

# 16<sup>th</sup> August Union

Inuit call Greenland "Kalaallit Nunaat", the Land of the People.

## Introduction

The 16<sup>th</sup> August Union is a small miners association in Greenland that was founded by local citizens after a group of Inuit collecting ruby out on their land were forcibly removed by the Home Rule Government in compliance with the wishes of an international mining company on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2007.

Their expulsion from long-standing village property is a violation of their native rights such as are enshrined in tradition, and are guaranteed in the Constitution. The government is breaking its own laws.

For thousands of years, Greenlanders out hunting and fishing have gathered stones for building material, heat and sustenance, tools and weapons, and, of course, for jewelry. The Greenland Ruby has been cherished by native people in art and culture for generations.

Now, the Home Rule Government of Greenland, under the direction of the remnant colonial government in Copenhagen, Denmark, is suppressing the rights and the initiative of the members of the Greenland Small Miner's Association to work freely and trade in natural ruby.

## Injustice

The Home Rule Law of 1978 was Step 1 in the devolution towards independence of Greenland. It was and is a "hometaking" of some of the areas comprising former colonial Danish political control, which are far-better managed in Greenland by the Greenlanders. Under Article 8, the law and its precedents ensure the people's rights to ruby collecting for sales purposes, so as to encourage the local business, and to provide an income for the citizens. The population of Greenland has the fundamental right to its natural resources.

Under the Home Rule, surface mineral rights are governed through the *Mineral's Act*, wherein the earlier Article 1 (§ 1) was superseded by Article 32 (§32) in which the keyword *industrial* was arbitrarily changed to *commercial*, meaning that mineral *business* requires a permit of some kind, depending on the circumstances.

Greenland's Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum (BMP), in regulating mineral rights under Article 32, suddenly in 2007 began to interpret the statute in a manner hostile to the best interests of the local villagers in the ruby fields.

The BMP equates the word *commercial* with the outdated and misleading term *semiprecious vs precious*, a term in violation of international convention, resulting in an inaccurate and inappropriate exercise of Article 32.

Previously, the BMP had permitted mining and export of ruby by the Greenlanders,

but in August of 2007, that changed dramatically with the harrassment the members of the Union; including: denial of prospecting licenses; and, denial of export permits.

The actions of the BMP are designed to serve the interests of a foreign mining company exploring for ruby at the expense of the citizens of the land, whose best interest they are payed to protect and serve.

### **21 July 2009**

Home Rule self governing of Greenland by Greenlanders in Greenland takes effect on the 21st of July 2009, Independence Day.

Greenland is now advancing quickly towards Step Two in the devolution to Independence. In Step Two, the Home Rule will become even more self governing, taking over even more areas of control from the Danish Government.

As the very first issue, Greenland's politicians are saying, "We wan't to take control and earnings from the underground mineral sector."

The Third, and probably last, step in the devolution will very likely be total independence. Some have recokoned that might take another thirty years time. Others want it tomorrow.

One of the conditions imposed by Denmark for this Step Two, Self Governing, to happen, is that the Danish government, is required to go to the United Nations (UN), and explain that there most definitely *is* an indigenous Inuit population in Greenland after all, and that we demand and deserve the international recognition as an indigenous population.

Greenland was until 1953 a Danish colony. Today, Greenland is a semi-autonomous zone under the control of Denmark. Local opinion in Greenland is that Denmark somehow convinced the UN that the Inuit race had died out, or was so mixed up in bloodline with the Viking Norse and, later, with the European whalers, that there no longer was a indigenous population on the island. This malicious attitude permitted the Danish conquerers to ignore the native rights of Inuit when it suited them.

### **Native Rights**

Tradition and native rights have been violated. The government has broken it own laws.

Before the 16th of August 2007, it was well-known and widely practiced that the native inhabitants of Greenland had the common right to hunt, fish and collect minerals anywhere they pleased on their island, as it was a tradition. Where ever there isn't an exclusive *exploitation license* for an operating mine with a fence around it for a specific mineral, Greenlanders enjoyed rights of access guaranteed by law and custom. Those exceptions are rare, indeed.

Unlike the U.S.A., or Canada, in Greenland we do not hold land as private property that we can buy and sell, or give to the next generation. There are no so-called *mining claims*, like in the “Wild West”, where they would shoot trespassers.

Communally, we all own the land (or does the land own’s us?!). Greenlanders have the right to take those minerals that we can hand mine and carry. Such as we always have done, like our fathers before us.

Something *has* changed.

In 2004, the head of the Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum (BMP), and his staff, told the first management of the Canadian ruby *exploration* company about the right’s of the Greenlandic population to go about and collect ruby and hunt anywhere they wanted. The BMP made sure the mining company knew that the law permitted Inuit the traditional collecting, working and selling of the world-famous “Fiskenaasset Ruby” and Pink Sapphire. Take it or leave it... The company didn’t leave.

The BMP arbitrarily changed their minds and policy in 2007 without notice!

In co-ordination with the Canadian mining company, the Greenland Police sailed an expensive police ship with crew and three (3) armed policemen and a BMP official down from the Capitol of Nuuk to the village of Fiskenaasset. From there, the BMP and police escort flew the last distance to the ruby fields in the Canadian exploration company’s helicopter to serve the Inuit a written order to stop all activity. The people were told to leave or face arrest. They had to leave their camp behind and walk home.

Official Reason according to the Canadian Company and BMP: five people collecting rocks, is too many! We say: “More than 56.000 people (population of Greenland) have the right!” Later, the five people were told to forget about it !?!

### **Call to Action**

In response to the harsh and unacceptable treatment from Greenland authorities, and the abrupt reversal in policy by the BMP without notice, the Greenlanders who were harassed on 16 August 2007 formed a citizen’s action group which has grown to become a small miner’s association.

This organization peacefully fights for the native rights of the Inuit to access their land in Greenland in the ways guaranteed by tradition and law, long before the Canadian mining company and the BMP decided to abuse the people

The 16 August Union has made its case known to the people through radio, television and newspaper. We have marched in the streets of the capitol. Our cause has been debated in the Home Rule Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

Most importantly, we are circulating a petition in support of our cause. It is attached below. Already, over 3500 Greenlanders, in a population of only 57,000 souls, have

signed. In addition, another 1000 people internationally have signed out petition on line and in print.

Please help us any way you can.

We will carry our message to the United Nations and to the world at large. This year, we will continue to harvest the ruby God gave us and create beautiful jewelry for sale and trade. A special piece will be constructed for on-line and in-person auction, with the proceeds used for a legal-defence fund to protect the native rights of Inuit Greenlanders to the ruby of Kalaallit Nunaat.

Nuuk, the capitol of Greenland, means the "Heartland", It was originally named Gotháb (Good Hope) in 1728 by Spanish-Norwegian missionary and founder Hans Egede.

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