

Resolution Copper Continues to Destroy Cultural Ties



by Naelyn Pike

In recent events foreign mining company Resolution Copper decides to place toxic tailings of the proposed Oak Flat Mine at Skunk Camp commonly known by local members as Dripping Springs. The decade-long fight to protect Oak Flat from being the largest copper mine is coming to the final steps of undergoing the land exchange and becoming private property.

This has been a battle of religion, land, water, and indigenous rights. Dripping Springs was one of many sites proposed to the public that the tailing waste of the mine would be placed. For years a preferred site three miles away from Picket Post was suddenly changed to yet another cultural significant site. Locals know that dripping springs is a place that holds cultural significance because of its water, medicine, and historic artifacts.

After the tailing site has been chosen and it is now known to the public, multiple tribes in Arizona have seen this as another stamp of desecration by the mining company. A field tour was given to different tribes to be able to come back to their ancestral homelands. This was not a tour that seemed to be happy and in-

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spiring. For many who attended it felt as if they were paying their last respects as if they were losing a loved one.

Tribes of the Tohono O'odham, Akimel O'odham, Piipaash, Pueblo, and Apache people came together to see the proposed areas. Being a part of this field tour, many emotions have flooded my body. It was upsetting to see the surrounding ranchers be bought off by Resolution Copper knowing that they wanted this to happen to the land. In my perspective this was yet another scheme to destroy land of cultural significance as a reminder to me that indigenous tribes and our way of life have little to no meaning.

Resolution Copper is owned by mining giant Rio Tinto. In 2020 Rio Tinto desecrated and destroyed aboriginal sacred site in Australia. This had later caused major repercussions for the company and removal of major company positions. As a way to save their compa-

ny Rio Tinto promised aboriginals that they would never destroy or desecrate any sacred site or artifacts in the future.

Although, here in the United States, Rio Tinto under Resolution Copper time and time again desecrates and plans to destroy sacred sites of the Apache people. In plain sight this company gives empty promises to continue their corporate greed in their pockets, indigenous people around the world fight for their religious way of life.

Being at dripping springs and seeing prehistoric artifacts like grinding stones and knowing that this is an untouched place left from our ancestors when they lived the golden era of freedom I am heartbroken. I am a 21 year old woman who wants a brighter future than the one laid in front of by Congress. I have yet to have children and I question will these places be here for my future children? What will happen to the Apache history and traditions if these places are gone? There will no longer



be songs to share the stories of one place.

After grouping together and hearing those share their perspective. I was left with one feeling. This was the urge to do something. Many of us left the area knowing that there needs to be action by not those who attended but by the people. Beautiful places like Oak Flat, and Dripping Springs will be destroyed if we do not stop this mine. Action needs to be taken by all of us together.

Culture, history, and spirituality are all essential components to surviving people. As a people of fighters and the last to surrender we have to remember we are Apache first. We have inherent rights and should have the same right as any other citizen in this country. It is time to break the cycle of genocide in this country and protect our future. Places like Skunk Camp/ Dripping Springs should not be destroyed. No more broken promises.