

The Social Aspects of Rapid Economic Growth

Glen Schmidt PhD RCSW
Associate Professor
UNBC School of Social Work

Schefferville, Quebec



Lynn Lake, Manitoba



Uranium City, Saskatchewan



Cassiar, British Columbia



Thompson, Manitoba



Economic Slowdown



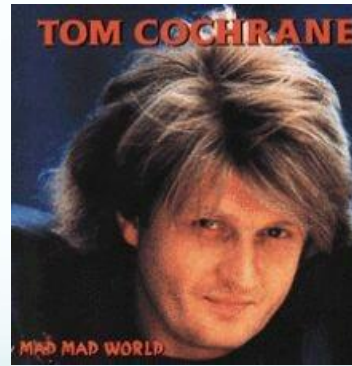
- Apartments boarded up in Thompson Manitoba in 1979 when CMHC was the biggest landlord.
- Population peaked at about 26,000 people in 1973.
- In 1979 the population was around 11,000 following a decline in nickel prices and a bitter strike against Inco Metals.
- Today the community numbers just over 13,000 people and Inco was taken over by Vale, a Brazilian company.

Single Industry Town



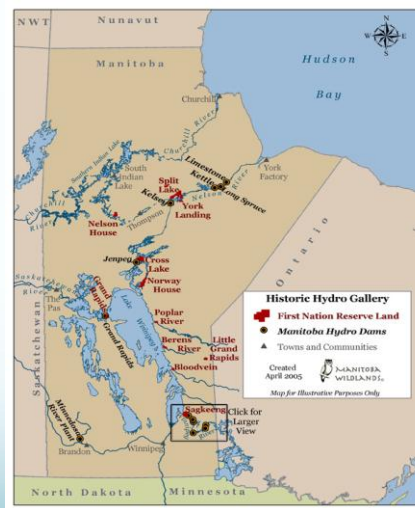
- The value of the primary commodity affects employment and investment.
- For many workers their primary investment is their home and a downturn in commodity prices can have a major effect on personal finances.

Lynn Lake



Manitoba Sites

- A number of hydro dam sites are on reserve land and many First Nations communities and traditional lands are affected by flooding.



South Indian Lake



Missi Falls Control Structure – Dam and spillway control structure which holds water in Southern Indian Lake and regulates the volume of water passing down the lower Churchill River.

South Indian Lake



- Shoreline erosion due to the rise and fall in water levels affected the beaver and muskrat populations as well as fish populations.
- Naturally occurring mercury seeps from soil erosion and ends up in the food chain.

Muskrat and beaver populations fell drastically.

- Muskrat Lodge
- Muskrat



- Fish species at the top of the food chain had the highest mercury content.



Fort St. John



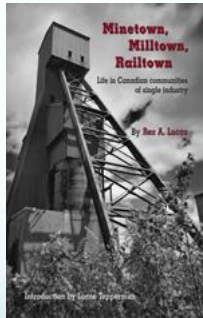
- Median age Fort St. John 29.8 years
- Median age BC 40.8 years
- 20 to 29 year age group - 5 males for every 4 females
- Median income males in Fort St. John & \$46,932.00
- Median income males in BC \$31,598.00
- Median income females FSJ - \$19,533.00
- Median income females BC - \$19,997.00

Male/Female Migrants 2000 to 2010 (Alberta Demographic Spotlight March 2011)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Calgary Migrants | • Fort McMurray Migrants |
| • Males 20-24 12.7% | • Males 20-24 (18.8%) 3,134 |
| • Females 20-24 11.6% | • Females 20-24 (11.3%) 1,187 |
| • Males 25-64 25.4% | • 2.6 males for each female |
| • Females 25-64 22.4% | • Males 25-64 (35.6%) 5,954 |
| | • Females 25-64 (14.4%) 2,412 |
| | • 2.5 males for each female |

Phases of a Single Industry Town

- Rex Lucas, 1971



- Construction
- Recruitment
- Transition
- Maturation

Construction Camps



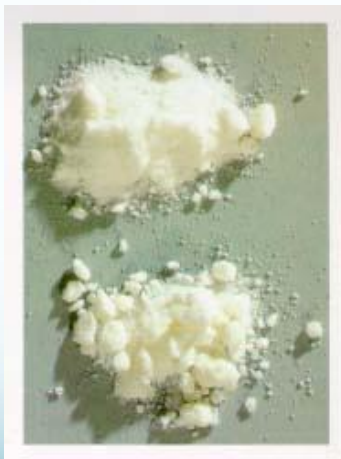
- There is a temporary feeling based on the reality of living in a trailer camp.
- The workers are mostly male. It is important to have healthy outlets for the young male workers when they are off shift.

Young Males and Impulsive Behaviour



- The people involved in the Stanley Cup riots were mostly male with an average age of 21. (Globe and Mail October 31, 2011)

Alcohol and Drugs



- Illicit drugs, such as cocaine, often become a problem during boom periods when incomes are high and there is a lot of transience.
- Fort St. John is a good example as arrests for cocaine were up 52% in 2010.

Nikiforuk (2008)

- “Fort McMurray reports five times more drug offences than the rest of Alberta, because ordering crack cocaine at a work camp is easier than ordering pizza. The boom town also has an 89 per cent higher rate of assault and a 117 percent higher rate of impaired driving.” (p. 46)



Hell's Highway

- “On Thursday and Sunday nights, the open-pit mines change shifts, and thousands of itinerant tar-sands workers head south looking for R&R in Edmonton. Young men, of course, don't worry about mortality, and many of them take to the road in Dodge Ram 3500s or GMC 4x4s, blind drunk or high on crystal meth. Sensible drivers avoid the road on those nights; they don't want to add to the rows of little white crosses decorated with blue hard hats, bottles of Russian Prince Vodka, and stuffed teddy bears.” (Nikiforuk, 2008)

Kerry Carrington

- The Resource Boom's Underbelly: Criminological Impacts of Mining Development (2011)
- Globalization, Frontier Masculinities and Violence: Booze, Blokes and Brawls (2010)



Income Division

- Median income males in Fort St. John - \$46,932.00
- Median income males in BC - \$31,598.00
- Median income females in FSJ - \$19,533.00
- Median income females in BC - \$19,997.00

Women in Resource Towns

- Feminist research (Krepps, 1979; Gill, 1986; Reed, 2003) reveals that the needs and roles of women and children may often be overlooked and this leads to a negative female appraisal of life in single industry resource towns.

Women in Resource Communities

1. Women's lives are seen to be structured around their husbands' jobs and studies conducted with women in resource communities have emphasized the negative aspects of living in remote northern locations.
2. Women have had no part in planning the community designed for male employees.
3. The resulting structure and the system demand that women fulfill traditional roles of homemaker and mother.

Victorian Family Structure



- Victorian families were generally characterized by a clear division of labour between father and mother. Father was often distant from the children while mother had responsibility for the children and household management.

Women in Single Industry Towns

- Research by McLeod and Hovorka (2008) suggests that some of these conditions may be changing.
- They looked at women in High Level Alberta and while employment rates were somewhat lower than males and wages were lower than males, women did have work, largely in the tertiary sector, and they reported satisfaction with the community.
- McLeod and Hovorka suggest that as single industry towns diversify they are likely to become more welcoming and hospitable to women.

Debt



- Per capita consumer debt
BC - \$40,977.00
- Canada - \$32,845.00
- Alberta - \$34,939.00

Town Development

- Older mining towns were often built around the mine and mill and smelter.
- Workers could walk down the street to get to work.
- Today mine sites are often built at a distance so some type of commuting arrangement is required.

Flin Flon Manitoba



“They were right about us not having a plan.” (Ralph Klein
September 2006)



Challenges

- A large population of younger males with high incomes and vulnerability to issues such as alcohol and drug abuse as well as violence.
- The influx of newcomers who may not always behave in the same way as locals or demonstrate the same values as the original population.
- Limited opportunities for females.
- Limited infrastructure or an infrastructure gap that presents challenges.
- The need to integrate newcomers and the challenges associated with shift work and the degree to which people are prepared to make a social investment in the community.

Recreational Infrastructure

- Recreational infrastructure is extremely important given the demographic profile that emerges during rapid development.
- Young males who are disconnected from social support systems and isolated young females who may require additional support and a sense of community are two vulnerable groups.
- Failure to build recreational outlets and healthy social options will increase the risk of substance misuse, isolation, depression, violence, and suicide.
- This requires the political will to plan and carefully spend the money in advance of the development surge.

Educational Programs

- Educational programs need to be targeted at the appropriate groups.
- At the same time the programs need to be normalized and non-stigmatizing.
- The programs need to be accessible and sensitive to the needs of shift workers.
- Accessible child care is vital for young mothers.

Community Building

- It is important to engage newcomers and avoid the worst aspects of bifurcation, which can include rigid division and hostility.
- Town councils and recreational groups need to develop outreach strategies that will attract and include newcomers.
- Communities need to concentrate on being welcoming and friendly.

Town Planning

- Town planning needs to account for young mothers and children.
- Recreational and social outlets need to attract and appeal to people even during a harsh winter.
- They need to be accessible and affordable.

Thank You.