

## **Building bridges for Alberta's energy future: inclusive strategies for a sustainable future**

### **The ConocoPhillips IRIS Seminar Series**

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Rather than the usual presentation format for the IRIS Seminar Series, this seminar focused on the TRANSrisk project and required attendees to play an active role.

The TRANSrisk project is multi-disciplinary research project that synthesizes qualitative and quantitative data while giving stakeholders a voice regarding the global transition to low carbon energy. This EU-funded project aids policy makers in developing pathways that will enhance this transition by removing barriers and gathering a true understanding of stakeholders' interests. Canada is one of 14 countries included in the study; naturally Alberta was a Canadian priority for researchers to connect with stakeholders. Two University of Calgary alumni, Dr. Luis D. Virla and Dr. Jenny Lieu, were not only the guest speakers for this edition of the ConocoPhillips IRIS Seminar Series but they also took the opportunity to run a workshop with all of the attendees as stakeholders.

Virla and Lieu presented three narratives for how Alberta could transition to a low carbon future in order to stimulate discussion. These scenarios were hardly needed, however, because everyone was eager to share. The people attending the workshop came from diverse backgrounds which included everything from the energy industry to sustainability think-tanks. The diversity of people in the room ensured that a wide range of viewpoints were collected for consideration in the TRANSrisk project.

During the workshop the allotted time was deliberately kept short. This urgency encouraged attendees to share without the time to second-guess or self-censor; a great way for TRANSrisk to get authentic data. This whirlwind brainstorming yielded some themes for TRANSrisk which included the importance of both social and technical innovation and how Alberta's pioneering, can-do spirit could be an enabler for energy transition.

We conducted an interview with Drs. Lieu and Virla in advance of the workshop and it was evident that Virla and Lieu found great value in connecting with stakeholders and were excited about the unexpected feedback. Lieu pointed-out that their work was unique because the starting point was to first understand the stakeholders they consult with prior to performing any academic research. As a multi-disciplinary research project they quickly identified the need for establishing a common language. By doing this, they can consult with stakeholders more effectively. Virla and Lieu also mentioned they were impressed by how informed the stakeholders were and found that they were more than happy to contribute to have their voices heard. As advocates of change, Virla and Lieu hope that their work will lead to better policy decisions that consider technology, innovation systems, as well as stakeholders.



This research provides policy makers important feedback from their constituents, including unexpected agreement from the Albertans in the room that it is necessary to maintain an oil sands presence during the transition to low carbon energy. As an international research team, unearthing this response is an important part of their work.

Overall, this workshop and our one-on-one interview in advance offered a great snapshot of two University of Calgary alumni and their work coming full circle. It is not only reaching the international stage but returning home to ensure Canadian voices are heard.