



Indigenous Wisdom

"Only when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, and the last river poisoned, will we realize that we cannot eat money."

-Cree proverb



Background

Oil is a fossil fuel, meaning it is a substance formed from the decomposition of ancient plants and animals over millions of years. Oil has been the world's primary energy source for decades, and is also used in the production of many of the products that surround our lives.

- In 2019, global demand for oil was 100.1 million barrels a day. This is enough oil to fill BC Place to the brim 16 times over - every single day!

Despite its usefulness, the extraction, transportation, and burning of oil has many negative environmental and social impacts. There is an urgent need to transition to alternative energy sources.



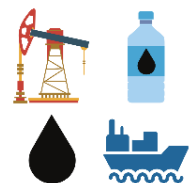
Uses and Benefits of Oil



- Oil is burned to produce energy. Over half of all oil is used to power transportation, and smaller amounts are used to heat buildings and produce electricity. Oil is a widely-used energy source because it is **energy dense** and easy to handle, store and transport.
- By-products of oil refining are found in many everyday products, such as plastics, clothing, toys, electronics, and even drugs and cosmetics.
- Because of the importance of this resource, oil extraction is a significant part of many economies. The oil and gas industry makes up 5.6% of Canada's economy.
- Globally, Canadians consume the third highest amount of oil per person.

Environmental and Social Impacts of Oil

- Oil extraction harms nearby communities, with Indigenous people often on the frontlines of the harm. For example, due to contaminated drinking water, the community of Fort Chipewyan First Nation, downstream from Alberta's tar sands, experience cancer at a rate 2–3 times more than non-First Nations populations in Alberta.
- Oil extraction and transportation can have devastating impacts on the environment. British Petroleum's 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster is the largest marine oil spill in recorded history. The 4.9 million barrels of spilled oil covered over 2,100 km of the southern US coastline and devastated wildlife and ecosystems, both onshore and offshore.



Oil and the Climate Crisis

Carbon dioxide emissions from burning oil are a main driver of the **climate crisis**. To avoid the most catastrophic impacts of the **climate crisis**, scientists have emphasized the need to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 °C,

compared to **pre-industrial levels**. Yet governments and oil companies are planning to burn 43% more oil by 2030 than the atmosphere can tolerate to meet this goal.

Oil companies, 6 of which are among the top 10 richest companies in the world, have enormous power and public influence around the world. For example, oil companies are known to have funded outspoken deniers of human-caused climate change, which may have delayed government action on this crisis for decades.

Alternatives to Oil Do Exist

Less harmful and polluting alternatives to oil include solar power, wind power, and hydropower. Electric vehicles are a more environmentally sustainable alternative to gasoline-powered vehicles.

Glossary

The climate crisis. It describes the urgent situation of human-caused climate change, caused by greenhouse gas emissions from human activity.

Energy dense. A substance is considered energy dense when it can store large amounts of energy in its mass. The term energy density refers to the amount of energy that can be stored in a given mass of a substance, or system, it commonly measured as MJ/Kg.

Pre-industrial. It refers to the time period before the beginning of the industrial revolution, in 1750. This was when humans began extracting and burning fossil fuels to produce energy for powering machines, and so marked the beginning of human-caused climate change.

Learn More and Take Action

Learn more about the true costs of oil and how we can take action to transition to clean energy:

- **Oil Change International** (<http://priceofoil.org/>)

Take action by joining a community of teenagers from across Metro Vancouver working for a just transition away from fossil fuels:

- **Sustainabiliteens** (www.instagram.com/sustainabiliteens)

Learn more about and support the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, who are taking legal action against the Government of Canada for the damage caused to their community by tar sands projects:

- **Tar Sands Trial** (<https://tarsandstrial.com/>)

Learn more and support an organization of oil workers who are advocating for the transition to renewable energy:

- **Iron & Earth** (<https://www.ironandearth.org/>)

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