

Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional and Resource Extractive Industries in Saskatchewan: An Exploration of the Issues

Roberta Stout

May 2011

Project #239



centres of excellence
for WOMEN'S HEALTH

centres d'excellence
pour LA SANTÉ DES FEMMES

PRAIRIE WOMEN'S HEALTH

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
RESEARCH ■ POLICY ■ COMMUNITY

**Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional and
Resource Extractive Industries in Saskatchewan:
An Exploration of the Issues**

Roberta Stout

May 2011

Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) is one of the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, funded by the Women's Health Contribution Program of Health Canada. PWHCE supports new knowledge and research on women's health issues; and provides policy advice, analysis and information to governments, health organizations and non-governmental organizations. Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of PWHCE or Health Canada.

The Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence

56 The Promenade

Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3H9

Telephone: (204) 982-6630

Fax: (204) 982-6637

Email: pwhce@uwinnipeg.ca

This report is also available on our website: www.pwhce.ca

This is project #239 of Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence

**Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional
and Resource Extractive Industries in Saskatchewan:
An Exploration of the Issues**

Roberta Stout

May 2011



centres of excellence
for WOMEN'S HEALTH

centres d'excellence
pour LA SANTÉ DES FEMMES

PRAIRIE WOMEN'S HEALTH

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
RESEARCH ■ POLICY ■ COMMUNITY

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Recommendations	i
Résumé	iii
Recommandations	iv
Part 1: Introduction	1
Literature Review	1
Methodology and Limitations	4
The Women	5
The Report.....	5
Part 2: Findings	7
Employment in the Industry	7
Training.....	8
Entrance into the Industry – Transition and First Impressions.....	10
Impact of the Industry	12
Impact of Income.....	14
Recruitment	16
Childcare	17
Shift Work.....	19
Personal Relationships	22
Camp Life	24
Women-Designated Spaces	27
Male-Dominated Workplace	30
Sexual Harassment.....	34
Racial Discrimination	37
Workplace Injury.....	38
Work-Related Stress	43
Part 3: Discussion and Concluding Remarks	47
Recommendations.....	49
Part 4: Bibliography	51
Appendix I: Aboriginal Women and Extractive Industries Interview Guide	52

Executive Summary

In 2010-2011, Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) undertook an exploratory study in Northern Saskatchewan with the goal of understanding Aboriginal women's employment experiences in the mining sector. The key purposes of the study were:

- To provide a venue for Aboriginal women to voice their perceptions and experiences of working in mining in Northern Saskatchewan.
- To explore the positive and negative socio-economic and health outcomes of employment in mining for Aboriginal women, their families and communities.
- To understand the opportunities and challenges of recruitment and retention of Aboriginal women within mining in Northern Saskatchewan.

This builds upon the 2009 PWHCE report entitled *Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional and Resource Extractive Industries in Manitoba: An Exploration of the Issues*. While many of the women in the 2009 study had positive training and employment experiences, they did identify the need for greater training opportunities, the provision of more social supports including flexible childcare, and gender-designated spaces. They also identified the workplace culture, sexual harassment and racism as challenges to Aboriginal women being able to benefit from economic opportunities within these industries. The 2010-2011 study wanted to see whether these same findings held true for Aboriginal women working in Northern Saskatchewan.

This current research contributes to a small but growing body of research calling for a gendered and culturally grounded analysis of the experiences and effects of resource extractive industries on Aboriginal women, families and communities in Canada.

The report has three parts. Following an introductory section, which sets the context, it turns directly to the voices of the women. Their narratives provide insights to their employment within the field including recruitment, training, income, working arrangements, work culture and workplace health and safety. Based on these stories, in the third part we discuss the commonalities and differences with the findings from Northern Manitoba. It concludes by drawing up a number of recommendations for consideration.

Recommendations

To facilitate Aboriginal women's continued and growing employment in mining in Northern Saskatchewan, a number of recommendations have been drawn up. These recommendations focus on breaking down the persistent gender-based barriers that

challenge Aboriginal women from fully benefiting from northern industrial development. While some of these recommendations include tapping into already existing, top-down industry policies, others could be more localized and bottom-up and would include more in depth conversations with Aboriginal women employees for local response.

Training and Employment

- Diversify the training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal women across the sector, in both traditional and non-traditional jobs.
- Promote Aboriginal women role models in diverse employment positions.

Shift Work

- Recognize Aboriginal women's multiple roles as mothers, caregivers and employees and assist them with meeting the challenges of juggling childcare and dependent care with shift work.

Camp Life

- Provide up-to-date, safe and healthy living and working spaces for all employees.
- Make around the clock healthy food options available for shift workers.
- Ensure that women designated spaces extend beyond dormitories to include exercise and activity facilities.
- Institute women-specific recreational and arts-based activities for off-hour shift workers.

Work Culture

- Challenge the male-dominated work culture by hiring more women and Aboriginal women in supervisory and managerial positions.
- Develop and implement zero tolerance policies for sexual harassment and intimidation in training, employment and camp life.

Workplace Injury Prevention

- Recognize and develop targeted strategies to lessen the diversity of shift work-related injuries and stressors across the sector, including mental, physical and emotional health.
- Provide on-site health promotion workers, including a counsellor and nutritionist.

Résumé

En 2010-2011, le Centre d'excellence pour la santé des femmes - région des Prairies (CESFP) a mené une étude préliminaire dans le nord de la Saskatchewan dans le but de comprendre l'expérience professionnelle des femmes autochtones du secteur minier. Les objectifs clés visés par l'étude étaient :

- de fournir un forum qui permettrait aux femmes autochtones d'exprimer leurs points de vue et leurs expériences professionnelles relatifs au travail dans les mines du nord de la Saskatchewan;
- d'analyser les résultats positifs et négatifs socioéconomiques et en matière de santé découlant de l'emploi minier chez les femmes autochtones, leur famille et leur collectivité;
- de comprendre les possibilités et les défis liés au recrutement et au maintien en poste des femmes autochtones au sein des mines du nord de la Saskatchewan.

Cette étude mise sur le rapport du CESFP publié en 2009 et intitulé *Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional and Resource Extractive Industries in Manitoba: An Exploration of the Issues*. Bien que l'expérience de formation et d'emploi de bon nombre des femmes ayant participé à l'étude de 2009 avaient été positive, elles ont mentionné qu'il fallait plus de possibilités de formation, plus de soutiens sociaux, y compris des services de garderies souples et plus de postes désignés en fonction du sexe. Elles ont aussi signalé que la culture de travail, le harcèlement sexuel et le racisme représentaient des défis aux femmes autochtones qui empêchaient celles-ci de profiter des possibilités économiques au sein de ces industries. L'étude de 2010-2011 tentait de déterminer si ces mêmes conclusions s'appliquaient aux femmes autochtones qui travaillaient dans le nord de la Saskatchewan.

Ce projet de recherche actuel contribue à un corpus de recherche peu abondant mais grandissant qui préconise une analyse des expériences des femmes autochtones, de leur famille et de leur collectivité, ainsi que des effets sur elles. Une telle analyse viserait les industries qui exploitent les ressources naturelles au Canada et serait axée sur le sexe et la culture.

Le rapport est composé de trois parties. Après la section de l'introduction qui établit le contexte, le rapport donne immédiatement place aux commentaires des femmes. Leurs témoignages offrent un aperçu du travail de ce domaine, y inclus le recrutement, la formation, le revenu, les accords de travail, la culture de travail en plus de la santé et de la sécurité au travail. En s'inspirant de ces témoignages, on discute, dans la troisième section, les points communs et les différences entre les conclusions qui portent sur le nord du Manitoba. La section se termine en formulant un nombre de recommandations à considérer.

Recommandations

Pour contribuer à la continuation et à l'essor de l'emploi des femmes autochtones dans les mines du nord de la Saskatchewan, on a formulé un nombre de recommandations. Ces recommandations portent sur l'élimination des obstacles persistants et fondés sur le sexe qui empêchent les femmes autochtones à profiter pleinement du développement industriel nordique. Malgré le fait que certaines de ces recommandations comprennent l'accès aux politiques industrielles descendantes et actuelles, d'autres pourraient avoir un caractère plus local et ascendant, et incluraient des discussions plus approfondies avec les femmes autochtones employées qui serviraient à susciter une réponse locale.

La formation et l'emploi

- Diversifier les occasions de formation et d'emploi à l'intention des femmes autochtones dans tout le secteur, y compris les postes traditionnels et non traditionnels.
- Mettre en valeur les femmes autochtones qui servent de modèles de rôle dans divers postes.

Le travail par quarts

- Reconnaître les multiples rôles des femmes autochtones à titre de mères de famille, de fournisseuses de soins et d'employées, et les aider à bien coordonner leurs rôles de sorte à ce qu'elles puissent voir à la garde d'enfants, des personnes à charge tout en travaillant par quarts.

La vie dans les camps miniers

- Fournir un logement et un lieu de travail modernes, sécuritaires et sains à tous les employés.
- Assurer que les travailleurs de quarts aient des choix alimentaires sains à leur disposition 24 heures sur 24.
- Assurer que les locaux destinés aux femmes comprennent plus que les dortoirs pour y inclure les salles d'exercices et d'activités.
- Organiser des activités récréatives et artistiques à l'intention des femmes qui ont terminé leur quart.

La culture de travail

- Contrer le milieu de travail à prédominance masculine en embauchant un plus grand nombre de femmes et de femmes autochtones dans des postes de supervision et de gestion.

- Élaborer et mettre en œuvre des politiques de tolérance zéro contre le harcèlement sexuel et l'intimidation liées aux activités de formation, d'emploi et de vie de camp.

La prévention des blessures sur les lieux de travail

- Reconnaître et élaborer des stratégies ciblées pour réduire les diverses blessures liées au travail de quarts et aux facteurs de stress dans le secteur entier, y compris la santé mentale, physique et affective.
- Offrir les services des travailleurs de promotion de la santé sur les lieux, y inclus ceux d'un conseiller et d'un nutritionniste.

Part I: Introduction

In 2009, Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) initiated an exploration into Aboriginal women's participation in resource extraction industries in the northern regions of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The first phase involved discussions with nine Aboriginal women employed, previously employed or training for work within mining and hydro in Northern Manitoba. The result was a report entitled *Aboriginal Women's Employment in Non-Traditional and Resource Extractive Industries in Manitoba: An Exploration of the Issues*. While many of the women had positive training and employment experiences, they did identify the need for greater training opportunities, the provision of more social supports including flexible childcare, and gender-designated spaces. They also identified the workplace culture, sexual harassment and racism as challenges to Aboriginal women being able to benefit from economic opportunities within these industries.

As a second phase to this work, PWHCE undertook a sister study in Northern Saskatchewan with the goal of looking for commonalities and differences of Aboriginal women's employment experiences within resource extractive industries. The key purposes of the study were:

- To provide a venue for Aboriginal women to voice their perceptions and experiences of working in mining in Saskatchewan.
- To explore the positive and negative socio-economic and health outcomes of employment in mining for Aboriginal women, their families and communities.
- To understand the opportunities and challenges of recruitment and retention of Aboriginal women within mining in Saskatchewan.

This report contributes to a small but growing body of research calling for a gendered and culturally grounded analysis of the experiences and effects of resource extractive industries on Aboriginal women, families and communities in Canada.

Literature Review

A recent report entitled "Ramp-up: A Study on the Status of Women in Canada's Mining and Exploration Sector"¹, compiled by Women in Mining Canada, examined statistical data on the representation of women in the mining and exploration industries as well as the perspectives of key stakeholders. The study suggested that: "follow-up, in-depth interviews to probe and obtain examples of issues in the work

¹ Women in Mining Canada. (2010). *Ramp-up: A study on the status of women in Canada's mining and exploration sector*. <http://www.mihc.ca/en/publications/resources/Ramp-UPFinal2010.pdf>

context” should be conducted². Additionally, they stated that further research should include “special focus groups of women in non-traditional occupations in mining and exploration”³.

According to the Saskatchewan Mining Association, northern Saskatchewan is responsible for the highest amount of mineral production in Canada⁴, the majority of which takes place on Aboriginal lands. With an estimated \$5 billion in mineral production, Saskatchewan has over 25 mines presently operating.

Mining and exploration provide Saskatchewan residents with approximately 30,500 jobs⁵. The province boasts the highest Aboriginal participation in the mining industry in Canada, making up 20.7% of mining industry employees⁶. That said Aboriginal employees are grossly underrepresented in management positions. In 2001 only 2% held management positions. There are also fewer than 2% of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan who work in the mining, oil and gas industries⁷.

Gender segregation, that is still apparent in the Canadian workforce today, is reproduced in the resource extraction industry. Women tend to occupy traditional gender positions, such as housekeeping, cooking or administrative work, while the male workers fill the remaining, higher paying technical and managerial positions^{8 9 10 11}. In 2006, while Aboriginal women comprised 14% of the total employees in the mining sector across the country, only 0.6% held management positions¹². According to the Ramp-Up Report, over 60% of administrative and cooperative

² Ibid, p.26.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Saskatchewan Mining Association. (May, 2009). *General Information Fact Sheet*. [Online] Last accessed June 30, 2010 from: <http://www.saskmining.ca/info/Fact-Sheets/fact-sheet-general-information.html>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. (2010) Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *Aboriginal People and Mineral Exploration*, <http://www.pdac.ca/aboriginal/pdf/1003-aboriginal-affairs-fact-sheet.pdf>, last accessed June 2011

⁷ Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. (2009). *Socio-Demographic Profiles of Saskatchewan Women: Aboriginal Women*. Status of Women Office. <http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/aboriginal-women>

⁸Ibid

⁹ National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *Resource Extraction and Aboriginal Communities in Northern Canada: Gender Considerations*. http://www.naho.ca/documents/naho/english/resourceExtraction/Gender_EN.pdf

¹⁰ Status of Women’s Council of the NWT. (1999). *Review of Diavik Diamonds Project Socio-Economic Environmental Effects Report: Impacts on Women and Families*. http://www.statusofwomen.nt.ca/download/review_diavik.pdf

¹¹ The Government of Canada. (2005). *Prospecting the Future: Meeting Human Resource Challenges in the Mining in the Canadian Minerals and Metals Industry*. http://www.aboriginaltrades.ca/en/files/prospecting_final.pdf

¹² Natural Resources Canada. (2009) *Statistical Profile: Aboriginal Mining in Canada*. <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/smm-mms/abor-auto/pdf/stats-09-eng.pdf>

services in mining and exploration are held by women. Furthermore, women earn approximately 32% less than male employees in the mining sector¹³.

Training for resource extraction positions may also be challenging for women seeking to gain employment. Women have a documented drop out rate much higher than that of men in apprenticeship programs. Reasons cited include discriminating hiring practices, negative perceptions of their abilities, and isolation and harassment in apprenticeship classrooms and on the job¹⁴. Lack of awareness about the opportunities in the industry, few female role models, lack of flexibility for those with young families, and distance from home communities are all cited as challenges for women pursuing a career in mining¹⁵.

The fly-in-fly-out system in the mining industry is becoming increasingly popular, which is especially challenging for female workers, especially those with young families or in low paying positions that have less financial rewards for a more stressful schedule^{16,17}. For women to pursue careers in mining, equal pay and better training opportunities are essential¹⁸.

Although the history of mining in Canada and its impact on Aboriginal communities has been widely investigated, research specifically regarding Aboriginal women's individual experiences merits fuller examination and discussion. Promotion and acceptance of women in non-traditional industries is imperative and in-depth knowledge into the specialized needs and working conditions for women is required¹⁹. As such, PWHCE has conducted this second exploratory project focusing

¹³ Women in Mining Canada. (2010). *Ramp-up: A study on the Status of Women in Canada's Mining and Exploration Sector*. <http://www.mihrc.ca/en/publications/resources/Ramp-UPFinal2010.pdf>

¹⁴ Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. (2004). *Accessing and Completing Apprenticeship Training in Canada: Perceptions of Barriers Report*. http://www.caf-fca.org/files/access/1-Report_jan04_e.pdf

¹⁵ The Government of Canada. (2005). *Prospecting the Future: Meeting Human Resource Challenges in Mining in the Canadian Minerals and Metals Industry*. http://www.aboriginaltrades.ca/en/files/prospecting_final.pdf

¹⁶ Costa, S, Silva, A. & Hui, V. (2006). *What are the Opportunities and Challenges for Women in Fly-in-Fly-out (FIFO) Mining in Canada? An Exploratory Study*. http://www.womeninmining.net/pdf/fifo_women.pdf

¹⁷ Women in Mining Canada. (2010). *Ramp-up: A study on the Status of Women in Canada's Mining and Exploration Sector*. <http://www.mihrc.ca/en/publications/resources/Ramp-UPFinal2010.pdf>

¹⁸ Status of Women's Council of the NWT. (1999). *Review of Diavik Diamonds Project Socio-Economic Environmental Effects Report: Impacts on Women and Families*, http://www.statusofwomen.nt.ca/download/review_diavik.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid

on the experiences of Aboriginal women working in the resource extractive industries in northern Saskatchewan.

Methodology and Limitations

This project was challenging due to getting access to a northern mine site and Aboriginal women employees within the industry. As such, PWHCE sought out assistance through a variety of channels to find Aboriginal women employees who we could interview off-site. We approached contacts in academia, technical institutes, the Aboriginal research community, a mining NGO and directly through mining sector human resources, without any leads.

At that point a PWHCE Board Director based out of Saskatchewan provided us with the name of an Aboriginal female employee at CAMECO who was willing to assist us with the project. Given that the CAMECO mine site where she is employed is a secured zone, with no public access, roads, accommodations, restaurants or stores, the researcher was dependant on the company for permission to use their transportation and camp for the duration of the field research. Although we relied heavily on industry to undertake this study, the findings in this report have not been altered to portray the company's views. Importantly, one Aboriginal participant told the researcher to "be honest" and tell their stories such as they were shared with her.

The industry contact secured our access to the northern mine site and identified 10 Aboriginal women in a variety of positions, traditional and non-traditional, who had agreed to participate in the study. A total of 8 participated in semi-structured in-person interviews (see Appendix A for interview guide). The questionnaire used in the Manitoba sister-project was tailored for this study. All of the interviews took place in a private office in the administration building of the company. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed from which a thematic analysis approach was done to identify themes.

PWHCE recognizes that there are many detrimental and diverse environmental and health threats related to mining in Canada and abroad. These are most often felt by surrounding Aboriginal communities²⁰. We are also aware that government and industry are proponents of the economic spin-offs and benefits from resource extraction. These factors drive industrial development despite environmental, human rights and Indigenous grassroots opposition. There has also been a push to hire more Aboriginal men and women in this sector. But what do those, in particular Aboriginal women, already working in the industry have to say about their

²⁰ National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *Resource Extraction and Aboriginal Communities in Northern Canada: Cultural Considerations*, http://www.naho.ca/documents/naho/english/resourceExtraction/Cultural_EN.pdf

employment? Why have they chosen to work in mining? Would they recommend this industry to other women and Aboriginal women?

PWHCE is not providing an evaluation of CAMECO, or other mining industries, but seeks to gain insider perspectives of what it is like for Aboriginal women to work in the industry generally. Therefore the participants were asked to reflect broadly on their experiences working in mining, to share their thoughts on the socio-economic and health outcomes for Aboriginal women, families and communities, and to discuss the opportunities and challenges related to Aboriginal women's employment in mining.

In an effort to maintain confidentiality of the participants, the name of the northern mine site is omitted from this report.

The Women

A total of 8 women participated in the study. They ranged in age from their early twenties to their mid-fifties and were evenly split between First Nations and Métis. All but one had Grade 12 education. Three had some post-secondary education and one had several technical certificates. All of the women were employed full-time in the mining industry at the time of the interviews. One had been employed by more than one mining company over the course of her career. While two of the women had been working in the industry for under two years, the other six had careers that spanned up to twenty years or more.

Three of the women were employed in administrative and clerical positions, two in housekeeping and three worked directly in the mill. Three of the women held supervisory positions. While the researcher did not ask for exact salaries, the women's approximate yearly wages ranged from \$25,000 to over \$100,000. With the exception of one, all of the women worked a seven-day-on, seven-day-off, twelve-hour shift. Only the administrative people held positions did not require a night shift. All of the women commuted to work via the company air transportation.

The Report

This research report has three parts. It begins by listening to experiences voiced by the women. Their narratives provide insights to their employment within the field including recruitment, training, income, working arrangements, work culture and workplace health and safety. Based on these stories, we next discuss the commonalities and differences with the findings from Northern Manitoba. It concludes by making a number of recommendations for consideration.

Part 2: Findings

Over the course of two full days, 8 Aboriginal women were interviewed in order to understand their experiences and perspectives on working within the mining industry. The following section looks to how they became aware of mining jobs, what training they received, their initial impressions and how their income had affected them personally.

Employment in the Industry

As discussed in the literature review, mining is a big business in Saskatchewan. For northern residents, it provides economic opportunities through employment. There were overlapping reasons that the women chose to enter the mining industry. Six of them had become aware of potential employment in the mine through a family member or a friend. In all of these cases, family members or friends were working or had worked for the mine. Three of them entered the industry through a summer student placement. One of them spoke of hearing about opportunities through a public service announcement on the radio and another stated it was just “luck” that she became aware of a job.

When they were asked why they wanted a job within mining, three of the eight women spoke about the financial incentives of the industry. While none of them spoke about “getting wealthy” through mining, they did express how it has afforded them self-sufficiency and financial independence from spouses or parents. The following quote reveals how one woman saw her job as a way to “not live off of her parents”.

My income is probably the only reason why I've actually stayed here as long as I have. Actually it is the only reason. But I don't know, well I don't really like living off of my parents or 'hey mom, I want to go for supper, can I have twenty dollars'. If I can do it, then I'll do it myself. Like I'm not saying 'I don't really want your help' but I want to show [my parents], you know, that I can make it? Other than that, it's given me the opportunity to do things and not have to rely on anybody else, and it feels good.

Another woman commented on how she is gaining independence through her income. Previous to her employment with the industry, she had been a stay-at-home mother in an unstable marriage.

For some reason it kind of made me stronger than what I used to be. Like before, I didn't have a job. I was living off my husband and I was being a house mom, and I, I enjoyed my life there for a little bit because it was a lot of outdoor activities that we did, but I still didn't enjoy the

relationship part...[it] wasn't going good between me and my husband. Being away from him, I don't want to be mean or anything, but it was a good get-away for me. I thought it would help build our relationship, but it didn't. [W]e had trouble before I started working up here. Yeah so, it helped being away.

In a similar vein, another woman spoke of how shift work allows her time away from her family.

I like the week off. I can do whatever I want with one week off. Plus it's that time away from, from the, the family? I like the time away from my family, yeah, because...sometimes, there's lots of stress at home.

Other women spoke of being intrigued with mining and wanting to try it out as a potential career. One participant stated,

I just wanted to try the mine life. I know a lot of people that work in the mines, like especially in Northern Saskatchewan. There's a lot of men that work up here and there are some women but I just wanted to see what it was like to be up here, like, be away from family and...then I came up here and I haven't left.

The physical challenge and demands of the industry are what drew another woman into the mining field. According to her, it is the “grit of it all I think. The blood, sweat and tears, if you will. I don't know, it's tough. And it's tough being the only chick. And it's tough draggin' your butt up the stairs a million times. I just love the challenge of it”. She went on to say that being physical appeals to her in a job, “[You're] always on the go. There's dull moments but 90% of the time, you're on the floor givin' her, eh? You have to be or else hell will break loose”.

Training

All of the women have had ongoing training in one form or another, be it formal or informal, on-the-job, through an apprenticeship with a senior co-worker or simply through observation. Several had also become trainers of new recruits given their positions in the mill.

The mill operators talked about the eight different levels, where knowledge is essentially passed down through the ranks. One worker stated, “There's a lot of guys ahead of me. If you don't know [something] they'll go down and teach you and this is what happens. And they're really good with passing on the knowledge”.

One woman remarked that she received most of her hands-on training through employment in another mine. She entered the industry without any knowledge of mill processing and learned directly from her co-workers.

I'd say [my previous job] was my training for here. I went in and I didn't know anything. And my crew helped me along...So, on-the-job training, which is the best for me anyhow. I need hands-on [training]. I need to see to learn it. And that was my stepping stone to here, which is perfect, cause I came here with a lot of experience...It was listening and observing. That's where, that's how I got to where I am now, you know?

Despite the appeal of hands-on learning, some caution was raised around the relationships between new and senior employees with regard to knowledge sharing. This holds true particularly with regard to women entering a male-dominated workforce.

Well...being in a man's world. A lot of times, and it doesn't happen here very much anymore, but when I...was green...a lot of men are intimidated by you. [W]hen you're learning, from your elders, right? And when I say elders I mean like higher seniority people, men who have been here longer...They won't show you, they won't teach you...[Y]ou kind of have to just do your best to survive.

A seasoned veteran in the mill made a similar comment regarding training. According to her, there has been a shift in knowledge translation in the mill. In years past, it was common for information to be transferred “inter-generationally” between senior and junior employees. Now, senior employees are asking for an additional training wage for this role.

I always felt that the operators showed me what they knew, but I'm finding the newer operators coming in don't have the same mentality as we had back in the mid-eighties, early nineties and that...Cause their mentality is like, I'm not a trainer, I don't train operators. It's even gone to the point where one operator actually went upstairs here to personnel, to ask them to get the training wage because they're training another operator. Like they just don't get [it]. Like a trainer didn't come out and hold your hand for six months. Like somebody else showed you. You know, you have to pass on that information to somebody else. You know, when you get a new operator on site, you can't be out there holding their hand day-in and day-out, and showing them everything they need to know. They have to learn that from other operators and that's the way it's always been.

Formal workplace training is also on-going. The women spoke about taking Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems (WHMIS) and Building a Respectful Workplace training. Most agreed that these training practices “were helpful”.

Entrance into the Industry – Transition and First Impressions

The women were asked to reflect upon their transition and first impressions of the industry. Was it a welcoming environment, what stood out to them, was there a need for more supports as they transitioned into their jobs? For some, the transition had less to do with the job and more to do with leaving behind their home, children and family supports.

It was tough to be away from my family at first, of course. But if I wanted to make something out of my life, you know not just stay in [my community] for the rest of my life, heaven forbid. I love it, it's my home, I'll always love it, but I needed to do something to get away. And this was the opportunity.

*

So when I came here, I was a little scared just because it was the first time I was leaving my son and leaving home and not be home for seven days. That was the most frightening part. But, other than that, my job basically is the same thing I've done in any other job I've ever done.

*

At first, I didn't like being away from my kids because they were a little bit younger. But they're not that young anymore. They're old enough to take care of themselves. I don't worry as much anymore. But otherwise I didn't like that part being away from them.

Others were fortunate to have friends and relatives working within the mine with whom they could hang out and from whom they could learn the social ropes of camp/mine life.

Actually it was pretty good, cause right away the people are friendly. And nice, courteous. And plus I had my cousin for support. He really helped me a lot, [to] get through the fear of people, just being with me. I was so shy going for lunch, [but] I had him. Otherwise I would take my food upstairs and sit upstairs and eat up there. But otherwise people are really kind and friendly here, once you start and get to know people.

Two of the women likened the mine site and camp to a family. They remembered being scared and intimidated by the enormity of strangers, in particular if they came from smaller, less populated communities.

I was isolated all my life and then all of a sudden, [I] come to one little community where everybody knows everybody. Everybody sees everybody. It's all like one big family. And it was, I was really shy at first. Like it was hard for me. It took me a long time to get used to it. Especially trying to get to know five hundred people. I didn't have to meet absolutely everybody like that, but it took me a while, getting to know people.

*

It was very different. Cause you know everybody in your home town. Here I was very quiet for the first three months. I was very shy cause I didn't know what to say when I got here. They should have an introduction when you're in orientation.

Similar thoughts were shared by another participant. She also expressed how the mine community is very tight and eventually becomes one's second family.

It was kind of scary because it's a different atmosphere here. It's not like a normal nine-to-five job where you come in, you do your work, and you go home. Here you come to work [and] it's like coming to join a second family. You're constantly with these people and you have to start building relationships as if you are family members because you have to look out for each other. We're all on the same, we're stuck here. We can't go anywhere. So when I first came here I felt like I was kind of an intruder...like basically breaking some of these family bonds.

She went on to add,

But if you enjoy coming here and you feel as though you are a part of the whole team, then you, you appreciate it and you don't mind it and it's like you leave one place, you leave one home to go to another home. It becomes your other home.

Several women referred to the long hours demanded by shift work as what stood out to them. One woman stated, "I thought, 'what the hell have I gotten myself into?' Cause like I didn't want to get up in the morning. The hours are so long". Another woman shared the same sentiment, "The days, like, the days are super long. I just couldn't understand working eleven hour days. That's a long time to be sitting, even eight hours at a normal job, it's like, 'oh my God I just want to go home now'".

Another woman experienced many of the same issues that the other women had discussed. However she also made specific comments related to being a female employee and the extra burden she felt to prove herself in a the male-dominated workforce.

It was a little scary cause I was twenty when I started. So it was a little scary at first because it's really unknown coming up to a mine. Really unknown. I didn't know what to take for gear, didn't know what to take for clothes, and then I was stuck in trailer in just a small room. So, it was at the very beginning it was quite intimidating actually. I didn't know anybody working up here either and it took me about three or four weeks. And then the unknown, you know? Can you, are you going to be able to handle this work they're going to give you? What is it? So you end up working twice as hard though to prove yourself? As a female employee, I think anyway. Like I remember this one time I was shovelling snow, we had to shovel snow between all the trailers, so I was shovelling snow and there was like, four or five of us supposed to do snow shovelling, and I'm thinking, 'hey, I did half the camp, where are these guys?' And I'm the only girl and there's a bunch of guys in the crew. So I went in and they're all just sitting there and having coffee, hey?

Impact of the Industry

When asked about how the industry has impacted communities, either positively or negatively, a variety of responses were offered. One of the participants stated that her family, for one, has a long history in mining and that there have been few other options for income in her region.

I have a lot of family in the mining industry. And I know, so many people that the mining industry has helped out. You know, like from my dad, to my sister, to my uncle, to my great-uncle. My sister was a clerk in the mines, my mom worked in the mine, my kohkom²¹ worked in the mine. What else are we going to do in [the community]? You know, you can work at the Co-op, or pump gas. But to really make a living? There's nothing much more. It's a mining town.

While several women said that mining companies have positively impacted the surrounding communities through funding recreational centres or youth activities, a couple of them were candid in sharing their views on the emerging and detrimental environment considerations of resource extraction. One woman critically stated, "I think the oil sands, they're making a huge mess. Their impact on the environment is just huge".

While not fearful for her own health and safety working in the mill, another participant openly said "I think you have to have worked in this industry, or maybe have gone to school, to actually understand the harm, you know, the effects that uranium can have, you know, later on in life". And that even though the industry

²¹ Cree word meaning grandmother

has been active in providing economic opportunities for nearby communities, she went on to say, “I think that they try to have a positive impact on the communities, but from what I see, and from what they tell the communities, is two different things.”

Caution was expressed around unnecessary ground transportation of uranium through surrounding communities. This was particularly due to on-going traditional land use by Aboriginal people and the lack of information on the potential effects on the environment. One woman stated:

...the amount of break-downs that there are? That's high, high-grade ore. You know, like they're going to drag it through Northern Saskatchewan, through communities, even where [we] catch fish...where [our families] have cabins. I totally disagreed with that. This company went through every little community that would have been affected and they told these people who probably don't even know what uranium is or what it does or anything, to tell them that you know, 'it's okay, you don't get harmed, there's no affect', but they don't know.

I mean, if you bring in contractors into [the mine] that don't even know what we do here, how is that sixty or fifty year old man or woman that you're telling the story to going to know what you're talking about? The reason why I'm saying that is a contractor, just a young guy, came on site last year. Well it wasn't until he got in there that he asked, 'What do you guys do here?' And the guy giving the orientation, said, 'This is a uranium mine.' He got up and went straight back to the airport. He was outta here. He didn't want to have anything to do with this mine site. Like, that's what I mean. If you're bringing in people [and] they don't know what we do, how [are] the people in the communities [going to know]? They probably never have heard of uranium, you know?

There was the sense that the uranium industry is being more closely watched now, particularly given the recent earthquake in Japan and the damage and risks from the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant in Japan (March, 2011).

I think there's a lot more focus on the environment and the impact of the environment than there was years ago. You know they never used to worry so much about it. But now they really pay attention, especially in the uranium industry. I would say this stuff in Japan, you don't feel real good about working in the nuclear industry because of what's going on there.

Impact of Income

They also spoke to the benefits of working within this sector, namely a stable income. The women were asked how having an income has changed their lives, either positively or negatively. With the exception of one participant, all of the women agreed that their wages were adequate. Two of the women compared their present wage to that of previous jobs they held. Both indicated that they were making more income for similar work.

Up here, you're paid an excellent pay. I've done [a similar] job for fifteen years [and] maybe made eight hundred to a thousand dollars a paycheque. And I come up here and all of a sudden I'm making fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars a paycheque. I'm doing the same thing I've done for years. But I guess if you have to make that pay more because if I was still being paid eight hundred dollars would I seriously want to be up here? You kind of make the incentive for people to want to be here.

Many of the women could also agree that their income had afforded them self-sufficiency and independence. They are able to travel, help their families and plan for the future.

I'm financially secure. Got my own house and all of that stuff. Which, it's a struggle now for these young kids coming up. I have the ability to go and travel. I'm able to do that so that's good. That's one of the benefits where if I was just working, you know, [in the] retail industry or something, I wouldn't be able to do that. And really, you know, plan for retirement early, and put lots of money away as far as that goes. And be comfortable really. Not have to worry [like] I don't look through the flyers and see what's on sale. When I go to the grocery store, I just go to the grocery store.

*

I travel twice a year, wherever. It absolutely gives you the freedom to do whatever you want. I pay my sister's daycare. It's nice to be able to do that for my sister. Buy my kohkom a car. I'm taking her to Vegas in April. You know, it's nice to do that, to be able to do that and not worry about it. Not worry about it.

*

It just helped me build me, made me more stronger, get me used to being more confident, independent... Cause now I'm employed, I have my own money. I can pay for my own things. I can support myself a

little...I'd like to be, completely on my own...so I can have my kids come live with me, instead of having somebody else there. And I would have my own private time with them.

Another woman related how she and her children felt pride in having an income.

They liked it. They knew that mom was making an income and I get to spoil them a little bit more than what I could before. I know that they seen the confidence in me and like being proud to have a job and to be out here. They were proud of me. I was proud of myself. I still am.

Not all the comments around wages were positive. For two of the women, as they have changed positions and their wages have grown, they have lost some of the previous benefits they had enjoyed, such as overtime pay. One of them stated, “Now that I’m in this department, I know exactly to the exact penny how much I’m going [to bring] home because my pay cheque’s the same every day cause we don’t get any overtime.”

Money and debt management were also brought up by a couple of the participants. In this way, they stated that money management skills training would be beneficial to them and other employees. For one of them, although she makes a good income, she is unable to cover her current debt load. She states, “I’d like to learn how to be able to get it all together, the payments, and then concentrate on that. [Be] debt free”.

The other mentioned how wages can at times be negative. By this she meant that a rapid influx of income has the potential to result in money mismanagement and even substance abuse.

You give this person that amount of money but the person doesn’t really have the budgeting [and] the life skills behind them. Especially people coming, who’ve never worked and you hire them to come up here and they’re suddenly making twenty-five hundred dollars a month, that’s a huge increase. And you can see how that affects them because then they come to work every week tired because they have this huge amount of money [so] they can do their drinking for a week at a time. My [relative] makes a huge amount of money but doesn’t really spend anything on it other than drinking. But he’s never really had this money. So in order to have healthy people working for you, you need to offer them some assistance. I mean it’s their choice if they choose not to take it, but I think that it should be a part of [what we offer] when we bring people here.

She went on to note that there are both negative and positive aspects to income, “You can have a very good lifestyle over here. But if I chose to go home and party

all week, well that's not very healthy for me, to come back up here when I haven't really slept, my body hasn't come off of that alcohol feeling."

Recruitment

Of the 8 women interviewed, only 3 would unequivocally recommend the industry to other Aboriginal women as a career choice. For these women, there were clear economic benefits to working in this sector. One woman stated that in addition to the salary, having time-off from work and family are two additional benefits of this type of work, "Good benefits, and also the time out and the time away from home".

Another 3 women explained they would recommend the industry with some reservations. Again, while there are obvious economic spin-offs to having an income, there are also clear trade-offs. First and foremost, women need to be okay with the week-on, week-off work arrangements and family considerations. They also need to be aware of physical and mental demands of shift-work, alongside the male-dominated work culture of the industry.

I would say it's a secure job. I would say that, you know, you wouldn't have to worry about the harassment aspect of it because, you know, usually mining companies are big enough that they have [Human Resources] in place. Just the compensation you know. You know the whole thing is that you're going to be away from your family and friends, hey? But then you're there for a full week, so it's a trade-off, right?

*

I guess I [would recommend it], but at the same time, it all depends on your family situation. Like if I was the mother of a young baby, I wouldn't want to be up here. Like my son is [a teenager], it's kind of like we've got that balance going. I wouldn't recommend it to somebody who's got a little one. If you're a single woman [without children] it's not bad. It's alright. But I wouldn't want to do it if I had a baby I wouldn't be up here.

*

It depends on the family factor too though. Say if I had a little baby, I wouldn't be out here. Definitely not. I could never, ever see myself out here if I were to ever have a little baby. I wouldn't be able to do it. Like after raising my kids, being there absolutely every day with them like I couldn't see myself being here prior. I wouldn't have been able to do that, having somebody else raise them for me, cause it's a half a year we're here. Half a year of their lives that I lose. They'd be little strangers.

*

It's trial and error you know. This life-style is not for everybody. And I've seen good women come and go. Because you know like, I don't have kids or anything. Like maybe if I had a family I wouldn't be able to come up here. I've seen some girls they can't stay a week which is understandable. It's tough to be [here]. You have to be mentally and physically and emotionally tough to deal with the things we have to deal with.

One of the women articulated that she had never, nor would she ever, recommend the industry to other Aboriginal women, particularly her own female relatives. Given her personal experiences of sexual harassment and intimidation on the job, she feels she would have to be forthcoming with her own story to new recruits. She also expressed that she would be overcome with the need to protect her relatives from what she experienced and feared that they would be targeted for mistreatment through their connection to her.

I think it would be too much. I would want to tell them everything that I know, everything that I've experienced. And I think it just would be too much for me. That's what I think. No but I never have in my life recommended this to anybody. Never.

To tell you the truth, my whole time of employment here, I have never ever had a relative, whether it be a niece, a brother, a sister, an uncle, an aunt, working here. Never. Never. Not even doing the same thing that I'm doing, ever. I've always said that I like it that way. I have a tough enough time trying to protect myself. Cause I think I would be kind of protective. You know, the way that I see things around here. Just the way some people treat other people. You know, maybe there is some foreman out there that doesn't really like me, and if I had a niece or a nephew maybe coming into the mill, maybe they'd give them a hard time because of maybe something that he's not happy with me or something.

Childcare

Three of the women were mothers. In all cases, their children were grown up. They, along with the other participants, acknowledged that the fly-in/fly-out nature of the industry effectively bars mothers of young children, single mothers and mothers without a family network of support, from entering this workforce. Of the women who were not mothers, many said that they would not work for the mine if they had small children.

One woman reflected upon the tenuous situation of a female co-worker who is dependent on a patchwork of support for childcare.

The friend that I know that has...I believe he's two, she cross-shifts with her sister. Yeah. So she has her sister taking care of her son, but then she has that trouble of the way she's raising him, that one week, cause they're spending, he's spending half his life with her sister and, and then half his life with his biological mom. She finds it a little hard sometimes. Otherwise, he does go to daycare. She puts him in daycare and stuff. Has her boyfriend back home, also helping out.

Another woman shared similar insights into the difficulty of balancing motherhood with work, "I had a friend. She was a mill operator too at one time, but now she works up at the office here as a clerk. She's got one boy and it was really difficult for her".

Having parents who could fill the parental role while she was working was key to one woman's ability to do her job. She leaves behind a teenager for her work at the mine.

But I have a huge and great family support. I think that's what makes a really big difference, being here, is I have my parents and they take over the parenting role when I'm not at home. So I don't feel as though I'm leaving my son to just kind of fend for himself with a baby-sitter. He actually still has that family feeling when I am gone.

In the case of another woman, although she did have family support, she had to leave her job as a mill operator due to childcare needs. She stated, "But then, I got pregnant and I had my baby. [I] tried a baby-sitter a couple of times and it didn't work out so I just left the company". She was able to return to the industry once her children were grown up.

Knowing how difficult it would be to leave a baby for seven days at a time, one of the women stated that she would prefer a regular 8 hour position once she becomes a mother.

I eventually want to start a family and don't really want to be leaving a week at a time. [With] the nine to five job [at] corporate, I'll be able to tuck my kid in bed at night and wake up with him. As opposed to 'mom's coming home on a plane, be ready!' Doesn't really get my vote cause I've seen [that] so I don't really want that.

In the case of another participant, while she sees how hard it is for women to maintain a job without stable childcare or a dependable partner, she also acknowledges that children benefit from a working parent.

Ninety percent of them can't come to work, or quit, because they don't have a babysitter or the boyfriend went out last night and now they're not home or whatever you know. There's a million and one excuses. But

it all basically is around the children. And 80% of this job is getting on that plane. And that's a hard thing for people to do. To leave you know? If I ever did have a kid I know myself now I'm going to work. Because I know that if I come back up here, this company's going to wipe my baby's ass for the rest of his life. You know, is that wrong to think that way? I don't know. But that's the way I feel. I know that there will be food in the fridge and, like wood in the stove, and gas in the car, and blah blah blah, for the rest of my baby's life, if I could just get on that plane. You know, it would be hard.

This statement is based on her childhood experience of having a father employed in shift work as a miner. She said, “You know, it kept me fed. It's so shitty, we would cry. Cry and cry for my dad not to go to work. We never starved. You know we never went without, ever.”

Shift Work

With the exception of two women, all of the other participants indicated that they enjoy shift work. One stated, “I've always liked it that week in, week out.” Another said that she would prefer the shift to be longer on both ends. This would allow her to go fully back and forth between both worlds.

I love shift work. A week is not long enough. I'd rather do two weeks, two and two. Cause it just gets you that chance to step back from both worlds. My home world and this world are two different worlds. So when I'm here, I step back and reflect on my home. And when I'm home, I step back and reflect on my work life. It's nice coming up here if I get away from it and go home. So you know, it's equilibrium I guess.

As indicated in previous sections of this report, some of the women look forward to and appreciate time away from their partners, home life and communities.

For another woman, working at the mine has meant giving up important social events and activities, such as organized sporting tournaments, parties and friends' birthdays. Being removed from her social network and friends, “...was difficult when I first started because you're young and you want to have that social life. And, being a week away from your friends and hearing all the stories...I don't know, I'm kind of missing out.”

All of the women, regardless of their positions, work twelve hour shifts. While those in administrative positions work day shifts only, the women working in the mill alternate between 12 hour night and day shifts. Some of the women commented on how the rotation between day and night shifts is difficult on their bodies. One woman stated, “We switch days and nights. [We] rotate each week and [it] takes you

a little while to get used to it. But it does take a toll on you after a while. It takes a toll on your body.”

One of the women expressed how she has had to juggle her shift with her health and parenting needs.

I work six to six. The normal shift here is seven to seven. I work six to six only because I also have to work in my fitness, my healthy lifestyle. And I find if I do the seven to seven, I would, I usually get up at four-thirty or three-thirty. I'm in the gym by four. And I come to work and I'm completely exhausted at the end of the day. I find it's very hard up here to try and maintain that. There was a long period of time where I didn't do anything because I was just so mentally tired at the end of the day. And now I've found that balance. So my boss allows me to juggle my schedule. Like if, knowing that I'm a single parent, if I need to be home an extra day, well I stay home an extra day but that just means I stay here an extra day.

Another woman told how she enjoys shift work because, “the day goes by fast because you're constantly busy.” All the women agreed that after working a full seven day shift, they were exhausted and ready to go home. When they were asked what it felt like when they got on the flight home after their seven day shift, there were common themes of relief and the need to recuperate from the mental and physical fatigue. Upon arriving home, some said they went shopping, had massages, celebrated, frequented the bar and spent time with family and friends.

It's like you just let yourself relax. Like it's funny how you get on the plane when you're leaving here and you aren't even done taxiing down the runway, and you can just let go. And you get home and you're home. Like there's no worrying about what's going to happen at five o'clock or twelve o'clock or eleven o'clock. You're just home. And what you decide to do on your own home time is your own thing. So I go home and I get to be with my son for seven days. And I give him my seven days, so it really balances itself out because even when I'm up here, I can stay till ten at night [at work].

*

Today's my home day. So today I'm extra happy. It's a sigh of relief because you're here all week working. The days go by really fast sometimes. It's long. I'm just finally thinking, 'oh thank God, this day is here'. It's a relief to get home. Especially when you don't see your family all week. So, I'm happy to be going home today.

*

Now I'm excited. I had that feeling at first, when I first started here, and then it started dissipating and I didn't want to go back and I dreaded [it]. Cause when we land in [the community], my husband would pick me up and we'd travel with another friend that was flying the same day, same time, but to a different mine and of course, they'd want to go to the bar and I'd end up in there too and it wasn't what I would've liked and I still did it anyway. Like land, run to the bar right away, drink beer. Now I don't even get carried away doing stuff like that. But that's what it was. I was starting to get tired of doing that. It was meaningless. Then [my kids] were not happy with me being half-shot after being gone for how long, you know? So it was a routine that was starting to happen and it did make the time go by faster at home because I wanted to be here.

*

It's kind of hard to explain, you know. It almost feels like it's time for you to let loose and go and treat yourself. It's almost like you deserve it. I mean, like having a few beer or whatever. It's almost like you're celebrating. You completed something. That's the feeling that I get. A lot of times when we'd come off the plane, there'd be a whole bunch of us, nobody even goes home, you just go right from the airport to a lounge. Like it's almost like you're celebrating and that's always been kind of what I do.

*

A sigh of relief. It's like you're responsible here, right? It's kind of like a weight lifted off your shoulders. I don't have to worry about doing this or having to watch for this. Like I don't want to talk about work when I'm home. Not at all.

*

It's such a wonderful overwhelming feeling, you would never know. You would never know until you lived it. That morning you're going home. Oh it's the best feeling in the whole world, taking off in that plane. Landing, you get in your truck and it's like I've never seen my family for years, you know? I get to relive that wonderful feeling every week. I get to go home and just appreciate my family, the dirty dishes, my snot-nosed nephew, like just stuff that you take for granted every day. You appreciate life so much out there.

Even for the women who were not working in the mill, they stated the need to shut down physically and mentally during their off days. Once they leave the mine site,

they are able to completely “forget this place”. They also said that they need to “shut down” their minds and recuperate during their time off.

I'm sleeping before they even put the [aircraft] wheels up. I do not wake until I get there. And then, the next day is very, very hard for me to do anything because my body just needs to rest. When you're mentally tired you're more than physically tired. You can't function. And that job where you're doing book-work or computer work or sitting all day, it may not be as labour intensive or physically intensive, but it attacks the mind. And if you can't shut yourself down you get to a point where you're just burnt. You're done. I find that going home, it's like my brain literally shuts.

Personal Relationships

Although the question of personal relationships was not in the original questionnaire, the issue was raised enough times throughout the interviews by the participants that it is included in this report. As it turned out, each of them commented on how hard it was to have or maintain a relationship given shift work. At least two of the women, however, said that time away from their husbands was appreciated and needed.

Another two stated that they were in relationships. For one, working at the mine resulted in problems with her relationship. An incident related to gossip was relayed to her boyfriend back home. Her male colleagues had said she was “sleeping around” and labelled her a “mine slut”. She stated, “I’m done defending myself because I know in my heart of hearts who I am, and I’m not that. It was awful. How do you defend yourself? How do you clear your name of that?”

Another woman had a common experience of dealing with a partner’s jealousy related to her work at the mine, particularly since it is a male-dominated workplace.

Jealousy. A lot of jealousy. It was like I wasn't constantly explaining myself to him, that I wasn't with anybody, I was here to work and that's my main goal is to work. He didn't understand that because he knew I had free time. But on my free time it was a lot of hiding. I was so shy and scared to be out and about and stuff.

Several of the women voiced their belief that having a relationship would be difficult given their working arrangements. One stated,

I haven't been in a relationship, but I think it would be hard to be in a relationship when you're gone a whole week. I'd be stress, stressed out. I would think so. So I wouldn't want to be in a relationship right now.

For another woman, she felt that she would not have the necessary energy to give a relationship on her days off.

You're working here for a week. You go home and you have your week off. Then you have somebody that wants your time and you just need to have a little time for yourself. And they don't understand that. Geez you just worked eighty hours and you're a bit tired you know? I find it a real challenge having a relationship. They don't understand the scheduling or how long the hours are. So I find it very difficult.

This led her to question the high rates of divorce that she had witnessed while working in the sector.

I would say the divorce rate is really high. My guess would be at least forty percent. People do have to work and you're gone for two weeks, and then you come home. And then you're gone somewhere else. Not everybody stays at home and works, right? So I don't know, I felt the divorce rate here was quite high.

In a similar way, another woman spoke of how the re-adjustment of shift work can wreak havoc on spouses and home life.

I guess just from my own experience, my ex-husband, he always worked in the mining industry and used to do a four week, two week off stint. And then he went two and two. But that adjusting kind of causes grief because if he was home for two weeks, and he only left for two when I was used to four. When he'd be coming back it's kind of like, 'you're in my space' type of deal.

Relationships that take place in the camp were also touched up by the women. While there is no policy around relationships between co-workers, there have been concerns about having men in the women's wings and vice versa.

We don't have co-ed wings, we have men's wings, women's wings. And relationships do form up here. We're all human. We're adults. It's natural it's going to happen. But some ladies get super offended when there's a man in our wing. Like, a guy coming to visit his girlfriend or you go to the bathroom and you see a guy coming out. A lot of ladies will get offended by it. I kind of look at it like staying in a big hotel. If you went to a hotel, you can't tell somebody they can't go sleep together.

She went on to add,

...there is no policy. A lot of people want there to be a policy, but you can't do that because how do you ask somebody to come up here and not feel anything for a week? You can't tell somebody, 'You come to

work on Monday. Until next Monday you can't look at anybody.' It's natural like. It's going to happen. And it will happen. Like there's a lot of couples up here. They live together outside of here, they're married.

Camp Life

All employees and contractors are accommodated at the mining camp. There are separate dormitories for men and women. Each wing has individual rooms, shared bathrooms, laundromat, showers and a TV room. There is a cafeteria which provides cold food 24 hours a day. Hot breakfasts, lunches and dinners are served at specific times of the day and night. Co-ed amenities include an exercise room, a lounge and a gymnasium. There is "slow speed" internet and a small confectionary stand. Rooms are cleaned each day by housekeepers. A school bus shuttles employees to and from the camp, the administration building and the plant.

When asked to comment on camp life, the women provided a range of opinions. Given the time spent at the mine, the camp was seen as a home away from home. As such, one woman expressed how being there is more manageable when one adds personal touches to the individual rooms.

As long as you make your space your space. Like I have my own bedding here. I have decorated [my room]. I have my fridge. I have my TV. I have everything I would have at home right at my access. And especially with your own bedding, it's like you're home. Like I said, this becomes your second home, so you have to make it your home. You have to feel it's your home. You have to want to be here or else don't come here.

While it is possible to beautify individual rooms with imported décor, many of the women observed that the camp is in bad shape and recommend renovations take place. One of them commented, "The camp's getting old, so I wish they could do some upgrades to it. It would be nice to get our bathroom painted. You know, spend the money and get some new lino. Put some paint on the walls so, I'd like to see that, as far as the atmosphere goes."

For other women, the need to improve the camp conditions went beyond aesthetics and had more to do with potential associated health problems.

It's a terrible camp. Like the camp itself, the structure, the building itself is so old. It's so mouldy. It's thirty years old. It's just an old, disgusting camp. And how many of us have to get sick? How many of us come up here and have worse cold/flu-like symptoms for the whole week you're here? You know [there is] no air exchange. It's old and it's crappy.

The women were critical of the lack of proper camp conditions given the high profits earned by industry.

Last year, we made a world record in uranium production and they can't buy us a new camp? They can't buy us a humidifier for our room [or] an air conditioner? It's forty-five above outside in the summertime and we're trying to sleep to work night-shift. How do you expect us to give a shit, with no sleep, shitty camp, shitty food.

One woman compared another mining site she'd visited as the "IKEA" of camps, while the one she lived at was the "Value Village" of camps. She said that to improve the camp, it would need to include, "Bright hallways, bright environments, plants or, I don't even know, I would just [make it] more homey, not so institutional."

Bathrooms issues were brought up. While each wing shares a common bathroom, it was found to be insulting that in the women's wings, "Every bathroom has four urinals." When women requested that they be removed, the response was, "Well we can't take out the urinals, so we'll put black garbage bags over them." Another woman stated, "The older I get, the worse it is. I don't like having to share a bathroom. I don't like to do that anymore". Another woman spoke of the need to have more showers, given the numbers of women in each wing. She said, "Three shower stalls, for a whole floor of women? Like I'm glad cause I work 5:30 to 5:30 so I get home and I get to have my shower before, [the other women] get off, because then it's a rat-race."

Other women were fine with the camp particularly that it provided them with free accommodations, meals and cleaning.

You don't have to pay for anything for a week. Someone cleans up after you. Like I always made my bed, I grew up having to clean up after [myself]. You don't have to here. I know people like it because you just come back to a nicely made bed and food's free. That's about all that is good for me.

Another woman half-jokingly stated that she would stay at the camp if she could.

I get spoiled. When I go home I don't want to cook. I don't want to clean up. They do everything here for me. 'Do I have to cook?' I ask my husband. I'd stay here if I had to!

The women were also asked to describe the social life and activities at the camp. Keeping to one's self and the slowness of camp life was fine for some of the women. One made the comment that ultimately camp life is not so dissimilar to home life.

If I was younger, I might want to do [something] in the evening and go all gung-ho, but I'm fine to go stretch out. We got good television shows. [I] read my book at night. I'm good that way. We go fishing in the summertime or go for a walk or pick berries or stuff like that. Winter gets a little long but, I mean, you get home what do you do? I mean, do you go out and play in the snow just because you're going to go out? You go home and usually make your supper and do whatever and then you kick back and read a book or watch TV or maybe go to a show or something, you know?

While some of the women chose to stay to themselves in their rooms after a shift and unwind, others spoke about the social aspects they like about camp living. One woman spoke about how the camp offered her more social interaction than her home life.

I lived on a farm. Everybody would be gone. My kids would be at school. My husband would be gone to work and it would be just me wishing that I had somebody there to talk to and visit and. Texting just wasn't the same, being on a computer just wasn't the same. [I liked] being out here and talking and visiting with everybody, having somebody to have a coffee with.

A camp bar used to be a gathering point for employees. It is now an alcohol-free lounge. There were different opinions on the closing of the bar. For some, it was good to have a central place to meet up with co-workers and enjoy one another's company. For others it was seen as a space for potential alcohol abuse.

It was a social gathering [place]. And that's another way that I met a lot of people. Even though it was three drinks, it was still enough time to sit and visit and to enjoy a drink and go outside for a smoke with a little group. It was pretty cute. Now that's gone, I don't even do anything. I did enjoy my time with the people around me. And now you go into the lobby after a certain hour and there's absolutely nobody around. You can hear the crickets cricketing in the corner.

*

It would have been good to keep the bar open. It was a central point for socializing.

*

I don't think it was good [to close the bar]. For me personally, it's the only time I socialize with the other people I never see, like people that work in the other building or something. I maybe run into them and have a game of cards, or talk to them. And now, a lot of people don't go

down there, so you don't really socialize with them. I was fine with having my three beer and going to bed. I didn't go every night, but for people that can't handle it I guess it was good.

*

I think it's very good [the bar closed]. I guess I look at it like how do you expect people to get enough rest and come to work if you're giving them the opportunity to stay up till eleven o'clock at night and have three drinks. Three drinks may affect different people in different ways. I felt if you took that away, you got rid of all the underlying issues of your workforce, basically.

*

They were bringing in probably a plane every weekend and shipping people outta here that were intoxicated. There's so many contractors here too because even though there was a limit as to how many beer you can drink in a night – which was three – that was still an excuse if you were staggering the next morning and smelling of booze. Cause people were bringing in booze. You know, but now there's no excuse. There's no alcohol and allowed in [the camp]. The bar is closed. It hasn't been an issue since. I think a few people were pissed off about it. You know, they were mad at the people that actually caused the bar to be shut down. But I think it's all blown over now.

Women-Designated Spaces

For the most part, the women felt there were adequate spaces designated for women. In particular, they were happy with having women's dormitories and spaces in the camp. One stated, "It would be weird if they had mixed dorms. I would feel uncomfortable walking down the hallway, like in my towel, knowing there's a man just next door, you know? So I'm happy with the wings at the camp." Another woman noted, "We have our little areas where we can go and relax and be comfortable."

One of the women related how the mine has adjusted to accommodate the needs of women in other sections of the mine. It was through her speaking up that workplace health and safety met the needs of other female employees.

We used to have safety meetings all the time. And they said 'if you ever get spilled, if you ever splashed with [a chemical], I want you guys to go under those showers right away. Get naked and go under those showers'. I told my boss I would never, ever take my clothes off and stand under those showers. There's no curtains there. I'd go under there, but without taking off my clothes, I said, 'Maybe you put some

curtains on there'. Next thing, there's some on the shower. Because people get shy too.

Where there are co-ed spaces, such as the exercise room and gym, some of the women stated that they were intimidated to use them. They openly expressed how the men leer at the women while they are working out. According to one woman, "Some of the guys that do go in there, they'll talk about the girls that are in there. There's always somebody saying something about this girl and that girl." Another woman noted,

I find a lot of the women, their first excuse when [I] ask, 'Come with me to the gym tonight or in the morning.' They'll be like, 'No, there's too many men in there.' But, I guess, especially the older women won't go when there are men in there. I don't know why that is but that's what I find. Like even one of the girls who is in her forties, she won't go to the gym if there's men in there. And I'm like, 'well why?' Like she just doesn't feel comfortable for them to look at her.

Another woman had tried to use the co-ed spaces but became disinterested over time for similar reasons stated above.

I used them when I first got here. I don't know some guys are real creepy up here. I'd rather work out and do some cardio at home than have guys working out with you. I've heard [men] say that they enjoy going to the gym because of other people working out. Other people as in females. At the beginning, I was kind of like go back and forth, thinking, 'are they serious or are they kidding?' And then you know after being here you know the group of people [who] will just say it to joke and you know the actual 'dogs' and so that's why I'll just go sit in my room and watch a movie.

Regarding the comments she hears, she said,

I just ignore it. I just hear guys talking about stuff and I just ignore it. If I could change something, I would have a girl time and a guy time for the gym. So the guys are not going in there just to go and look at the girls and the way they're dressed and stuff, and sweating and all this. It's chauvinistic. That's maybe why I don't do anything because a lot of the guys are a little chauvinistic towards [women].

The observation for women-specific time in the gym and exercise room reverberated with other participants. They also suggested having physical activities tailored to women.

Like, they do have the gym [but] it is set up for men. Women have different needs, like we need to have an aerobics room because

aerobics for women, we drop the weight faster than a man would but we don't have the space to do that. If we go in the gym, you know then it's kind of like not private and then all the guys get to watch us, and who wants to exercise with a whole bunch of guys watching you. So it's kind of like you need more women gym things. You need to allow time for the women to do their thing because you go in there and probably 90% of them are men.

*

[From] seven to seven, there's hardly anything to do. I like playing volleyball [back home]. We should have more recreational activities. Everyone goes to their room after supper. Bring some fun and have some volleyball or dodge ball, some basketball. Something like that. It's a big gym. There's never anybody in it. I wouldn't mind being there every day if somebody came on to play. Like, I wanted to play volleyball one day, and there were only two ladies there, the rest are men. So it is intimidating to go in there if it's all just men. I want more ladies in there, [an] all women team. That would be fun, something different.

Another woman commented that though there is a women's sauna, the women still need to walk through the exercise room to use it. Like other's her suggestion was to have women-designated times or days so that more female employees would be comfortable making use of the space. She stated, "We have the women's sauna which is awesome. I'd love to have a designated chick time. And it doesn't have to be all Tuesday and all Thursdays or whatever. You know, seven to eight, only girls."

Women who were not interested in sports called for other recreational activities. For example, one woman said that she would enjoy doing crafts with other women. These kinds of activities would help her unwind at the end of a shift instead of just watching television.

I wouldn't mind [to] knit or something like that because at the end of the shift, you need to do something with your hands. It's just like the stress goes down. Even sewing, that would be nice too. Or making a rug with my hands. While you're up here, like you, you can do something for yourself. On that half-time or when I'm not at work. Just something to wind down. Not go exercise or do, do more work. After work you need something to relieve stress, something instead of watching TV.

Another woman mentioned that they are constantly surrounded by men in the workplace. For her, just spending time with other women would be appreciated.

I've started a ladies night and it was on two years in a row. It's during summertime where it's just girls [and] we go to [the lake] have a barbecue and swim. Like little things like that [because] you know, sometimes I go seven days without talking to a girl. Girls need girl time.

Male-Dominated Workplace

All of the women agreed that the industry is male-dominated. One woman offered up the estimation that, “The population of [mine site] is 90% males probably”. Another woman stated that there have always been more men in the mine. Two specifically indicated that working in a male-dominated workforce did not bother them. They both held administrative positions.

The women, particularly in the mill, are either the only one or amongst a small handful of women in a given crew. They were able to share specific challenges of working with their male co-workers.

As long as I was in the mill on this shift, I think there was two of us. There was me and then there was another woman on the other shift – on the other crew I mean. There has never been more women than men. No, never, not in the mill operations, no.

There are more women working in administration and clerical positions. Yet across the board, supervisory positions continue to be held primarily by men. One of the women noted the slow shift of women into higher positions and the push back from male co-workers.

I used to fill in quite a bit as a foreman. And the majority of the time, because I was the only woman on the crew, there'd be men working under me. A lot of them didn't like that. It's just the way they treat their women where [it] is like, 'you stay home, you have the kids, I go out and I make the money. And there's no damn way that I want to be taking orders from you'. That was their attitude.

In the case of another woman in a supervisory position, though she thought the workplace respectful, her male subordinates did not always take kindly to her supervision.

Once in a while you have the bad days where you think somebody is out to get you, doesn't want you in this position. I've had that happen. Like I had that feeling where I know this person is not happy with me having this position. Or intimidated because I'm young and I'm a woman and some of the guys are older than me, more mature adult men. I don't know how I can put it, but, they're intimidated by me having to tell them what they need to do and how they need to do it. So that part is a

little hard on me to take care of a situation like that. Because a lot of them were born and raised that they're the dominant kind where they shouldn't have to follow a woman's orders. That's what I find. Sometimes. Not all the time. But I will sit them down and tell them that I don't like the way I'm being treated. It's a lot of managing their rights and then my rights. Because 80% of my crew is men.

One of the women fought hard to enter into a supervisory position. Although she had many years of experience and had filled in as a supervisor when needed, she has never been offered a permanent position at this level.

I was holding my boss's position while he [was off sick]. So I filled it for him for that whole time. During that time, probably about three months before they actually put the posting up, they brought a male operator from [another mine]. Now the position comes open, this is the position I've been filling for over a year. Well they give it to this operator that came from [the other mine]. So that's when I went to Head Office and I said, 'Why is it, you're the biggest uranium producing operation in the world [and] not in one of your Northern Saskatchewan sites do you have a female supervisor in any other department other than secretarial?'

Another woman spoke of the need for open-mindedness that women and men are capable of doing any job and that positions should not be gender-designated.

Like male nursing you know, who's to say it's a female's job? It's caring and nurturing, [so what] men can't care and nurture for somebody else? Who's to say I can't turn a valve? Or turn on a pump. Just because it started out like that, that was back in the 1970s, [it's now] 2011. Things change.

All of the women shared the opinion that women could do any of the same jobs as the men at the mine. While they tend to fill the traditional jobs, such as housekeeping and very few populate the non-traditional jobs, when they do enter the non-traditional positions, they have not always been accepted by their male co-workers.

There were stories shared by the women in the non-traditional jobs, that they "wouldn't make it" in a 'man's job'. This was observed by both women who had started out in the industry decades earlier, when there were far fewer female employees, as well as with the more recently employed female workers. That said, the women have and continue to stand up to workplace sexism and claim their rightful place in the workforce. One woman for example, stated in reference to her male co-workers, "Like don't feel offended that we can do the same thing you can. Maybe better." Others made the following statements.

I actually had somebody from Human Resources saying they didn't think I was going to make it, and all this. Partially probably, back then there wasn't any females in that trade. It was challenging. But my personality, I don't really put up with a lot from people, they're not going to bully me or intimidate me. Cause I just won't put up with it. And I put people straight right? There is a lot of head turning, of course. And you get a lot of support from some people and some people, maybe not so much. But it didn't really faze me too much, you know. Well actually, in [one section] there was one [male co-worker] who was fairly aggressive too. But I would just put him in his place whenever I had to and I wouldn't let him get away with anything.

*

A lot of men are intimidated by you. When I first started, I felt very intimidated. And I know that I felt intimidated because [the men], the way I seen it and I'm not saying this is how it is, but this is how I felt, as if I was here to take their job. 'I'm not here to take your job, I'm just here to work'. But that's the way I felt from a lot of guys. And it was a treacherous journey. I have rammed heads with almost every man on shift because I just want to learn. I just want to make a living just like them. I guess I just had to find my place. Stand my ground. Once I stood up for myself and for my skills and for what I believed in, then the respect started to come. At the beginning there wasn't any. It's tough.

*

We have lots of people saying, 'oh good for you, and of course you can you do the job as well'. And I could also handle the job. In the process in the early years, I had some issues with some of the older guys who didn't really think women should be in the workforce. And they told you so. They basically wouldn't make no bones about it that we were taking guys' jobs away.

The women felt they had to prove their abilities by working extra hard. As stated by one woman, "I don't know when that's going to change. But, it just seems to be, that's the way it is. You got to work twice as hard to prove yourself as a female." The stress of this can take an emotional toll as exemplified in the following, "[I've had] a lot of sleepless nights. If you messed up...the guys go, 'There you go. Send a woman to do a man's job.' It just makes me boil inside, even saying that."

Although this participant found the male-dominated workplace stressful, she made a clear decision to stay in order to pave the way for a more welcoming workforce for future women workers.

Women have been [here] for thirty years. But it still happens. There's still ignorant old bastards out there who are so intimidated by 'the young bloods' or whatever, you know? It's 2011 and there is still discrimination about women?! It's ridiculous. [Another mine] was the worse place in the world. I went through torment. At least here, it's respectful. Even though you know they think shitty things about you, they can never really act on it. But at [other mine] they would act on it.

She went on to say,

I couldn't let them win. They wanted to see me fail. And they wanted to see me quit and buckle-in and just go. And, just knowing that just drove me. I know how annoyed [the men] are with me sitting right here. I don't want to retaliate and I don't want to fight anybody. I'll come to work every week and do it. So you're sort of a pioneer here, like you're trying to blaze a trail forward so that other women don't have to go through it.

When asked if there was progression towards gender equity in the workplace, the women who responded did so cautiously. One of them commented that this is the way it has always been in trades and will likely continue to be.

Trades is way different than working in an office atmosphere. It's not going to change overnight. So you can't go in expecting change just because you think it should change for you. If you're that type of person, you're going to have a tough go. I'm not saying anybody should put up with anything. And most people are pretty good now with the 'Respectful Workplace' everywhere.

She went on to note that progression is measured by the number and level of positions held by women within the industry, "How many female supervisors do you see? How many coordinators do you see? How many superintendents do you see? How many general foremen? How many in the company do you see as managers who are female? That's what I look at."

Another woman reflected upon her own experience. Although she believes there have been incremental steps towards women's inclusion and better treatment, she also expressed her thoughts in this way, "Is [the industry] changing or am I changing? Or am I just getting tougher and I just don't let it bother me anymore?"

Finally, one participant offered up the following comments:

I think mining, as a whole, is a male dominated, old-boys club. I don't think it's going to change as long as I'm ever going to work in it. I can't see it changing. They can try and say 'No, we're not like that'. But how many CEOs of mining companies do you see that are female? Not even one. So it's got a long ways to go, and I won't see the change for sure.

Sexual Harassment

Although not every woman had experienced sexual harassment on the job, enough of them had to make it a concern.

One woman indicated that she went out of her way to not draw attention to her body. She did so by carefully choosing clothing and staying away from outfits that would be too revealing or form fitting.

I like to watch what I'm wearing. I don't want to expose myself too much. There's so many men around. I'll limit myself from wearing certain clothes. I don't feel comfortable wearing tight jeans. I know a lot of the guys, personally I've seen them looking at women wearing tight jeans, so I know I don't want anybody looking at me that way. I'm just I don't know maybe insecure on that part. I don't want anybody looking at me type of thing. Like I like to kind of dress tom-boyish, but then I always have anyways. And I prefer to be like that. But I try and keep my appearance half-decent because I do go to important meetings and stuff – I don't want to be too grubby type. I try and keep myself clean and, but then I still kind of dress the tom-boy way just so I won't, I won't intimidate anybody. It's kind of, that's the, little bit of the hard part is intimidating people and always watching what we're saying, what we're doing.

Two women stated that they are careful in how they relate to their male co-workers and are clear about personal and professional boundaries.

A lot of the men are pretty good to get along with. A lot of them know that nothing would ever happen. Because they have their families and wives at home, and I try not to let anybody know what's happening in my life. Like especially right now. But they all knew that I was married and I have children and they know there's boundaries.

*

Well, you try to be friendly, but if you start hanging out or you go to their rooms and stuff like that people assume that you're dating right away. So I'm not going into anybody's room. I just stay to myself. You have to be careful.

Even when practicing discretion in the workplace, the women were still harassed. One woman, although she stated that she does not fear for her safety while working, remembered incidents of male co-workers ogling her.

I've had guys whistling at me when I was working night shift. I would never ever see who they were, because they'd be walking by and I'd be

busy working. I had one incident, actually, here. I was by myself working in here, mopping the floors out. I was leaning actually back out of this office and started on up the little hallway part here, and I had my back faced towards this direction and the doorway is that way. And I heard somebody whistle. And I turned to look, that person was already long gone. So I never knew who it was. I, I had guys whistling at me and stuff.

Another woman emotionally shared how she was the target of successive sexual harassment. In this case, she was the only female employee at the time at one mine site. More disturbing was that those who were doing this to her were her crew mates, men she had considered friends.

I went home [to camp] one time, and there was about five hundred red spray-painted tampons hanging up from my ceiling. Went home one time [and] I can't even remember how many naked pictures [were] all over my room. Like that kind of stuff I went through there. You know and to have that happen when I thought they were my friends and oh my gosh, I thought they were my crew. To go home and find that kind of shit, I couldn't believe it. I didn't care because I wouldn't let them win. I wouldn't stop. I showed up every day, you know. They hated it.

This woman chose not to report these incidents primarily because she didn't want the men to know that it bothered her. Nor did she want to "show weakness". However she really did feel that the goal of her male crew was to "break her spirit".

Another situation exemplified harassment based on one of the women's sexual orientation. Once it was uncovered that she was in a relationship with a female co-worker, the two were completely separated. This was done by giving them opposite shifts. Although she had a supportive supervisor at the time, her real drive to stay in the industry was to prove that she couldn't be intimidated or driven out²².

[In the eighties] I had a partner. She was working here already when I started working up here. And then we actually got together while we were both here. Within not even a year everybody found out what was going on. They actually separated us. They forced me to go to another crew, even though it wasn't affecting our work. They totally separated us. So I'd go home and she'd come up here and work. We were totally opposite shifts....So the first couple years of my employment here wasn't very good at all...calling me a lesbian. There would be times where I wouldn't even eat. You know -I didn't want to go to the kitchen. I'd get up in the morning, just give myself enough time to go for my route to the bus. Sometimes I wouldn't eat at lunch time, I'd get

²² A piece of this story has been left out for reasons of protecting her anonymity.

off the bus and go straight to my room. Supper time, get off the bus, go straight to my room.

Again, similar to the situation relayed by the previous narrative, this woman decided not to make her grievances public. She also chose to stay, despite the harassment.

To tell you the truth, I probably [stayed] just to show them ‘you’re not running me out of here’. My mother was a very strong person. You know, kind of like the leader. So I don’t know, I think I kind of got that from her. Like ‘you’re not going to defeat me’ kind of thing. You know all the name-calling and everything, I have never retaliated, I have never said anything bad. [Today] we have a class for respectful work place, so people pretty much know their boundaries, or how far they can go with what they say. People respect me for what I do. You know, they know what I’m here for or what I’m doing here.

There are channels to go through if an employee is being harassed. Supervisors, security and human resources were described as stepping in to resolve specific situations when reported. By all accounts, this served the purpose of ending an isolated case of harassment and/or removing the guilty individual.

Well there was only one particular case, where I just had enough with the one gentleman, so then I basically did talk to my supervisor. We talked to human resources. I could have put in a written complaint but I just put in a verbal complaint and they talked to him, and I was satisfied with the outcome of that.

*

I’m not sure if my co-workers [have been harassed] cause they say it’s all confidential. You’re supposed to report it to a supervisor and the supervisor will tell another supervisor, and then they’ll have what they call a ‘formal assessment’ and an ‘informal assessment’. They get all of us together and have a meeting. This person is being harassed by this person. You know.

That there is a formal process in place is vital to ending workplace sexual harassment.

I think that’s one of the biggest mistakes that people do make. They don’t follow the proper channels. They put up with [harassment] too long sometimes and they want to jump right here and charge somebody with something whereas, you know, you haven’t warned the person, you haven’t done all the ‘in between stuff’.

While sexual harassment is alive and well in mining communities, when an industry takes swift action against it, women's physical security and comfort working in the sector can better be guaranteed. The following exemplifies this.

I had a guy stalking me. I reported it though. I had a couple incidents with that guy driving around the area I was working. And, like there's windows all over the place and they can see you. I wasn't in this building though, I was over at the mine shop building. And over there was more quiet than it was over here. But then I knew security came around and I told them this guy was driving around and I feel really uncomfortable. I'm afraid that he might come in here, corner me somewhere. I was afraid of that so security had to bring him out because of what he was doing. And it didn't take long. I didn't have to worry that long, but it was kind of scary to have somebody do that.

Racial Discrimination

While sexual harassment had affected half of the women who were interviewed, only one of the women made a specific observation of work-related racial discrimination. Although she did not have a direct experience with racism or a racist comment, she noted her perception that those working in higher paid jobs were non-Aboriginal, while those in the lower paid jobs are Aboriginal.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that all the bosses upstairs are Caucasian. But to see all the lower people Aboriginals, like it does cross your mind, I mean now and again. It's the senior guys making calls for us lower people and them not knowing where and what the hell we do.

Another participant stated that discrimination had less to do with racism and more to do with sexism. She said, "To tell you the truth, I don't think [it is] so much about being Aboriginal. I think more of it has to do with being a woman."

According to another participant, the issues of sexism and racism overlap. That said, she adamantly feels equal to all of her colleagues, whatever their position or background, and no matter that she is an Aboriginal woman in a male-dominated environment.

If you believe somebody is superior to you, then you're allowing that person to be superior to you. But if you believe everybody is on a level playing field, then no matter who you are, what culture you belong to, what colour you are, man or woman, you, you have an, you actually have a level playing field. So like I don't believe, even though they are my superiors, [they're] no different than me. I do see that a lot of the Aboriginal people, like even [a female relative] she had a lot of issues with men. So she didn't like it up here. Because of the men. But me, on

the other hand, I was never that way. I was always taught to never believe I was better or less, but that I was me. And so every situation I walk into, that's the way I walk into it and the guys are just like another girl, to me. And I'm sure I'm just like another guy to them because it doesn't matter.

Workplace Injury

Seven of the eight women, regardless of their position in the mine, related that they had experienced a work-related injury. These ranged from broken bones, to sprains, to elevated cholesterol levels. All of the women were proactive in their wellness and protecting themselves from injury.

They discussed for example, the use of a daily toolbox exercise amongst their crew, “so everyday [we’re] learning about safety”. The toolbox was explained as assisting employees with, “proper lifting and that. It’s where we give out work instructions, safety policies and procedures”.

There was a general recognition that employees are not just responsible for their own safety but also for their larger crew. One woman stated, “You need to watch out for yourself but you also need to realize that there’s a whole site of people here.” In this way, when considering whether to have more Aboriginal people working at the mine, one of the women cautioned that young people with addictions should not be recruited since they could jeopardize the safety of others. She stated, “I wouldn’t recommend the young people that do drugs or drink [work here] because they might get hurt or something or they can hurt somebody else.”

Another example of improper workplace practices that one of the women felt could lead to injury is the use of cell phones on the job, with reference to work in the plant, “I bet you out of the thirteen or fourteen operators that are out there, ten of them are sitting there texting right now. And there should be no cell phones out in the plant.”

One participant spoke of how she is very aware of practicing safety protocols on the job. This extends from ensuring that her clothing and other personal articles from the mine are separate from those she uses at home. She is also aware of how co-workers do not have this same awareness.

The more I understood it and the more I started to understand how things operate and all that. Like I knew how to protect myself anywhere. I was told to wear a respirator because of a certain chemical I was handling. By all means, I always protected myself. But then you see, you know, people out there, they bypass that and that, I don't know, I guess they just don't really care.

I've always been really protective. I'm very clean and wise as far as washing my hands. The example that I always give is this is not a sugar

factory. This is uranium we deal with here. Because still today you see a lot of operators, their gloves are all dirty, they go for coffee, they take off their hard hat and their gloves are in their hard hat. Like, why? Why do those gloves have to go in your hard hat, then you take them out and put them on your head.

And a lot of them don't even shower and they're back at camp. A lot of them don't even have separate clothes that they wear under their coveralls other than what they wear back to camp. Like for me, I have a different jacket, I have different shoes. All the clothes that you see me wear here aren't the clothes I wear home. The clothes I wear from home stay in my room until I go and put them back but they aren't going home. But a lot of people have those same street clothes. Like even the clothes they wear from camp, they just pull their coveralls right over and go to work.

Like this stuff is harmful or could be harmful. I tell them, like when I first started here and when I took my orientation, they scared me so much in that orientation that from that day on, like right from the start, I always made sure I separated this from this. Even the time I was smoking, the lighter that I carried in my pocket wasn't even the same lighter that I used at camp at the end of the day. I never took it back to camp. There's a complete separation --totally. Thursday morning I go home. If I had cigarettes left in this pack I'd be carrying for the last two days that goes in the garbage. But a lot of people don't understand that, I don't think.

Another woman echoed the need to be aware of switching from street to work clothes. Like most of the women, she does not have a fear of working in a uranium mine although questions the long-term health effects.

I definitely don't want to wear street clothes in here. I'd rather get these ratty old coveralls dirty than anything else. But I didn't think [uranium] was scary. Maybe years or months some of the severity could happen here. Like you hear stories about other mines and their accidents and you're like, 'oh man that couldn't possibly happen here'. Maybe that gets your mind thinking a little bit more about safety.

Again, another participant, while she sees the mine as practicing "high standards" for worker protection, she is personally very cautious on site. Importantly, she speaks of her reproductive health and the need for gender-based injury prevention.

We're protected here, everything you could ever need to monitor your exposure and stuff, is right here. If you're getting sick from [the mine] you're not using the tools given to you. That's the way I see it. I'm very cautious. I protect myself 100%. Maybe one day I want to have babies.

We had a spill and my bosses let me leave. You know, I don't want to stay if it wrecks my reproductive [health]. They're very respectful.

Yet despite the precautions taken, both personally and by the industry, workplace injury was a common experience within this small sampling of women. This occurred with the women working across the sectors, meaning those in both traditional and non-traditional jobs.

One of the women who had worked in the traditional sector for some time commented that the physical aspect of the employment grinds down on the body. This applies to both women and men.

I was getting a little tired of some of the bull work that was associated with [my job]. The rebuilding and stuff is fine. I like doing that, but some of the sledge-hammer or heavier work, I mean [being] a female, your body does break down after a while. I don't think women tend to stick in trades for a really long time and I don't know why. I don't know if there's been studies done one way or the other why they don't. But, I would suggest it would be something like me. Like it's really physically demanding and women's bodies just aren't cut out for all that physical work. They'll wear down. Like you take an older trade guy and some of them are humped over. So I don't know if it's the physical aspect of it or what it is.

The strain on the body caused by heavy lifting, whether it be sledgehammers or bags of housekeeping linens, was described as difficult, “Sometimes my shoulder hurts, but they have, they trained us on how to do proper lifting. Instead of bending over and then lifting something, you're supposed to bend with your legs and lift with your legs. So I didn't know that before.”

Similarly, another woman spoke of the physical strain of her work in addition to environmental health-related issues she believed stem from living in the camp.

In one mine, [I had a lot of] physical strain. Here I've had some throat issues. I had a laryngoscope done in the last year. I lost my voice for a whole year. I don't believe it's the uranium or the mill. I believe it's our old, dry camp. I would just wake up with [no voice]. So I've had laryngoscopes, and I just believe it's just the dry humidity of the whole atmosphere up here. You know, we're so far north.

There are also workplace injuries that have to do with unforeseen circumstances and/or human error.

I got into an accident in the packaging plant where my hands were crushed. It was on New Year's day. We were eight jobs behind to meet our quota so whatever was going into our load-out bin, I was packing. I

was about on the last drum and the foreman walks by, and he said to me, 'what drum is that?' I said, 'number seven' so that was the last drum. I was done. Like you put a lid on the drum as they're coming out from where they get filled like it's all automatic rollers. So I put a lid on it and I push these two buttons and the lid-press came down. But it used to just slam right down, like it wouldn't come down nice and slow. So I was just holding the lid in place while you're putting the ring around it. And you want to tighten the ring with an air-gun. Then you take the drum and you push it onto the scale, and then you print it out and push it through. So anyway, the guy walks by. I said 'it's number seven', I says, 'seventh drum'. I guess he goes up to the control room in a totally other area and tells the operator there to go down to the motor control central room, that's where we do our major log-outs, to take the electrician with them. There happened to be an electrician in the area to lock-out the main power to the plant where I was packing where I was filling these drums. And I was just finished putting the ring around the drum, I tightened it, pushed the buttons, the lid-press came up. I went to put my hands back down on the drum to push it to the scale, and that thing just came down. And I'm claustrophobic so the first thing I tried to do was get my mask off, which I managed to, on the drum. I got my hard hat off. And it's a good thing that day they had brought a girl there for me to train cause otherwise I always work there by myself and I started yelling and she come running out that room and I looked at the printers and everything and I knew right away what happened. I said, 'run next door'. I said, 'somebody's switched the main breaker off in here'. So she ran there and I was probably stuck fifteen minutes from the time the operator went down there to lock-out the equipment, the electrician put his personal lock on, cause he's the one that's going to be doing the work, and then the electrician took off. Nobody knew where he was. So they had to look for him. I had to get medi-vac'ed out of here on ambulance.

One injury was described as a “burn from a hot solution” without lost work time. Another participant had sustained a past foot injury while working in the mill.

That was quite a while back in the mill. [Something] was overflowing, it was plugged. I had to go walk there and unplug it. And as I was coming down I accidentally like one of the rungs, it slipped my foot and I hit that cement floor. I didn't fall. It's just that I hit [my foot] hard on that cement floor and my heel got hurt. So I was using crutches for a while. I was limping.

Finally in the case of one participant, a physical exam revealed that her health had declined since she joined the mining industry. In her opinion, this deterioration was due in large part to the sedentary nature of her administrative position coupled with long hours associated with shift work, camp life and poor nutrition. These multiple

and contributing factors have resulted in her inability to take care of her nutritional and fitness needs.

I work with a nutritionist back home because my heart and liver were doing things that just weren't real. And it's shown in my charts here. My heart cholesterol – triglycerides – has practically doubled, if not tripled, in years that I've been here. If you look at when I came here, to just the last one we had, that really scared me. And it's like wow! I never even realized that that was going on.

A lot of the office people, we sit for eleven hours. You go to eat, you go to your room, you're sitting again. So unless you make it a part of your life, you can really injure your body here. And not that we're injured, physically injured, we're injuring like our hearts, and our livers, and our kidneys. I could people easily being diabetic here just because of all the stuff that is around here.

But the biggest scare was when I had to start taking, like I'm [under forty years old], to start taking pills and carrying pills as if I'm an old person. This is unreal like!

She went on to comment about the eating habits that one must assume when doing shift work in an isolated location and being dependent on industry for making good nutritional options available to employees.

The only thing about this place is it's very hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle when the suppers are so late at night. That was hard to adjust your body to. I [found] I was getting all sick because I wasn't eating. I would skip breakfast because there's no way I'm eating at four-thirty, five o'clock [in the morning]. So I would just skip breakfast and then I would eat at [lunch] and sometimes I would have supper, depending on how I felt. And so I felt my body was telling me, 'you need to start looking after yourself.'

You can see in a lot of people. Like, there's some people who have started here and can see the difference in their bodies, because your food is cooked and it's sometimes not always the healthy choices and there's always snacks. Everywhere you go there's, you're going to find a snack in this whole entire site. So it's easy to get into that always eating and not eating properly routine. I do believe that there should be more health choices, like say like a Booster Juice bar. You know, things where we can, if we choose to be healthy, we can be healthy. We don't always have to have the deep-fried fish you know.

They need to look more at the way they're cooking. That's the only thing that I say. Because I mean, for many years, don't get me wrong, I

was eating the full plate of meals or whatever. And now that I've started to change my lifestyle it's kind of like you look at the food and go, 'I can't believe we put that in our mouths. I'd say at least 40% of that food is deep-fried. And the people like me, if I sat at my desk for eleven hours a day and every time I went to eat in your kitchen, you're going to give me oiled cooked food? Like you're just killing me. You know nobody really promotes the health of the people here. But I mean the guys out there working, like the operators, they go up and down the stairs fifty times a day, so they could eat that food. I mean, it's not healthiest choice but they need to find an equal balance.

So then I talked with a nutritionist and that's what we found is, those huge periods of not eating and always eating food that's cooked in oil. They also could find different options to give us like, let, allow us to choose what we want to eat. Make the vegetables. Like the vegetables are only out at lunch and supper. Make them available all day long so that we could make that choice. If I want to go eat a pastry or have myself a bowl of cucumbers, like, don't always make it the sweet, ugly stuff sitting out there?

Work-Related Stress

All of the women indicated that they had experienced stress or anxiety in one form or another related to their work and/or personal relationships with colleagues. For some, as shown in earlier sections of this report, just entering the industry was stressful in and of itself. Women talked about the loneliness associated with leaving home and family, the shyness related to breaking into a new “family” away from home, and the forging of new and ever-changing relationships with crew mates.

[At first it was] very stressful. No sleep, no eating, you know, like you just get consumed by everything going on around you, you know? And plus you're away from home. I know people here from home. You see a familiar face in a crowd of strangers, even though you've never talked to that person in your whole life, automatically they're your friend. And these people I work with, not every one of them is apple pie but they're still my family.

One of the women explained how she was trying to juggle a difficult home and family situation with doing her job properly. Eventually this landed her in a deep depression.

My mind was elsewhere all the time. My mind was at home and at work. I guess you could have said I was depressed. I came out of it I was so happy when I just came out, it was so hard. I don't blame people when they kill themselves. I don't blame them because it's hard.

I didn't say anything. I just kept to myself. And well there's a couple of things that happened to me too because I was busy, my mind was elsewhere. So I recommend people, like when you come to work, I hope they think about their work and not anything else at home.

Some of the women referred to the mine as a "small community" which involves its fair share of internal gossip and inter-personal politics. For one woman, gossip leaves her unable to trust her co-workers.

It's so funny. Like I said I know the ones that I can trust, whenever I can. And there's people here that I'll sit down with and say 'Ah man, like this or that happened today'. Or 'I'm so sick of this place'. An hour later, everybody knows. That's how it is like the whole high-school thing. It's like 'As the Mill Turns'. Like why do we have to do that? We're all here for the same thing. I mean we all want to do our job and everything.

She went on to add that is relieving to speak to people outside of the industry as the stress related to gossip is not a concern, "It's good [to talk] to someone not in industry, not knowing, or being here."

In the case of three women, they described how advancing or changing positions, which involved taking on new responsibilities, created stress for them. This was not because they were incapable of taking on new challenges, but because they wanted to do their jobs well. They also described unforeseen and overlapping responsibilities that came with new positions.

This job got me stressed out when I first started because it was new and I wasn't sure if I was doing the right thing and all that. From time to time, I think every job's got it, maybe you're getting a task that you don't necessarily like. It's something that you really don't want to do because it's an ugly job, but somebody's got to do it, and it's your turn to do it. But it's not anything I can't handle. You get comfortable with what you're doing and you're more confident. When you start something new, it's always, 'oh I wonder if I can this, you know. I hope I'm doing a good job'. And there's always the unknown.

*

I knew that I was going to be stressed when I took this position. The communication part is the hardest, even though we're all together in [a] meeting, a lot of the time, the guys won't say anything until after. They'll come to me personally, quietly, tell me what's bothering them. My position could [also] be as a mediator too. Like listening to their issues and what they're having trouble with and what they're feeling and stuff. Because I'm dealing with nine men and I have a day shift crew and I have a night shift crew and then we have crew shifts and once in a while it is stressful.

For one woman, at the same time as she moved into a new position, she found it anxiety provoking to see her previous job not being done to the same standards she practiced.

At the very start, when I first started in this department, I used to be so stressed out. I'd stress myself out over stuff cause I knew so much about what my job was [then] and now [in my new position]. But still, I'm still out in the plant and I see this, I see that and think 'this shouldn't be like this' and I used to tell [a friend] and I don't know how many times it took her to tell me, 'you're no longer [in that old position]. There's people that do that work out there now. If they don't give a shit, it's not for you to worry about.'

There is also stress related to current workload. Either as the first quote shows, one woman found herself overwhelmed to stay on top of her multiple responsibilities, or as the second shows, another woman was underwhelmed by the challenges of her position.

Oh! I feel stress. More stress in that we're so broad and there's so many things that it's sometimes very hard to juggle, which is why I stay later some nights. Because I'm a type of person, I don't like leaving my things, like 'I'll get to that later', you know? There are some things that have to carry on and will carry on, but the little things...and those sometimes will get to me and will stress me out because it's like, 'how do I fit fifty things into two hours?'

*

In this job, I work a twelve hour day. I'm busy twelve hours a day but there's moments when you can think. And I'm not saying that the guys that I work with, who have been here I don't know how many years, that they haven't accomplished anything in their lives, but that's their own life. But this is mine and maybe I wanted something more, something bigger?

Simply being in a male-dominated industry was stressful for some of the women. As the section on sexual harassment clearly showed, a number of them had personally witnessed acts of humiliation and intimidation by male co-workers. Some chose not to eat in common spaces, or eat at all. Others told how they had difficulty sleeping. Amongst this particular group of women, none of them had left the workforce as a result of these actions. One participant, although having gone through successive and stressful experiences of sexual harassment, stated, "If that stuff were to happen to me today, the strong woman that I am now, I wouldn't shed a tear. Would not have cried once, over any of that stuff. But it made me what I am. It made me this strong woman, I believe that."

Part 3: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Two exploratory studies have now been completed by PWHCE. In total, seventeen First Nations and Métis women participated from across northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The women ranged from their early twenties through to their sixties. They held a variety of educational backgrounds, including those who had not completed high school to several who had gone on to formal post-secondary education.

The participants in both studies were working, had worked or were training for positions in resource extractive industries. All, but one, of the women had been affiliated with mining or hydro employment or training. The women held a variety of positions within these fields including administration, underground operators, mill processors, equipment operators, housekeepers, coordinators, trainers and mining trainees.

While this is still a small sampling of Aboriginal women working in resource extraction in Canada, there are some conclusions that we can glean from their narratives.

In both provinces, Aboriginal women find their way into the industry primarily through family and community connections. Women were also drawn towards this sector because they were interested in the physical challenge afforded by non-traditional occupations and because of financial incentives. A noted difference to recruitment was that for those living in Manitoba, both training and industry were located close to home. This was not the case of Saskatchewan where the mine is located far from home and requires an air commute.

All of the women had received training for their employment with the industry, although this ranged from direct observation of more seasoned co-workers to structured trades training offered by industry or through Aboriginal community programming. Women in both studies felt that they could have benefitted from additional orientation to the industry and co-workers.

For many of the women, industry is one of the major economic players and employers within their regions. The majority indicated that their employment had led to increased self-sufficiency and independence, although not all were satisfied with their income or voiced difficulty with money management skills. That said, and despite being employed by their respective companies, there were environmental, health concerns voiced. As well, at least half of them would recommend this field to other Aboriginal women but some expressed caution around related to family considerations and issues related to sexual harassment within the workforce.

As already stated, a notable difference between the provinces was industry location. For those in Manitoba, ground travel was the primary mode of daily commuting. Many did not have to commute at all. The women in Saskatchewan on the other hand all commuted weekly by air transportation provided by industry. That the women in Manitoba returned home every day is juxtaposed to the week-on, week-off shift working arrangements in Saskatchewan. Perhaps the greatest difference between the studies was the issue of childcare. The women in Manitoba stated that their participation in this sector is limited due to the lack of organized childcare options available to them. That said, because they returned home after each day or night shift, they were able to work if they had a patchwork of parents, friends, daycare and schools to support them. The women in Saskatchewan, on the other hand, expressed that they would not even consider working in the sector if they had babies or small children, regardless of childcare given the week on, week off work required.

Geography and work hours also dictated another difference between the provinces. While only one woman from the Manitoba cohort lived in a camp, all of the women in Saskatchewan did. While most of the women were satisfied with women designated spaces, there was room for improvement in both provinces. Underground port-a-potties for women and time set aside for women only in the work-out rooms and gyms were strongly suggested. The women in Saskatchewan also wanted to see renovations made to reflect the women's wings of camps, like the dismantling of urinals in their bathrooms.

Across the board, all of the women were working in a male-dominated environment. Within the sector, the women perceived that the men believe that women are taking away the jobs from them; that women can't do a man's job; and that the females workers need to work extra hard to prove themselves. While not always reporting incidents of harassment, none of the women shied away from taking their rightful place in non-traditional jobs. There are ongoing covert and overt threats and sexual harassment in the workplace however measured, including policies related to respectful workplace, may assist in challenging these.

Many of the seventeen women had experienced a workplace injury. These were common not only amongst the women workers in the traditional jobs but also amongst those in administrative and housekeeping positions. Women also expressed stress and anxiety on the job related to the lack of social supports (like childcare); workplace culture which favours men over women; ongoing sexual harassment and intimidation; workload and responsibilities; and fatigue, physical and mental distress related to shift work.

Recommendations

To facilitate Aboriginal women's continued and growing employment in mining in Northern Saskatchewan, a number of recommendations have been drawn up. These recommendations focus on breaking down the persistent gender-based barriers that challenge Aboriginal women from fully benefiting from northern industrial development. While some of these recommendations include tapping into already existing, top-down industry policies, others could be more localized and bottom-up and would include more in depth conversations with Aboriginal women employees for local response.

Training and Employment

- Diversify the training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal women across the sector, in both traditional and non-traditional jobs.
- Promote Aboriginal women role models in diverse employment positions.

Shift Work

- Recognize Aboriginal women's multiple roles as mothers, caregivers and employees and assist them with meeting the challenges of juggling childcare and dependent care with shift work.

Camp Life

- Provide up-to-date, safe and healthy living and working spaces for all employees.
- Make around the clock healthy food options available for shift workers.
- Ensure that women designated spaces extend beyond dormitories to include exercise and activity facilities.
- Institute women-specific recreational and arts-based activities for off-hour shift workers.

Work Culture

- Challenge the male-dominated work culture by hiring more women and Aboriginal women in supervisory and managerial positions.
- Develop and implement zero tolerance policies for sexual harassment and intimidation in training, employment and camp life.

Workplace Injury Prevention

- Recognize and develop targeted strategies to lessen the diversity of shift work-related injuries and stressors across the sector, including mental, physical and emotional health.
- Provide on-site health promotion workers, including a counsellor and nutritionist.

Part 4: Bibliography

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. (2004). *Accessing and Completing Apprenticeship Training in Canada: Perceptions of Barriers Report*. http://www.caf-fca.org/files/access/1-Report_jan04_e.pdf

Costa, S, Silva, A. & Hui, V. (2006). *What are the Opportunities and Challenges for Women in Fly-in-Fly-out (FIFO) Mining in Canada? An Exploratory Study*. http://www.womeninmining.net/pdf/fifo_women.pdf

Government of Canada. (2005). *Prospecting the Future: Meeting Human Resource Challenges in the Mining in the Canadian Minerals and Metals Industry*. http://www.aboriginaltrades.ca/en/files/prospecting_final.pdf

National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *Resource Extraction and Aboriginal Communities in Northern Canada: Gender Considerations*. http://www.naho.ca/documents/naho/english/resourceExtraction/Gender_EN.pdf

Natural Resources Canada. (2009) *Statistical Profile: Aboriginal Mining in Canada*. <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/smm-mms/abor-auto/pdf/stats-09-eng.pdf>

Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. (2010) Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *Aboriginal People and Mineral Exploration*, <http://www.pdac.ca/aboriginal/pdf/1003-aboriginal-affairs-fact-sheet.pdf>, last accessed June 2011

Saskatchewan Mining Association. (May, 2009). *General Information Fact Sheet*. [Online] Last accessed June 30, 2010 from: <http://www.saskmining.ca/info/Fact-Sheets/fact-sheet-general-information.html>

Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. (2009). *Socio-Demographic Profiles of Saskatchewan Women: Aboriginal Women*. Status of Women Office. <http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/aboriginal-women>

Status of Women's Council of the NWT. (1999). *Review of Diavik Diamonds Project Socio-Economic Environmental Effects Report: Impacts on Women and Families*. http://www.statusofwomen.nt.ca/download/review_diavik.pdf

Women in Mining Canada. (2010). *Ramp-up: A study on the status of women in Canada's mining and exploration sector*. <http://www.mihrc.ca/en/publications/resources/Ramp-UPFinal2010.pdf>

Appendix I: Aboriginal Women and Extractive Industries

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Information

1. Can you tell me how old you are right now?
2. How do you identify yourself as an Aboriginal woman?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
4. What is your current employment status?
5. What is your main source of income right now?
6. What is your approximate yearly household income?

Questions referring to extractive industry employment

7. How did you become aware of employment in the industry?
8. What were your reasons for entering the mining industry?
9. Were you required to take a training program before entering the workforce?
10. Did you receive training? By whom and for how long?
11. Can you speak about your training experience?
12. Did you think you received enough training to enter the mining industry?
13. What were your first impressions of working within the mining industry?
14. What position do you hold in the industry you work in?
15. Did you have access to support services in making your transition to this career?
16. Do you think that the resource industries have lead to greater economic development within your region/community?
17. Has your perception of the industry changed as a result of working there?
18. Would you recommend a career within this industry to other Aboriginal women?
19. What other services would you like the companies to have in supporting Aboriginal women workers?
20. Could you identify how your life has changed as a result of working for the mining industry?

Housing

21. What is your current housing situation?
22. Are you currently living on your own or with a partner?
23. Do you have any dependents currently living in your household?
24. Did you need to move for your job in the mining/hydro industry? If so, how difficult was it to find a new home?
25. Has your employment changed your housing costs?
26. Do you live in a camp for employees?

Childcare

27. Are you doing shift work?
28. What are your hours and work schedule?
29. Do you require childcare?
30. Do you have access to quality/subsidized childcare?
31. If you are not using a childcare centre, who helps you most with the children?
32. How often would you say you see your children outside of work?
33. Do you feel that you are missing out on anything with their lives?
34. Have they said anything to you about your work?
35. Do you feel that your employer would understand if you needed to take time off for family-related issues, like sickness, school-related activities etc.?

Women-centered Social Supports

36. Do you see the industry as a male-dominated workplace? What are your thoughts of working within this environment?
37. Have you been welcomed within the industry?
38. Are there spaces within the workplace designated for women (i.e. change rooms/ showers/camps etc?)
39. Do you think that the industry needs to have women-designated spaces?
40. Have you ever experienced workplace harassment, either from supervisors/co-workers? Have you seen other women in such situations? If so, was there any remediation?
41. In your opinion, are women and men are treated differently within the workplace? What about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers/men and women?
42. Are there many other women and Aboriginal women in the workforce? What positions do they hold?

Health and Safety

43. Are you aware of any health-specific problems that can come about through working within mining/hydro?
44. Can you tell me about your diet when you are in the camp?
45. Do you have access to nutritious food?
46. How would you explain life in the camp?
47. Are alcohol and drugs readily available?
48. Have you used alcohol and drugs while living in the camp?
49. How does your life change when you go back home?
50. Does your work situation cause you stress or anxiety?
51. Have you ever had an accident or injury while in the workplace?
52. Are there any services in the workplace to help you with stress/anxiety?

Income

53. What was your economic situation before you worked in the industry?
54. How has this changed as a result of working for the company?
55. How do you feel about your income?
56. What was it like to receive your first paycheck?
57. Does your income allow you to cover all of your bills and expenses?
58. Have there been unforeseen expenses?
59. Has your income positively affected your life and family? How?
60. Were there any negative effects of having an increased income? What were they?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your own experiences with working in the resource extraction field. Your assistance in this project is greatly appreciated.

Please detach this mailing address stub and place it in the appropriately marked envelope, when completed.

Yes, I would like to receive a copy of the *Aboriginal Women and Resource Extractive Industries* report, when completed.

Name: _____

Mailing

Address: _____
