



FEMNORTHNET NEWS

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A new look for the FemNorthNet Newsletter!

Welcome to the new format for our FemNorthNet Newsletter. We're keeping it shorter, often by providing a summary of articles that are available on our web site. We will issue the FemNorthNet Newsletter more frequently, as news becomes available, replacing the longer format that came out twice a year.

We hope you'll find this a more effective way of letting you know about important developments.

Building Links Among Women

FemNorthNet has launched an initiative called ***Building Links Among Women*** to foster and support an alliance among women in Atlantic Canada. The Alliance will initially focus on building understanding and links between women in the Atlantic provinces around the massive hydro-electric dam at Muskrat Falls in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador that will generate and transmit power from Labrador to Newfoundland to Nova Scotia and beyond.

A public meeting in Halifax, February 25 attracted a diverse and engaged audience in considering the costs and

benefits of Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link. Media interviews raised broader public awareness of the impact of this "clean" energy on the local community. Listen to one interview here: <http://www.criaw-icref.ca/paying-price-muskrat-falls>)

The broader goals of ***Building Links*** are to share knowledge and experiences and to take action related to the impact of resource development on women, their families, and their communities. Many women are unaware of the dangers associated with resource development. Women who do recognize the risks may feel unable to present their concerns to developers, governments, and the public; they often lack

confidence and experience because women, in general, have been continually excluded from decision-making positions and processes. The alliance will help to inform women about resource development and empower them to speak out. Women involved in the alliance will draw on Western, Indigenous, and other ways of knowing as well as local experiences and models of action to create a strong, collective voice for a women-centred approach to resource development.

A Community Vitality Index for Happy Valley-Goose Bay

In September 2012, a small group of women in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, along with a small group of FemNorthNet researchers, began a journey to create a community vitality index (CVI); a tool to track changes to the wellbeing of women in the community.

The CVI is a framework that includes the definition of, and ideas about, wellbeing that are held by women with diverse social identities and positions living in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HV-GB), Labrador. The CVI is based on a definition of wellbeing that was

developed by women in HV-GB through a series of community workshops, community discussions, revisions, and the support of women in the community, student research assistants, and other members of the research team. The CVI is being piloted in the community this winter 2014, and will be finalized in the spring. The goal of the project is for the questionnaire to 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.

Read more about the Community Vitality Index on the FemNorthNet web site here: <http://criaw-icref.ca/community-vitality-index-cvi>

Presentation to ArcticNet on Women's Experiences of Dislocation from the Rivers and Land

Members of FemNorthNet presented findings from ***Claiming Our Place: Women's Relationship with Rivers*** to ArcticNet's 9th Annual Scientific Meeting in Halifax in December 2013. ArcticNet encourages researchers, policy and decision makers, governments, private sector, northern stakeholders and others to address the global challenges and opportunities arising from climate change and modernization in the Arctic. Gail Baikie and Libby Dean captured the

imagination of participants with a visually engaging poster that summed up connections by women in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HV-GB) with their local natural environment and the potential implications to their wellbeing given the nearby hydro-electric development at Muskrat Falls.

Find this poster report on the FNN web site <http://criaw-icref.ca/femnorthnet/locations/nl/happy-valley--goose-bay>

Local women have always lived close to and relied on the land and rivers. It was a place for hunting, trapping and berry picking. Natural resource development changes the environment and disrupts this vital relationship, and local women have expressed fear about the future. As the natural environment changes due to development, their relationships with the land and with the people around them are also altered: as people become focused on what they can get from development, they are less concerned about what they can give. Government and organizational policies and practices fail to account for the implications of disconnecting women and their families from the land and the water. Women who don't participate within the development agenda are being positioned as no longer worthy of the generosity of 'the land of the people.' Now women are finding strength and a sense of 'possibility' by reconnecting and reaffirming their relationships with each other, and with the land and rivers.

Lab West hit by Mine shutdown

The recent news of the Wabush iron ore mine closure in Labrador West will put nearly 400 people out of work. Cliffs Natural Resources is the key employer in this 'one-industry' community, right beside Labrador City. The mine closure will cause critical housing issues. The recent iron ore boom caused an influx of workers into the community causing a shortage of affordable homes and rental housing to accommodate the growing community, while also driving up the prices. Although the mine closure decision was made based on the financial un-sustainability of the mine, the economic and housing stability of the community dependent on the mine will be challenged. In light of the rental housing shortage in the Wabush community, many have bought homes, which will cause problems for all those who need that employment to support their mortgage payments. The mine closure will directly impact women, housing and the community as a whole, and in time we will see how this all further unfolds.

To read the CBC News article click here: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/wabush-mines-shutdown-blamed-on-production-costs-1.2533328>

Important Developments in Thompson

The future of Thompson has been uncertain since the 2010 announcement of the smelter and refinery closure by the main employer, global mining giant Vale. But recent developments suggest Thompson is on the upswing.

The City of Thompson launched the Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group (TEDWG) to engage the community in developing plans for long-term sustainability. A series of community plans have been developed and are available on the City of Thompson's TEDWG web site. <http://www.thompson.ca/index.aspx?page=273>

As well, federal government flexibility in meeting 2015 emissions targets, may

extend the life of the Vale smelter and refinery in Thompson. Vale is currently seeking a strategic partner to finance expansion of current operations. For local people, especially Aboriginal people, hiring changes within Vale are among the most significant developments. Accountability for most business functions (including hiring, people management and Aboriginal affairs) was moved to Thompson from the Toronto Vale office. Not only has the hiring restriction been lifted, a new employment strategy has been developed to train people in the North to work in the North. (Manitoba Mining Review 2014) Local responsibility for hiring and human resources means Vale has started to reach out and recruit more Aboriginal workers and women living in Thompson and nearby northern communities, a welcome and significant change, according to FemNorthNet member Liz Sousa who works for the Northern Manitoba Sector Council.

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FemNorthNet on the Web:

<http://criaw-icref.ca/femnorthnet>



