

For over a decade, impacted communities have resisted the illegally-imposed Escobal mine. Tahoe Resources, a U.S.-Canadian company, first opened the mine, which is on one of the largest silver reserves in the world. Since the first whispered rumors of the mine, community members have defended their territories through reclaiming Indigenous Xinka identities, art, direct action, legal cases, community consultations, and so much more.

In 2017, the resistance achieved what many had thought was impossible: thanks to legal and direct action, a Guatemalan court ordered the mine to suspend operations. In financial ruin, in 2019 Tahoe Resources was forced to sell the mine to Pan American Silver (PAS), a Canadian company. PAS has continued to violate Indigenous Xinka territory and human rights by insisting on re-establishing mining operations. The resistance remains firm in their opposition to the mine given its negative impacts on the land and people.

“Our resistance is strengthening each day. Pan American Silver should know that this resistance is not just for a fleeting moment. It’s for a lifetime. If they have the money to wait 25 years to resume operations, well...we have the capacity to resist for 100.” -Bernabé Rivas, Xinka water protector, 2019

A brief timeline of the resistance:

March 2007: Mining exploration license granted

2011-2013: Five impacted municipalities hold referenda, overwhelmingly rejecting the mine

March 2013: Military intelligence operation to quell the resistance

April 2013: Exploitation license granted and mine private security shoot peaceful protestors

May 2013: Impacted region is heavily militarized in a state of siege

April '14: Topacio Reynoso, 16-year-old water protector, is murdered

June 2017: Peaceful check-point to stop mining traffic created in Casillas



Popular education has been a crucial part of the resistance to the mine. The above graphic by the Xinka Parliament and CODIDENA reads, “The authorities of the Xinka people are responsible for managing and supervising programs and projects that contribute to inclusive community development.”

Timeline continued:

July 2017: Guatemalan Supreme Court suspends exploitation license

Aug. 2018: Peaceful check-point to stop mining traffic created in Mataquesuintla

Sept. 2018: Constitutional Court upholds suspension and orders a consultation of the Xinka people

February 2019: PAS acquires the mine from Tahoe Resources

May 2019: Xinka Parliament denounces discrimination in the state-led consultation

Oct. 2020: Ministry of Energy and Mines accredits the 59 Xinka representatives after two years of refusals

Jan. 2021: Xinka leader Julio González survives assassination attempt

For more details on this timeline, visit resistescobal.com



The phases of the consultation process, as ordered by the Guatemalan Constitutional Court:

- 1) definition of the area of influence of the mine,
- 2) pre-consultation phase to outline the process,
- 3) consultation,
- 4) presentation of consultation results to the Guatemalan Supreme Court.

Update on the pre-consultation from Quélvin Jiménez, Xinka Parliament lawyer:

"We have managed to advance in the pre-consultation process. However, it is important to point out that although progress has been made in evaluating the cultural and spiritual impacts of the Escobal mine, in the last few days the mining company has increased its provocative actions, trying to pass through trucks with materials, cement, fuel, etc. It seems that as the pre-consultation process advances, they want to increase pressure through provocation.

A clear example is that they had ceased their advertising [of the Escobal mine in Guatemala] since 2019. Now we see that they began to advertise again, especially on social media, which is causing a lot of discomfort in the communities. These actions are a clear provocation and a clear violation of the principle of good faith, which is required by the pre-consultation process."

Image caption: A section of a popular education graphic by Xinka Parliament and CODIDENA. The sign reads "The Xinka People protect natural resources."