



Mirage of El Dorado

Director: Martin Frigon, Canada, 2008, 75 minutes

Mirage of El Dorado leads us into the mountains of northern Chile, where the devastating operations of Canadian mining companies threaten a fragile ecosystem in one of the driest parts of the globe.

This political cowboy flick follows the pitched battle between a farming community in the Huasco valley and Canada's mining giant, Barrick Gold, with its sidekick Noranda (now part of the Swiss corporation Xstrata). It's a battle fought high in the Cordilleran Andes, where farmers and locals fear the ravages of open pit mining operations. Here, a fragile system of glaciers feeds the rivers that flow into the farmlands built out of the advancing Atacama desert.

The camera reveals a Chilean government impotent in the face of unprecedented, potentially devastating mining projects. The film also exposes the Canadian government's hypocrisy towards its own mining companies, which corrupt foreign governments and weaken the environmental assessment process. Pinochet's dictatorship imposed the permissive legislation now enjoyed by Canadian trans-nationals. This same legislation has been carried over by successive transition governments, bowing to the dictates of neo-liberal economics.

With a backdrop of breathtaking images and eloquent testimonials, *Mirage of El Dorado* defies the powers that would have us believe their divine mission is to extract wealth, no matter where it lies, purportedly to save local communities from endemic poverty.

Winner, Grand Prize, Paris International Environmental Film Festival
Winner, Grand Prize, Vina Del Mar International Digital Cinema Festival

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Martin Frigon's first documentaries were inspired by the people and the vast maritime landscape of the Gaspé in Eastern Quebec where he grew up. He applied the cinéma vérité style he learned as a film student to document the rich and colourful lives of the fishers in his film *Mourir au large* (Dying at sea), and of miners left stranded by the multinational Noranda in *Make Money, Salut, bonsoir!* Using the documentary form, Martin gives a voice to the forgotten people of impoverished resource-based communities of the Gaspé, the third world in our midst. Martin pursued these interests in the southern hemisphere in his latest film *Mirage of El Dorado* when he learned that Noranda Mines was relocating its smelter from Murdochville in the Gaspé to northern Chile. *Mirage of El Dorado* is a searing exposure of the impact of Canadian mining operations abroad.

FILMMAKER IN ATTENDANCE

SCREENING PARTNER



COMMUNITY PARTNER

