

**A 'HOW TO GUIDE' FOR PARTICIPATING IN
SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(SEIA)
IN THE NWT**

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This Guide Can Help You Participate in SEIA.

Socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) is a way to determine how a development project might affect the social and economic conditions of people and communities. A SEIA study is part of a larger environmental study of the impacts of a proposed project such as a hydroelectric dam, road, bridge, pier, pipeline, park, new mine or clean-up of an abandoned mine. A SEIA study:

- 1) describes the current social and economic conditions of the area concerned
- 2) predicts the good and bad effects of a project on people and communities.
- 3) identifies ways to reduce bad effects and improve good effects.
- 4) describes how to keep track of the changes the project causes.
- 5) describes how changes caused by the project will be managed.

In the past, women in NWT communities have often experienced bad effects from oil and gas, mining and other resource development projects. Women have also received very few benefits from these projects. The Status of Women Council believes that if women have a voice in decisions about development projects, there will be less risk of past mistakes being repeated in the future. This guide is one way to encourage women to participate in decisions about development projects.

This guide offers ideas on where to get information, questions to think about, and how to have a say in SEIA. The guide uses the Mackenzie Gas Project as an example of how people in the NWT can participate in a SEIA study.

Everyone Can Participate in a SEIA Study.

Anyone proposing a project that could affect people, land or natural resources must talk to the communities potentially affected. This is the law.¹

But not all projects involve a SEIA study. Boards or groups that control land, resource or water use, such as the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board (MVLWB) or Aboriginal governments, make the decision about whether a SEIA study is needed.

Environmental laws recognize the rights of people in NWT communities to:

1. Participate in environmental assessment processes including socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) studies for projects.
2. Be protected from harm that might be caused by a project.

These laws recognize that northerners have to live with the good and bad impacts of development projects, so they should have a voice in the decisions about them.

Many people in NWT communities are unaware of their rights to participate in a SEIA study. They also might think they don't have the time or skills to participate. This guide can help.

¹The laws that require proponents to talk to people potentially affected by a project are the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*, *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement Act* and *Sahtu Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement Act*.

Three Things to do to Participate in SEIA.

To participate in a SEIA study, people can do three things -

1. Get information about projects proposed in your area.
2. Talk with others about the possible effects of the proposed project.
3. Voice your opinion and encourage others to do the same.

This guide gives you ideas on how to do these things.

1. GET INFORMATION ABOUT A PROPOSED PROJECT

There are many pieces of information that can be collected about a proposed project. Two important pieces to get are the project description and the documents showing the expected impacts of the project. Several different names are used for these documents. For the Mackenzie Gas Project, these documents are called

- the Preliminary Information Package (PIP) for the project description.
- the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the impacts the project could have, according to the project proponents.

Check with your community council to see if they have copies of these reports.

There are many sources of information about proposed projects:

- **Radio, Television, and Newspapers**

Make a habit of listening to northern radio stations, reading northern newspapers and watching northern television news. People planning

development projects often use these media to make announcements.

- **Meetings in the Community**

Check community bulletin boards and northern media for notices about community meetings. Make time to attend meetings that discuss proposed projects.

Sometimes these meetings are informal drop-in or open houses intended to give people information about a project. Other times these meetings are more formal, with an agenda, presentations, and question and answer periods. Formal meetings may have two purposes – to give information and receive information. Meetings to hear what people have to say about a project are called consultation meetings.

- **The Public Registry**

Anyone proposing a project that uses public resources or lands, or that potentially impacts people and the natural environment, must put all official information about the project on the Public Registry. The Public Registry is like ‘one-stop’ shopping for information on a proposed project. Anyone can get information from the Public Registry. For example, information on the Mackenzie Gas Project is available from the Public Registry by writing or visiting:

The Public Registry
Suite 208, Scotia Centre
5102 - 50th Avenue,
Yellowknife, NT X1A 3S8

The Public Registry
Suite 302, 125 Mackenzie Road
Inuvik, NT X-0E 0T0

or on the Internet at <http://www.ngps.nt.ca> and click on Public Registry.

- **Government Regulators**

Anyone proposing a project that uses public resources or lands, or potentially impacts people and the natural environment, must apply for approval from government regulators. For example, information on the Mackenzie Gas Project is available by contacting:

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
Box 938, 200 Scotia Centre
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N7

<http://www.mveirb.nt.ca>

Inuvialuit Environmental Impact Review Board
Box 2120,
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0

<http://www.jointsecretariat.ca/EIRB/aboutus.htm>

- **The Project Proponents**

The groups proposing a project that uses public resources or lands, or potentially impacts on people and the natural environment, must provide information to the public and consult with the people who could be affected. The public can contact the project proponent and ask for information. For example, information on the Mackenzie Gas Project is available from:

<http://www.mackenziegasproject.com/> or:

Inuvik Regional Office

Mackenzie Gas Project
151 Mackenzie Road
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0
Telephone: (867) 678-6104
Fax: (867) 678-6107

Fort Simpson Regional Office

Mackenzie Gas Project
9925 - 102 Avenue
Fort Simpson, NT X0E 0N0
Telephone: (867) 695- 2624
Fax: (867) 695-2651

Norman Wells Regional Office

Mackenzie Gas Project

#1 Town Square

Norman Wells, NT X0E 0V0

Telephone: (867) 587-3130

Fax: (867) 587-4109

Did You Know?

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) is working on guidelines to make it easier for:

1. The public to know how and who should participate in discussions about proposed projects.
2. Project proponents to know what is expected of them.

These guidelines will encourage:

- project proponents and communities to discuss local capacity to prepare for projects that will affect their community.
- broader consultation with traditional knowledge holders, front line workers, women, and non-government groups, and government delivery of social and economic programs and services.
- public participation to begin right after the rights issuance and during the environmental assessment and regulatory approvals phase of mineral resource development projects.

• **Special Groups Set Up For Certain Projects.**

Some projects are so big or complicated that special groups are set up to help government regulators and the public make decisions.

Two special groups have been set up for the Mackenzie Gas Project. One group is the Northern Gas Project Secretariat. The job of the Secretariat is to help people participate in the environmental evaluation and SEIA, and support the work of the Joint Review Panel. The Joint Review Panel

will make recommendations about how and if the Mackenzie Gas Project should go ahead.

The other special group is the Pipeline Readiness Office. The Office is part of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Its job is to help the government and northerners to deal with the Mackenzie Gas Project. Both the Northern Gas Project Secretariat and Pipeline Readiness Office are sources of information about the Mackenzie Gas Project.

The Northern Gas Project Secretariat

Suite 208, Scotia Centre,
5102 - 50th Avenue,
Yellowknife, NWT XIA 3S8

Suite 302
125 Mackenzie Road,
Inuvik, NWT X0E 0T0

<http://www.ngps.nt.ca/>

The Pipeline Readiness Office

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Box 1500 Station Main
Yellowknife, NT XIA 9Z9

http://nwt-tno.inac-ainc.gc.ca/pl_e.htm

Information about projects sometimes changes. So it is important to keep checking to make sure you have the most recent information. This means:

- √ regularly checking with the information sources listed on pages 3-6
- √ asking the information sources listed on pages 3-6 to put your name on mailing lists for project updates.
- √ sharing information with other groups who are interested in the project.
- √ asking leaders in the community or region for updates.

2. TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The possible social, cultural and economic effects of a project are described in a SEIA study. SEIA is usually part of the environmental impact statement (EIS). The SEIA study for the Mackenzie Gas Project is in volumes 4, 6 and Additional Information Part 2, of the *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mackenzie Gas Project* (2004). The SEIA is also summarized in the plain language summary of this EIS.

Two Heads are Better Than One!

Some SEIA studies like the one for the Mackenzie Gas Project require lots of reading and thought. Getting help to go through the SEIA and talking about it with others can help.

After reading the SEIA or talking to other people who have read it, ask yourself and others about the possible effects that the project could have on you, your family and your community.

“We need to stick together as Aboriginal people and not be bought out. We have a responsibility to the unborn. We need to support communities and recognize that they don’t have the capacity to deal with impacts.”

(Berna Unka, Fort Resolution, NWT speaking to NWT speaking at Native Women’s Association of the NWT AGA in Fort Providence, November 2004.)

Thinking about the Mackenzie Gas Project, some questions to consider are:

- Do I know enough about the project to assess how it will affect my life, my family and my community?
- Will this project make my family and my community better or worse off than we are now? Why will we be better or worse off?
- What do I (we) want from the project? Are we going to get what we want? What guarantees do I (we) have that we will get these things?
- What will I (we) have to give up to let this project go ahead? Am I (we) willing to give up these things and for how long?
- How will this project be different from the Norman Wells Project or other oil and gas projects that have taken place in the Beaufort, Liard or Sahtu regions in the past?
- How can we avoid making the same mistakes that were made in the past? Are there any guarantees that we will avoid past mistakes?

Sometimes it is easier to think and talk about the effects of a project such as the Mackenzie Gas Project by looking at one section of the SEIA at a time.

Thinking and Talking About the Impacts on Our Economy

Looking at the sections in the SEIA on the economy, some questions to think about are:

- *How will this project make a difference to our local economy both in the short and long term?*
- *What guarantees and enforceable agreements will our community have to make sure that we get short and long term jobs, training, and business opportunities?*

- *Will this project support the participation of local people by offering local hiring and training preferences, and child care, money management and family counselling services?*
- *In 2004, the Status of Woman Council talked to women in the NWT about the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. Does the SEIA address women’s comments on the economy? (see table below)*

Women’s Views on the Mackenzie Gas Project	Women’s Recommendations for the Mackenzie Gas Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The few jobs will be short term, and for unskilled positions. - Women will not get good jobs. - Job-related stress could result from lack of child care; risk of harassment and abuse; young people leaving school early; family disruption/dysfunction from rotational employment; racial and gender discrimination; and worker safety issues. - Income from short-term industrial work will be treated as disposable income and spent on gambling, alcohol and drugs, leading to economic control by working members of the family. - Income will widen gaps between men and women, husbands and wives and ‘have’ and ‘have not’ families. - Career, job and money counseling might not be available. - Local businesses will miss opportunities because they lack capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guaranteed access to jobs at all levels for men and women. ✓ Safety training. ✓ Family counseling, anger management, conflict resolution and financial supports/services. ✓ A trust fund to cushion the negative effects of job loss when the project is over. ✓ Fair distribution of economic benefits for men and women and between families. ✓ Guarantees for investment in activities to reduce negative effects of rotational employment, absenteeism and returning workers. ✓ Contractor accountability for policy commitments. ✓ Cross-cultural and gender-sensitive training. ✓ Counseling for addictions. ✓ Guarantees that some business opportunities will be available to businesswomen. ✓ Support for women to start businesses.

A Story from the Past

“We were very shocked to find ourselves one day with a whole army descended on us. We were unprepared. Our way of life changed drastically. The disruption of people’s lives lasts forever. When I was only 25 years old, the U.S. army came to call ... You see, when there’s not enough single girls to go around they start with married women with all kinds of promises, maybe they buy things for them with money that their husbands don’t have and the women get carried away with that kind of behaviour. ... the soldiers left a bunch of pregnant girlfriends, women and children when they took their leave. .. Life for the children was mixed up. They didn’t know who their natural fathers were. The mothers absolutely refused to talk about it.” (the late Emilia Gratrix of Fort Smith speaking about the American soldiers that arrived in Denendeh in 1942 and left in 1945. Printed in **Denendeh: A Dene Celebration** (1984).

Thinking and Talking About the Impacts on Health and Well-Being

Looking at the sections in the SEIA on health and well-being, some questions to think about are:

- *How will this project help the health and well-being of our community?*
- *How will this project change the lives of more vulnerable members of our community - the very young, the very old, the very weak and the people with little power?*
- *How will the project affect current concerns in our community such as poor health and well-being, limited capacity and inadequate leadership interest and resources to respond to current social issues?*
- *How will the project help our community to deal with more health and well-being issues when we don’t have the capacity to deal with them now?*

- *What guarantees or enforceable agreements will our community have that we will get the support to respond to existing and any new demands that come from the project?*
- *In 2004, the Status of Woman Council talked to women in the NWT about the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. Does the SEIA address women’s comments on health and well being? (see table below)*

Women’s Views on the Mackenzie Gas Project	Women’s Recommendations for the Mackenzie Gas Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many southern workers will come who don’t know or care about us. - We will have more unwanted pregnancies; fetal alcohol spectrum disorder(FASD); elder abuse; and sexually transmitted infections. . - Costs of living will go up. - We will have more homelessness. - More drug and alcohol use and gambling will add to dysfunctional behaviour and the abuse of women, children and elders. - We will not be safe or be able to get protection. - Already we don’t have enough social, health and protection services. - No one including government is taking responsibility for the social issues and impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ A plan with money attached to address health and well-being issues before any more development projects are approved. √ An enforceable agreement to make everyone work together to build our capacity to respond to health and well-being issues. √ Guarantees to manage the flow of southern workers into our communities. √ Restrictions on alcohol sales. √ Networks and services to keep women and other vulnerable members safe. √ Action to stamp out family violence now. √ A large financial bond to safeguard communities from further social harm. √ Clear roles, resources and enforceable actions for addressing existing social issues and those resulting from the project.

“Change is coming to our communities whether we like it or not... There will be a fight when it comes to social issues.”

(Chief Berna Landry, Fort Providence, NWT speaking at Native Women’s Association of the NWT AGA in Fort Providence, November 2004.)

Thinking and Talking About the Impacts on Culture

Looking at the sections in the SEIA on culture, some questions to think about are:

- *How will this project help Aboriginal languages and cultures to survive and thrive?*
- *What guarantees or enforceable agreements will our community have that our language and culture will not be under more pressure to disappear?*
- *In 2004, the Status of Woman Council talked to women in the NWT about the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. Does the SEIA address women’s comments on culture? (see table below)*

Women’s Views on the Mackenzie Gas Project	Women’s Recommendations for the Mackenzie Gas Project
<p>- Southern workers who don’t know, care about or respect us will devastate already weak language and cultural conditions.</p> <p>- Family units will break down and traditional values will change when family members work outside the community or in an industrial setting.</p>	<p>√ Project proponents and governments need to support and encourage families and our communities to practice and celebrate First Nations languages, cultures and traditions.</p>

Women are Concerned About Language and Culture!

Aboriginal cultures and languages are at risk. Language and cultural loss are among the reasons people are disconnected and lose their sense of place and identity. People who lose traditional values and connection with others don’t participate in the community or help others as they did in the past. Our communities are poorer places for these losses.

Something to Think About!

Women are among those who are concerned that the Mackenzie Gas Project may be just the start of many more projects including more oil and gas exploration, hydroelectric power generation and transmission, and road construction. Each person in the NWT needs to ask themselves and their leaders: *when is it time to say 'no' to more development?*

For many people the answer to this question is when the community has reached its "threshold". A threshold is reached when the negative impacts of a new project (combined with impacts of existing projects and other activities), are greater than its benefits and it is no longer contributing to a higher quality of life or long term sustainability of the community.

Thinking and Talking About Monitoring Impacts and Managing Change

Looking at the sections in the SEIA on monitoring and managing change, some questions to think about are:

- *What signs of change or indicators will be monitored? What are the best ones to monitor to show change in our community? What other indicators do we think are important for our community?*
- *Who will monitor and manage social, cultural and economic change, and how will they do it?*
- *How will my community be involved in monitoring change?*
- *What enforceable agreements will be put in place to make sure the project proponents, governments and other responsible parties*

address negative social, economic and cultural change that could happen during the project and after it is over?

- *In 2004, the Status of Woman Council talked to women in the NWT about the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. Does the SEIA address women’s comments on monitoring? (see table below)*

Women’s Views on the Mackenzie Gas Project	Women’s Recommendations for the Mackenzie Gas Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicators established by the government or the proponent are monitored, not those things that are socially, culturally and economically valuable to communities. - Project proponents say that they are not responsible for managing social, cultural or economic change brought by their projects. - Governments say they don’t have the money to manage social, cultural or economic change brought by projects. - Communities don’t have the capacity or resources to manage change brought by projects. - No one is taking responsibility for socio-economic change. - Environmental review boards and other regulatory bodies will not deal with social issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Enforceable agreements are needed to support and fund independent monitoring of change and management of impacts. √ Women should be equally represented on monitoring and management boards or committees. √ Funding is needed for community-based monitoring committees with the power to halt/suspend the project if damage is being done. √ Investment is needed to develop and sustain local monitoring capacity. √ Impact benefit agreements should be linked directly to managing project impacts.

Some indicators of social, cultural and economic change that communities in the Akaitcho and Tli Cho Regions want to monitor to understand and manage impacts from the diamond mines are:

- √ Aboriginal self identify
- √ Respect for elders and youth
- √ Involvement in community decisions
- √ Sharing traditional knowledge
- √ Gender relations
- √ Time management

3. Voice Your Opinion and Encourage Others To Do The Same

Women and 'have not' families are among the people who often don't get involved in community workshops or consultations/meetings. Lack of confidence, understanding, education, and fear of intimidation and criticism are barriers that stop some people from participating and speaking out. Voicing your opinion and encouraging others to do the same takes courage. It also takes thought and preparation.

Some ideas for dealing with barriers to speaking out are:

- √ **Be prepared.** For example to speak out on the Mackenzie Gas Project, be familiar with what is in the proponents' SEIA. Make sure you are clear about what you want to say. What you have to say is important! But you will need to be prepared to go to lots of meetings and to say the same things over and over again to be heard.
- √ **Get feedback.** Talk to others to share your ideas and concerns. Talk to influential people and leaders in your community. Ask others if what you think makes sense and if there are others things to think about or include. Ask community negotiators for Impact Benefit Agreements, Participation Agreements, Benefit Plans, and Socio-Economic Agreements to listen to your views.
- √ **Get support.** Ask friends, family and others who you know and trust to come to support you when you speak out. Ask others if they will speak out too. Ask people and groups who support your views to write letters of support, and come to meetings with you.

How to have your views heard about the Mackenzie Gas Project.

1. Contact the Northern Gas Project Secretariat to get the schedule for project and information sessions, community meetings, technical hearings and public hearings. Contact: <http://www.ngps.nt.ca/> or email info@ngps.nt.ca or call toll-free 1-866-372-8600.
2. Attend public consultation meetings when they are scheduled by the proponents of the Mackenzie Gas Project or the Joint Review Board.
3. Register to present your views to the Joint Review Panel public hearings when they are scheduled in your community.
4. Write a letter expressing your views and mail it to the Northern Gas Project Secretariat and to the Public Registry (see address on page 4).
5. Share your views with the Status of Women Council. The Council can bring women's views forward at the public hearings. Call toll-free 1-888-234-4485.