

Workshop follow-up report from:

## What's a 'Cumulative Impact', Anyway? Unpacking the environmental, community and health impacts of resource development activities across northern BC

Smithers, BC, September 26, 2018

### 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. CIRC is dedicated to enhancing the understanding of the cumulative environmental, community, and health impacts of resource development. For more information, please visit [www.unbc.ca/cumulative-impacts](http://www.unbc.ca/cumulative-impacts).

### About the CIRC Smithers Workshop

CIRC staff facilitated a free public lecture and workshop on the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en people in Smithers on September 26, 2018 in conjunction with the Bulkley Valley Research Centre's Seminar Series. The workshop was part of an ongoing CIRC research project focused on developing new tools and processes to assess and monitor the positive and negative impacts of resource development across northern BC. This project aims to integrate community, environmental, and health values and perspectives, and account for diverse forms of knowledge and information, to inform the development of cumulative impact assessment tools. These conversations are also an important avenue through which CIRC can better understand how our ongoing research can best enhance on the ground capacity to respond to issues related to cumulative impacts. For more information about the "New Tools" project, please visit the [project description](#) on the CIRC website.

The public lecture provided an overview of cumulative impacts science and research; presented some exciting new tools that integrate environmental, community and health data to inform land-use decisions; and shared results from four years of research on the cumulative environmental, community and health impacts of resource development across northern BC. A [video recording of the presentation](#) is available on the CIRC website.

The presentation was followed by a workshop, which was intended to create space for people living and working in Smithers and the surrounding area to share their perspectives and experiences related to

## Key Messages

In describing their motivation to attend the CIRC workshop, numerous participants expressed that they came to the topic through their work on cumulative effects, environmental assessment, other natural resource issues, and environmental concerns. An area of specific interest was the policy implications of cumulative impacts assessment, and how cumulative impacts planning processes could be supported in municipalities and First Nations communities. Several participants expressed a strong interest in the connections between environmental and human health: For the sake of all peoples living in the region now and in the future, there is a need for holistic and shared intercultural understandings of how the health of people is inseparable from the health of the land. Industry activity such as forestry has historically polarized the community with the prosperity of employment positioned in opposition to concern for the environment. It was noted that logging, mining, and energy projects in the region have been putting pressure on water quality and forest health. Other participants expressed concern that recent and historic wildfires, beehive burnings, broadcast burns, and slash burnings have had significant impacts on air quality in northern BC. Participants were interested in learning more about the individual and community impacts of resource development, and in hearing what others have to say building understanding, and learning about social change in relation to cumulative impacts. Overall, it was felt

initiatives as a way forward to ensure their voices can be heard in decision-making processes. There

issues in place. CIRC staff present at this workshop were humbled and grateful for the willingness of people in the room to share these stories with us, and commit to returning to continue these dialogues.

### Acknowledgements

This event would not have been possible without the generous support of our funders, as well as the invitation from the Bulkley Valley Research Centre to speak in their Seminar Series. CIRC would like to recognize and thank the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia for contributing funds to support this event.

For more information about this event and the CIRC, please contact:

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