

The ECHO Network (Environment, Community, Health Observatory): Strengthening intersectoral capacity to understand and respond to health impacts of resource development

Funder(s): Canadian Institutes for Health Research

Project Duration: 2017-2021

Project Description: Responding to the health impacts of resource development requires thorough observation and nuanced analysis of the interrelated socioeconomic, ecological, cultural, and political pathways that influence health in regions in which communities and resource development operations coexist. Indeed, the cumulative community, health, and environmental impacts of resource development remain contentious and poorly understood issues in resource-rich regions, especially rural, remote and Indigenous communities. Through utilizing a public health observatory approach, the ECHO Network project aims to develop more integrative tools and processes to understand and respond to the cumulative determinants of health impacts. By integrating different kinds of information, strengthening capacity, and building cross-jurisdictional relationships, this approach can inform intersectoral actions that address the health impacts of resource development.

This project will be undertaken in collaboration with researchers, practitioners, policy- and decision-makers, community organizations, health service agencies, and First Nations organizations from across Canada, including UNBC researchers, who share a commitment to producing actionable research that responds to, and is driven by, unique community contexts and concerns. As such, the ECHO Network will be anchored in four regional cases actively grappling with the health impacts of resource development, including the New Brunswick Children, Environment and Health Collaborative, Alberta's Battle River Watershed Alliance, BC's First Nations Health Authority, and BC's Northern Health Authority.

Key Deliverables: The ECHO Network will provide a platform to connect people, share information and best practices, and develop effective responses as informed by diverse perspectives and complex social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental contexts. Overall, this research aims to develop methods to identify and prioritize intersectoral responses to the cumulative impacts of resource development.

Role of the CIRC: CIRC staff in collaboration with Northern Health and ECHO researchers are delighted to be co-designing and contributing to the development of the northern BC case-study for this project. We are striving to develop innovative strategies and integrative tools that can identify and respond to the cumulative health, community, and environmental impacts in northern BC.