“Cold Water Oil: Newfoundland and Labrador Culture and the Offshore”

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This project focuses on how culture produces the offshore oil industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Oil extraction is rapidly transforming our economy in ways that have myriad consequences for the every day lives of the province’s inhabitants. The shuttling of workers between the offshore and the Albertan oil sands, and the circulation of itinerant oil industry executives and their families through St. John’s is creating a sense of unsettledness, but also increasing cosmopolitanism. Other evidence, ranging from better employment figures, to soaring real estate costs, to fluctuating gas prices, to news coverage of oil spills elsewhere, makes it hard for any of us to ignore our reliance on cold water oil. Yet how are those living in Newfoundland and Labrador to interpret the multiple and rapid changes offshore oil production is wreaking? What kinds of cultural frames might shape our responses? We posit that writers, visual artists, musicians and filmmakers are currently imagining oil in ways that are of crucial relevance. Given the popularity of work like Lisa Moore’s Man Booker Prize-nominated novel *February,* Joan Sullivan’s recently sold-out theatre piece *Rig*, and visual artist Edward Burtynsky’s well-attended exhibition “Oil” this is clearly something many in the province already know. However, sustained scholarly work is urgently needed to explore the full implications and nuances of recent cultural figurations of oil. We intend to undertake this, and, further, juxtapose such work with discourse emanating from other sources, including the oil industry, government, and the news media.