

Workshop Follow-up Report from:

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Cumulative Impacts and Resource Development in Northern BC

Fort Nelson, BC
October 26, 2016

About the Cumulative Impacts Research Consortium

The Cumulative Impacts Research Consortium (CIRC) is a research and community outreach initiative at the University of Northern British Columbia that is dedicated to enhancing the understanding of the cumulative environmental, community and health impacts of resource development. For more information on our on-going research and related initiatives, please visit www.unbc.ca/cumulative-impacts.

About the CIRC Fort Nelson Workshop

The CIRC convened a public workshop in Fort Nelson at Northern Lights College on October 26, 2016 as part of a broader research project sponsored by the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions titled “Developing new tools for assessing the cumulative impacts of resource development across northern BC: Integrating environmental, socioeconomic, and human health assessment methods”. The overall goals of this project are to:

- Build connections across past, present and future work broadly related to the cumulative impacts of resource development for resource-dependent communities across northern BC;
- Review and document promising practices in cumulative impacts assessment, particularly approaches capable of integrating diverse local values to enhance decision-making (e.g. environmental, community, health);
- Provide a platform to share stories and local experiences of cumulative impacts (both positive and negative) thereby improving community involvement in the selection of ‘valued components’; and
- Solicit broad public input on knowledge and capacity gaps the CIRC may be able to fill or work collaboratively to address.

This was the first of several planned community events on the topic of the cumulative impacts of resource development as a part of this project and focused specifically on the Northern Rockies Region located in northeast BC. The workshop was designed around four specific actions: panel presentations on local understandings and approaches to monitoring cumulative impacts; roundtable discussions to generate locally important values; a values ranking activity;

and a summary discussion of relevant next steps. This report provides a brief overview of the key themes that emerged throughout the day's activities. All workshop presentations made by CIRC staff and invited speakers are available [online](#).

Part I: Perspective on Cumulative Impacts Monitoring and Assessment

Over the course of four different presentations, six presenters shared their perspectives on current and emerging cumulative impacts monitoring and assessment projects and approaches. A [recording](#) of these presentations and associated [slide decks](#) are available for viewing online.

Mike Gilbert and Krista Vandersteen from the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (NRRM) discussed the ways in which intense resource development (namely oil and gas development and forestry operations) is felt at the local government level and the myriad actions the municipality is taking to better understand and respond to these impacts in the future. This involves conducting broad outreach, gathering information and building relationships to help address capacity issues.

Sean Curry from the BC Oil and Gas Commission (BCOGC) discussed the Area Based Analysis (ABA) tool, a systematic method of analyzing the cumulative impacts of all industrial development in relation to nine broad values utilized by the BCOGC when making decisions on oil and gas project applications. The ABA tool is a promising attempt to actualize cumulative effects monitoring in northeast BC, and is guided by the province's Cumulative Effects Framework.

Art Fredeen from the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) drew connections between the cumulative impacts we are witnessing and experiencing in northern BC to cumulative impacts we are experiencing on a global level, including climate change and rapid resource depletion. He gave an overview of well-established critiques of current cumulative effects assessment processes and introduced a research project looking at the state of the art of cumulative effects assessment in BC through interjurisdictional comparative case studies.

Lana Lowe from the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) and Alistair MacDonald from The Firelight Group co-presented collaborative work and shared key insights and concepts from FNFN's environmental stewardship work, which includes a strong focus on cumulative effects assessment and management. This work incorporates best practices in cumulative effects assessment as well as principles to ensure Treaty Rights and Title are respected and upheld through such processes.

Part II: Roundtable Discussions on Community, Health and Environmental Values

Workshop participants engaged in facilitated roundtable discussion groups where they were asked to brainstorm a broad account of locally-important community, health and environmental values. We also discussed what kinds of information currently exist around the

state of these values and where gaps in information exist that, if addressed, would give us a better understanding of how these values are changing or have changed over time.

We learned about the strong sense and commitment to community present in this area, defined by a sense of self-reliance and a commitment to helping neighbours. We also heard about the importance of treaty relationships and reconciliation between the NRRM and the FNFN communities. Some of the important community values identified included the importance of having recreational opportunities and an ability to spend time on the land, access to a broad range of services (including maternity, elder care and addictions support services), and a diversified economy that offers meaningful and stable local employment opportunities.

In discussing health values, conversations included the importance of living in an environment free of contaminants with clean air and healthy watersheds. Concerns were also shared about promoting opportunities to age in place so as to maintain intergenerational relationships, maintaining cultural and spiritual practices, providing mental health services and a range of educational opportunities.

Certain wilderness values were also discussed including bat, moose and boreal caribou populations, sustaining harvesting ability and practices, old growth forests, native plants, protected areas and village sites. Further, we heard about the importance of transparency and credibility in industrial operations, consistency across industrial regulatory bodies, balancing development with conservation and beginning to remediate landscapes. Across all three themes, it was clear that community members want to feel considered and represented, and have power and influence in decision-making processes that hold significant implications for the local level, but which are not always made locally.

Part III: Values Activity

Given the difficulty in measuring everything (either quantitatively or qualitatively), a subsequent activity challenged participants to begin to think collectively around the idea of prioritizing particular values. In other words, what values are most important or the best proxies for broader change throughout the region? Participants were asked to consider how diverse—and sometimes competing—values can be maintained and promoted in cumulative impacts assessment and other decision-making processes. Two rounds of values ranking were conducted. First, participants had ten votes to distribute however they wanted within each theme (health, community, environment). For the purposes of this report, these values were organized based on similarity (for example, bats, moose, beaver, boreal caribou and birds were grouped into the “wildlife” meta-value). The results of these activities appear in tables 1-3.

Table 1. Results and rankings of thematic groupings of health values.

Meta-Values	% of all Health Votes
Sense of community	22.5%
Health promotion/prevention	17.7%
Adequate access to services	14.7%
Strong diverse economy	12.7%
Environmental exposures	12.7%
Connecting communities through reconciliation	8.8%
Mental health	4.9%
Local harvesting	4.9%

Table 2. Results and rankings of thematic groupings of community values.

Meta-Values	% of all Community Votes
Full range of adequate and accessible social and health services	26.4 %
Strong local economy and meaningful local employment	17.9%
Sense of community	15.1%
Recreation	8.5%
Local agency and influence	7.5%
Reconciliation and healing	6.6%
First Nations culture	5.7%
Infrastructure	5.7%
Diversity and inclusion	4.7%
Housing	1.8%

Table 3. Results and ranking of thematic groupings of environmental values.

Meta-Values	% of all Environment Votes
Balancing development and conservation	28.3%
Natural capital and ecosystem preservation	12.3%
Wildlife	9.4%
Connection to the land	9.4%
Adequate monitoring and enforcement	9.4%
Water resources	9.4%
A seat at the table	8.5%
Air quality	5.6%
Built environment	5.6%
Locally specific environmental education and awareness	1.9%

Second, participants had 10 votes to distribute across the values identified in all three themes. The top 3 values identified through the second round of values ranking are identified in table 4.

Table 4. Top three values identified across health, community and environment themes.

Meta-Value	% of all votes
Balance between development and conservation	15.4 %
Health promotion/prevention	12.5%
Connecting communities through reconciliation	7.7%

Part IV: Generating Next Steps for Positive Action

In light of all the information presented and shared throughout the day and ongoing work being promoted by a variety of communities and organizations, we finished the day with a group discussion around how we can work better together to address cumulative impacts in this region; and in this regard, how the CIRC can best support positive local action? This conversation circled back to a theme that resonated strongly throughout the day: this region is full of amazing people, and the experiences of people who live here are an important and informative measure of cumulative impacts. We also heard that having local influence in decision-making processes is imperative in order to ensure that policy better reflects local needs, values and contexts. As well, industry was identified as an important partner in collaboratively developing local solutions to issues around cumulative impacts.

Over the next year, the CIRC will be facilitating other similar community meetings in the Peace River Region and the District of Vanderhoof. Through this process, we will be continuing to gather information around local understandings of cumulative impacts and soliciting feedback about how the CIRC can best support on the ground capacity issues and knowledge gaps given the kinds of tools, information and resources we have at our disposal. Analysis of results from these meetings will be on-going, and the CIRC is committed to sharing data and analytic information as it becomes available.

After this initial process and through on-going engagement practices, we will convene a second round of workshops in these communities with our proposals around how we can develop research that best supports communities and local decision-making processes, and tells the story of cumulative impacts in light of the local values surfacing through these conversations. Throughout this process, the CIRC will continue to build our capacity to act as a hub of information by building the “Cumulative Impacts Living Library,” an online, freely accessible repository of information around various organizations, initiatives and projects broadly related to cumulative impacts.

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