

Developing new tools for assessing the cumulative impacts of resource development across northern British Columbia: Integrating environmental, socioeconomic, and human health assessment methods

Funder(s): Real Estate Foundation of BC; Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions

Project Duration: July 2016 – February 2019

Project status: In process; several successful community workshops throughout 2016-2017; development of the several innovative research tools and processes

Project Description: This project is specifically oriented towards broad and inclusive public engagement to conceptualize the next generation of cumulative impact assessment tools to support local and regional initiatives working to address issues related to cumulative impacts. This project seeks to integrate diverse forms of knowledge about the environment, community, and health impacts of resource extraction and development into a more holistic understanding of how resource development operations both positively and negatively influence rural and remote communities across northern BC. The project will involve a series of community workshops with three case study regions: the District of Vanderhoof, the Peace River Region, and the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality. These regions were chosen based on previous relationships as well as expressions of interest. Community feedback will play a major role in the development of this tool, and we will strive to ensure the project is responsive to shifting community concerns, and that the tools developed as part of this project are adaptable to local contexts, values, and concerns. In addition to community feedback and information, tool development will also be informed by emerging cumulative effects assessment literature and international and national best practices in cumulative effects assessment, monitoring, and management.

Role of the CIRC: CIRC staff are leading the development and implementation of this project in collaboration with stakeholders and rightsholders throughout the District of Vanderhoof, Peace River Region, and Northern Rockies Regional Municipality.

Key objectives: **LEARN** about the practice of cumulative impact assessment; **SHARE** local knowledge, experience and data; and **ENVISION** innovative integrated impact assessment tools and processes capable that take notice of cumulative change at a regional level, in relation to local values.

Research and facilitation tools: In order to progress this project, CIRC has developed several research and facilitation tools:

1) Integrated Values Mapping: Youth perspectives are often under-represented or missing entirely from conversations about the future of resource governance. Recognizing that decisions of today will leave a lasting impact on future generations, we endeavoured to pilot a process to engage youth on the kinds of values that are important to protect indefinitely. In May 2017, CIRC staff led an arts-based workshop with grade 8 students from School District 91. The overall goal of this workshop was to learn about the kinds of health, community and environmental values that are important to youth living in SD91, and to locate those values on a regional map to discuss how those values interact across time and space. For more information about this workshop, you can find the workshop report [here](#).

2) Data-driven Storytelling: Throughout 2017, [CIRC staff facilitated a series of community workshops](#) using a "data-driven storytelling" research and facilitation tool. CIRC staff compiled regional data into a 30-year retrospective on cumulative environmental, community and health impacts of resource development. In response to these "integrated regional profiles", workshop participants were asked to respond to the following question: *How do we make better land-use decisions that account for long-term impacts to environmental, community and health values?*

This method:

1. Seeks to explore areas of convergence and divergence between narratives, and other kinds of information around community, environmental, and health values.
2. Attempts to 'make sense' of cumulative impacts across different areas of northern BC, and across past experiences, ongoing realities and visions for the future.
3. Provides a space for participants to share issues they feel go 'unnoticed' in conventional land use decision-making processes, holding space for both researchers and community members to hear and hold multiple perspectives of a region's lived reality at the same time, in dialogue with one another.