

Buzz, Boom, and Bust:
The gendered impacts of the speculative phase of
resource development in British Columbia



Community Report #1
June 2020

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The purpose of this research project is to better understand the social and community impacts of natural resource development in the years of preparation and anticipation before a major project opens for operations—during the "buzz" that precedes a boom. This study asks: **What are the social impacts of natural resource development in the years leading up to operations, even if a project is cancelled?**

The study specifically looks at how women, men, and diverse people living in Kitimat and the surrounding area experience the positive and negative impacts of this pre-operational and speculative phase of resource development differently.

Kitimat is one of [two case studies](#) being undertaken for a larger project on the buzz phase of resource development in British Columbia and New Brunswick.

The three-year research project runs from September 2018 to August 2021, with funding provided by the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#).

The Kitimat study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at the [University of Northern British Columbia](#).

More information about the research project, including future updates and community reports, are available at <http://www.resource-buzz.ca/british-columbia/>.

All photographs in this report were taken by Dr. Marieka Sax in Kitimat in February 2020.



COMMUNITY REPORT #1

This community report summarizes the presentation and participant input from the project launch workshop, and outlines changes to research activities planned for 2020-21 due to COVID-19.

Presentation slides from the project launch can be found on the project website at http://www.resource-buzz.ca/british-columbia/british-columbia/community_activities.html.

PROJECT LAUNCH

The research project was publicly launched on February 29, 2020. Approximately 40 people came to the Kitimat Public Library for an hour-long workshop. There was a great turnout with a lot of enthusiastic participation!

The event included a presentation with an overview of the research project, an open discussion period, and five discussion boards where participants could leave written comments.

There was a door prize draw for a \$50 gift card to Save On Foods. The winner of the door prize was Sue Jay. Congratulations Sue!

The extra food and beverages left at the end of the event were donated to The Cornerstone.

Thanks to the Kitimat Public Library for providing the meeting room for this event, including opening up the space when more people arrived.

A special thanks to Pam Vollrath, Leah Levac, and Andrea Guldin for help with promoting the event, picking up supplies, setting up the room, and looking after the registration table.



WHY THIS STUDY?

This study aims to:

- Support policy development and planning decisions
- Inform social impact assessment methodologies
- Enhance resiliency, mitigate conflict, and support evidence-based solutions for British Columbians living and working alongside resource development

WHAT'S THE BUZZ PHASE?

We often hear about resource booms and busts. But what's happening during the years of preparation and anticipation for a major project? This is the buzz phase. The buzz phase is speculative, because although there may be a hoped-for project, it's not yet for sure. The buzz phase is also pre-operational, because the project is still preparing to open for business.

The buzz phase includes the years of exploration, consultation, planning, and anticipation for major projects. British Columbia has seen at least 10 years of "buzz" around LNG development. In drawing attention to an understudied phase of the extractive cycle, the buzz phase of resource development can be useful for planning, regulation, and mobilization for both projects that move forward to operations, and those that are cancelled.

WHY KITIMAT?

Kitimat was chosen for this study because:

- It has a deep history and experience of resource development
- It will be the site of Canada's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facility
- It is the ideal location to study the community impacts of oil and gas development at sites of extraction, "downstream" in the commodity chain

WHAT'S GENDER GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The positive and negative impacts of resource development are unequally distributed. Women, men, and diverse individuals are impacted differently.

By paying attention to individual circumstances and aspects of identity (along with social structures such as class, racialization, sexuality, ability, and age), this study aims to describe how diverse people in Kitimat and the surrounding area access the benefits of resource development, and deal with the burdens that go along with it.

This "intersectional" approach to research and policy development is aligned with the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) that is being adopted across various governing jurisdictions, including the [Government of Canada](#).

PUBLIC INPUT FROM THE PROJECT LAUNCH



In the discussion period following the presentation, someone spoke about their concerns for the environment and how resource development results in often irreversible changes. Another person mentioned reduced hours at stores and restaurants (which have lost staff to higher-paying industry jobs), and several people commented on the increased cost of housing. It wasn't all bad news, however, and someone spoke about how their business was benefitting from the construction.

There was interest in knowing who would be invited to participate in interviews and focus groups. The many seniors present wanted to make sure their voices would be heard in the research project.

There was also concern expressed about what difference the project could make for Kitimat, indicating a strong desire for positive changes in local policies and procedures in the face of ongoing resource development.

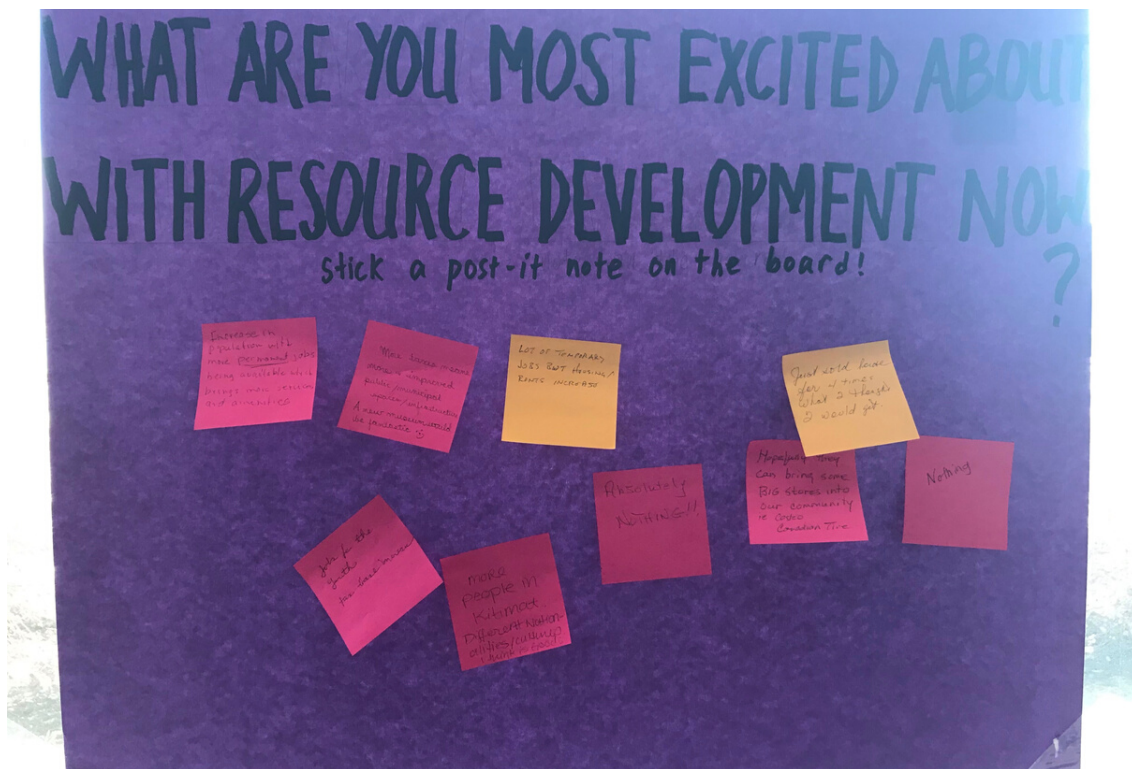
Responses to the discussion boards are summarized in the following pages.

"WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT WITH RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT NOW?"

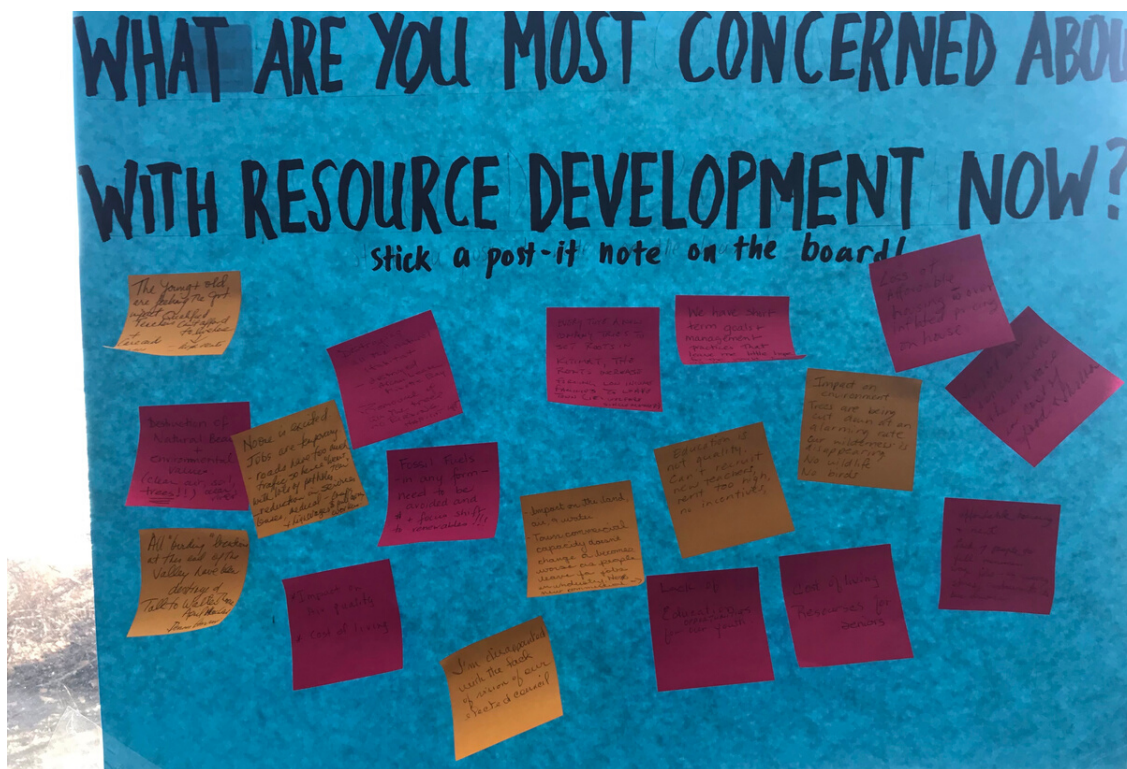
Participants largely wrote about their excitement for jobs. Kitimat is a small resource town, and well-paying jobs, people see, are necessary for a vibrant community. With good jobs, perhaps more youth would elect to remain or return to Kitimat to raise their own families, as some residents say is now happening.

The sticky notes on this poster board expressed that people hope the jobs will bring a more diverse population, a bigger tax base, and in turn improved public spaces and infrastructure. They hope for more services, and more choices in local businesses. Indeed, in this first year of construction, local contractors and tradespeople are benefiting from construction and engineering contracts.

The optimism expressed was not universal, however. On some sticky notes, people wrote about their concern that the jobs are temporary. Long-time residents have been through several boom and bust cycles, and they are keenly aware of the transitory nature of much of the industry work that comes to Kitimat. Other people wrote that there was "nothing" they were excited about.



In spite of the excitement for resource development written on the first poster, participants expressed more negative impacts than positive ones on the other discussion boards.

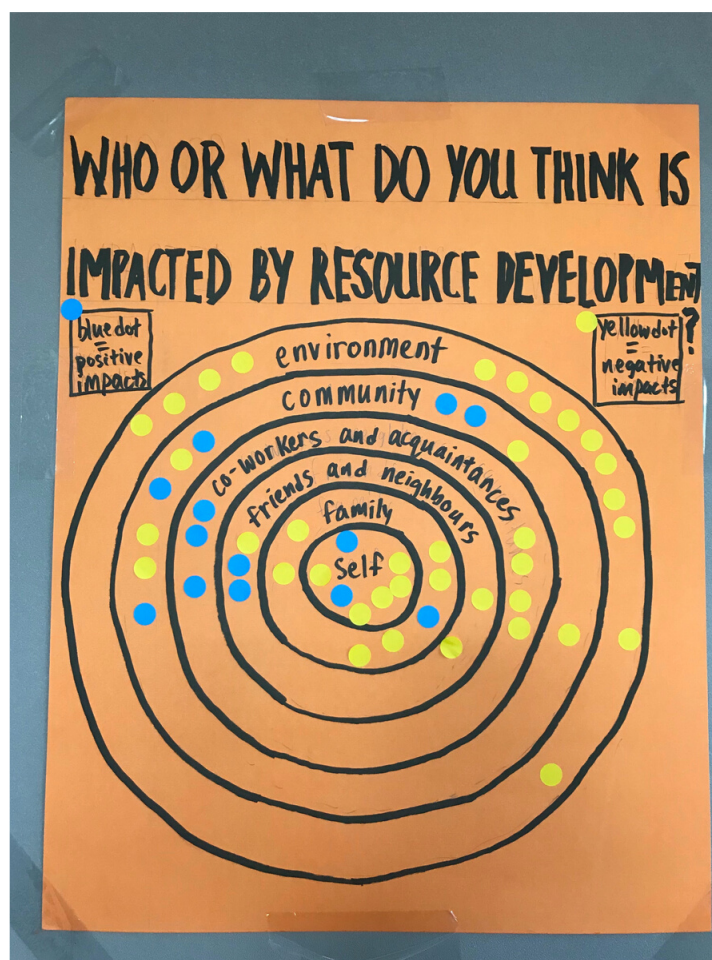


"WHO OR WHAT DO YOU THINK IS IMPACTED BY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT?"

Participants were invited to put a blue sticker where they saw positive impacts, and a yellow sticker where they saw negative impacts. Each ring was labelled with a different type of social proximity: self, family, friends and neighbours, co-workers and acquaintances, community, and environment.

At the end of the workshop, there were 2.8 yellow stickers for every blue sticker on the board. In almost every ring there was at least one positive impact indicated along with the more numerous negative impacts. The one exception was "environment," which exclusively had 14 yellow stickers—all negative, and the highest number of stickers for any one category.

Responses to this discussion board indicated a strong conviction that the environment is being negatively impacted by resource development. At the same time, participants recognized that resource development brings both positive and negative impacts at various levels of society.

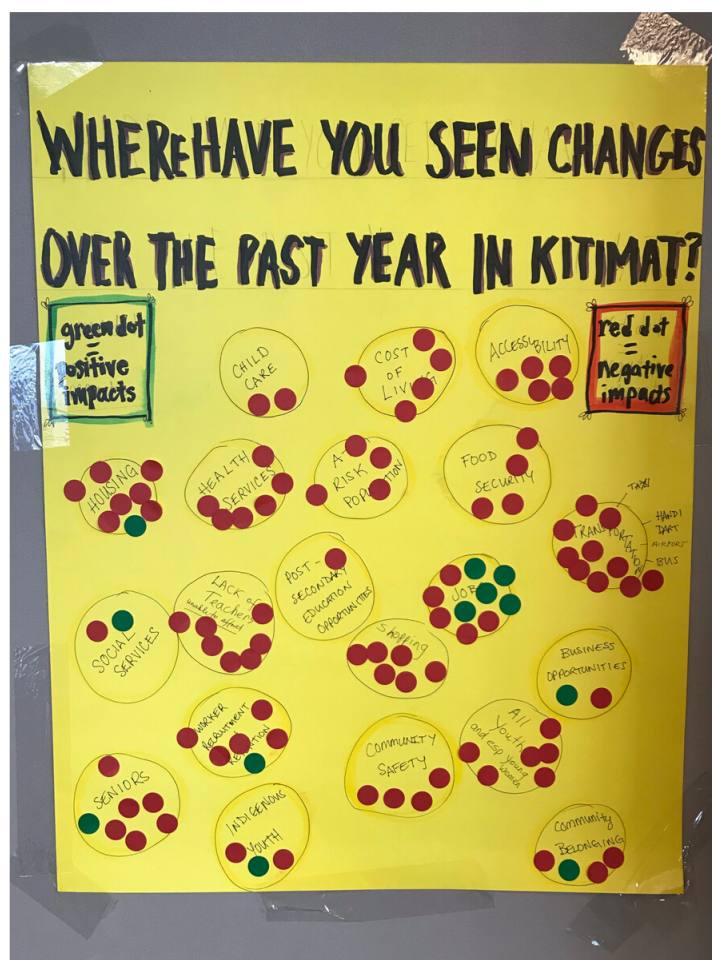


"WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN CHANGES OVER THE PAST YEAR IN KITIMAT?"

This discussion board included 20 categories, some of which were added by participants as they considered what was missing from the board. Some of the categories represented services and infrastructure (child care, education, health services, housing, social services, transportation), and some were about broader needs and assets (accessibility, business opportunities, food security, jobs, shopping, teacher and worker recruitment). Some categories concerned specific groups of people (at risk populations, seniors, youth), and some referred to quality of life issues (community belonging, community safety, cost of living).

Participants were invited to put a green sticker where they saw positive impacts, and a red sticker where they saw negative impacts on the poster board. Once again, there were many more negative impacts expressed compared to positive impacts—7.4 red stickers for every green sticker, in fact.

While every category received at least one sticker, 12 of the categories did not receive any green or "positive" stickers.



Jobs stood out as having an equal number of red and green stickers, for a total of 10. Transportation also received a total of 10 stickers, but these were all red or "negative."

Other categories that received relatively high numbers of stickers were housing, youth (combining youth in general and Indigenous youth in particular), teachers, and seniors. These were highlighted by the workshop participants as areas where they have seen largely negative changes over the past year.

"FOR YOU, WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS 2-YEAR STUDY WORTHWHILE?"

This discussion board was at the registration table, next to the door prize entry and communications sign-up sheet. Participants said they wanted to hear feedback from this meeting (approximately 75% of attendees signed up for an email communications list to be updated about the study), to learn more about the arts-based research component, and to see findings published and taken seriously by decision-makers to put recommended changes into an action plan. One respondent was even more pointed about their desire to see a change in a key area of their life that has been exacerbated by the buzz of resource development, saying that lower rents are needed.



STUDY ACTIVITIES FOR 2020-21

Some changes to study activities are necessary due to COVID-19. The possibility of in-person visits and public events for this research project will be re-evaluated as COVID-19 circumstances change, following guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the University of Northern British Columbia's Office of Research.

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey will be open from June 24 to September 25 for residents of the District of Kitimat and Kitimaat Village. The survey aims to understand how residents participate in and are impacted by the buzz of resource development projects. Survey participants will be eligible to be entered into a draw for a \$50 gift card to No Frills. The link to the survey is www.surveymonkey.ca/r/Y9NX23V.

REMOTE INTERVIEWS

Remote interviews will be undertaken with local decision-makers, health and social service providers, and business owners to better understand the social and community impacts of the buzz phase. The "life history" interviews proposed for a select sample of residents have been put on hold until in-person visits become possible again.

WORKSHOPS

Do you want to tell your story about what it's like to live and work alongside the buzz of resource development while learning creative skills? A series of workshops will start in September with the assistance of a local coordinator. Small groups will meet online and/or in person for a guided activity and facilitated discussion. Activities to reflect on life experiences may include drawing, collage, writing, photography, video blogging, and podcasting. These workshops aim to hear from Indigenous peoples, first-generation immigrants, seniors, youth, men and women working in industry, and non-industry community members.

PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

A photovoice project is under development to delve deeper into the experiences of living and working alongside the buzz of resource development. Two separate groups will meet online over several weeks to share their stories, document their experiences of the buzz phase through photographs, and reflect upon their experiences. A public exhibition of selected photographs will take place at the end.

If you or your organization or community group would like to be involved in any of these research activities, please contact Marieka Sax at marieka.sax@unbc.ca or (250) 960-5650.

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