

Resource extraction is a major aspect of Canada's economy and way of life. In 2022 "the value of Canada's mineral production reached \$74.6 billion" (Government of Canada, 2024). While this industry is beneficial to many Canadians, both as a personal source of income as well as for the economy, it also contributes to some profound issues - political, environmental, and social.

Resource extraction sites are often located in isolated and ecologically important places. Their placement often means that there is ongoing impact to local wildlife, waterways, and Indigenous communities who live, fish, hunt, and are connected culturally and spiritually to these areas. For example, Leyton-Flor and Sangha (2024) highlight how "Mining on Indigenous lands affects people's well-being and the relationship between themselves and their lands" (p. 1). Another aspect to the operation of these sites is the intersection between resource extraction, social inequality, and violence against women - particularly oppressed and marginalized Indigenous women.

There are several factors which make the resource extraction industry prone to inequitable practices, environmental and political discord, and increase the propensity for violence towards Indigenous women. These factors include the culture that surrounds this type of work, the lack of respect towards Indigenous peoples and their way of life, and the power disparities between big corporations and the needs of workers to make a living, as well as the lasting environmental impacts that affect us all. However, these impacts are not

experienced to the same degree by everyone. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by the social and political inequalities bound up in the expropriation of land for capital gain. The heteropatriarchal culture of the resource extraction industry is an example of a settler colonial system, however, its effects are not universal among Indigenous people. Along the axis of gender, settler colonialism is further distributed disproportionately whereby the intersection of Indigeneity and woman has greater impacts than it does for Indigenous men in many respects. Zingel (2019) highlights a particular phenomenon regarding the concentration of violent abuse cases towards Indigenous women surrounding resource extraction sites. The effects of resource development are highly gendered, colonial projects that have disproportionate impacts on Indigenous women.

As a settler colonial state, Canada retains settler colonialism structurally and systemically. According to Hunt (2021), settler colonialism seeks “to operate in favour of settlers and the expansion of capitalist ideologies of settlement” (p. 214), generating power through the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, dispossession of land, and gaining hegemony over all dominant conceptions of politics, economics, culture, and social life. Settler colonialism is “structurally embedded” (Hunt, 2021, p. 214), operating on the normalization of white, Western dominance, systematic violence against Indigenous peoples, and continued settler occupation in an effort to ensure legitimacy of settler ‘rights’ to land and continued capitalist exploitation of land and people. Projects of settler colonialism normalize the exploitation of lands and people – just as resource extraction projects do.

The resource extraction industry, according to Major et al. (2023), “has played an enduring role in settler-Indigenous relations around the world (p. 75). The resource industry routinely dispossesses Indigenous people of their ancestral lands - causing environmental harm, health concerns, and altered relationships with the land (Hunt, 2021). Resource extraction sites also subject Indigenous populations to violence through the shaping of the social structures of the communities in which they are located through the exclusion of Indigenous people from the economic benefits of mining, and minimal engagement of Indigenous communities with political decision making. “While settler colonialism is understood by many to centre on land – specifically on territorial claims – socio-legal analysis reveals that settler colonial power seeks to rework not only relationships to land but all areas of social life.” (Hunt, 2021, p. 213). Just as settler colonialism is linked to the land, so too is resource extraction and it is here that the issues lay, as the way of life for settlers is in direct opposition to that of Indigenous peoples who are linked to the land in a very different manner. And so, for one way of life to exist, the other must be diminished, exploited, or even eradicated - a process that has been ongoing and increasingly normalized. For Indigenous women, dispossession and violence are key tenets of settler colonialism and something they face in very real and physical ways. Extractive projects are central to enacting and reproducing that violence in a variety of ways which can leave lasting impacts Indigenous communities and particularly their women and girls.

Resource extraction camps are sites of gender-based and settler colonial violence. This is demonstrated by the disproportionate levels of violence faced by Indigenous women that increase in the areas adjacent to their locations (Zingel, 2019). Hettinga and Dean

(2023) argue that “The demographics in this industry help explain the increased crime rates in resource-based communities” (p. 4) by this they point to the age of the men hired in these industries, as well as how many employees have convictions for violent and sexual crimes. They also note that “The culture in man camps is described as sexist, disconnected, homophobic and conducive to levels of hypermasculinity similar to military organizations.” (Hettinga & Dean, 2023, p. 4). Other issues that can add to violence towards Indigenous women in and around resource extraction sites include “transient workers, harassment and assault in the workplace, rotational shift work, substance abuse and addictions, and economic insecurity.” (*Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a*, 2019, p. 584).

Settler colonial control over the dominant conceptions of gender have historically associated leadership and power with men/masculinity. According to Whetung (2019), the dominance of Western notions of gender, means that Indigenous women have been historically excluded from roles of power and decision making in colonial society. This would be very different from the social location they would have previously experienced in their own cultures. However, today the lack of inclusion of Indigenous women in resource extraction related decision making, as well as exclusion from participating in the industry generally is an ongoing act of oppression (Major et al., 2023). According to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a* (2019) “resource extraction projects can lead to increased violence against Indigenous women at the hands of non-Indigenous men, as well

as increased violence within Indigenous communities” (p. 584). In this environment, Indigenous women are subjected to gender-based colonial violence.

Extractive industries in Canada are sites of gender-based settler colonial violence, manifesting in the dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous land and the violence against Indigenous peoples and in women. The link between Indigenous dispossession through extractive projects and gender-based violence highlights the relationship between gender and settler colonialism. Involving both the “gendered dispossession of land” (Whetung, 2019, p 16), gender-based colonial violence, the issue operates at the intersections of settler colonialism and gender.

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