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“We’ re in this all together:” Community Impacts of Long- distance Labour Commuting

CAG, June 2015

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ENGAGING THE WORLD

Outline

1. Long-distance Labour Commuting
2. Research Focus
3. Mackenzie, BC
4. Family & Community Dynamics
5. Impact on Community Organizations
6. Implications for Research

LDLC

- Fly-in, fly-out; bus-in, bus-out; drive-in, drive-out
 - Workplace is isolated by a distance of at least 200 kilometres from the worker's home community
- 42/7; 21/21; 21/7; 7/7; 14/7...



Source: ebbsandflowers.com

Rise of LDLC

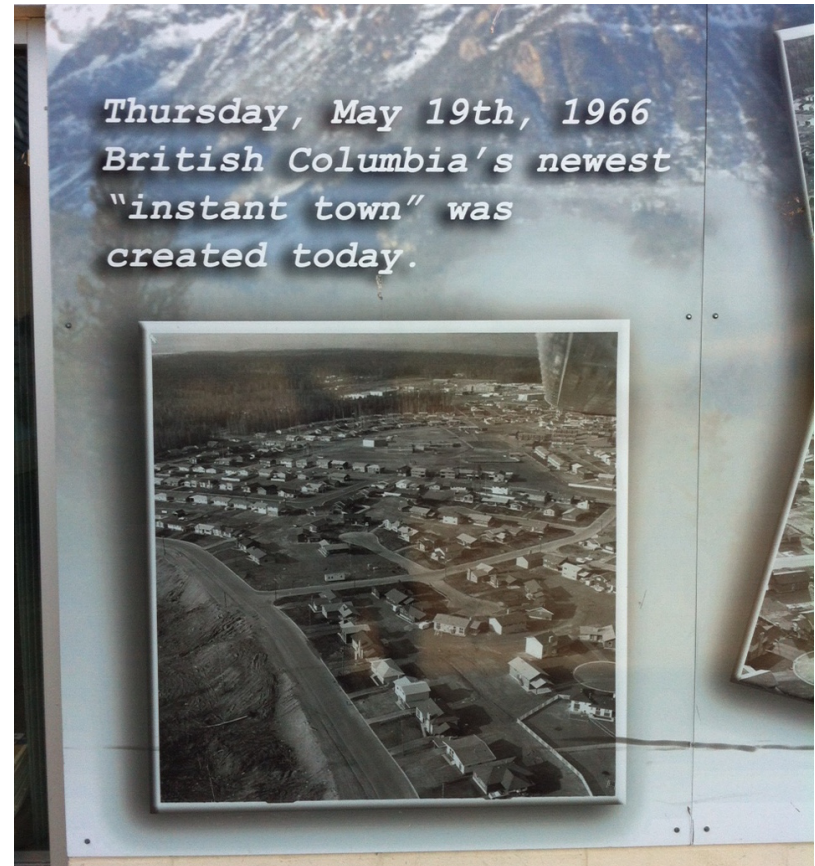
- Rural and Small Town Restructuring
- Senior Government and Industrial Disengagement from Community
- Industrial Restructuring
- Technology and Transportation



LDLC Research Focus

- Social dynamics and impacts
- Employment and income benefits
- **Our focus:** impacts and implications of LDLC on home and host communities
- Home = permanent residence of worker
- Host = commute to location

Mackenzie, British Columbia



Mackenzie, British Columbia



Mackenzie, British Columbia



Instant Town Planning...
with High Amenity



Mackenzie, British Columbia



Methods

- Survey: 1,537 residents (41.2% response rate)
- Key informant interviews: community clubs and organizations (17 – with many representing multiple groups)

Findings: LDLC Scale / Location



Findings: Family/Community Dynamics

1. Household responsibilities
2. Time with friends and neighbours
3. Sense of community
4. Community organizations
5. Volunteerism
6. Flexible responses

Findings: Household Responsibility

I think there was a lot more pressure put on the person doing the long distance commuting. Mainly like the men because if they are at work for two weeks and home for a week, what they could do if they were working for three weeks here they had to do in one week. So it's not like they can come home and spend time with the wife and kids because you come home and the wife has her honey-to-do list (Mackenzie Interview #15).

Findings: Sense of Community

- Enhanced sense of community – dealing with crisis and support through transition
- **And**, less time and fewer resources for residents to engage with community
- LDLC to keep community – but the minute you leave, the community changes

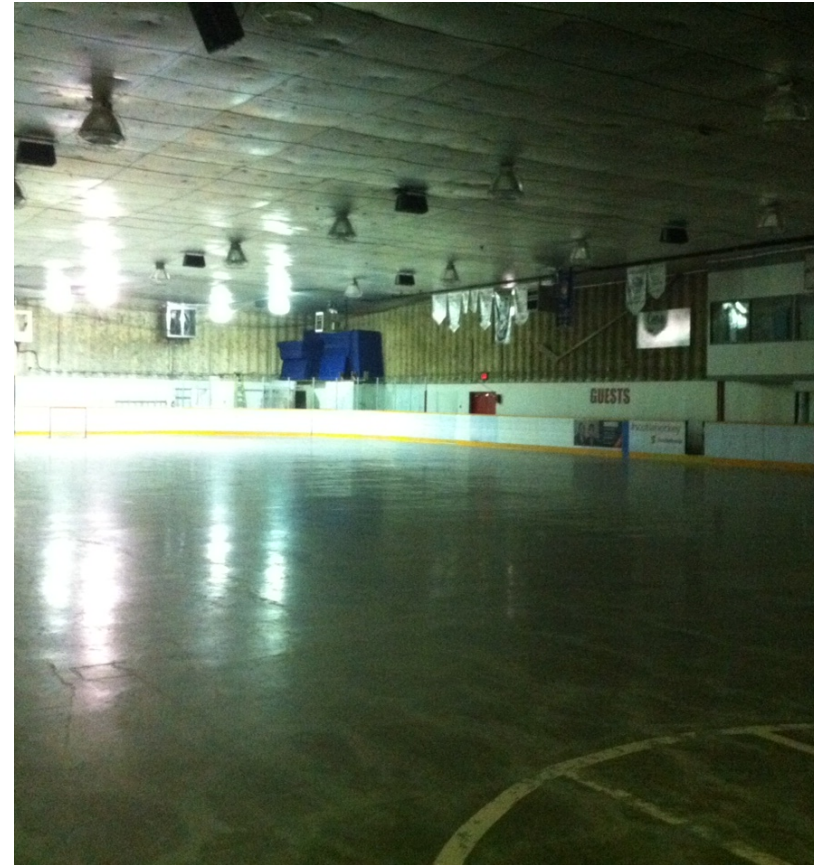
Findings: Community Organizations

It's harder to get people out to community events. There's lots of people who've tried to put on events in the community... but actually getting attendance is nearly impossible.
(Mackenzie Interview #16).



Findings: Volunteerism

- Loss of skills, expertise and time
- Leadership roles in community
- Impact on volunteerism rates
- Away or family focused during home rotation



Findings: Increased Flexibility

- Community Responses:
 - Business hours
 - Service hours
 - Increase use of drop-in services
 - External assistance (coaches)

Findings: Time

*I think the community did a good job in general in trying to provide opportunities for people. So Mackenzie Counselling had **a drop-in time** for parents needing to bring their kids. So that's parents who were single parenting had an opportunity to get together. I think the district **worked hard to keep recreational things happening**...The Community Awareness Committee was meeting a lot more often during that time to **monitor what was going on** and to perceive what people's needs were and to make sure there were things to keep people entertained.*

Discussion: Complexity -ves

1. Decline in community engagement to maintain service and program levels
2. Burn-out
3. Increase in family stress
4. Lone-parent household stress
5. Uncertainty associated with precarious labour and state of local economy

Discussion: Complexity +ves

- Keep calling Mackenzie home
- Sense of place, community
- New relationships, roles
- New forms of engagement
- Local economy (LDLC income + flexible response to shifting dynamics)

Implications for Research

- Flexible community responses to labour mobility and how these are initiated
- Community events and community building efforts – targeted strategies
- Deployment of family supports
- Voluntary sector responses and community monitoring
- Policy related to workplace mobility

LDLC = Complexity...

It's probably brought the community closer together. It's made people more aware of the community. It's taken people out of the state of mind they were in before and realized that we're in this all together. That's probably been the biggest change. (Mackenzie Interview #3)

Thank You.

Forthcoming: *Journal of Rural Society*

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Worker Paper: forthcoming *Geografiska
Annuler B*