



Issue

As resource extraction activities are increasingly taking place in Canada's North--from the Bay Nickel Mine in Nunatsiavut to the Mackenzie Gas project in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region--it is expected that Inuit communities will benefit from significant economic growth. However, considering the issues caused by resource extraction, there are concerns that economic growth might come at the expense of the communities' environmental, social, cultural and physical wellbeing.^{iv} In particular, women's health can be seriously affected by the impacts of resource extraction activities, particularly their reproductive and social health. For instance, women in mining communities have experienced "poverty, sexual exploitation, dislocation, family violence, and workplace harassment".^v Further, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like HIV/AIDS continue to be reported in epidemic proportions in mining regions around the world.^{vi} Inuit communities already have eight times the national average for STI rates.^v Moreover, there are concerns about potential sexual exploitation of women

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and youth in mining communities due to mine workers' high income earnings, long periods of time spent away from spouses, and marital friction arising from work-related issues and stress.^{vii} Members of Pauktuutit are concerned that these resource extraction activities may have negative impacts on women's physical, mental and sexual health.

Review processes for resource extraction companies' proposals (such as Areva's 'Kiggavik' uranium mining proposal) do not include a culturally relevant gender-based analysis in their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) guidelines. Yet women often experience specific physical health, environmental and social impacts caused by resource extraction activities uniquely, due to the multiple roles and relationships that exist within communities.^{viii} Employment in mines is generally male-dominated, and the women who are employed generally occupy lower-paid positions. An additional barrier for women attaining lasting, full-time employment is inadequate childcare facilities for rotational work schedules. Further to this, additional barriers can be created by gender discrimination and sexual harassment on the job site.^{ix} Therefore, with the economic opportunities that resource extraction brings comes the potential for significant negative impacts on women and their communities. The complexity of this issue points to the need for more extensive research at the community level in order to understand how such negative impacts might be prevented or mitigated.



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PAUKTUUTIT
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA

Current Work

- Pauktuutit is developing working relationships with a number of other organizations and academic institutions working on mining and resource extraction issues specific to women in the North. This includes sitting on the Women and Extractive Industries in Canada's North informal Network steering committee.
- In close collaboration with the Canadian Women's Foundation, Pauktuutit has submitted a funding proposal (Feb 2012) to conduct research with youth and elders in the Baker Lake mining area. This research will assess the impacts of resource extraction activities on Inuit women. We are still waiting to hear back about this funding proposal.
- Pauktuutit has recently met with the Mining industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) to discuss possible partnerships in developing gender and Inuit specific labour market forecasts in the mining sector. This information could be used in cross-cultural and gender specific training program that MiHR would like to do with Aboriginal women across Canada including Inuit women in the North.

Contact Us

For more information or if you would like join the dialogue and help us pursue this area of work, please contact:

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ⁱ National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008). *Exploring Community-Based Responses to Resource Extractive Development in Northern Canada* – Issue Paper: Social. Ottawa: Author.

ⁱⁱ The Nature of Things, *Tipping Point: The Age of the Oil Sands*, <http://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/natureofthings/2011/tippingpoint/>, aired January 27, 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008) *Resource Extraction and Aboriginal Communities in Northern Canada: Gender Consideration*. Ottawa: Author.

^{iv} Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2008). *Resource Extraction and Inuit Sexual Health: Sexual Health is Everyone's Responsibility* – Conference Report. Ottawa: Author.

^v MiningWatch Canada (2004). *Overburdened: Understanding the Impacts of Mineral Extraction on Women's Health in Mining Communities*. Ottawa: CCSG Associates

^{vi} International Women and Mining Network (2005). *Conference Report: Third International Women & Mining*

Conference. Hyderabad: Mines, Minerals & PEOPLE. Prepared by Bhanumathi, K. et al.

^{vii} Gibson, G & Klinck, J. (2005). Canada's Resilient North: The Impacts of Mining on Aboriginal Communities. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous and Community Health*, 3 (1), 115-141.

^{viii} National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008); Archibald and Crnkovich (1999)

^{ix} National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008); Status of Women Council of the NWT (1999); Mercier (2011)

^x National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008)

^{xi} National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008)