

Feminist Northern Network Project

Project Overview

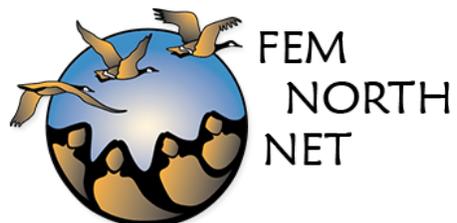


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About FemNorthNet¹

New economic development in northern Canada is changing communities socially, economically, and culturally. The Feminist Northern Network (called FemNorthNet) wanted to know the downside of 'up' that cannot be ignored. Our research asked:

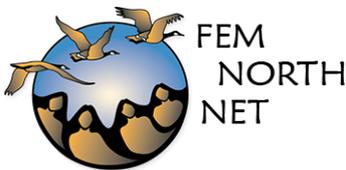
- HOW do these economic developments affect women in northern communities?
- WHAT can women do to bring positive change to their northern communities?

Using an intersectional gendered analysis and participatory action research, FemNorthNet focused on sustainable economic development in the North by exploring similarities and differences among and between different groups of women. These included Aboriginal women in the North, women with disabilities, immigrant women, women with children, women of various ages and women from different language groups.

By studying these timely issues through perspectives that are often overlooked, FemNorthNet aimed to provoke broader discussions on economic restructuring and healthy communities. Tough questions about community infrastructure and social issues like poverty, violence, and housing have to be asked. And answers must include and involve women.

FemNorthNet was made up of a network of researchers within and outside of universities and colleges together with representatives of community-based organizations, in northern Canada as well as working across Canada.

Our Logo



Did you know the FemNorthNet logo inspired a whole series of paintings? In this short video titled “Geese”, Indigenous artist Nathalie Coutou explains the intuitive and spiritual process that led her to the design for the logo and for a series of paintings exploring the connections between women, geese migrations, and the land that nourishes us all. To learn more about Nathalie and her artwork visit: <http://nathaliecoutou.com/>

¹ The [FemNorthNet project](#) is housed at the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA-W-ICREF). Our work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Northern Communities CURA Program) and Status of Women Canada (Blueprint Project Funding).

Research Approach



FemNorthNet used participatory action research and intersectional gendered analysis to explore four key questions:

- What are diverse women's experiences of economic restructuring and related community transformations in the North?
- How do plans and programs for economic development in these communities address women's experiences?
- What can women do collectively to address their experiences and any gaps in community or economic development initiatives?
- What do women's experiences and responses teach Canadians about how to address economic restructuring and related community transformations?

Participatory action research² directly involved women from northern communities in FemNorthNet's research process. Local women:

... Helped design the tools and methods we use to gather information about their experiences.

... Assisted with collecting information about their experiences and explain how the changes they see are impacting their broader community.

... Told us how to package the information in a way that is useful to them, whether in fact sheets, videos, or reports.

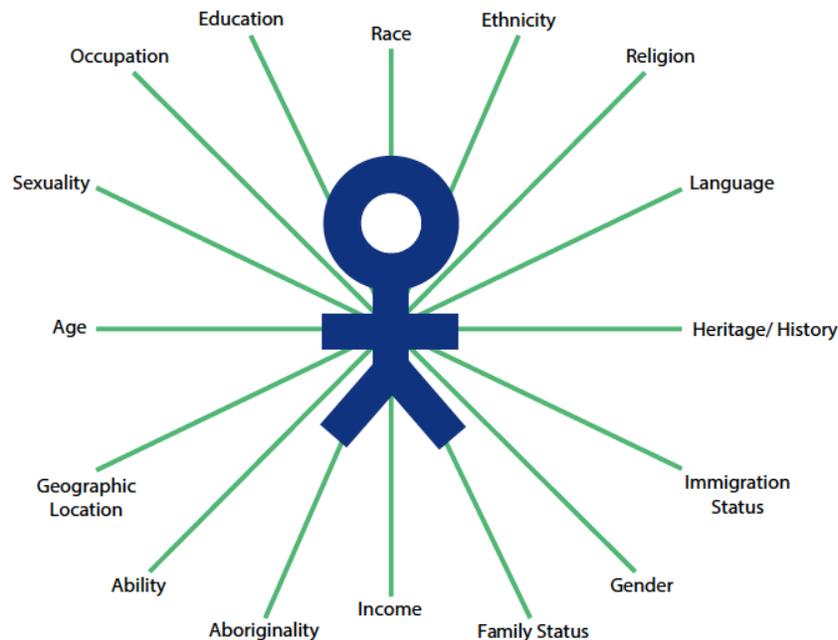
... Used resulting information materials, which embody their collective knowledge, to engage more effectively with decision-makers in their communities. In this way we

² To learn more about CRIA-ICREF's research approach, check out [Participatory research and action: A Guide to Becoming a Researcher for Social Change](#) on our website!

worked together to create change and build sustainable development models for the North.

Intersectional Gendered Analysis allowed us to understand how economic restructuring is impacting diverse northern women in different ways.

FemNorthNet involved women of all backgrounds, age groups, abilities, and identities. This way our research findings account for a wide variety of experiences and can help decision-makers build northern communities that are inclusive of all women.



Partner Communities

FemNorthNet worked with community leaders and organizations in three communities:

Thompson, MB

Thompson, Manitoba is located 740 km north of Winnipeg and is the third largest city in Manitoba with 13 000 people. It is known as the “Hub of the North” for Manitoba and is a centre of commerce and services for surrounding communities in the region. It has a diverse population and Aboriginal peoples make up 36% of the population, including Cree, Dene, and Oji-Cree peoples.

The major industry in the city has been mining, through the Vale nickel mines, but Thompson has been undergoing changes in the past few years as mining is being transitioned out as an industry. In 2011, the Thompson Economic Diversification

Working Group (TEDWG) was formed to take action in moving forward in terms of growth and development of Thompson in the future.

FemNorthNet's work in Thompson examined the effects of economic development and restructuring on the lives of diverse women as well as the work of TEDWG.

Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL

Happy Valley-Goose Bay is a town of 7,552 people located in central Labrador. Historically, Goose Bay was a key airbase for NATO. Currently, Happy Valley-Goose Bay is a strategic location for mining exploration and development in central and eastern Labrador, including the Voisey's Bay development by Vale Inco. The hydroelectric project at the Lower Churchill Falls will also impact the community. Both developments require negotiations and agreements with the Inuit and Innu, which are two of the three major Indigenous groups in the area along with the Métis.

FemNorthNet worked with the community to study the different developments and their effects on diverse groups of women and the broader community.

Labrador West, NL

Labrador West consists of two communities near the Labrador-Quebec border: Wabush and Labrador City. Wabush has a population of 1,861 and Labrador City has 9,354. Labrador West was built as a mining centre, and iron ore mining remains the main industry in the area.

The reliance on iron ore production has created a local economy affected by "boom and bust" cycles. As global market prices for iron ore rise, mining activities and revenue increase. As prices drop, operations are scaled back, local jobs are cut, and local government and businesses lose income.

FemNorthNet's work looked at how the community, particularly women, have been affected by the iron ore operations and how women can be better included in economic development.

Research Themes

FemNorthNet investigated the impacts of economic restructuring in the North through four cross-cutting themes:

Community Infrastructure and Economic Development

The FemNorthNet project was concerned with how community infrastructure – from physical infrastructure like roads and schools to soft infrastructure like childcare programs – is impacted by economic development.

The Community Infrastructure & Economic Development theme group examined the priority infrastructure areas identified by our community partners - from soft infrastructure (such as childcare, healthcare, and employment programs) to physical infrastructure (such as housing, water and sewage, and schools).

We explored the questions:

- When economic restructuring occurs in northern communities, who has the power to decide what type of infrastructure and economic development is prioritized?
- What types of infrastructure are most impacted by economic restructuring, especially resource extraction and development projects?
- How do changes to infrastructure affect northern women and their communities?
- How can diverse northern women be empowered to participate in discussions about infrastructure development and influence decision-making in their communities?

The key objective was the development of a new holistic, gendered perspective on infrastructure that bridges the false division between social and economic infrastructure to see them as integrally related. For instance, this perspective sees childcare (typically categorized as serving a social function) as a necessary part of economic growth and development. In order to attract, train, and retain a labour force, communities must have childcare services available for workers. Childcare then is not so much a fiscal drain as a necessary investment to strengthen our economy.

The theme group's work also explored the emerging concept in Canada that access to supportive infrastructure is a human right.

Theme Group Members

Susan Prentice, University of Manitoba

Teresa Healy, SIT Graduate Institute & Canadian Labour Congress

Community Engagement and Governance

The FemNorthNet project investigated how local women are involved in decision-making processes about economic development and how their involvement can be strengthened.

A wealth of good practices exists on ways to engage women in decision-making and governance. Many of these practices are developed especially for smaller communities, such as those found in the northern and remote parts of Canada.

We explored the questions:

- Which engagement and governance models are best suited to involving diverse northern women in community decision-making?
- How can partnerships at the local level be developed to actively involve northern women?
- How can engagement and governance models be structured to account for the various cultures, traditions, and experiences present in northern communities?
- How does the involvement of women in decision-making and governance make a difference or change political perspectives?

The theme group used community case studies and knowledge from our community partners to both develop and evaluate strategies for engagement of diverse women in decision-making processes.

Theme Group Members

Caroline Andrew, University of Ottawa

Charlene Lafreniere, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

Kiera Ladner, University of Manitoba

Brandee Albert, Student Researcher

Delia Chartrand, Student Researcher

Community Inclusions and Exclusions

The FemNorthNet project examined who had the opportunity to provide input to local development processes and how this affected diverse women's access to local resources, services, and infrastructure.

The Community Inclusions and Exclusions theme group used an intersectional feminist framework to analyze community-based practices and experiences of inclusion, exclusion, marginality, and privilege.

We explored the questions:

- Who is, and who is not, seen as being part of northern communities?
- What implications do these inclusions and exclusions have for the distribution of power and resources within communities?
- How do the experiences of Indigenous women, women with disabilities, young women and migrant and immigrant women in the North differ? Are there similarities?
- What are the best inclusive practices for engaging across diverse identities and experiences?
- What are the effects of economic restructuring and resource development on diverse women's access to services in the North?

The theme group applied an intersectional lens to current 'hot topics' in the North such as sexual and reproductive rights and emergency planning and response. Their work was committed to inclusive research processes, sharing of FemNorthNet's collective knowledge, and making information available in various formats (fact sheets, handbooks, etc.) using plain language to ensure their work is accessible to the widest audience possible.

Theme Group Members

Deborah Stienstra, Theme Group Co-lead & Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies at Mount St. Vincent University

Gail Baikie, Theme Group Co-lead & School of Social Work at Dalhousie University

Carmela Hutchison, President of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Leah Levac, Professor in Political Science at University of Guelph

Vera Chouinard, Professor of Geography & Earth Sciences at McMaster University

Daisy Monias, Principal at Jack River School in Norway House Cree Nation, MB

Jessica McCuaig, FemNorthNet Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator

Susan Manning, Student Researcher at Mount St. Vincent University

Migration, Immigration, and Mobility

The FemNorthNet project considered the experiences of women as they move between places – whether emigrating to the North from abroad or flying in-and-out to work – and through different northern systems, such as those for education and employment.

Patterns of migration, immigration and the need for ongoing mobility to find work deeply influence life and create unique challenges in northern communities for both established residents and new arrivals. The Migration, Immigration & Mobility theme work teased out the specific experiences of women affected by these patterns.

We explored the questions:

- What affects the mobility of diverse women in northern communities, whether moving through social systems or between physical places within their community or region?
- How do women cope with the rotational schedules associated with resource extraction and fly-in/fly-out jobs, whether they, their partner, or both have this type of schedule?
- What supports and flexibility is required for diverse women to obtain education and training for non-traditional, in-demand jobs (such as those in mining or construction)?
- How do new trade agreements, like the Trade and International Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA), affect new or potential employment opportunities available to immigrant women?
- What are the experiences of foreign women who work in northern communities?

Theme Group Members

Judy White, University of Regina

Noreen Careen, Labrador West Status of Women Council

Carmela Hutchison, President of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Barbara Neis, Memorial University

FemNorthNet Members

FemNorthNet was a research alliance based at the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA-W-ICREF) with multiple partnerships, including in three northern communities – Thompson MB, Happy Valley-Goose Bay NL and Labrador West NL. The network included municipal officials, community-based organizations, national organizations, and researchers from universities.

Managing Circle

Jane Stinson, CRIA-W-ICREF / FemNorthNet Director

Deborah Stienstra, FemNorthNet Co-Director & Professor in Disability Studies at the University of Manitoba

Jacqueline Neapole, CRIA-W-ICREF / FemNorthNet Administrative Officer

Jessica McCuaig, Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator

Janice Manchee, Finance Officer

Academic & Community-based Participants

Caroline Andrew, Director of the Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa

Gail Baikie, Social Work, Dalhousie University

Libby Dean, Research Consultant

Petrina Beals, Women's Advocate, Happy Valley - Goose Bay

Colin Bonnycastle, Director of Northern Social Work Program, University of Manitoba

Carmela Hutchison, President of DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Bonnie Brayton, Executive Director of DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

Judy White, Social Work, University of Regina

Noreen Careen, Director of Labrador West Status of Women Centre

Teresa Healy, Canadian Labour Congress & Assoc. Prof., SIT Graduate Institute

Susan Prentice, Sociology, University of Manitoba

Barbara Clow, Research Consultant

Charlene Lafreniere, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

Leah Levac, Political Science, University of Guelph

Nina Cordell, Coordinator of the YWCA Women's Centre in Thompson, MB

Kiera Ladner, Canada Research Chair, University of Manitoba

Chris Bignell, Executive Director of the Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

Daisy Monias, Principal at Jack River School, Norway House First Nation

Denise Cole, Housing Development Coordinator, Newfoundland & Labrador Housing and Homelessness Network

Liz Sousa, Project Manager, Northern Manitoba Sector Council

Patrica Nash, Fish and Wildlife Coordinator at Nunatukavut

Mona Gregory, Support Worker at Libra House in Happy Valley - Goose Bay

Vera Chouinard, Prof. of Feminist Geography, McMaster University

Barbara Neis, Sociology, Memorial University

Rashida Collins, Canadian Labour Congress

Peggy Slipp, Family & Child Legal Aid Services, Happy Valley - Goose Bay

Mary Shortall, Canadian Labour Congress - Atlantic Region

Thelma Randall, Childcare Coalition of Manitoba

Jane Robinson, Bay St. George Status of Women Council

Susan Wadien, UN Platform for Action Committee

Partner Organizations

Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (closed)

Bay St. George Status of Women Council

Canadian Labour Congress

Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

Dalhousie University

DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN-RAFH) Canada

Labrador West Status of Women Council

Labrador Institute of Memorial University

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Mount St. Vincent University

New North–SANC Services Inc.

North Central Community Futures Development Corporation

Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

University of Manitoba

University of Ottawa

University of Regina

Activities and Projects

Resource Development in Northern Communities: Local Women Matter

Canada's north is full of communities where resource extraction and development provide a hope for prosperity. But it can also come with:

- the loss of traditional values and practices
- the potential for new family and social tensions, such as alcohol and drug abuse, and
- greater divisions between those with resource-based jobs and those without.

How can northern communities find ways to benefit from resource extraction? How do women fit into the picture? How can we ensure that diverse local women's views are heard?

The Local Women Matter project produced a series of fact sheets to foster understanding about, and provide ideas for, how to develop resources in northern Canadian communities in ways that ensure women, children and their communities benefit.

[Find the fact sheet series and other related publications on our website.](#)

Building Links Among Women



The Building Links among Women Project created opportunities and resources to help people think, learn, and talk about how the Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Hydro-electric Project – and hydro-electric development more generally – affects the lives of women.

Building Links created opportunities to think, learn, and talk about how hydroelectric development affects the lives of diverse women. Our conversations and activities started with the Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Hydro-electric Project – both the impact it is already having as well as the future dangers it may pose for women in Labrador, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia.

Building Links illustrated that women from diverse communities can share their knowledge and experiences. For example, in the summer of 2014, Building Links brought together women from Labrador, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia to talk about the impact of the Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Hydro-electric Project.

- Women in Labrador learned how the hydro-electric development is affecting their own and other communities.
- Women from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland learned that while they might benefit from new sources of energy, the women of Labrador are paying the price.
- Women from Nova Scotia and Labrador also shared tools and strategies to address the gendered effects of resource development.
- As women from these and other communities shared and learned from each other, they were empowered to become involved in and influence decisions about resource development.

Building Links demonstrated that others understand and care about the adverse effects of resource development on diverse women. Women in Labrador and Nova Scotia – as elsewhere – are often marginalized in or excluded from decisions about resource development. They feel alone. Building Links helped to reduce this sense of isolation and exclusion by fostering conversations about the implications of resource development for diverse women. Many groups joined the conversation: Indigenous women, organizations, and governments; racialized women; women with disabilities; environmental activists; union leaders; women’s organizations; social justice and community organizations; researchers and students. Together, they contributed to a strong collective voice and an inclusive, women-centred approach to resource development.

The Women of Building Links

Catherine Abreu, Energy Coordinator of the Ecology Action Centre (EAC)

Gail Baikie, Social Work, Dalhousie University

Petrina Beals, Research Consultant

Barbara Clow, Research Consultant

Michelle Cohen, Equality Representative, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

Denise Cole, Housing Development Coordinator, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and Homeless Network

Libby Dean, Research Consultant

Sandra Earle, Community Member

Sheila Francis, Director of Education, Pictou Landing First Nation Band Administration

Vicki Hallet, Assistant Professor, Gender Studies Department at Memorial University

Lynn Hones, Research Consultant

Diana (Dee) Campbell, PhD Candidate at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University

Leah Levac, Political Science, University of Guelph

Susan Manning, Student Researcher, Mount Saint Vincent University

Cathy Martin, Film Producer

Trish Nash, Fish and Wildlife Coordinator, NunatuKavut Community Council Inc.

Carla Pamak, Inuit Research Advisor, Nunatsiavut Government

Deborah Stienstra, Disability Studies, University of Manitoba & FemNorthNet Co-Director

Jane Stinson, FemNorthNet Director, CRIA-W-ICREF

Johanna Tuglavina, Project Coordinator, AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association

The Muskrat Falls – Maritime Link Project

The Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Hydro-electric Project – also referred to as the Lower Churchill Project – is damming the Lower Churchill River in Labrador and building a generating plant at Muskrat Falls.

As well, thousands of kilometres of subsea cable and overhead transmission lines (The Labrador-Island Link and the Maritime Link) with a number of transmission stations will be installed to deliver electricity from Labrador to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and beyond.

The Project is being led by Nalcor, a Newfoundland and Labrador crown corporation responsible for most power generation in that province, and Emera, a public corporation that owns Nova Scotia Power, which is responsible for 95% of energy generation, transmission, and distribution in that province.

Benefits

Governments, business and economic leaders, and developers in the region are enthusiastic about the potential of the Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Project for a number of reasons.

- Reduced reliance on fossil fuels - We know we need cleaner alternatives to burning oil, gas, and coal. Both Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia rely on fossil fuels and a new source of hydro-electric energy would help to reduce this dependence as well as green-house gas emissions.
- Economic independence and growth –The hydro-electric project will provide a locally-controlled and a sustainable source of energy for the Atlantic provinces, which could make the region more competitive in world markets.
- Employment – The development of the hydro-electric project will also create many new jobs in the trades and other sectors – a welcome change in a region with some of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in Canada.

The Costs

As much as we want and need clean, renewable energy, we cannot ignore the impact the development is having on the land, the communities, and the people of Labrador.

- Environmental damage – Damming the Lower Churchill River will destroy thousands of hectares of land, threaten animal and fish populations, and poison the environment for decades.
- Human health risks – Environmental degradation will affect everyone, but women and children will be at greater risk of negative health outcomes because of the way that women’s bodies metabolize environmental contaminants. Toxins are also passed from mothers to babies, both before birth and through breast-feeding.
- Social impact – Experience shows that communities experiencing resource development face many challenges. Often governments and developers invest little or no money in infrastructure – housing, hospitals, recreation and day-care centres as well as social and economic services. As a result, when workers flood into communities: food prices sky-rocket; housing becomes unavailable or unaffordable; rates of violence, addictions, racism, and sex work increase. Homelessness in Happy Valley-Goose Bay was uncommon in the past, but now it is reaching alarming proportions.
- Economic impact – While the hydro-electric development will increase the number of jobs in the region, there is no guarantee that local residents will benefit from job creation. Skilled workers are likely to move to the community, at least temporarily, to take up jobs and the women of Labrador, like women elsewhere, are vastly under-represented in the trades that will benefit from these jobs. Already we can see that some residents of Happy Valley-Goose Bay are doing well from the development while others are not.

- Increased power rates – Most Nova Scotians will be spared the negative effects of the hydro-electric development because current plans for construction are confined to a single transmission station at Point Aconi. But many in both provinces will be adversely affected by increased power rates, and women are particularly at risk because they are more likely than men to be living in poverty and therefore less able to manage increased energy costs.

The 2014 Knowledge Sharing Tour

Our Knowledge Sharing Tour brought women from Nova Scotia, Labrador and Newfoundland together in Labrador to begin building relationships and conversations. From June 9 to 13, the women of Building Links gathered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (the home base of the Knowledge Sharing Tour). Friendships were forged and strengthened as we shared and learned, laughed and cried together over meals, during reflections, and while engaged in scheduled activities.

Women from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland witnessed the effects of the Muskrat Falls-Maritime Link Hydro-electric Project – on the land, on the Indigenous peoples of Labrador, on the women and families living in the neighbouring communities. The Tour allowed them to see and understand all the costs involved in bringing so-called clean energy from Labrador to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Women from Labrador had opportunities to share knowledge and experience with one another and with the women of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland – to learn about shared challenges and resources and so that they could really see they are not alone.

Building Links Among Women Documentary: Being in Right Relationship in the Resource Development Agenda

Cathy Martin, an award-winning Mi'kmaq filmmaker and co-owner of Matues Productions, is one of the women of Building Links. We were excited when she agreed to participate in the Knowledge Sharing Tour and thrilled when she offered to create a documentary. She has created a powerful record of the Tour and the Building Links project. We hope you will view it and share it widely.

[You can view the Building Links Among Women Documentary here.](#)

Community Vitality Index (CVI)

The Community Vitality Index (CVI) is a tool designed to track changes to the wellbeing of diverse women in Happy Valley – Goose Bay. It was developed in partnership by a small group of women from Happy Valley – Goose Bay and a few researchers involved with the FemNorthNet project.

While creating the CVI, we emphasized the development of a framework that could account for and define the experiences of women with diverse social identities who live in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. In this community, women’s primary concern was their wellbeing, which is critical to gender equality.

The content of the CVI is captured in a “wellbeing framework”, depicted by an image of an inuksuk. Each section of the inuksuk represents an element of wellbeing as identified by the women of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. To evaluate women’s wellbeing in each of these areas, a long questionnaire was created using questions found in existing studies of wellbeing, as well as from women in the community. This questionnaire will be used to gather data over time so that we can see how women’s wellbeing – as defined by women – is changing in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

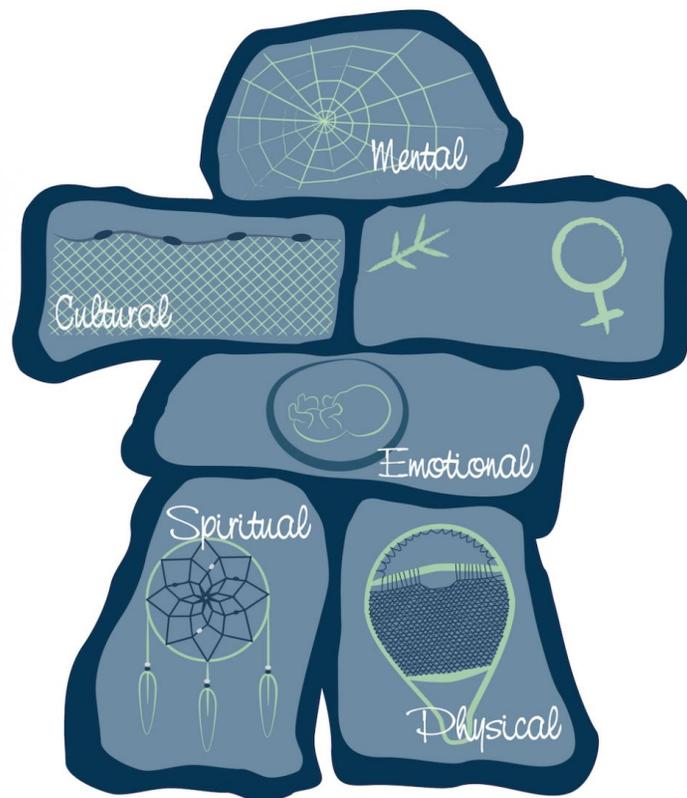


Image developed by community researchers in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and digitized by Monica Peach

The Importance of the CVI

Why is the CVI important to women in Happy Valley - Goose Bay?

Tracking changes in the wellbeing of women in Happy Valley – Goose Bay is important because of the arrival of the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Dam.

The Joint Review Panel for the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Dam noted that the project has “the potential for adverse effects resulting from high wage employment, including increased substance abuse, and sexual assault, family violence and [other] effects on women and children in Happy Valley-Goose Bay...” (Report of the Joint Review Panel, 2011, p. xxviii).

The Panel recommended that “the provincial Department of Health and Community Services, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, and appropriate government and community agencies from the Upper Lake Melville area, conduct a social effects needs assessment, including an appropriately resourced participatory research component, that would determine the parameters to monitor, collect baseline data, and provide recommendations for social effects mitigation measures and an approach to on-going monitoring...” (Report of the Joint Review Panel, 2011, p. 291).

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador did not follow this recommendation, so FemNorthNet did.

Important components of the CVI include:

- A description of diverse women in HV-GB developed by women in the community
- A wellbeing framework (an image representing women’s wellbeing), developed by women in the community, and developed graphically with the support of the Nunatsiavut government
- A definition of wellbeing (including five inter-connected categories of wellbeing), developed by women in the community
- A wellbeing survey to measure and track diverse women’s wellbeing over time

To learn more about the Community Vitality Index, you can [access the CVI Overview document on our website](#).

Claiming Our Place: Women's Relationship with Rivers

Happy Valley-Goose Bay is grappling with the socio-economic impacts of building a new hydroelectric dam at Muskrat Falls (the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Generation Project). This is the second dam on this river, and its construction is significant to all of the peoples in the region.

Over the last few decades people in northern Labrador, especially Indigenous peoples, have frequently experienced direct and indirect displacement from the land due to resource-based development. In spite of having strong connections to the “Big Land” and natural environment, Indigenous and women's voices are often left out of conversations about economic development in Labrador.

The Claiming Our Place project had two core objectives:

- Raise local women's awareness of the large economic development projects in the region that will have an impact on their lives, wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their community
- Develop the ability of women to participate effectively in community discussions, planning meetings, and events about economic development and create tools to amplify their voices

This project's guiding questions were:

- What is the connection between local women and the local natural environment and what are the potential implications to their wellbeing given the current natural resource economic development agenda?
- What can women do to influence this agenda so that it takes their interests into account?

Women's Leadership Development

A large part of FemNorthNet's work engaged with women in northern communities to discover what it takes to be a woman in a leadership position in the North. Each partner community developed a unique model to encourage participation of women whose voices are normally underrepresented in community decision-making (particularly Aboriginal women, women living with disabilities, immigrant women, and young women).

We learned that the barriers to leadership for women in these northern communities are significant. We also identified key elements needed to support women as northern

community leaders. With FemNorthNet's support, women were able to come together to deepen their leadership abilities and begin to develop concrete, practical solutions to address urgent needs in their communities, including the need for affordable housing, access to the land, employment, childcare supports and transition homes for women. The Network itself provided tremendous support to women and offered countless opportunities for co-learning.

Hear from these women as they discuss their experience as a leader. [Access their interviews on our website.](#)

Acknowledgements

Community Partners: The Northern Village of La Loche, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (TNRC), Labrador West Status of Women Council, and Mokami Status of Women Council.

Interview Participants: Petrina Beals, Karen Oldford, Carmela Hutchison, Doris Sacrey, Charlene Lafreniere, Charlotte Lessard, Mernie Kelly, Noreen Careen, Liz Sousa, Amanda Dyson, Bernice Earle, and Harriet Paul (Interview participants)

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Video & Sound Editing: Sara Tedford & Jessica McCuaig

Video Captioning: Precision Transfer & Jessica McCuaig

Content Reviewers: Dawn Sands, Deborah Stienstra, Georgina Jolibois, Noreen Careen, Petrina Beals

Gender, Diversity, and Resource Extraction

As the quest for valuable natural resources in Canada's northern and Arctic communities continues, FemNorthnet asked: "What tools and policies are in place to assess the gendered and diverse impacts resource projects have on the people who live in these communities?" We investigated how governments, private companies, and communities can work together to advance the benefits and address the consequences of resource extraction in northern communities.

FemNorthNet's initial research unearthed two key findings:

- Resource extraction projects in Canada's North often have negative impacts on the infrastructure, environment, economies, and social and cultural fabric of northern communities.
- Many people in northern communities, particularly women, have been excluded from decision-making processes for, and core benefits resulting from, resource extraction projects.

This information led us to wonder about what is being done to mitigate negative impacts and to ensure that all community members can better benefit from the opportunities resource extraction projects offer.

We knew from small-scale case studies within our work, such as the Labrador West Community Action Panel and the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Community Vitality Index, that models and tools for improving the situation in northern communities could be developed. So, with the support of a Knowledge Synthesis grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, FemNorthNet researchers asked:

- What research, tools and policies exist and/or are planned to address the implications of resource extraction in Canada's northern communities from a gendered, intersectional perspective?
- What are the structural opportunities, innovations and barriers in Canada's federal and provincial policy and regulatory mechanisms to ensure a gendered, intersectional analysis?
- What actions are required and by whom to ensure a gendered, intersectional analysis of the impacts of northern resource extraction? (For example, how can policy makers, researchers, and others address gaps and lack of access to relevant data?)

Find out what we learned by exploring our final [Knowledge Synthesis Report: Gendered and Intersectional Implications of Energy and Resource Extraction in Resource-Based Communities in Canada's North](#). It provides recommendations on how governments,

private sector companies, and communities can more effectively work together on these issues. The Knowledge Synthesis Report also informs two Policy Impact Papers: [Gender-based analysis meets environmental assessment](#) and [What do gender and diversity have to do with it?](#) We developed these Policy Impact Papers, with feedback from policymakers, to identify concrete measures to ensure more complete policy responses to the needs of diverse communities in the North.

Members of FemNorthNet continued to apply the knowledge gained through research into what is being done to mitigate negative impacts and to ensure that all community members can better benefit from the opportunities resource extraction projects offer. This includes making [a submission to an Expert Review Panel on federal Environmental Assessment \(EA\) processes in December 2016](#) about the importance of requiring Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and using participatory research principles in Environmental Assessments.

In 2018 the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) asked CRIAW-ICREF to conduct research to aid in the implementation of a new Impact Assessment Act (Bill C-69). The new legislation, if adopted, will require proponents of major environmental projects to complete a holistic impact assessment to support their applications, considering several factors including any impacts the project may have on Indigenous Peoples, traditional knowledge and culture of Indigenous Peoples and the intersection of these factors with sex/gender. CRIAW-ICREF's research was meant to inform the development of the CEAA's guidance for proponents, stakeholders, Indigenous groups, and internal staff in advance of Bill C-69 coming into force.

Members of FemNorthNet undertook research to:

- Identify major social, economic, health and cultural impacts that may be experienced by Indigenous women in the context of major resource development projects.
- Identify good practices for assessing and mitigating potential impacts on Indigenous women.
- Provide guidance to support the implementation of the proposed Impact Assessment Act, specifically the new requirements to consider “the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors” when examining potential social, economic, and health impacts of major projects.

We provided two research papers. First, [a synthesis report](#) of key findings from Canadian literature and key informants, primarily Canadian Indigenous women, on the impacts of resource development on Indigenous women.

[The second report](#) is on how to strengthen impact assessment processes in order to identify and address the needs of Indigenous women. The report identifies principles and practices to guide proponents and governments to do a better job with identifying

the impacts of major resource and infrastructure developments on Indigenous women. It suggests ways in which Indigenous Peoples' knowledges can guide resource-related decisions, and how impact assessment processes and mitigation strategies can be more attentive and responsive to the experiences of Indigenous women.

In 2019, CRIA W-ICREF made two presentations to the Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, to support the implementation of Bill C-69. [In the initial submission](#), CRIA W-ICREF argued in favour of Bill C-69's inclusion of the "intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors;" 22(1) (s) to be considered in Impact Assessments. It drew on over a decade of research across a number of studies on the impacts of resource extraction on diverse women in Northern communities, as well as recent work on Strengthening Impact Assessments for Indigenous Women. [The supplementary submission](#) focuses on the importance of Indigenous and Northern women's experiences and knowledges in impact assessments.



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