
1. The History of Natural Resource Development in the Arctic: The State of the Literature

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Preliminary Outline

This paper will examine the history of natural resource developments in the Arctic (broadly defined to include portions of the provincial North in Canada and comparable areas in other Arctic countries). It will look, specifically, at the contributions of existing historical literature to our understanding of the impact of resource developments on northern communities. In this way, the paper will describe how historians and historically-minded scholars have contributed to the collective understanding of the problems for northern communities associated with resource development and the more constructive impacts that resource developments have played in shaping the human history of the region.

For the purposes of this paper, natural resources will be taken to include only non-renewable resources. There is, of course, a rich literature on such economic development sectors as fur trading, northern agriculture, fishing, whaling and forestry. This is very important scholarship and has contributed significantly to our understanding of the evolution of northern societies. The issues raised by this literature are, however, quite different from those related to the extractive industries (mining and oil and gas development). For this reason, the paper will adopt a more narrow focus on mining and oil and gas activities in the Arctic regions.

Introduction: Historians, Resource Development and Community Impacts: A General Overview.

Natural Resource Development in the Arctic: A Brief Historical Overview

Major Themes in the Historiography of Natural Resource Development, Northern Peoples and Community Development

- Why have natural resources and community development attracted comparatively little research?
- Pre-1970s Scholarship: When Resources Dominated
 - Southern-focused scholarship
 - Policy-oriented work
 - Celebratory elements to the scholarship
- Post-1970s Scholarship: Toward Critical Assessments of Resource Development
 - Toward north and community-centred scholarship
 - Growing awareness of the impact of resources on Aboriginal communities
 - More complicated appreciation for the role of natural resource development
- Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resource Development
 - Focus on disruptive elements of resource development
 - Association of resource development with an era of great transformation in Indigenous life-ways and social organization
 - Strong interest in Aboriginal protests against resource development
 - Less attention to (limited) Indigenous engagement
- Newcomer Populations, Community Formation and Change, and Natural Resource Development

- Limited historical interest in newcomers, pre and post-WWII
- Natural resource “boom” understood largely on the macro-level
- Few studies of resource communities and extractive industries generally in this time period; some work on single industry towns
- Shift to fly in-fly out camps has lessened interest in mining towns
- Missing stories and missing understandings.
- Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Northern Communities
 - Long-standing historical interest in major infrastructure projects
 - Interest declines after World War II – celebratory work declines, especially among professional historians
 - Major projects and their Impact on the North
 - Local politics and demands for north-centered infrastructure
- Arctic Environments and the Long-Term Effects of Natural Resource Development on Northern Peoples
 - Growing southern interest in the Arctic sparks concern about the Arctic environment
 - Major projects, including the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, James Bay hydroelectric development, and others, generate historical interest in northern resources and local impacts.
 - Preliminary work on environmental history, natural resources and Arctic communities has started
- Historians and the Natural Resource Evaluation Process: Why Have Historians’ Voices Been Largely Silent?
 - The limited engagement of historians with contemporary Northern issues
 - Even smaller historical interest among governments and industry proponents
 - The effect of missing historical understanding of earlier development processes.

Gaps in Historical Research on Natural Resources and Arctic Communities: Preliminary Themes

- Non-Aboriginal Communities and Resource-Dependant Societies
- Transiency in Northern Resource Communities
- Pre-World War II Resource Communities
- Value Systems (Indigenous, Newcomer Populations, Outside Corporations, Governments, Southerners Generally) related to Arctic Resource Development
- Impact of Pre-World War II Resource Developments on Aboriginal Peoples
- Wage Economies in the Natural Resource Sector, including the Role of Unions in Arctic Development
- High Arctic Resource Developments, focusing on Nearby Indigenous Communities and Temporary Workers
- Coping with Winter and Arctic Conditions: The Effects on Northern Communities
- Private and Public Sector Investments in Infrastructure and the Impact of these Investments on Arctic Communities
- Indigenous Engagement with the Resource Economy
- Environmental Impact of Resource Activities on Northern Eco-Systems, Indigenous Peoples and Arctic Communities
- Indigenous Protests against Resource Development
- Government Policies re: Community Formation, Servicing and Transitions in Arctic Regions

- Mine/Project-Specific Studies of the Impact of Resource Developments in the Arctic
- Planning, Speculation and Arctic Communities (particularly related to oil and gas)
- The Military, Strategic Considerations and Major Investments in Northern Natural Resource Development and Infrastructure
- The Advent of Environmental Remediation in the Arctic
- Fly In-Fly Out Camps and the Transformation of Northern Societies
- Aboriginal Land Claims and Land Claims Settlements and the Development Frontier
- Comparative Aspects of Northern Resource Development and Arctic Communities

Bibliography