

# ADVERTORIAL

I am a Tlicho Citizen who lives in the Behchoko (Rae) community and I am writing in response to the article in News North on April 17th from Joseph Boysis who states that BHP Billiton Aboriginal workers at Ekati did not understand that they were voting to go on strike. As a BHP Aboriginal employee, I am aware of the issues and reasons for the strike and I fully support the union's efforts to reach a fair contract for all workers.

BHP is an outsider and a guest on Tlicho land where they obtain their riches and I hope that my employer will make a sincere effort to return to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith.

As for Mr. Boysis, he is neither Dogrib nor does he speak for members of the Tlicho Nation who work at Ekati. I am assuming that Mr. Boysis was speaking for BHP as he is one of the two applicants who filed the petition to decertify the union. I believe that Mr. Boysis is not sincere when he states that he is "neutral". I have heard reports that many of the Aboriginal members who signed the petition, thought that they were supporting the union and not decertification. Why didn't Mr. Boysis provide translation and interpreters for the Aboriginal workers who signed his petition? BHP has made public statements that workers at Ekati speak fluent English and I'm not aware of Mr. Boysis complaining about the company not having a policy requiring translation and interpreters for Aboriginal workers.

As for myself, I was taught to judge a person by their actions and not by their words.

**Richard Charlo**

I am a BHP union employee and a Tlicho Citizen.

I fully support the efforts of the Union and think I speak for many when I say that I hope there is a quick resolve to the signing of our Collective Agreement with our employer.

I read the article from Joseph Boysis in News North on April 17 and would like to make a few comments. Mr. Boysis stated, "*Aboriginal workers make up 30% of Ekati's 400 unionized workforce. Some of us don't know what we're on strike for.*" In response, I have to say that whether a union member is Aboriginal or not, if they don't know what they are on strike for, they should get informed on this situation and educate themselves by talking to the union and keeping themselves in the loop.

Problems occur because of misinformation and rumours and Mr. Boysis makes it sound like we're "all" misinformed, when in fact, information is readily available on a daily basis to union members. I encourage everyone to call the Toll Free number (1-800-661-0870) that the union has set up for members who live across Canada and in the smaller communities.

As for needing interpreters, I don't believe this is true. Mr. Boysis states that some Aboriginal workers are not proficient in English and didn't understand what they were voting for or that the strike would mean a loss of income. I find his comment hard to believe. Everyone was told of this fact prior to the strike. Perhaps Mr. Boysis forgot that everybody who works at Ekati is required to use TRACKCESS, a strictly English computer program which teaches a person how to operate, maintain machinery, heavy equipment, and also teaches safety procedures. If a person were not able to speak and read English, they would not be able to complete these courses. As well, workers are required to speak English only on the two-way radio communications at the mine site.

I also do not believe that the Union is using Aboriginals as "a crutch". This Aboriginal is well informed and understands the cause that I am fighting for. I know my rights and I don't allow others to speak for me.

**Andre Dupras**