



# **Preparing for the Next Boom: The Implications of Mine Construction and Expansion in BC's Interior**

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# Outline

- Background
- Study
- Impacts of mine development and expansion
- Discussion



# Background

- Restructuring of resource development
  - Efficiency of local mill operations
  - Access to large volumes of cheap timber
    - Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic
  - Restructuring of local economies
    - Decline of forest sector
    - Expansion of mining activity
      - High mineral prices
- Booms come faster; busts go deeper
- Employment restructuring
  - Worker transition / worker shortages
  - Fly-in, fly-out (FIFO), long distance labour commuting (LDLC)



# Study

## On the Move: Employment Related Geographic Mobility

- Lead by Barb Neis, Memorial University
- 40 researchers from 22 universities
- **BC Team focus: mining sector**
  - **Community impacts**
  - Impacts on workers and their families
- 7 year project



# LDLC Study

- Preliminary investigations to set stage for multi-year study
- Key informant interviews
  - 25 stakeholders in Williams Lake
  - 23 stakeholders in Mackenzie
  - Impacts on community
    - Key pressures and responses
    - Initiatives with industry
    - Initiatives with local / senior governments
    - Barriers / gaps
  - Latent / manifest content analysis





# Study Site Characteristics

- Mackenzie
  - Mt. Milligan – Mackenzie ~ 95 km
  - Mt. Milligan under construction
    - Located between Mackenzie / Fort St. James
  - Mostly transient, out-of-town workers
- Williams Lake
  - Gibraltar – Williams Lake ~ 45 km
  - Gibraltar – long-term operations
  - Mostly local labour force



# Results

- Attitudinal Issues
- Economy
- Labour Force
- Education and Training
- Services
- Communication
- Infrastructure
- Policy





# Results

- Attitudinal Issues
- Economy
  
- Services
- Communication
- Infrastructure



# Attitudinal Issues

- Resistance to change
- Opposition to industry
  - Social, environmental, First Nations
- Degree of resignation
- Perception of industry culture
  - Mine workers stay in camps; transient travel to places that offer top dollar



That's how those types of workers live. **They live in their camps**, and then they go to wherever it is that they live. **They are going to continue to commute to whatever mine pays the top dollar, and where they like working. It's unlike forestry, where we tend to stay in the communities where we actually work.** Mining is just different, and it's like that all over the world.



# Economy

- More stable, diversified economy
- Expanded opportunities for First Nations
- Deeper client base in Williams Lake
- Limited economic benefits in Mackenzie
  - Return of forestry had bigger impact
- Difficult to get service / supplier contract
- Scale of industry operations difficult for small business to acquire benefits



“The marketing side is a trip, because most of the time, during the construction, **we’re dealing with someone in Vancouver** or dealing with someone on the site, but they’re so focused on construction, that all that stuff’s been bid on, so when it gets to the site, **it’s already been purchased** and containerized in how it gets there. So it’s tough for us smaller companies to get involved. **But it’s all the shorts.** They needed 50 of an item and they got shorted and they need three more and by chance I have three on the shelf and **at that point you possibly get chosen to be a vendor for that.**”



So you know getting your foot in the door with the vendors only happened because **some of the purchasing people left some of our mills and went there, so they were known people and you could target them.** That's the only way these places like Mackenzie Hose and Quadra the machine shop here got in.



# Services I

- A temporary approach?
  - Temporary residence status to access services
  - Temporary library cards
  - Temporary recreation passes
  - Access to showers for workers in campgrounds
  - Temporary housing



# Services II

- A flexible approach?
  - Mismatch between business hours / shift schedules
  - Closed evenings / Sundays





Because of shift work, people can't attend something that is static. It's difficult to address that problem. **How do you offer programs to people who don't have consistent days off** because of their work schedule? Trying to meet people when and where they're available is a challenge in a small community because people just end up being on call which is tricky.



# Services II

- A flexible approach?
  - Mismatch between business hours / shift schedules
  - Closed evenings / Sundays
  - Inflexible daycare



# Communication I

- Stakeholder organizations / committees
  - Leaders Moving Forward (Williams Lake)
  - Social Planning Council (Williams Lake)
  - Sustainability Table (Mackenzie)
- MOU with First Nations communities
- But....



# Communication II

- Conversations not initiated with mines
  - Uncertainty on how to develop relationships with industry
- Limited coordination between towns / First Nations
- Limited effort to assess what is needed for workers and their families



We really have not clearly explored what the family composition is. **We have talked about the labour market, but we haven't really talked about the families**, who's coming and who's going. What are the demographic characteristics of the mining community? That would be very helpful to know. Then we can design services that are fitting for them and be able to put the pitch forward.



# Communication II

- Conversations not initiated with mines
  - Uncertainty on how to develop relationships with industry
- Limited coordination between towns / First Nations
- Limited effort to assess what is needed for workers and their families
- International labour not aware of purpose of services / programs



# Infrastructure

- Housing
  - Mining companies purchased / lease homes, trailers, apartment buildings
  - Aging housing infrastructure
  - Private sector not reinvesting
  - Lack of social housing
- Aging recreational facilities
- Aging transportation infrastructure
  - Federal programs don't recognize unique nature of resource town airport operations



One of the things that we are dealing with right now, **ACAP only funds based on scheduled commercial traffic.** So here in Williams Lake, we have two airlines. But they only look at what do those two scheduled airlines require as far as runway length, condition, and what not. **But we have a lot of other charter flights** that bring in some of these mining workers. We have a lot of charter flights that bring in executives or contractors or engineers in. Some of the aircraft that they charter in **require a greater amount of runway than the small carriers** that we have.

Unfortunately, ACAP doesn't recognize those, so they may say you only need a 5,000 foot runway because that is all that your airlines require. But for us, we say no that's not true.



# Discussion





# Discussion I

## Geography and Place Matter

- Context matters
- Distance from community impacts potential for embedding local benefit
- Stage of mine development / operation matters



# Discussion II

## Connections

- Building understanding through communication
- Foundation for planning and coordination
- Ongoing communication
- Facilitating connections
  - Local business with mine opportunities



## Discussion III

### Continuing research questions

- Ongoing relationships between community, industry, and businesses
- Benefit flows
- Tracking responses:
  - Community
  - Labour
  - Industry
- Tracking impacts of policy change



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