

## RESISTANCE TO EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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### I. Introduction

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador is undergoing an economic, social, and cultural transformation, due in no small part to extractive industries such as oil and mineral mining. Yet even as some areas of the province have seen obvious economic benefits – specifically urban areas – many rural communities express disaffection over perceived neglect and uneven development, even as it is rural or otherwise peripheral regions of the province where resources are being extracted. Industrial developments can give rise to cultures of resistance, which function in various ways and take different forms. Forms of resistance are influenced by proximity (real or imagined) to industrial developments, as well as social aspects such as class and ethnicity, among other factors. Forms of resistance can be understood as a backdrop to industrial development, acting as an indicator of the impact of extractive industries on the social fabric of communities.

Offshore oil and gas has rapidly expanded in Newfoundland and Labrador since the mid-1980s, with companies like ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Statoil operating offshore production rigs. The provincial government, in partnership with the federal government of Canada, has a royalty agreement in place, the 1985 Atlantic Accord. The province also benefits from jobs in the oil industry and related service industries, increased spending on social services, and in the consumer economy.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, there have been a number of traumatic incidents to do with offshore oil developments, such as the 1982 sinking of the exploration rig *Ocean Ranger*, in which 84 people died, and more recently the 2009 crash of an offshore transport helicopter, in which 17 people died. These events left a mark on the collective consciousness of the province and have been the subject of government inquiries, numerous reports, and have

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<sup>1</sup> Reports by the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial government show that offshore oil is the largest contributor to GDP by industry in the province. Offshore production is on the order of 100 million barrels per year (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012).

also been taken up in cultural forms such as novels, songs, plays, and monuments. These cultural markers show that the province is not only a petro-culture in terms of the economic foundation of society, but also because the community experiences moments of trauma that are represented or spoken back to the oil industry through cultural means.

Exploratory work has also been conducted on shale deposits on the west coast of Newfoundland, with proposals to use unconventional techniques like hydraulic fracturing (fracking) at a number of onshore sites. In response there has been an anti-fracking movement, made up of vocal residents of rural communities near the onshore drill sites as well as anti-fracking activists in urban centers of the province. The movement has been successful in pressuring the provincial government to enact a moratorium on shale developments, pending further review. Other Canadian provinces have also enacted moratoria or bans on hydraulic fracturing in response to public dissent. The chief concerns of west coast Newfoundland residents are environmental (spills, emissions, contamination of drinking water) and social concerns of impacts on quality of life from industrial activity. The offshore oil industry does not directly impact residents in that it is distant, unseen, and “not in my backyard,” even while there are occasional moments of collective trauma such as the *Ocean Ranger* disaster. Onshore industrial activity throughout the province, whether oil, mining, or other kinds of development, is much more likely to contribute to the formation of cultures of resistance, even in sparsely populated communities of rural Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup>

Further examples of cultures of resistance to extractive industries can be found in communities in the Labrador portion of the province, which has significant iron ore, nickel, uranium, and copper deposits. Even though land claim agreements with Inuit and Innu peoples have provided some benefits to Labrador indigenous communities, there are concerns about sovereignty and loss of traditional food sources such as caribou, seal, and fish due to industrial activity; concerns about hiring practices and indigenous participation in industrial projects; concerns over a perceived lack of consultation on the part of government and industry; concerns about rising cost of living; and concerns about social

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<sup>2</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador has a population of ~ 525,000, of which ~ 200,000 live in the urban area of the capital St. John's. The Labrador portion of the province has a population of ~ 25,000 (Statistics Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013).

problems such as substance abuse.<sup>3</sup> Even with so much resource wealth coming out of Labrador, a number of northern indigenous communities remain inaccessible except by plane or boat, are not hooked up to the integrated electrical grid (though lines are quickly run to new mining operations), and regularly experience food shortages due to unusual or prolonged springtime pack ice conditions. With increased revenues from extractive industries, the province has also undertaken large-scale hydroelectric projects in Labrador to bolster an expanding mining industry and for potential energy exports to North American markets. This hydroelectric industrial activity, as with the mining activities it is associated with, has likewise led to the development of resistance movements.

The disaffection felt by communities in Labrador manifests in various forms of resistance, just as forms of resistance emerged on the west coast of Newfoundland to hydraulic fracturing. Protests and opposition to industrial activity in Labrador has a long history, and Innu and Inuit indigenous communities have been at the forefront of the resistance to mining. Resistance by indigenous groups has taken the form of blockades, work stoppages, demonstrations, and legal challenges. Perceived patterns of neglect of Labrador communities have also spurred a Labrador “independence” or “separatist” movement. Somewhat atypical of independence movements around the world, the Labrador independence movement does not want to be a country or state per se, but rather to become a self-governing territory in the Canadian federation, similar to the northern Nunavut territory or the Northwest Territories. Much of the rhetoric of the Labrador independence movement centers on the “colonial attitude” of the provincial government and the lack of benefit to Labrador communities from the development of Labrador-based resources.

This concept – resistance – has been the topic of a good deal of scholarly writing and is a philosophically rich term. It should be noted, from the outset, that resistance as it is discussed here is not to be understood in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal groups in Labrador include the Innu, whose territory is generally inland and extends westward into Quebec; the Inuit, whose territory is northern and coastal areas of Labrador; and NunatuKavut (sometimes called Southern Inuit or Labrador metis) who are of mixed Inuit and European-settler heritage. NunatuKavut Community Council, the representative body for NunatuKavut, is actively seeking aboriginal recognition from the Canadian federal and Newfoundland and Labrador provincial governments. The island of Newfoundland is home to Mi'kmaq bands, located on the west of the island, as well as a large number of people claiming aboriginal status as Newfoundland Mi'kmaq-metis, organized in the Qalipu band, whose claim has not yet been recognized by the federal or provincial government.

armed or militant groups, which represent one end of what might be described as a spectrum of resistance, though they certainly do not encompass the broad sweep of possible modes or forms. However, this is not to say that the study of such militant groups would be unproductive in terms of a way of understanding impacts of extractive industries, and, indeed, there are many examples of just these kinds of armed groups arising in response (directly or indirectly) to industrial activity. In the experience of contemporary Canadian society, and in post-Confederation Newfoundland and Labrador more specifically, resistance to extractive industries most often takes up nonviolent, in many cases institutionalized, forms. These resistance movements very often function in a manner that may be described as “within-against,” taking up a position of dissent or employing contentious politics in order to win concessions from government and industry or to sway public opinion, but these are certainly not examples of resistance movements calling for regime change or that seek to found a new state. Nonetheless, there are shared characteristics among seemingly disparate modes of resistance, especially since relations of power and authority are often at issue.

One example of recent scholarly activity theorizing resistance is the journal *Resistance Studies* (founded in 2008). In the first issue, Tim Gough, in his article “Resistance: Under what Grace,” underlines the difficulty and complexity inherent in the term:

There is an apparently paradoxical nature to resistance. Resistance is resistance against something, towards which it appears inimical. This resisted thing, however, requires such resistance in order to define itself and keep itself safe. Should it fail to do so, that which succeeds it will require resistance in turn ... Resistance and counter-resistance, resistance and counter-move, resistance and incorporation are the means by which this pre-existing order will maintain itself and neutralise that which opposes it. It will maintain itself, more or less successfully, and will neutralise resistance, more or less successfully, but will never, for strategic reasons, do so too well. (2008, 17-18)

This is to say that resistance is integral to the exercise of any sort of authority, such that an opposing force is necessary for any authority to function. Even though resistance “appears inimical,” as Gough puts it, to the particular thing being opposed, resistance is always pointing toward and defining that which it stands against. Moreover, resistance presupposes and recognizes that

which is opposed by the act of standing against it, and in this sense resistance is necessary for authority to function and to exist. For this reason, it is also appropriate to understand participation with institutional bodies, including government-sanctioned consultative boards and commissions, as forms of resistance. This notion of resistance also related to Foucault's discussion of discourse, since any discourse functions as a power system, with dominant and subordinate claims. Subordinate and dissenting voices are necessary in that they give a defining structure to the discourse in general, mapping out the boundaries of what can legitimately be said. It is in this sense that Foucault provocatively wrote, in *The History of Sexuality*, that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1990, 96).

It may seem that formulations of resistance as a necessary correlate to the exercise of authority and power, as discussed by Foucault and others, is only applicable to governments and state institutions. Nonetheless, this theory of resistance is equally applicable to companies involved in extractive industries. Regardless of whether companies invite or even encourage resistance in the same manner that modern states do, and regardless of the degree to which corporations are able to exercise what may seem to be hegemonic private power, there are few, if any, examples of industrial developments that take place without having to contend with, or without eliciting, some form of resistance. Historically speaking, the forms of resistance that industry most often encountered were to do with organized labour – disputes over wages, benefits, hours, working conditions, etc. Resistance in the form of unionism and organized labour was most pronounced during the industrial era, specifically because of the locale and characteristics of a labour force living in industrial cities and the dominant mode of transportation being rail. That said, organized labour continues to be a force of resistance, albeit significantly blunted, in what are sometimes called post-industrial societies. Unionism is a part of the analysis to follow, so it is worth noting that companies, just like governments, create mechanisms intended to mitigate or incorporate labour resistance, often elaborated in terms of managerial or human relations theory.

Along with the correlate of corporate power as resistance in the form of the labour movement, companies encounter resistance from communities in which they operate or communities adjacent to their operations. A govern-

ment or regulatory body may grant a company license to conduct industrial activity, but without the support of the community that company is likely to encounter numerous, often unanticipated, obstacles. Even in communities where there is tacit support for a particular industrial activity, it takes no more than a handful of disaffected or otherwise opposed individuals to create significant resistance. Extractive industries are also no stranger to direct action and explicit forms of resistance. In recent decades, direct action aimed at extractive industries has often been carried out by groups like Greenpeace, Earth First!, or other such groups adhering to eco-anarchist or deep green ideologies. Sabotage, lockdowns, blockades, protest camps, and other kinds of disruptive direct action can affect the day-to-day operations of companies; these sorts of direct action can also galvanize cultures of resistance in particular communities, though this is often dependant on the response by industry or law enforcement to such provocations. In the Newfoundland and Labrador context, direct action has often been employed by indigenous communities, mostly when institutional and legal forms of resistance have been ineffective in resolving disputes. In this sense, and as will be seen in the discussion below, it seems appropriate to set out a broad thesis: extractive industries, just as the exercise of power by states, compels resistance.

The analysis developed in this paper also draws on similar studies of resistance to extractive industries and social impacts of extractive industries more broadly. A number of articles in the 2014 inaugural issue of the journal *Extractive Industries and Society* have been informative in this regard. One such article, Henry Veltmeyer and Paul Bowles's "Extractivist Resistance: The Case of the Enbridge Oil Pipeline Project in Northern British Columbia," understands resistance to oil and gas pipelines through three lenses: Marxist class analysis, postcolonial theory, and postmodern frames of reference. These various approaches essentially line up with three main groups the authors identify in their analysis of resistance to pipelines in British Columbia, "labour, indigenous groups and environmental organizations" (2014, 62). An analysis of resistance to extractive industries in Newfoundland and Labrador likewise takes up perspectives on social class, colonialism, and environmentalism, and adds elements of discourse analysis, which is helpful for describing literature, images, and other kinds of cultural representations of extractive industries and resistance.

A number of studies and articles have also been informative in terms of theorizing indigenous resistance to extractive industries. One such study, “Pitfalls and Pipelines: Indigenous Peoples and Extractive Industries,” discusses numerous examples of indigenous resistance to oil and mining developments around the globe; the importance of free, prior, and informed consent; the impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples and their resistance movements; as well as industry responses to indigenous resistance. The analysis of forms of resistance in the voluminous report ranges from “barricading to stop operations, strikes, filing temporary restraining orders (TROs) against companies, filing civil and criminal cases, using international complaints and grievance mechanisms, campaigning in countries where the corporations have headquarters or where their investors are, to taking up arms” (Whitmore, 2012, xv). The analysis of the effects of extractive industries on indigenous communities focuses on three main areas: environmental impacts, social impacts, and cultural impacts. Resistance in local communities is often combined with resistance that takes the form of interacting with regulatory bodies, the courts, with companies themselves (through complaint mechanisms), international bodies, and NGOs. This paper examines responses by communities, indigenous and settler alike, to extractive industries in similar terms, with an awareness that various kinds of resistance exist in concert.

Finally, it should be noted, before proceeding, that even though this analysis teases apart oil and mineral mining developments and discusses resistance in relation to each, it is difficult to understand resistance to one extractive industry in isolation from a generalized culture of resistance inherent in various power relations within the social, economic, cultural, and political life of communities. This is to say that occurrences of resistance do not happen in a vacuum – a particular kind of industrial development may simply be a catalyst or focal point for a mobilization of resistance that is, in fact, deeply rooted in amorphous grievances. With regard to extractive industries, it may be the case that a particular development meets with resistance in what seems to be a cause-effect relationship, but the antecedent of resistance may very well be longstanding structural violence or inherent inequalities of the broader economic system. This systems analysis of resistance may help explain why, in the Newfoundland and Labrador context, rural communities, and especially indigenous communities in Labrador, have been hotbeds of resistance in re-

cent years, while urban centers, such as the provincial capital St. John's, have been relatively sedate. Labrador indigenous communities suffer from unequal development, poverty, and numerous social problems. Urban centers of the province, while not idyllic or without social problems, enjoy a relatively high standard of living and access to services. So although industrial developments inevitably compel forms of resistance, some of the possible metrics for the intensity or pervasiveness of resistance in a particular community or region are the underlying socioeconomic stability and overall quality of life. This is to say that resistance is much more likely to become popular or "contagious" in particular circumstances, and this can sometimes have little to do with what seems to be the specific issue at hand.

The following discussion is divided in two sections, the first examining resistance to oil and gas developments in Newfoundland and Labrador, the second examining resistance to mining developments in the province.

## **II. Resistance to Oil and Gas in Newfoundland and Labrador**

In 1979, Chevron Standard Limited made a major discovery of oil 350 kilometers east of the island of Newfoundland, the Hibernia oil field. This discovery heralded the coming of an oil boom in the province, which continues to this day, with new wells being discovered on a regular basis over the past few decades. Offshore oil has been, in economic terms, a boon for the province, which had been mired in economic hardships and chronic unemployment for generations; the oil industry also came online at roughly the same time as the province's traditional industry, the cod fishery, collapsed. Recently, the provincial government, in partnership with Statoil, has pledged to take the lead in Arctic oil exploration, citing Newfoundland and Labrador's experience working in the harsh conditions of the North Atlantic, and will host the Arctic Technology Conference in 2016.

The centrality of oil in Newfoundland and Labrador has led academics and commentators to describe the province as a "petroculture." This notion of a society organized around oil has been developed by, among others, Imre Szeman, Canada Research Chair at the University of Alberta. "It's not just that we

have a society and we simply use this energy source. We are a petroculture,” said Szeman, in a paper delivered at a Memorial University forum (2014, 2). He opened his talk wondering whether “we are people who live in societies so saturated with the substance that we cannot imagine how to do without it” (2014, 1). Oil, from this perspective, is not only a chief export and source of revenue, it is central to the very infrastructure and organization of the modern world. This is true in terms of use of combustion engines in vehicles, consumer products that rely on petroleum and plastics, fertilizers used on crops, and, indeed, the very network of paved roads that function as the base mode of transportation in contemporary society.

An interesting example that Szeman discusses, to illustrate oil’s social significance in terms of the mobilisation and suppression of resistance, is the relationship of different energy sources and organized labour. When coal was the primary energy source, the organization of that industry meant that labour forces could strike for better wages or working conditions, because sites of production, refinement, and rail transport could be easily disrupted by workers. Leverage points for organized labour were, in this sense, visible and easily found. A society based on oil, on the other hand, requires fewer workers to produce more energy, and the labour is often done in isolated locations, far removed from population centers. Szeman notes that “the mass politics that emerged alongside coal was defeated by the rise of fossil-fuel networks that made mass action more difficult, and changed the conditions within which class struggle took place” (2014, 6). Szeman is critical of a society organized around cheap oil and the illusion of endless growth, but he is also critical of leftist and environmental politics for failing or neglecting to understand the true scope of the question of oil and for making oil invisible when articulating a vision for society. Szeman contends that the introduction of oil and energy into how we talk about societal change would not invalidate left thinking, but would make it more alert to the necessity of mass energy for the enormous social and infrastructural systems we inhabit and those we imagine. “Keeping oil front and centre to our awareness,” he says, “would also alert us to the dead end of any environmental discourse that continues to ally itself with economics, as in some variants of theories of sustainability, a discourse that depends on the idea of oil being virtually ‘free’” (Szeman, 2014, 20).

This impasse, the pervasive nature of the oil to the petroculture that is Newfoundland and Labrador combined with the paradoxical invisibility of oil because of its distant locale of production in the offshore, summarizes the current thinking about oil in the province. The drive for economic development trumps issues of environmentalism and related social or political concerns. It is fair to say that St. John's has happily welcomed the oil industry and benefited in many ways; for example, through economic development, jobs, increased consumer spending, and increased government revenues. Nonetheless, there have been significant flashpoints and moments of strain between the community and the oil industry, notably with regard to industry-related accidents resulting in loss of life.

One such significant incident was the 1982 sinking of the exploration drilling rig *Ocean Ranger*. In *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History*, Memorial University historian Sean Cadigan suggests that at this time the provincial government "paid little attention to the regulation of offshore workers' safety ... The offshore oil industry, sadly, took on a more tragic significance for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador" when all 84 crew members perished in the sinking of the rig in frigid waters (2009, 269). Cadigan further notes the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* "was part of a rapid increase in major mishaps involving oil rigs in the offshore oil sector globally as exploratory drilling boomed throughout the 1970s and 1980s." A public inquiry, the Royal Commission on the Ocean Ranger Maritime Disaster, investigated the disaster, which led to a number of changes to the province's regulatory frameworks for offshore workers' safety. The report also suggested the offshore oil industry had been complicit in the disaster and had not responded adequately to legitimate concerns raised by workers (Royal Commission, 1984). Another such tragic incident occurred in 2009, the crash of a transport helicopter ferrying workers to the offshore rigs. The crash of Cougar flight 91 resulted in the deaths of 17 passengers and one survivor. As with the *Ocean Ranger* disaster, a public inquiry was held, the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry (2010), which made a number of recommendations concerning safety regulations for the offshore oil industry.

These two industrial accidents are best understood in relation to forms of resistance and organized labour, and, indeed, it was the major unions in the province that were most vocal in condemning perceived failures of regulatory bodies and lack of concern for workers' safety by the oil industry more gener-

ally. Even though no unions called for anything like a wholesale re-evaluation of the province's relationship with the oil industry and there were no explicit forms of resistance such as public demonstrations, the impact of the *Ocean Ranger* disaster and the crash of flight 91 was broadly felt as a collective trauma by the people of the province. Along with institutional forms of resistance such as public inquiries, there has also been a consistent stream of cultural expressions of grief and remonstrance, which serves the function, as Szeman puts it, of "naming and explaining oil with the aim of producing changes in our social imaginary" (2014, 7). Popular expression in songs, plays, and novelistic writing "speak back" to the oil industry, while attempting to manage the trauma and shock of industrial disasters. One such cultural expression, Lisa Moore's novel *February* (2009), recounts in vivid detail the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* and the subsequent grief felt by the families. These kinds of artistic representations of the oil industry demonstrate a form of cultural resistance, even as the province's social fabric – as a petroculture – is enmeshed with, and largely accepting of its relationship to, oil.

Whereas the offshore oil industry has enjoyed an arguably harmonious relationship with communities of the province, the 2012 announcement of plans to begin onshore, unconventional oil and gas extraction using processes of hydraulic fracturing has created fierce resistance. The west coast of Newfoundland contains a major shale deposit, known as the Greenpoint shale, and junior companies Shoal Point Energy and Black Spruce Exploration were granted exploration licenses. Hydraulic fracturing has been a significant point of contention in a number of US states and Canadian provinces. Numerous documentary films, books, editorials, and other forms of popular expression have staked out a claim in the discursive landscape of the debate, perhaps most notably Josh Fox's film *Gasland* (2010). Concerned citizens of American communities where hydraulic fracturing has taken place contend that this unconventional extractive process leads to groundwater contamination, air pollution due to fugitive emissions and flaring, and a general impact on quality of life from increased industrial activity. Significant concerns are also expressed to do with the safe disposal of wastewater and chemicals used in the process. These and other concerns have likewise been expressed by citizens of the west coast of Newfoundland. Sustained public pressure has resulted in a temporary ban on unconventional oil extraction in the province, pending further review.

The form that the resistance to hydraulic fracturing has taken in the province is of particular interest to the present discussion. A large number of grassroots advocacy groups very quickly emerged after the announcement of plans to begin hydraulic fracturing. Perhaps the most vocal of these groups, the Port au Port-Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Group, is made up of citizens who live in the areas of the proposed developments. The west coast of the island, and the land on which the shale deposit is located, is also home to the province's Mi'kmaq people. Though the leadership of the band expressed support for unconventional oil developments, band members generally opposed the development and joined the Fracking Awareness group in large numbers – this split between the leadership and members of the band has continued to be a source of division and animosity in the Mi'kmaq community, with members accusing the band leadership of corruption and disregard for the environment. The Fracking Awareness group has organized public meetings, information sessions, petitions, marches, and public demonstrations, and has sent representatives around the province to share their concerns with other communities. As a result of these visits to other communities, a number of similar organizations were set up whose aim is to provide solidarity and share information on hydraulic fracturing. Other grassroots groups have formed as well, including the Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network (NL-FAN; an umbrella group for anti-fracking activities); Save Gros Morne and our West Coast (specifically concerned with the UNESCO world heritage site Gros Morne National Park, which is in the vicinity of the proposed development); and the local chapter of the Council of Canadians (a Canada-wide NGO that has been at the forefront of resistance to hydraulic fracturing). Overall, it must be said that the anti-fracking movement in the province has been extremely effective in its campaign to educate the public and to enact a ban on hydraulic fracturing.

Although there is a high degree of organization, and though there are specific groups and umbrella organizations operating throughout the province, the anti-fracking movement in the province is highly decentralised. Particular groups do not necessarily know, and certainly do not control, the decisions or actions taken by other groups. This kind of decentralised, dispersed resistance is akin to what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe in *Multitude* as the “distributed attack” or as “swarm intelligence”:

When a distributed network attacks, it swarms its enemy: innumerable independent forces seem to strike from all directions at a particular point and then disappear back into the environment. From an external perspective, the network attack is described as a swarm because it appears formless. Since the network has no center that dictates order, those who can only think in terms of traditional models may assume it has no organization whatsoever—they see mere spontaneity and anarchy. ... If one looks inside the network, however, one can see that it is indeed organized, rational and creative. It has swarm intelligence. (91)

This formulation of the tactic of distributed attack is immediately recognizable in the case of the anti-fracking movement, and is potentially why the movement has been successful in its goals to date. The movement has made connections across class lines (participants in the movement are of all social classes), across ethnic lines (participants are from settler and indigenous communities), and with national and international groups (like the Council of Canadians and solidarity networks in the US, Ireland, England, and Australia).

It should be noted, as well, that the primary forms of resistance to hydraulic fracturing in Newfoundland and Labrador have been advocacy and institutional mechanisms, i.e. public awareness campaigns, petitions, public meetings, etc. Though the tenor of the public discourse has been passionate and heated, with some small-scale public demonstrations, there has not been any overt confrontation between residents and industry or any direct action, as has occurred in other parts of Canada. The anti-fracking movement in the province has been able to stop industry in its tracks, before any developments began. Had unconventional oil developments been allowed to proceed, one can imagine the resistance would have intensified, perhaps along the lines of the flashpoints of resistance at Elsipogtog First Nation in the province of New Brunswick, where Mi'kmaq peoples blockaded roads and industrial sites, and faced off against riot police and heavily armed members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Along with the kinds of labour movement and cultural forms of resistance described above in relation to offshore oil, and along with the kinds of grassroots, distributed forms of resistance described in relation to the anti-fracking movement, groups and individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador are also involved in the climate change movement. In some sense, because the

climate movement is calling for a move away from fossil fuels, this may be considered a form of resistance to the oil industry in the province. At the 2012 Climate Change Summit in Doha, United Nations members reaffirmed that if catastrophic climate change is to be avoided governments must ensure that the average rise in world temperatures is no more than 2 degree Celsius. In order for this to become reality, there must be an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2012) has estimated that to achieve an 80% reduction in emissions and to limit warming to “safe” levels, most of the known oil reserves will need to stay in the ground. Recently, the Canadian government has been accused of willfully ignored these sorts of warnings and even pulled out of the UN Kyoto Protocol on climate change, with some commentators calling Canada a rogue petrostate. The Newfoundland and Labrador government, on the other hand, has commissioned a Climate Action Plan (2011) based on research conducted by Memorial University climatologists and also created the provincial Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Some of the forms of resistance that have emerged in response to climate change include grassroots groups such as Fossil Fuel Divestment at Grenfell, which is calling on Memorial University to re-think its relationship with the oil industry. Other groups, such as the Social Justice Cooperative of Newfoundland and Labrador and the local chapter of global civil organization Avaaz, organized public demonstrations and marched in support of the 2014 Global Day of Action on Climate Change.

A number of studies have also suggested that climate change will impact the Labrador portion of the province more so than the island of Newfoundland and more so than global impacts of climate change generally. A report by Memorial University climatologist Joel Finnis predicts that by the middle of the 21st century, Labrador will experience a three degree Celsius rise in average temperature. The northern Labrador region, more specifically, is expected to see a rise in average winter temperatures of 5-6 degrees (Finnis, 2013, 7). Inuit communities in northern Labrador will, in this sense, be disproportionately impacted by climate change, even though sparsely populated northern indigenous communities are responsible for virtually no emissions. Of particular concern for Inuit communities is the impacts climate change will have on traditional foods and hunting grounds, as well as changing ice conditions. Isolated communities in northern Labrador rely on stable and predictable ice

patterns as a means of transportation and for the procurement of traditional food like seals. Research conducted by Ashlee Cunsolo Willox (2014), in a project called “Inuit Mental Health Adaptation to Climate Change,” has demonstrated that already, even before the kinds of significant shifts climate models are predicting, climatic change in northern regions of Labrador is creating a mental health crisis, with increased incidents of depression among Inuit peoples. Cunsolo Willox has also collaborated in the production of a documentary, *Lament for the Land* (2014), based on interviews conducted with Inuit people and residents of northern Labrador communities, which conveys in a poignant and straightforward manner the deeply rooted feelings of loss and grief over the social and cultural impacts of climate change.

Mobilizations of groups in urban centers of the province around climate change and the impacts of climate change on northern Labrador communities constitute a form of resistance to extractive industries, albeit a somewhat indirect resistance to the fossil fuel industry. However, even while concerns about climate change in Newfoundland and Labrador are, to all reports, serious and pressing, the climate movement in the province has primarily followed in the footsteps of international NGOs and global governance bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Public awareness of the dangers of climate change is widespread in the province; however, local groups and individuals involved in the climate movement have not built momentum from the grassroots or local communities, as is the case in the anti-fracking movement. Moreover, whereas the anti-fracking movement has been highly successful in a relatively short period of time, resistance to offshore oil has been, mostly, nonexistent. What is it about hydraulic fracturing that compels significant resistance, while offshore oil and the more general question of climate change does not?

Most obviously, proposed onshore developments are located near communities, while offshore rigs and the threat of climate change are, relatively speaking, distant and unseen. Despite tragedies and moments of collective trauma, like the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* and the crash of flight 91, there have been no major environmental incidents such as oil spills. Newfoundland and Labrador is very much a petroculture and the province certainly cannot be described as anti-oil. In this sense, it is likely that reports from other communities where hydraulic fracturing has occurred, primarily in the US, strike

residents of the west coast of Newfoundland close to home, so to speak, with concerns about property values, groundwater contamination, air pollution, and diminished quality of life due to nearby industrial activity. It is when people see the impacts – or the threat – of extractive industries in their own backyards that conditions are optimal for grassroots resistance, such as is the case in the anti-fracking movement in the province.

### **III. Resistance to Mining in Newfoundland and Labrador**

While oil and gas development is a relatively recent phenomenon in Newfoundland and Labrador, mineral mining has been a major industry in the province for more than a century and currently accounts for roughly 10% of provincial GDP (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013). Since the first mining operations in the province in the late 1800s, the industry has gone through a number of boom-bust cycles, often to do with geopolitical events and market fluctuations. In recent decades, mines on the island portion of the province have been mostly shut down whereas mining operations in Labrador have been on the upswing – Labrador is one of the major iron-ore producing regions of the world. Significant resistance to mining in Newfoundland and Labrador has centered on labour issues, environmental and human health concerns, and indigenous rights. The various forms resistance to mining has taken include on-the-ground actions like strikes, blockades, public demonstrations, and occupations, but also cultural forms such as plays, songs, novelistic writing, and other kinds of artistic expressions.

Two examples of mining operations that have now been shut down serve well to illustrate some of the troubled history of mining in Newfoundland: the St. Lawrence fluor spar mines and the Buchans copper mines. The mines in St. Lawrence opened in the early 1900s, mainly producing fluor spar, a smelting agent used to make steel. The history of the St. Lawrence mines has been the subject of a number of books, articles, and reports, including Rick Rennie's *The Dirt: Industrial Disease and Conflict at St. Lawrence, Newfoundland* (2008). Rennie's book focuses specifically on working conditions and labour unrest, recounting the numerous walkouts, strikes (official and wildcat), and protests by the community generally in support of mineworkers. Over the

seventy-year operation of the St. Lawrence mines, along with there being a number of industrial accidents, abnormally high rates of lung cancer emerged in mine workers (former workers continue to die from lung cancer), as well as deaths from silicosis and other lung diseases such as tuberculosis. Rennie notes that “an average of three miners had died of cancer per year since 1948” (2008, 75) and that the average age for workers that died from lung cancer was 47 (2008, 91). By 2001, “the official death toll from lung cancer among underground miners was 191” (2008, 130).

The focus of Rennie’s book, with respect to workers’ safety and health concerns, is on the mining activity in St. Lawrence and industrial disease. In the early years of operations, mining companies and the provincial government were unwilling to admit health and safety concerns existed. Over time, and as testing and diagnostic equipment improved, it was confirmed, first in the 1940s, that poor ventilation and the process used in the mine were responsible for occurrences of tuberculosis and silicosis. In the 1960s, testing proved that the unusually high levels of lung cancer among miners was caused by exposure to radon gas released during the mining process. Because industrial disease is a slow moving disaster, as Rennie points out, throughout the life of the St. Lawrence mines there were few improvements in worker health and safety protocols or in government regulation. Although the miners, their families, and the various unions in town were well aware that something was wrong, mining companies and the provincial government consistently minimized or obfuscated health and safety concerns and inadequately compensated sick miners or the families of those that had died. In this sense, the mining industry, which did bring much needed jobs and associated economic activity to the town of St. Lawrence, created a great deal of suffering and social unrest.

Though the grievances were different – i.e. not necessarily associated with industrial disease – similar patterns of social unrest and resistance emerged in many Newfoundland mining towns. Labour unrest in the form of prolonged strikes often happened at times when geopolitical events provided leverage to workers making demands for increased wages and better working conditions. The unions recognized that during times of war there was pressure on companies to settle labour disputes and maximize production. It is worth noting that numerous mining strikes happened throughout Newfoundland in the early 1940s, generally coinciding with World War II and the appearance in

Newfoundland of large numbers of American military, who used the island as a stopover on the way to Europe. Newfoundland historian Sean Cadigan notes that the Americans brought with them new ideas about unionism and labour rights, and many of the Newfoundland mineworker unions joined or affiliated with larger, international unions in the United States (2009, 256).

Along with the numerous strikes that took place in mining towns during times of war, there was also significant labour activity across all industries throughout the 1970s. Cadigan suggests this upsurge was “a manifestation of social unrest and a growing culture of protest ... a wave of labour unrest was sweeping the province,” including numerous mining operations, fisheries unions, and workers from other sectors, and “by the end of 1971, there would be twenty-nine strikes involving nearly 6,000 workers” (2009, 111). Workers were able to effect mining operations not only by withdrawing their labour and picketing worksites but also through blockades of docks or rail lines, and refusing to allow unloading of industrial gear associated with the mining industry. At this time there were also numerous occupations of company offices and numerous arrests. This intense period of labour unrest was ended only by the closure or winding down of mines throughout Newfoundland (Cadigan, 2009, 257).

A good example of 1970s labour unrest was in the company town of Buchans, which was founded by mining companies as a base of operation in central Newfoundland. The Buchans copper mines were in operation for some fifty years, 1920s through 1970s, during which time there were numerous strikes and other organized labour activity, including the longest strikes in the history of the province to that point in 1971. Miner strikes in Buchans were among the most contentious labour activities in the province in the twentieth century, and, as Cadigan notes, it was not only the miners themselves involved in protests: “miners at Buchans, members of local 5457 of the United Steelworkers of America, went on strike [in 1971]... violence broke out on the picket lines and non-union employees tried to cross, but miners’ wives and children reinforced the lines” (2009, 257). Early 1970s Buchans is also an interesting example of resistance to mining because there was a significant cultural aspect, especially with regard to a touring theatre group called the Mummers Troupe. This theatre company made plays that can be considered agitprop, theatre with an explicit political message meant to agitate a popu-

lation and spur collective action. As Cadigan points out, with regard to the many plays the theatre group put off throughout the province in the '60s and '70s, "The Mummers Troupe developed its message for rural and working-class people [by] identifying the forces of capitalism that undermined the basis of their families and communities. The Troupe hoped that its socialist theatre would offer Newfoundlanders and Labradorians an alternative to the 'cloned plastic-wrapped homogeneity of North American consumer capitalism'" (2009, 262). Newfoundland playwright Chris Brookes, who was the driving force behind the Mummers Troupe, wrote a book about their exploits, *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe* (1988), which contains a chapter specifically on Buchans. Brookes suggests the standoff between the company and the town was mainly to do with opposing worldviews: "To the company, Buchans was a temporary mining camp, a statistic in their annual corporate report. To the residents, it was a home with a forty year-old history, a history which demanded an equivalent corporate responsibility" (115). This tension between industry and local residents of Buchans was the central message of the play *Company Town: The Story of Buchans*. This and other examples of discursive interventions functioned as cultural forms of resistance to mining in the province.

As was said above, many of the mining operations on the island of Newfoundland closed down in the 1970s, but the legacy of mining has continued to impact communities on the island. Towns where mining operations were set up, or the towns like Buchans that were specifically set up for mining operations, enjoyed short-term prosperity but have been decimated by the closure of the mines. Mining companies operating in Newfoundland, most of which were large international companies, had no stake in creating sustainable economies for communities; they were motivated to extract the maximum amount of product for the least cost, before moving on to other parts of the world. Major mining operations in Newfoundland during the previous century happened in the context of social, economic, and political upheavals, and during a time when unionism and the labour movement were prominent – something that played out in the form of numerous mining strikes. Nonetheless, when considering the negative outcomes, such as industrial disease and impoverished communities, one must say that the mining industry has a particularly dark history in Newfoundland.

At the same time as mining operations were shutting down on the island portion of the province, mining was beginning to accelerate in Labrador. Since the mid-1960s Labrador has become a major producer of iron ore and nickel (in recent years Labrador has also reopened its previously shuttered uranium mining operations). As stated in the introduction, Labrador is home to indigenous populations; however, mining companies began working in the territory in the 1960s before Labrador indigenous groups had established land claims, and the industry proceeded without the consent of these groups. The Innu and Inuit were involved in numerous protests against mining on their traditional territory, and some of the concerns expressed were to do with sovereignty, loss of traditional sources of food, environmental issues, and more broadly speaking the threat posed by industry to indigenous ways of life. Indeed, resistance to mining was one of the motivating factors for Labrador indigenous groups to begin land claim negotiations.

Forms of resistance to mining in Labrador must be understood in a different way than the forms of resistance to mining that emerged in Newfoundland, which were typically expressed as unionism and the labour movement. In terms of indigenous resistance to mining, such as that by the Innu and the Inuit, resistance must also be distinguished from Western environmentalist discourses. As Saleem Ali points out in *Mining, the Environment, and Indigenous Development Conflicts*, “the weapons at the disposal of indigenous communities are often quite different from those at the disposal of environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOS), who are usually the popularizers of resistance. However, not only are the weapons different, the consequences of resistance failure are also different” (2004, 24). In this sense, indigenous resistance to mining, specifically as it has been expressed in Labrador, should be conceived of as a combination of confrontational and collaborative approaches. Much of the protest against mining activity by Labrador indigenous groups took place in the context of land claim negotiations, or in order to pressure governments to move land claims forward such that Innu and Inuit peoples would allow mining activities to go ahead.

For example, it was fairly recently (2011) that the Labrador Innu concluded land claim negotiations, a process that had been ongoing since the late 1970s. During the three decades of negotiations, the Innu sometimes engaged in contentious politics, such as protests, blockades, and work stoppages

aimed at mining operations happening on land they had claimed. Larry Innes describes one such action taken against mining operations in Labrador in his article, “Staking Claim: Innu Rights and Mining Claims at Voisey’s Bay”:

Once at the [mining] site, Chief Simeon Tshakapesh and Daniel Ashini delivered an eviction notice to the chief geologist, giving the company twenty-four hours to shut down operations and leave Innu land. A two-week standoff between the Innu and the RCMP followed before a peaceful resolution was reached. Although the Innu action against the company failed to achieve the practical outcome the Innu desired, it was singularly important in many other ways. Publicly, the action established the Innu as one of the principal actors in the drama unfolding around the mineral discovery, but it also helped to unify the Innu response to the project. Innu leaders, spokespeople, elders, and community members consistently articulated positions that centered on the effects of the project on Innu rights, Innu land, and the Innu way of life. (2001, np)

Although in this particular case the mining operation continued without the consent of the Innu, the demonstration of resistance was important in terms of forwarding Innu claims and showing the company and governments that the Innu were a force to be reckoned with.

In the case of negotiations and contentious politics employed by the Innu before their land claim was concluded, it was not so much that the Innu were fundamentally opposed to mining on moral grounds, even though there were significant concerns about impacts on traditional ways of life, but rather felt they should be meaningfully consulted and involved if such developments were to proceed. As Ali points out, “resistance in such movements can be tacit – manifest as intransigence at the negotiating table – or overt – involving public protests and civil disobedience. The forms that the resistance may take depends on the opportunities and the dynamics of control that are exercised by other stakeholders in the process” (2001, 23). Mobilization against resource extraction by indigenous communities in Labrador is not necessarily in the name of indigenous values as they may be stereotypically understood by settler society, but rather is *sometimes* for the purpose of forwarding land claims.

Another example of the complex nature of indigenous resistance to mining was the northern Inuit opposition to uranium mining on their territories, also at a time when land claim negotiations were taking place. This example highlights the difference between Western environmental perspectives on

resistance to mining and indigenous resistance to mining. Throughout the 1980s, environmentalists in urban centers like St. John's and from national and international NGOs opposed uranium mining primarily because of the perceived threat of nuclear weapons, concerns about the use of atomic energy, and concerns about the use of depleted uranium armaments (Feasby, 2009). The Inuit resistance to uranium mining, on the other hand, was more to do with concerns about the impacts of industrial activity on Inuit ways of life, concerns about consultation and consent, and underpinned by unresolved questions of land claims and sovereignty. The combination of these forces of indigenous and environmentalist resistance successfully halted uranium mining in Labrador; however, the difference between indigenous and environmentalist resistance to mining is perhaps well encapsulated by the fact that after their land claim had been resolved, the Labrador Inuit have, since 2008, lifted the moratorium on uranium mining.

A good frame of reference for further understanding resistance to mining in Labrador (and more specifically the mitigation of resistance) is through theories of settler colonialism, such as that elaborated by Patrick Wolfe. Although there has been what is often referred to as the postcolonial turn, indicative of peoples or nations who have thrown off the yoke of European colonial administrations, Labrador (and indeed Canada as a whole) continues to be essentially a settler-colonial society. Many of the same ideas that are important in postcolonial theory remain important in settler-colonial theory, as it is discussed by Wolfe and others, but there are important differences, such as that indigenous populations in Labrador (and Canada more generally) continue to be subsumed or otherwise dominated by state institutions of settler origin. In his article "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," Wolfe notes, historically speaking, "settler colonialism is an inclusive, land-centered project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view of eliminating Indigenous societies" (2006, 396). This elimination happens not just in the form of outright genocide (as in the early history of North American colonialism), but through the destruction of culture, languages, and traditional ways of life. Where indigenous communities and cultures cannot be eliminated, settler colonialism attempts to police indigenous identity, and the primary means to do this is through the production of difference, which serves to produce

certainty out of otherwise ambiguous situations. The production of difference causes tensions and competition between various indigenous groups (even within an indigenous group) or geographically defined groups that may otherwise be allies and that may otherwise stand in solidarity when grievances arise. This is a particularly insidious divide-and-conquer strategy, one that is, ironically, understood in the present day as respecting indigenous rights.

For example, in the Labrador context the production of difference occurred (and continues to occur) through the definition of indigenous groups, Innu and Inuit, and the definition of the territories of those groups and of the colonial administrations. So even though land claims seem on the face of things to be a progressive step, a kind of postcolonial move on the part of colonial governments like the Canadian federal and Newfoundland and Labrador provincial governments, such land claims may also be understood as means of mitigating indigenous resistance. Indeed, public opinion expressed by Labrador indigenous communities suggests that the colonial project continues to this day, albeit in a different form than in previous times. Former Innu Grand Chief Peter Penashue gestured toward this colonial project of displacement and elimination of indigenous peoples as a misplaced morality of settler colonialism, when he wrote about the many social problems of Innu communities:

Newspaper coverage of the social problems we have in Sheshatshiu – the high suicide rate, the gas-sniffing children – blame boredom and isolation. Media in the South suggest that the solution is moving us to bigger communities where there might be jobs. The facts as I see them through Innu eyes are more complex. I share my insights in the hope of a constructive dialogue that will lead you to support us in taking responsibility for our own lives. We Innu view your solution as another chapter in a book that could be titled “They Kill Us with Kindness.”

“Kill us with kindness” is a good descriptor of the current configuration of settler colonialism in Labrador. The attempts by governments to fix the problems in Labrador indigenous communities, whether this is through humanitarian and economic development schemes or through self-governance models like land claim agreements, remains a form of imposition of settler values on the Innu.

There have been moments of pan-Labrador solidarity, when various indigenous groups and settler society have come together to fight for the common benefit of the peoples of Labrador. Though it has enjoyed only limited and sporadic success, the Labrador independence movement has risen at different times in recent history. This movement is not interested in forming a separate state, as is typical of independence or separatist movements around the world, but rather wants Labrador to be a territory in the Canadian federal system, free from political control of the provincial government in St. John's. The movement looks to other territorial governments in Canada, such as the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as a model for Labrador self-governance. Surges of separatist and independence sentiment in Labrador have often been associated with resource development, and specifically the sentiment among Labrador peoples that the region is not benefiting proportionally to the amount of resource wealth that is being extracted. As Cadigan notes of the 1970s surge in independence sentiment, "in Labrador, growing resentment about the lack of local benefits arising from the development of its resources, compared with the benefits realized by the island portion of the province, fuelled support for independent MHA Tom Burgess's New Labrador Party, founded in 1970" (2009, 258). In the last few years, as the provincial government has begun a new hydro project in central Labrador, similar feelings of disaffection have come to the surface. Meetings and demonstrations have taken place in the last year, an interesting example of which was a number of flag-raising protests, where residents put up flagpoles with the Labrador flag on border crossings in response to the provincial government refusing to allow Labrador flags to be considered legitimate.

Finally, it should also be noted that anti-mining activism and resistance in both Labrador and Newfoundland, in its various forms, draws on and is related to a broader national and international movement. As with the global movements that oppose fossil fuels, there are a number of NGOs opposed to mining activities (like Mining Watch Canada), often on grounds of environmental and human rights concerns. In some sense, this is a particular manifestation of the anti-globalization or anti-corporate movement. As Ali points out, "the argument is often made that the modern corporation ... regards environmental and human rights concerns as externalities that should be addressed only as a means to an end – the end being profitability" (2004, 27). International NGOs

have had limited impact in terms of resistance to mining in Newfoundland and Labrador. Connections, however, have been made between international groups and local resistance movements in Labrador, as was seen, for example, in the anti-uranium movement and Inuit communities.

As discussed above, resistance to mining in Newfoundland mostly faded with the slowdown of the mining industry on the island. Throughout the history of mining on the island, resistance to mining was linked most often to issues of worker safety, wages, and other concerns specific to unionism. Although the mining industry is no longer as active in Newfoundland, its legacy is still present in mining towns like Buchans and St. Lawrence, as well as numerous other communities. Along with unionism, this resistance to mining was also evident in cultural forms, such as the plays of the Mummers Troupe. Resistance to mining in Labrador is perhaps best understood through reference to indigenous communities and through notions of postcolonialism and settler colonialism. Resistance to mining by Labrador indigenous communities is not necessarily an anti-mining stance so much as it is to do with questions of indigenous sovereignty and the distribution of benefits from industrial development.

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