



FEM
NORTH
NET

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN COMMUNITIES; LOCAL WOMEN MATTER

Fact Sheet #8

HOW LOCAL WOMEN AND NORTHERN COMMUNITIES CAN BENEFIT FROM RESOURCE EXTRACTION

Local women must organize if they want their concerns to be heard in resource development plans. There is rarely a requirement for the impacts of resource extraction to examine all the sectors of society that may be affected. Women's concerns will also be left off the agenda unless local women ensure they are included.

Resource extraction industries have a huge impact on northern communities. They affect people's well-being and the community's well-being. On the positive side, they bring jobs. On the other hand:

- High wages from resource-based jobs often go to male workers who do not settle in the community
- Housing shortages occur during the "boom" part of the boom and bust cycle, and this pushes up housing prices for everyone, including those who can least afford it
- Violence against women and children tends to increase.
- Drug use and addictions also tend to increase
- Community social services that are already strained may be stretched even further
- Those who do not have jobs in the industry (such as many Indigenous women, disabled people, and those with little formal education) suffer the most.

Resource-based industries operating in the north need to consider their roles and responsibilities in making community health and well-being a part of their mandate for doing business.

This fact sheet looks at *environmental assessments* and *impact benefits agreements* as two places where women and communities can air their concerns and be heard.

This is one in a series of ten fact sheets on women and resource development and extraction. All of the fact sheets are available at www.fnn.criaw-icref.ca and include additional resources on these topics.

CRIAW-ICREF acknowledges its presence and work on Indigenous Territories. We respectfully recognize the legacy of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples.

This publication was created by CRIAW's Feminist Northern Network. For the full list of contributors refer to our website.

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The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women – FemNorthNet
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1. Using environmental assessments to raise concerns

An environmental assessment (EA) is a formal, public process conducted by a federal and/or provincial government to decide on the benefits and risks of resource projects before they begin. These assessments provide a public forum to:

- identify environmental and social impacts
- describe the risks for environmental damage, and
- develop plans to avoid or address risks before a project starts.

In general, EAs look at:

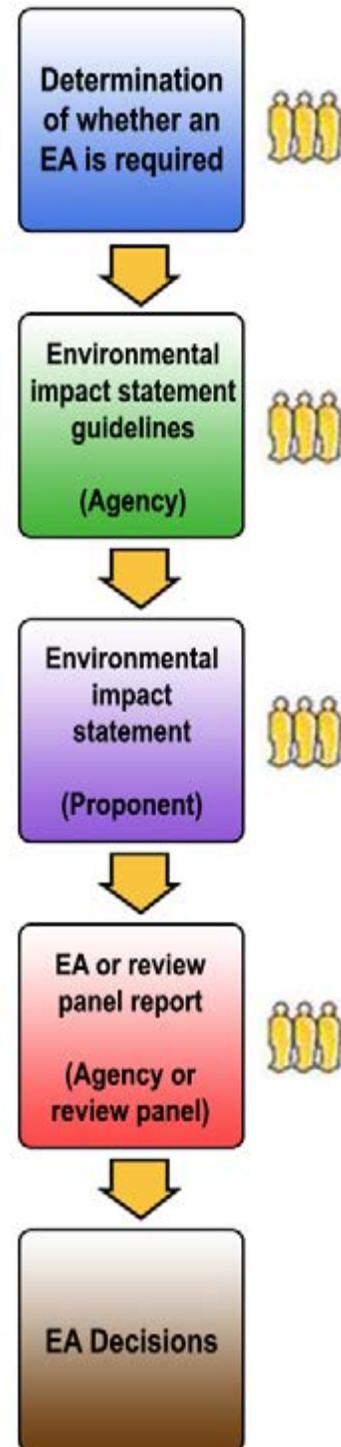
- impacts on physical features such as lakes, rivers, and wildlife areas
- impacts on Indigenous people, including health and socio-economic conditions; use of lands and resources for traditional purposes; and impacts on places with historical or archaeological meaning (sacred sites), and
- social impacts on diverse women and communities.

The last item is not required during an EA, but will be considered if the public raises it.

An EA can set up:

- independent monitoring of the project
- a list of things the company must do
- reports the company must submit
- community involvement in environmental monitoring
- ways to resolve disputes, and
- public hearings

Opportunities for Public Participation



Flow chart describing the key steps in an Environmental Assessment in Canada – Developed by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (2015)

Local women in Labrador benefit from Environmental Assessment

The Mokami Status of Women Council, supported by FemNorthNet, participated in public EA hearings held by the panel reviewing the hydroelectric dam proposed for Muskrat Falls on the Lower Churchill River in Labrador. The Council used this forum to draw attention to five issues that were important to the women in Happy Valley – Goose Bay (HV-GB):

- violence against women
- poverty
- child care
- housing, and
- mental health, substance abuse and addictions.

Through written submissions, presentations to the Panel, media releases, interviews, and an article in the provincial newspaper, Petrina Beals, former executive director of Mokami, showed how these issues were expected to worsen with a sharp increase in male workers hired to build the dam.

The EA panel's recommendations

The EA panel recognized the serious impact of the dam project on the community of HV-GB, especially for disadvantaged women and children.

“The Panel concludes that it is likely that there would be adverse effects in Happy Valley-Goose Bay resulting from high-wage employment, including increased substance abuse, sexual assault and violence against women and children.” (p. 219)

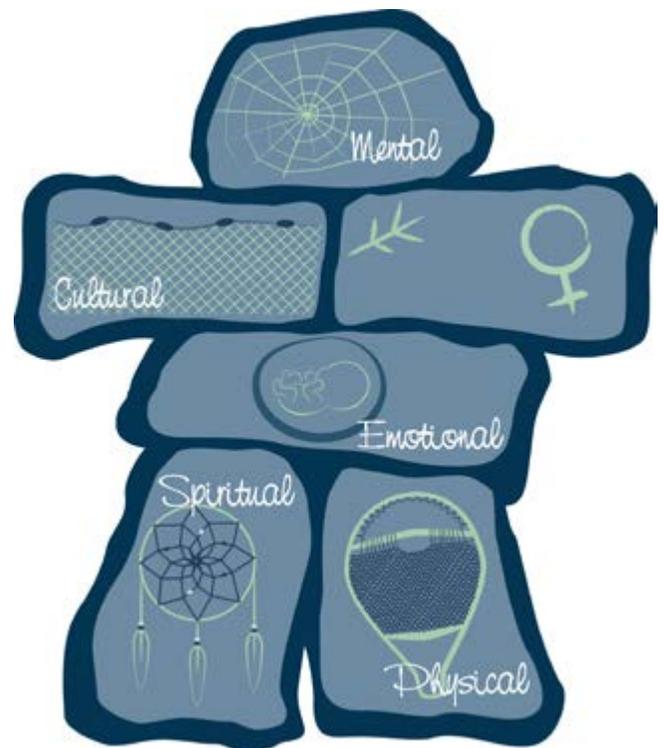
To deal with negative effects on the community, the Panel recommended that:

- the province’s health and social services branch hire more people
- a Capacity Agreement with HV/GB be set up to gather baseline information on impacts of the dam on the town’s roads, services and ability to cope with the demands on infrastructure

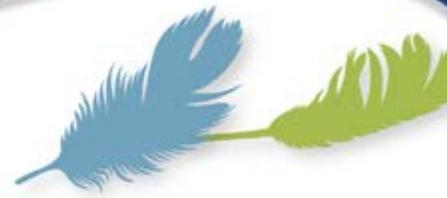
- funding for infrastructure be provided and
- a low-income housing strategy be set up (to set targets)

Follow-up leads to a Community Vitality Index

A team of community women, student researchers and academics came together through FemNorthNet after the EA ended. They wanted to follow up on the Panel’s recommendation to gather baseline information and to track potential impacts on women and the community. They developed a Community Vitality Index—a set of questions to track changes to well-being among women in the community. It took more than two years (2012–2014) to develop the questions using a process that involved workshops, discussions, a community pilot project, and final revisions.



The Community Vitality Index framework, developed by diverse women from Happy Valley – Goose Bay and digitized by Monica Peach (2014)



The Community Vitality Index project has received five more years of funding (2015–2020). This will allow the HV-GB community to collect more data on community well-being. As well, NunatuKavut will create its own Community Vitality Index for communities on the south coast of Labrador.

Happy Valley-Goose Bay's capacity agreement

In August 2015, the provincial government announced special assistance funding of \$250,000 per year for the next three years for HV-GB. This was linked to the EA Panel's recommendation that the government collect baseline data on the impacts

of the new hydro-electric dam at Muskrat Falls on the local community.

The money is to:

- help the town monitor the effects on local roads and infrastructure due to building of the mega-dam
- engage in emergency preparedness
- address the effects of new people coming to live in HV-GB
- prepare for a potential economic downturn when the project ends, and
- manage any other project-related effects in the town.

Women's employment plans

In Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), some companies proposing resource extraction projects also develop employment plans and business strategies for women, Indigenous and disabled people. Women's employment plans may contain:

- hiring goals
- timelines for reaching the goals
- ways to measure success
- training, mentoring, education and retention plans, and
- ways to track accountability.

Resource companies can also do a review of their employment systems from a gender perspective. This helps companies identify and change policies and practices that may have a negative impact on the ability of women to work there.

In its 2011–2014 Business Plan, the NL Women's Policy Office supports Innu and Inuit women to gain employment and business benefits from the Lower Churchill dam project.

Unfortunately, women's employment plans do not take into account how women are affected in the community, not just the workplace. For example, women may be more likely to face violence, and they may have to deal with more addictions in their community. Other ways that women are affected include:

- spending and sharing of income between men and women may be unequal
- childcare or eldercare may be lacking, and
- mental health and women's health services may not exist or be insufficient.

The announcement did not address the 5 needs raised by local women with the EA Panel.

Some limitations of environmental assessments

- Governments and resource development companies do not have to follow the EA's recommendations.
- Time frames for public input are short.
- EA rules should require and make it possible for women and diverse voices from the community to be heard.
- EA panels should assess resource development plans by means of an intersectional, gender lens.

2. The role of impact benefits agreements

Impact benefit agreements (IBAs) are private contracts between corporations and northern communities. Northern community partners are primarily Indigenous nations, territorial and provincial governments.

IBAs are meant to reduce the negative impacts of resource extraction on northern communities, compensate them, and provide a share of the economic benefits. Access to jobs and business opportunities are often the most concrete parts of such agreements.

Benefits and limitations of IBAs

IBAs may include these benefits for northern local people:

- hiring of certain groups, first (or hiring quotas)
- part ownership of a project or profit sharing from a project
- training opportunities
- community liaisons
- a process to resolve disputes
- health, wellness, and education initiatives, and
- funding for counselling and support services.

An IBA may overlap with an EA since both deal with environmental and employment concerns. Some people believe IBAs compensate for the failings of EAs by treating Indigenous groups and local communities as partners in resource development, providing economic and social benefits, and ensuring follow-up. Even so, an IBA can allow injustice to continue if resources are not equally distributed within a northern community.

Women and impact benefits agreements

Most IBAs do not mention or highlight women or women's concerns. Also, the IBA process and final agreement may not be publicly available. This can make it difficult for members of the community to hold resource companies accountable, and to voice their concerns.

Resource-based industries and their host communities continue to be male-dominated. Most women who get hired are in housekeeping, food services and clerical work. Women have fewer jobs, are paid less, and have less status and job security than men. This pattern is even more pronounced for Indigenous women.

Long-term plans are needed to really make a difference in terms of life skills, education, sustainable community building, education and training. People's job skills need to transfer in the longer term to other industries or markets. If IBAs are to provide real benefits to communities, they need to go beyond the timeframe that provides benefits to resource development companies.

IBAs can set policies and rules to encourage hiring more diverse, local, northern women in resource industries. They can also address impacts on northern families and communities. But there is no guarantee of these outcomes.



Research into the impacts of an IBA and EA in Voisey's Bay, NL on local Indigenous women showed that:

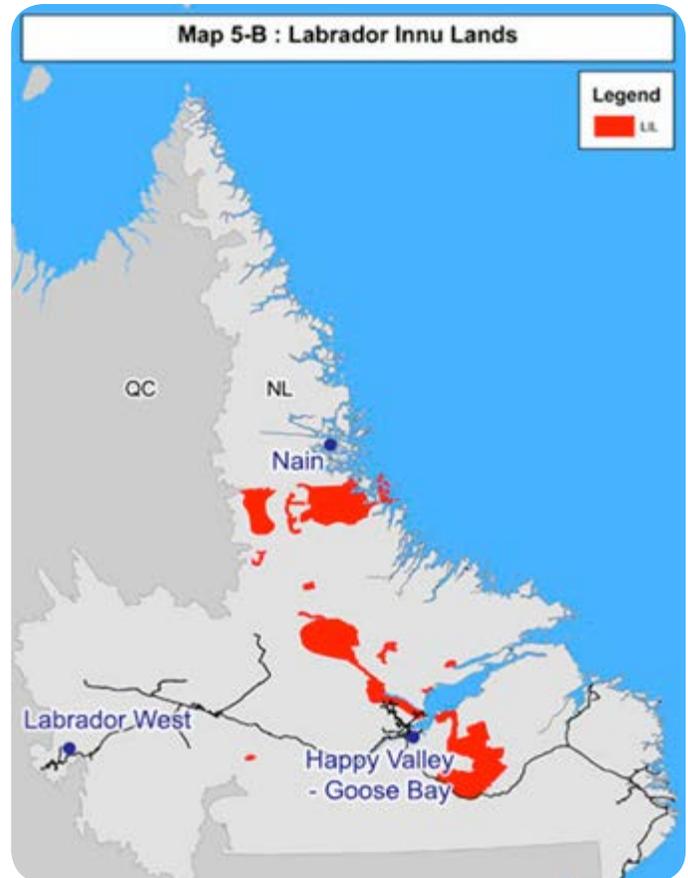
- Women's needs were raised and addressed in both processes
- Women still faced gender barriers and a deeply male culture in mining
- The numbers and experience of Indigenous women working at Voisey's Bay was similar to findings at other mining sites
- Worker and union support for preferred hiring of Inuit and Innu men was much higher than it was for hiring of women
- Many Indigenous men did not agree with preferential hiring for women.

The research reached these conclusions:

- IBAs need to focus on outcomes, not just processes
- Commitments in IBAs need to include things like hiring protocols and collective agreements, which will improve access to higher paid jobs for women
- Gender sensitive training programs are needed to challenge the male culture of the mining industry
- The ways that gender is linked to resource extraction needs to go far beyond jobs; the impacts of industry also affect family and community life, and traditional harvesting.

The Innu's Tshash Petapen, the New Dawn Agreement

In 2008, the Innu Nation negotiated a comprehensive agreement with the government of NL and its Crown Corporation, Nalcor Energy. The agreement was called *Tshash Petapen*, or the New Dawn Agreement. By 2011, it had signed three major breakthrough agreements:



A map of the Labrador Innu Lands set aside under the Agreement in Principle (2011). The final land claim settlement is still being negotiated as of 2015.
– Map from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

1. Innu Land Claim and Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle – A land claim for 13,000 square miles of land traditionally used by the Innu, with certain areas set aside for hydro development, including Muskrat Falls.
2. Upper Churchill Redress Agreement – Compensation for displacing the Innu from the *Mitsa-shipu* river in the 1950s when the first hydro dam was built on the upper Churchill River.

3. Lower Churchill Innu IBA – An IBA for hydro development of the Lower Churchill River at Muskrat Falls and Gull Island. It contained a list of payments to the Innu Nation, a guarantee of \$400 million in contracts to Innu businesses, and more.

These agreements are helping to speed up and resolve issues related to hydro developments at both Upper and Lower Churchill Falls. The Upper Churchill Redress Agreement and the Lower Churchill Innu IBA will provide:

- about \$100 million over 30 years to the Innu, to compensate them for flooding of hunting grounds when the Upper Churchill hydro project was built in the 1960s
- Innu rights to a 3% share of future revenues from the Upper Churchill project when NL's contract with Quebec expires in 2041
- Innu rights to \$5 million a year (indexed) during construction and during operation
- 5% of cash flow from the Muskrat Falls hydro project (a \$6.2 billion project that will export 825 megawatts of power to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia) and from the larger Gull Island hydro project when it proceeds, and
- training, employment and business opportunities, along with a role in issuing environmental permits for these hydro projects.

Local women protested the New Dawn agreement because a lack of community consultation and discussion before signing it. The benefits for women from this agreement, if any, are not public.

3. How to address local women's needs

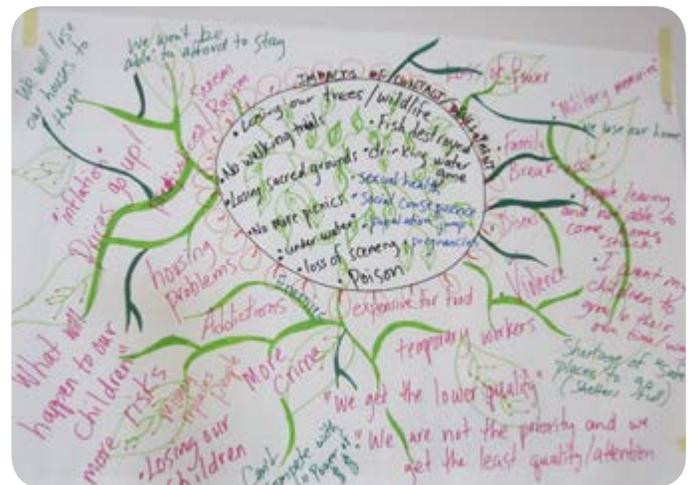
EAs and IBAs offer vital opportunities for women and northern communities to be part of public discussions that influence resource development decisions. Why does this matter? It's because

companies and governments need to ensure that benefits from these projects are more equally distributed.

FemNorthNet has developed a set of questions to support local women who seek to influence decisions around resource extraction. Questions include:

- Who bears the costs?
- Who benefits from this resource project?
- How are women and other marginalized groups recognized and included in the project?
- How are colonization, racism, and other systems of power recognized and addressed?

Asking questions about the assessment of a resource project, the decision-making process, monitoring and more are also important. FemNorthNet's [Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis: Resource Development and Extraction Framework](#) provides northern women with suggestions about how to do this.



Women document their concerns about the hydro development at Muskrat Falls – Photo by Jane Stinson (2012)



Unfortunately, northern women may be criticized or excluded in their communities if they question the benefits of resource extraction projects. Jobs are often seen as the most important thing. This focus on jobs may overshadow permanent harm to the environment, high costs borne by those least able to afford them, and an uncertain future.

Northern women would have more influence over resource extraction and development processes if:

- diverse community engagement were mandated or included in a clearer way in EAs, IBAs and other resource plans
- governments were committed to acting on EA recommendations, and
- local communities and local organizations were willing to hold government and resource companies accountable.

The examples in this fact sheet show how local governments play a key role in resource development. They can:

- press higher levels of governments to help to fund local communities in dealing with changes that occur due to resource extraction, and
- negotiate IBAs with resource companies.

For these reasons, local women need to lobby local governments for action on women's needs.

Suggested citation:

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ABOUT FEMNORTHNET

Economic development centered around resource extraction is changing northern communities in Canada socially, economically, and culturally. FemNorthNet (or the Feminist Northern Network) documented and shared the experiences of diverse, northern women affected by these changes while supporting them in their work to strengthen and build resiliency within their communities. FemNorthNet was initiated by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This network engaged over 30 researchers and community activists across Canadian universities, colleges, and northern community organizations, with community partners in Thompson (Manitoba), Happy Valley – Goose Bay (Labrador), and Labrador West (Labrador). Learn more at www.fnn.criaw-icref.ca.

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Since 1976, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) has been documenting the economic and social situation of women in Canada through ground-breaking feminist research. All CRIAW activities flow from an overarching goal to provide tools to help organizations taking action to advance social justice and equality for all women.



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