

BACKGROUND

The possible closure of Imperial Oil's facilities at Norman Wells, after more than a century of operations, has raised questions in communities across the Sahtú region about the history of oil extraction at Norman Wells and its impacts on land, water, animals, and Dene and Métis ts'ı̀ı̀ (way of life).

Over the course of 2020-21, these questions were communicated by community leaders and members to ǰehdzo Got'ı̀ne Gots'ę́ Nákedı́ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB) staff during a series of study circles and meetings of the Nę́ K'ę́ Dene Ts'ı̀ı̀ – Living on the Land Forum. Together the SRRB and the Norman Wells, Tulıt'a, and Fort Good Hope ǰehdzo Got'ı̀ne (Renewable Resources Councils), with input from the Nę́ K'ę́ Dene Ts'ı̀ı̀ Forum, designed “A Century of Petroleum Extraction at Tę́gǰhı́ (Norman Wells): Indigenous Knowledge for Indigenous Guardianship.”

DESCRIPTION

Stories and knowledge gathered through oral histories, archival research, ground truthing (fieldwork), study circles, and in-person gatherings will be shared through a narrative history, story maps, a website, and short and feature-length films. In addition to expanding local understandings of the history of the Norman Wells oilfields, the knowledge generated through this project will support the development of community conservation plans in the five Sahtú communities. These plans, in turn, will provide a range of evidence for regulatory bodies (Sahtú Land and Water Board, Sahtú Land Use Planning Board, Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, and Mackenzie Environmental Impact Review Board) making decisions about the closure and reclamation of the Norman Wells oilfields.

PETROLEUM HISTORIES PROJECT



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PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to document the history and impacts of the oil industry at Norman Wells in order to support Sahtú Dene and Métis participation in closure and reclamation of the Norman Wells oilfields and strengthen present and future Indigenous roles in monitoring, stewardship, and decision-making.



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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Compile an archive of sources about the history and impacts of petroleum extraction at Norman Wells.
2. Record oral histories with a focus on Indigenous knowledge about cumulative impacts on land, water, animals, and Dene and Métis ts'įłı.
3. "Ground truth" current evidence of cumulative impacts through boots on the ground observation by Ne K'édíke – Keepers of the Land. Interpret current observations in light of historical knowledge through dialogue between Ne K'édíke and elders.
4. Facilitate dialogue between Dene and Métis elders and knowledge holders, Ne K'édíke, youth, and collaborators about the history and impacts of petroleum extraction at Norman Wells.
5. Produce a community-informed and archival-based history of petroleum extraction at Norman Wells to be used as documentation for: Sahtú communities participating in ongoing remediation, closure, and reclamation processes; regional decision-making related to conservation of homeland, wildlife, and way of life; and new resource development projects.
6. Contribute to community planning, proposal review, and input to the Sahtú Land and Water Board on closure and reclamation of the Norman Wells Proven Area, including design of a Ne K'édíke monitoring program.
7. Contribute community presentations to the SRRB's Public Listening Sessions (Hearings) on caribou.
8. In collaboration with the Gwich'in Tribal Council's River Journeys team, train youth in video production and produce short videos about Indigenous knowledge and science related to the historical and ongoing impacts of petroleum extraction at Norman Wells, to be compiled as a feature documentary film.

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

- Fort Good Hope ʔehdzo Got'įne (Renewable Resources Council)
- GNWT Environment and Natural Resources
- Gwich'in Tribal Council, Department of Cultural Heritage
- Memorial University
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
- Ne K'ə Dene Ts'įłı - Living on the Land Forum
- Norman Wells ʔehdzo Got'įne (Renewable Resources Council)
- ʔehdzo Got'įne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
- Tulít'a ʔehdzo Got'įne (Renewable Resources Council)
- University of Calgary

You can find more information about this project at:

www.srrb.nt.ca