

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2019

Report seeks to address ‘knowledge gap’ about Indigenous oil workers

A new report released today by the University of Alberta-based Parkland Institute is a first step in beginning to address the dearth of research and knowledge about the lived experiences of Indigenous workers in northern Alberta’s oil sands region.

Indigenous Gendered Experiences of Work in an Oil-Dependent, Rural Alberta Community is a mixed-methods study based on a series of extensive interviews with 16 Indigenous workers from the northern Alberta hamlet of Wabasca employed in a range of oilfield occupations.

“There has been a tremendous amount of research into the barriers Indigenous peoples face in accessing jobs in the oil sands region and the unequal participation of Indigenous workers in the sector,” says lead author Dr. Angele Alook, who conducted the interviews using the method of Cree storytelling known as *acimowin*. “What has been sorely lacking is a focus on the impact that working in the oil industry has had on Indigenous workers, their families, and their communities. We hope this report is a first step in the process of addressing this gap in our knowledge.”

Four primary themes emerged from the interviews with the workers in Wabasca:

1. Concerns about career mobility, and the challenges posed by experiences of racial and gender discrimination
2. The positive and negative impact on families of workers in the oil industry, including the impact of long hours and stress on the family
3. The precarious reality of working and being financially dependent on a boom-and-bust industry
4. The community impact—both positive and negative—of living in a region dominated by one industry

“What is clear from the interviews is that there exists a very complex and nuanced relationship between the industry and these workers,” says Alook. “In many ways the industry has had an incredibly positive impact for their families and communities, but those positives are counterbalanced by significant drawbacks that can’t just be ignored. With continued research of this kind, I’m hopeful policies and approaches can be developed to tilt the balance more to the positive in the future.”

Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. *Indigenous Gendered Experiences of Work in an Oil-Dependent, Rural Alberta Community* is available for download on Parkland Institute’s [website](#).

This report was undertaken as part of the Corporate Mapping Project (CMP). The CMP is a six-year research and public engagement initiative jointly led by the University of Victoria, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC and Saskatchewan Offices, and Parkland Institute. This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

-30-

For more information or to arrange interviews:

Scott Harris, Communications Coordinator

Tel. 780-492-3952 | Cell: 780-710-2025

sgharris@ualberta.ca