The faces of offshore drilling resistance

Photos by Robert van Waarden

“It would be catastrophic if there were a major spill here, and we would be directly affected. If there was an oil spill on our shores, tourists who come here for the natural beauty, beaches, recreation and paddling would surely go somewhere else.”

Scott McCormack, Sea kayak guide and owner-operator of Cape LaHave Adventures

Why is offshore drilling not worth the risk? Who carries these risks? Who is working in communities to speak out and fight back against the offshore industry? This photo series highlights a number of community activists who are coming together to protect their homes, coastal communities, fisheries, tourism, and cultural histories from the harms of offshore drilling.

Robert van Waarden, a photographer whose work often focuses on climate change-related issues, shares the images and voices of people who are working to stop BP’s drilling offshore Nova Scotia.

“This is our home, not a cash cow. As L’nu our job is to protect Mother Earth.”

Marilynn-Leigh Francis, Indigenous fisherwoman

Above: “This town is able to survive because of the tourism that flows from the ocean. If the ocean is uninhabitable or displeasing because of an oil spill, our economic viability is gone.”

David Devenne, Mayor of Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia
“We can’t fight climate change if we continue to extract and expand fossil fuel development. They’re mutually exclusive.”

Chelsea Fougere, climate justice activist

Opposing offshore drilling is just one piece of the “keep it in the ground” movement the Council of Canadians supports. This movement is calling for no more new fossil fuel development or infrastructure, combined with investment in a just transition for workers and our economy on a global scale.

Bold action must be taken in order to turn the tide on climate change. We need to call more loudly than ever for climate solutions, including funding for renewables, energy efficiency, ecological agriculture, and other low carbon sectors. We need to call for worker retraining, cleanup of abandoned oil projects, and for ways to make our cities more walking, biking and transit-friendly while upholding Indigenous rights. We need a new vision for our future – one that doesn’t include new offshore drilling projects, but one that is healthy, sustainable and will secure a better, livable future for us all.

Below: “The oil and gas industry has proven time and time again in Alaska and Angola and the Gulf of Mexico that they’re not willing to coexist with fishermen.”

Colin Sproul, Bay of Fundy Inshore Fisherman’s Association

Above: “Offshore drilling is not worth the risk to our fisheries, tourism, and climate. Our politicians need to listen to the people who elected them, not to the oil and gas companies. We can’t fall into this classic example of industry capture.”

Marilyn Keddy, Retired former social worker

“We refuse to allow the advocates for a poorly regulated finite oil resource to put the bounty of our renewable fishery resources at risk for a few decades of dangerous oil extraction.”

John Davis, Director of Clean Ocean Action Committee