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Perspectives on environmental justice in Canada: Case study of indigenous communities in northern alberta and the oil sands**Santosh Kumar Mishra**

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The conceptual framework of environmental justice (also sometimes termed as “environmental racism”) is the idea that everyone on the planet should have equal access to environmental benefits. It also envisages that no community should be left to bear environmental burdens and hazards (such as exposure to toxins). Unsurprisingly, however, environmental burdens have (historically) negatively impacted communities from minority and low income groups more. The theory of environmental justice, thus, attempts to bring attention to this problem and start to solve it.

Environmental justice is a matter of concern for Canada. In broader term, it refers to “the intentional of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators and polluting industries in locations populated mainly by Black, Latinos, Indigenous Peoples, Asians, migrant farm workers, and low-income people”. Importantly, environmental justice is embedded in the approval process for the sites. This practice results in the government sanctioning activities which lead to a situation wherein marginalized communities bear more environmental burden of environmental deterioration than other (more) privileged communities. In terms of access to environmental justice, the author of this work argues that access to justice issues are supported by the recognition of specific substantive and procedural legal rights and associated costs. It has been observed that in Alberta and other parts of Canada, inadequate access to environmental justice has resulted in undesirable consequences. More specifically, Indigenous communities in Northern Alberta and the Oil Sands (ICNAOS) are most sufferers. This paper primarily aims to address dimensions of environmental justice in the context of Indigenous communities in Northern Alberta and the Oil Sands. In terms of methodology, largely qualitative data (secondary in nature) have been used in the work. Since author focuses discussion on ICNAOS in Canada, approach used is “case study method”. Method of data analysis is descriptive, involving “desk-based research”. The paper briefly concludes that lack of regulation has resulted in environmental racism in modern-day Canada. According to some estimates, nearly 23,000 Indigenous people live in the oil sands region. The oil sands industry continues to harm the climate and the lives of Indigenous people. The Alberta government has repeatedly downplayed the environmental consequences, and instead has touted the industry's economic contribution.

Biography

Santosh Kumar Mishra has Independent Researcher (Scholar) retired (on June 30, 2020), as Technical Assistant, from Population Education Resource Centre, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai, India. Santosh Kumar Mishra underwent training in demography, with award of Government of India Fellowship, during 1986-1987 from the IIPS, Mumbai. Also, Santosh Kumar Mishra acquired Ph. D. from University of Patna in 1999. My other qualifications include Post-Master's Diploma in Adult & Continuing Education, Certificate Course on Hospital and Health Care Management, and Diploma in Human Resource Development. Santosh Kumar Mishra have authored (some co-authored) 5 booklets, 4 books, 23 book chapters, 97 journal articles, 2 monographs, 7 research studies, & 56 papers for national & international conferences (some with bursary). Santosh Kumar Mishra have been awarded with Certificate of Excellence in Reviewing for 2017, 2018, 2021 & 2022. Santosh Kumar Mishra have been conferred with Excellence of Research Award for outstanding contribution & recognition in the field of agriculture in 2021.