give participants the information *as they need it*, allowing them to discover the implications of mining on their own.

Create small groups of three to five participants and then explain they will be “mining” chocolate chips (resources) from cookies. Encourage young people to think of their group as a mining company.

Rules of the game

Each group is given \$20 and has a choice of buying one of three cookie “properties.” For \$3 they can have a bargain cookie “property,” for \$5 a regular cookie “property,” and for \$7 a deluxe cookie “property.” They also need to buy and use “tools:” toothpicks, \$2 each; paperclips, \$4 each; and masher, \$6 each. If a tool breaks, a group needs to buy a replacement.

For every minute of mining, groups will have to pay \$1 in labour costs. For every chip they mine, the group earns \$2. Broken chips can be combined to form one chip.

Allow each group to “buy” a cookie property and tools. A group can buy only one property, but can buy as many tools as their budget allows. Now, each group needs to trace the outline of their cookie on graph paper. The “vegetation” (frosting and sprinkles) on each cookie needs to be removed before “mining” begins, and then kept on the paper. Monitor groups to ensure they aren’t using their hands. Allow participants to mine their cookie properties for five minutes, or until every group has mined all their resources (chips.)

Next steps

After the mining is done, hand out a copy of the “Cookie Worksheet” (see page 25) and ask groups to fill in their costs,

as well as the space their original cookie occupied, by counting the squares in the traced circle. Now, ask groups to count the number of chocolate chips they have mined (each chip is worth \$2) and total in their profits by subtracting the amount of money they spent on labour, cookie properties, and tools from the total amount they earned from each chocolate chip, or resource, mined from the cookie property. Encourage older participants to help younger children do these task.

Ask groups: Was your mining effort successful? Which tools worked best and helped you earn the most profit. Note: Do not clean up yet. Leave the cookies and head back into the circle for the “Our Places” component of the workshop.

OUR PLACES AND RECLAMATION (10 minutes)

Step one: Use the same set-up that you started the workshop with, and put a new piece of paper in the middle of the group or small groups. Encourage people to briefly talk about the previous activity, and then signal that the workshop is moving on to a new topic.

Step two: Ask participants to name their favourite places and draw or list them on the paper provided. You can spark a conversation by stating your favourite places, such as a local park, river, or forest. Once people have a list, discuss what makes these places special; allow everyone to have a chance to share their ideas.

Step three: Explain the obvious: mining does not happen on graph paper, it happens in people’s communities, and in their favourite places. Ask participants to go back and look at their cookie property and reflect on how they would feel if someone mined their favourite spaces.

Step four: Ask participants to try and “reclaim” the cookie, putting it back on the graph paper outline the way it was before they removed the frosting and sprinkles, and broke it up to extract the chocolate chips. Explain to participants that they are replicating the effort that mining companies take when they attempt to restore landscapes and places. Once participants have made attempts to put the crumbs and frosting back in the traced outline ask them: Does the cookie property look like it did before you mined it? How would you feel if this happened to one of your favourite places?

CLOSING REFLECTION (10 minutes)

Have the entire group sit in one circle again, and ask a volunteer to read Matthew 6:19-24, in which Jesus preaches about treasure.

Talk to the group about the reality that we all like our things (mobile phones, tablets, etc.) but our things require mining, and mining means altering places that other people value.

Now ask the group to think about what happens when our things break, or wear out. (We often throw them out and buy new ones.) Over time, we use more and more minerals to create more and more things. Going back to the cookie analogy and mining exercise, this means more and more cookies are mined and the “deluxe” cookie properties with lots of resources/chips have been used up. As a result, society is increasingly mining more bargain properties. In order to make this mining profitable we are doing strip mining, or smashing, rather than less invasive forms of mining.

Show your group pictures that illustrate the differences between the two types of mining. Explain that because there are so few resources/chips at each property, mines are getting bigger.

Canada before colonization

This country was full of “deluxe properties,” but we have mined, and continue to mine, a great deal of them, such as the Vale Nickel Mine in Sudbury, Ontario, and the Windsor Salt Mine in Pugwash, Nova Scotia. Many of these mines were in places that were important to Indigenous peoples.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us, “Where your treasure is your heart will be also.” Is our treasure, “our things” or “our places?” Brainstorm solutions such as recycling, donating, buying second-hand things instead of new replacements, developing new industries that provide employment but are less destructive to places.

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COOKIE WORK SHEET

SUPPLIES

_____ # of toothpicks x \$2 = _____
 _____ # of paperclips x \$4 = _____
 _____ # of Mashers x \$6 = _____
 Total Supply Cost = _____

PROPERTY

Price of Cookie _____
 Size of Cookie _____ squares

TIME

We mined for _____ minutes x \$1 = _____
 Total Costs = Property+Supplies+Time = _____
 We mined _____ chocolate chips x \$2 = _____
 Profit = Chip Money - Costs = _____

Exploring child poverty By Jackie Harper

Young people can brainstorm solutions and take action

Poverty remains one of the most pressing social issues in the world. In Canada, a staggering number of children live in poor households. This one-hour workshop shows youth that poverty impacts everyone because it limits people's ability to reach their full potential. The activities help educate young people, and encourage them to think about what they can do to address this issue.

ITEMS REQUIRED:

- Flip chart paper, paper, markers (or LCD projector and screen), laptop for gathering ideas.
- Skittles—enough for each participant. (See the Skittles Game, below.)
- Campaign 2000 report card: <http://campaign2000.ca/report-cards/national/>
- Soup kit supplies (see “Recipe.”)
- *Voices United* #600 “When I Needed a Neighbour.”
- Paper doll chain. You will need two sets of paper doll chains for every two to four participants. You can find a template for making paper doll chains online: www.auntannie.com/FridayFun/DollChain/
- Pens, paper, and envelopes if you decide to write your MP and/or the Prime Minister.

WELCOME EXERCISES (15 minutes)

Acknowledgement of the Land

The United Church of Canada recognizes the land on which we gather. Your church, presbytery, or conference might already have wording you can use. Here is an example of how you might recognize the land.

We recognize that we are meeting on land first loved and cared for by _____.

(First Nations, Metis, or Inuit Peoples.) We are grateful for the opportunity to meet on this land and remember and respect its origins.

You can also visit www.united-church.ca and search for “acknowledging territory” to find information that will help you write your statement.

Prayer

Leader: You are invited to take some deep breaths, close your eyes if you wish, and focus on your breathing. With each breath in, know that God's Spirit, the Giver of Life, is with you in your breathing. As you breathe out, know that God's Spirit, the Giver of Life, is in the midst of the gathered community. Take a few more seconds to breathe deeply of God's love, and know that God's Spirit is in our midst. May we be open to God's Spirit's gentle nudging. Amen.

Getting to know each other

Ask participants to share the following information as they feel comfortable:

- Name
- Preferred pronoun
- Where they are from
- Anything needed to participate fully in this workshop
- When you hear the word “poverty,” what is the first word/idea/image that comes to mind?

Write down responses to the last question on your flip chart.

GROUP ACTIVITIES (20 minutes for each option)

Choose two options from the five listed below. If you select Option 2, allow a few extra minutes to wrap up any learnings and talk about future work.

Option 1: The Skittles Game

This is a simple simulation game that invites youth to identify issues that contribute to, or limit, poverty. You can find the game online:

<https://faithandfamilyhomelessness.com/recommended-models/experiences-simulation-exercises/>

Option 2: Campaign 2000—What is it? What does the most current report say?

Campaign 2000 (co-ordinated by Family Service Toronto) is a national, non-partisan coalition supporting the resolution made by the House of Commons in 1989 to end child poverty by 2000. An annual report card is issued addressing the status of children living in poverty in Canada, Ontario, and Toronto. The reports are online at: <http://campaign2000.ca/report-cards/national/>

Present these facts to your group. In 2015...

- Almost one in five (19 per cent) Canadian children lived in poverty.
- Forty per cent of First Nations children and youth lived in poverty in this country.
- Over 1.34 million children lived in poverty in Canada.

Divide young people into groups of two to four individuals, and give each group two paper-doll paper chains. (There are four dolls in one chain.) Ask groups to identify things that contribute to poverty, such as job loss and high food prices, and write them on the doll chain. On the second doll chain, young people can identify ways that poverty affects children and youth; for example, they go hungry.

Ask participants to share their ideas with the entire group. Now, ask groups to brainstorm things that might end child poverty in Canada. Examples include affordable places to live and inexpensive food. You can share your ideas as well.

Ask your groups if they want to take action on child poverty. You can let them know that in 2015, the federal government said it would create a national poverty reduction strategy. Your group might consider [writing a letter to their local MP](#) and/or the Prime Minister of Canada, asking for an update, timelines, and targets. You can also consider a future field trip, taking youth to their MP's office so they can share their concerns about child poverty in person.

Option 3: What does our faith say about poverty?

If you pick this option, give youth a copy of these verses, or other scriptures you choose. Invite young people to gather in groups of two to four individuals per group and read these scriptures out loud:

One: We live in an imperfect world with a huge imbalance of wealth and power.

We believe that God is a God of justice and invites God's people, us, to work toward the healing and the mending of the world.

All: The Lord has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

(Micah 6:8)

All: Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!" – if you don't give them the necessities of life?

(James 2:15-16)

All: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people."
(Luke 4:18-19)

In small groups, ask participants to reflect on this question: What does our faith have to say about justice, about poverty, about sharing?

Now, ask the group to identify one action they can take to do justice for children living in poverty. Ask smaller groups to share their ideas with everyone in the workshop.

Option 4: Making Soup in a Jar

Prior to the workshop, contact a local homeless shelter, youth home, or food bank and ask if they would like soup kits. Your church may also have a community meal program that would love these kits. Youth will make, and if possible deliver, the kits and ingredients for the final soup after the workshop.

Recipe

Ingredients: (this is what you need for one jar)

- ½ cup dry split peas
- ⅓ cup beef bouillon granules
- ¼ cup pearl barley
- ½ cup dry lentils

- ¼ cup dried onion flakes
- 2 teaspoons of dried Italian Seasoning
- ½ cup uncooked long-grain rice
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ cup pasta
- Prep time: 20 min.
- Cooking time: at least one hour

Instructions

In a 1-1/2 pint jar, layer the split peas, bouillon, barley, lentils, onion flakes, Italian seasoning, rice, and bay leaves. Wrap the pasta in plastic wrap, and place in the jar. Seal tightly.

Attach a label to the jar with the following instructions: **ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS:** 1 pound of ground beef, black pepper to taste, garlic powder to taste, 1 (28 ounce) can of diced tomatoes, undrained, 1 (6 ounce) can of tomato paste, and 3 quarts of water. **TO PREPARE SOUP:** Remove pasta from top of the jar, and set aside. In a large pot over medium heat, brown beef with pepper and garlic; drain excess fat. Add diced tomatoes, tomato paste, water, and soup mix. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover, and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in the pasta, cover, and simmer 15 to 20 minutes, or until the pasta, peas, lentils and barley are tender.

Note: most groups receiving the soup would appreciate having all the ingredients, but check ahead to make sure they have storage space for fresh ground beef.

Option 5: Community Garden

Many communities have communal garden plots, or your church may have space to grow a garden. Consider planting a raised garden bed of vegetables to share with a local food bank, or shelter.

Ask participants to consider:

- Whose permission do you need to plant a garden?
- What vegetables would they include in the garden?
- How would they buy and pay for seeds and seedlings?
- Is there a gardener in the congregation who might help with this project?
- Who will regularly water, weed and fertilize the vegetables?
- What else do you need to do to make the project a success?

Ask the group to create a timeline for their activities and assign responsibilities. Smaller groups can share their ideas and work with everyone in the workshop. Encourage youth to take action and make their vegetable garden plans a reality.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

Read VU #600 "When I Needed a Neighbour."

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Editor's note: Permission for the use of the Skittles Game from Seattle University School of Theology & Ministry's Faith and Family Homelessness Project.