

<http://www.ilo.int/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--en/index.htm>
<http://anttihaataja.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/finnish-colonization-irish-invasion>

Finnish colonization – Irish invasion

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A mine goes right here. Ohcejohka/Utsjoki – a Sami heritage site, a nationally very important landscape area, a Natura area, and the most important daughter river of the most important wild salmon river of Europe. Reserved for mining activities. Irish arrogance, Finnish short sightedness.

Kevo, Deatnu/Teno/Tana, Utsjoki. This is the place where [Karelian Diamond Resources](#) (later Karelian) from Dublin Ireland plans an open pit mine. The river is Ohcejohka (*Finnish: Utsjoki*). A Sami heritage site, a nationally valued landscape area, and the most important daughter river of the most important wild salmon river of Europe. On top of the hill begins [Kevo Strict Nature Reserve](#) – a Natura 2000 area and an area excluded from people due to its flora and fauna. Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes) has granted Karelian *a research permit to explore diamond mining* that extends into the Kevo Strict Nature Reserve.

This land is at the heart of the Sami. The mine would destroy the ten thousand year old livelihood of salmon fishing, severely weaken reindeer herding possibilities and destroy landscape and natural values irreversibly. There is a reason the state of Finland hasn't signed the [ILO Convention No. 169](#). The convention would grant rights to the Sami indigenous people to their land and give them power in matters that affect their future.



“State property”. The Sami feel that the land belongs to them and they have a case for their arguments.

“Mining industry is the Nokia of the future”. These are the actual words by our standing president Mr. Sauli Niinistö (Taloussanomamat / Kaleva: [in Finnish](#)). It seems to be the consensus amongst our political ‘leaders’. The reality is different. Almost all (if not all) of the current mines in Finland balance between living and dying – floating and going belly up. The most constant product from Finnish mining industry are the applications to exceed their toxic waste water allowance into the nature. Extremely poor managerial skills and technology failures are a routine in mining – a strong contrast to the overoptimistic promises of ‘green technology mining’ that label every single new mining plan in Finland.

A mine in Ohcejohka river valley would be extremely destructive. The landscape carves out into this valley from all over the fell plateaus around it. No matter where the waste water pools would be established the water would eventually pour into Ohcejohka. There is no place to dump the waste rock except the river valley where the river runs. Or the Kevo Strict Nature Area. A significant reindeer calving area is just a rock throw away. Kevo Strict Nature reserve is adjacent to the mining area. To top it all: the iconic Kevo canyon is 3 kilometers away from the diamond research site.



2 km to the planned mine.

The State of Finland Refuses to Ratify ILO 169 in Favor of Short Term Investments

If ILO Convention No. 169 was signed by the state of Finland, the Sami would have their say in matters such as mining in Samiland. Vast majority of the inhabitants in Utsjoki municipality are Sami. Ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 would almost certainly mean the end of mining business in northernmost Finland. It is either pure nature or poisoned nature. From up here the choice would seem logical - almost all of the local income comes from unpolluted nature and tourism. The state of Finland has chosen to overlook these needs against better judgement. It drives towards low premium – low skill – exploitative – short term economy.

Sami people have lived through a period of strong Finnish colonization from 1695 until 20th century. The Finnish Lutheran Church has *officially* [apologized](#) (Finnish Broadcasting Company: [news](#)) the violations of human rights of that period. These violations were part of the Finnish state coordinated ‘Finlandization’. The King of Norway has apologized Norwegian colonization of Sami in Norway ([The Associated Press story](#)) and Norway has ratified ILO Convention No. 169 improving Sami rights to their land and water.



An old Sami dwelling site. River Ohcejohka flows next to Kevo Strict Nature Reserve and inside the diamond search area. In active use. The popular Kevo hiking trail runs up the hill in the background.

The state of Finland denies such colonization and refuses to ratify ILO Convention No. 169. (Read president of Finland Mr. Sauli Niinistö deny Finnish colonization. YLE: [news](#)). This interpretation conflicts the academic consensus, the Finnish Lutheran church's interpretation, the interpretation by the Kingdom of Norway and naturally the interpretation by the Sami parliament of Finland. However this is the official status of the State of Finland until proven different. The colonization is well and kicking.

A Dangerous Game

The state of Finland is playing a dangerous game. Ohcejohka flows into Deatnu (*Finnish: Teno, Norwegian: Tana*) river, which is a border river between Finland and Norway. Norway has already taken steps to increase the protection of Deatnu's wild salmon after it grew tired of cooperating with Finland in that matter (The state of Finland treats Deatnu's wild salmon population as an abundant natural resource owned by the state. Norway recognizes it as a scarce resource owned at least partially by the locals i.e. Sami). The state of Finland has chosen to overlook the vulnerability and special circumstances of Arctic nature.



Midnight sun at Deatnu. The most important wild salmon river of Europe. 14 km downstream from where Ohcejohka empties into Deatnu. Finland on the left Norway on the right side of the river in the picture.

The latest Finnish mining legislation was heavily lobbied by the mining industry as it was formed a few years back. It violates not only the rights of every citizen in Finland to own land and to livelihood but also is

in gross violation to indigenous people's rights defined by the United Nations, the European Union defined Natura 2000 -legislation and also violates the rights of foreign citizens across national borders.

By allowing mining industry at the heart of Sami heritage site and also potentially endangering Norwegian Sami people's rights to their land and water the state of Finland is in danger of running into conflict with Norway and eventually European Union and the United Nations. As a Finnish citizen there is nothing I find dignifying in the way the state of Finland treats its own citizens and cultivates the richness found in multiculturalism.



Crushed dreams. A 100 years old sauna by a stream. The most Finnish thing there is. Added bonus: wild salmon catching naked under midnight sun from the sauna terrace. Individual dreams can easily be crushed in Finland by mining companies. Compensations for mining dust, polluted waters, polluted land, noise, light pollution, heavy traffic are minimal and the burden of proof usually lands on those affected.

Current mining legislation in Finland is in super rapid need of total change. Karelian Diamond Research advertises on its web site its close and longstanding relationship with the Finnish national agency [Geological Survey of Finland](#). The state of Finland is selling our national treasures to the highest faceless bidders in expense of its own citizens. In fact you have to pay close to nothing for mining research permits. The state agencies completely lack experience and comprehensive knowledge of their actions. Their ignorant decisions threaten Finnish citizens, our national treasures and our environment. By overlooking these issues the state of Finland is selling its citizens and our land at a fire sale.

How would You feel if we poured some Talvivaara uranium oxide into your Guinness?

-Antti

EDIT (26.5.2014):

The news has gained international attention. Finland is a bilingual country (Finnish, Swedish) with Sami language as a regionally official administrative language. The research permits and other official decisions by the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes) *are in Finnish only*. To my understanding this is in violation with Finnish law.