



Hollowing Out the Community: Examining the Local Impacts of Long Distance Labour Commuting in a Northern Canadian Small Town

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Outline

- Introduction
- Perceptions of Community Life
- Local Impacts
 - Clubs / organizations
 - Family / friends
 - Economic / community development
- Discussion





Background

- Instant towns
- Built in the late 1960s
- New regional forest industry
- Significant economic downturn in 2008
- Closure of all major forest industry operations
- Many forest workers had to engage in long distance labour commuting (LDLC)



Project:

- Explore the implications of LDLC on families and the community
- Impacts that LDLC had on:
 - Community organizations
 - Community relationships



Methodology

- Key informant interviews
- Conducted during May 2012
- 17 residents were interviewed
- Participants were involved with multiple community organizations

Length of Residence

	# of Responses
0-5 years	4
6-10 years	2
11-19 years	1
20 years or more	10
Total	17

What community groups do you belong to?



	# of Responses
Sporting clubs	17
Emergency services	12
Arts and society	10
Service clubs	5
Youth clubs	3
Other	5



Interview Questions

Background questions

- Experiences with community life prior to, and after, the mill closures;
- Impacts on community organizations and clubs;
- Impacts on relationships with family, friends, and neighbours; and
- Impacts on economic development



Analysis

- Interview comments were recorded and notes taken
- Qualitative analysis identified, coded, and categorized patterns and themes

Results



What was community life like prior to the mills closing in Mackenzie?



	# of Responses
Vibrant community	12
Vibrant community groups	9
High community engagement	8
Vibrant economy	5
High level of volunteerism	5
Good personal finances	3
Lots of services / amenities	2

What was community life like after the mill closures?



	# of Responses
Decreased volunteerism	12
Financial / economic challenges	9
Decreased community engagement	8
Population change / loss	7
Decreased community cohesion	5
Increased commuting	5
Expansion of community events / clubs	5
Loss of community groups	4
Safety concerns	4
Availability of community supports	2
Closures	2
Increased financial support	2
Increase in crime	2
Uncertainty	2
Communications	1
Families separated	1
Other	2

How did LDLC impact the membership of community groups?



	# of Responses
Decreased total membership	22
Changing age composition of membership	15
Shifting gender composition of membership	9
New group / clubs	5
Membership costs kept low	2
Instability	1
Other	3

How did LDLC impact community participation / engagement?

	# of Responses
Decreased attendance	7
Changing capacity	6
Change in household roles	2
Distance affected participation	1
Other	1

How did LDLC impact the recruitment / retention of volunteers?




	# of Responses
Loss of human resources	26
Difficult recruiting volunteers	22
Increased time constraints	15
Expansion of human resources	11
Volunteer burnout	6
Expansion of roles	4
Training costs up	4
Pressure on board of directors	3
Pressure on organization leadership	3
Impacts of small population base	2
Expansion of supports for volunteers / staff	1

Recruitment strategies

	# of Responses
Technology	11
Print material	10
Personal communication	9
Community events	7
Recruitment style	5

How did LDLC impact donations / in-kind support for community groups




	# of Responses
Decline in donations	17
Focus on government support	14
Increased donations outside the community	10
Increased local donations	9
Innovation around equipment / infrastructure	8
Decline in revenue	4
Other	2



How did LDLC impact the availability of programs / activities?

	# of Responses
Hours of operation	19
Program restructuring	13
Program creation / growth	4

How did LDLC impact the operations of community programs / activities?




	# of Responses
Flexible meeting / work times for groups / clubs	11
Challenged financial management	9
Challenged operational / equipment costs	7
Increased collaboration	3
Changes in demand for services	2
Declining quality of operations	1
Group mergers	1
Other	3

How did these impacts affect the overall sense of community?



	# of Responses
Increased sense of community	16
Decreased sense of community	10

How did LDLC impact activities / time spent with family?



	# of Responses
Impacts on household responsibilities	14
Shifting community participation	13
Impacts on spousal relationship	7
Shifting time for family activities	4
Housing	3
Shifting involvement with kids	2



How has LDLC impacted the activities / time spent with friends / neighbours?


	# of Responses
Limited time to spend with friends	9
Changed social interaction	6
Affected engagement with friends / neighbours	4
Financial impacts	2
Commuter fatigue	1
New friendships in other communities	1
Other	2

How have these impacts on family affected the sense of community?



	# of Responses
Enhanced sense of community	17
Decline in sense of community	8

How has LDLC impacted how you shop locally?



	# of Responses
Expanded support for businesses	11
Financial barriers to shopping	11
Limited quality of goods	10
Loss of support for businesses	7
Business operational costs	3
Other	6

How has LDLC impacted how you shop outside of the community?



	# of Responses
Access to goods and services	10
Proximity / convenience	8
Costs of goods and services	6
Frequency of out-of-town shopping	5
Capacity to shop out-of-town	3
Frequency of local shopping	3
Other	4



Discussion I

Several positive things done to respond to LDLC challenges:

- Kept program / activity costs low;
- Used key events / initiatives to provide a positive focus for the community;
- Shared expertise and resources across groups;
- Provided flexibility in timing and delivery of supports; and
- Organized interagency meetings to share information among service providers, government, and industry



Discussion II

Potential areas that community leaders can use to build resiliency

- Support and broaden infrastructure for social interaction to allow residents to connect with broader support networks
- Ensure supports are in place to facilitate community participation (i.e. child care, transportation, etc.)
- Devote attention to succession planning and strengthen the capacity / leadership skills of the volunteer base



Discussion III

- Build upon opportunities for collaboration and synergy across community groups
- Lobby for more resources to provide local services and outreach supports
- Support and expand non-local networks that can link community groups with a broader range of resources, expertise, and information
- Ensure that information about local, regional, provincial, and federal supports is up-to-date, accessible, and in multiple formats

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