

Migration to Fort McMurray, Alberta: Implications for Urban Planning and Social Capital in a Resource-Dependent Community

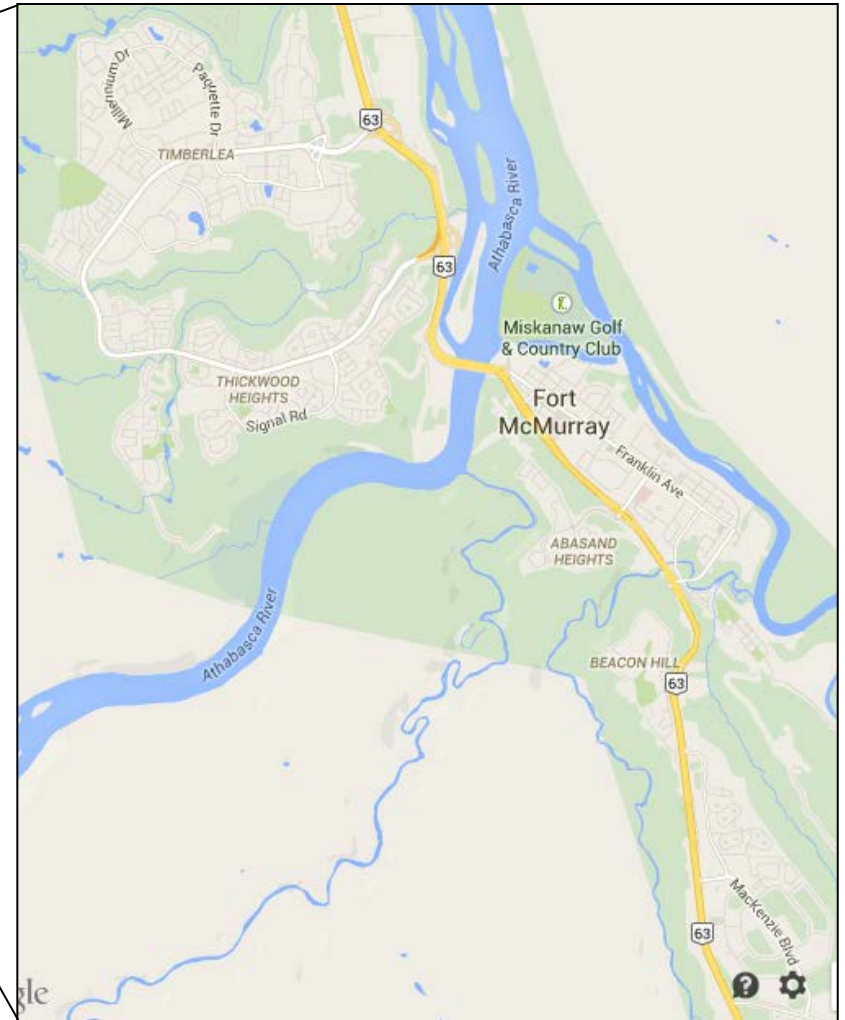


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Presentation Outline

- Fort McMurray: Geographical, Historical, and Demographic context
- Project I: Urban Planning in a Resource-Dependent Community
- Project II: Building Social Capital among the Newfoundland Population
- Thoughts and discussion

Fort McMurray: Geographic Context



- Largest settlement in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Confluence of 3 rivers
- 7 Neighborhoods
 - 1/2 of pop. Separated from oils sands by Athabasca R

Source: Google Maps

Fort McMurray: Historic Context

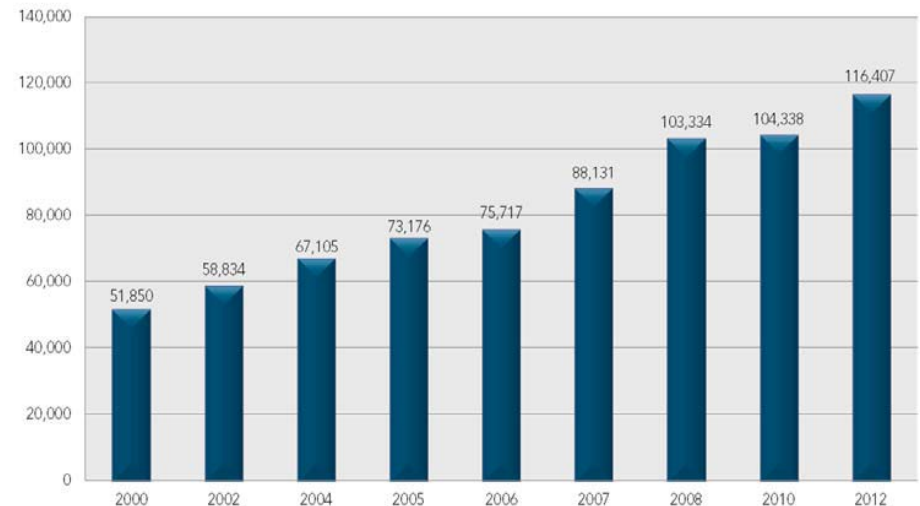
- Named by Peter Pond in 1778 after William McMurray of the Hudson's Bay Co.
- A series of boom and bust cycles follows
 - Small in comparison to today's boom
- 1960s—Great Canadian Oil Sands (GCOS) projects
- 1970s—arrival of Cities Services and Syncrude
 - Growth stalled with National Energy Policy
 - Sun Oil, Sunoco, and GCOS combined into Suncor In.
- Late 1990s into 2000s—new exponential growth as US seeks new oil resources, also China



Fort McMurray: Demographic Context

- 2012 City Population: 76,009
- 2012 Work Camp Population: 39,271
- 71.2% overall city pop. increase (2000-2012)
- Average household income:
 - \$210,852 CAD
 - 45.5% +\$200,000 CAD
 - National Average for families in top 20% income bracket: \$87,100

Total Population, 2000-2012, RMWB



Fort McMurray: Demographic Context

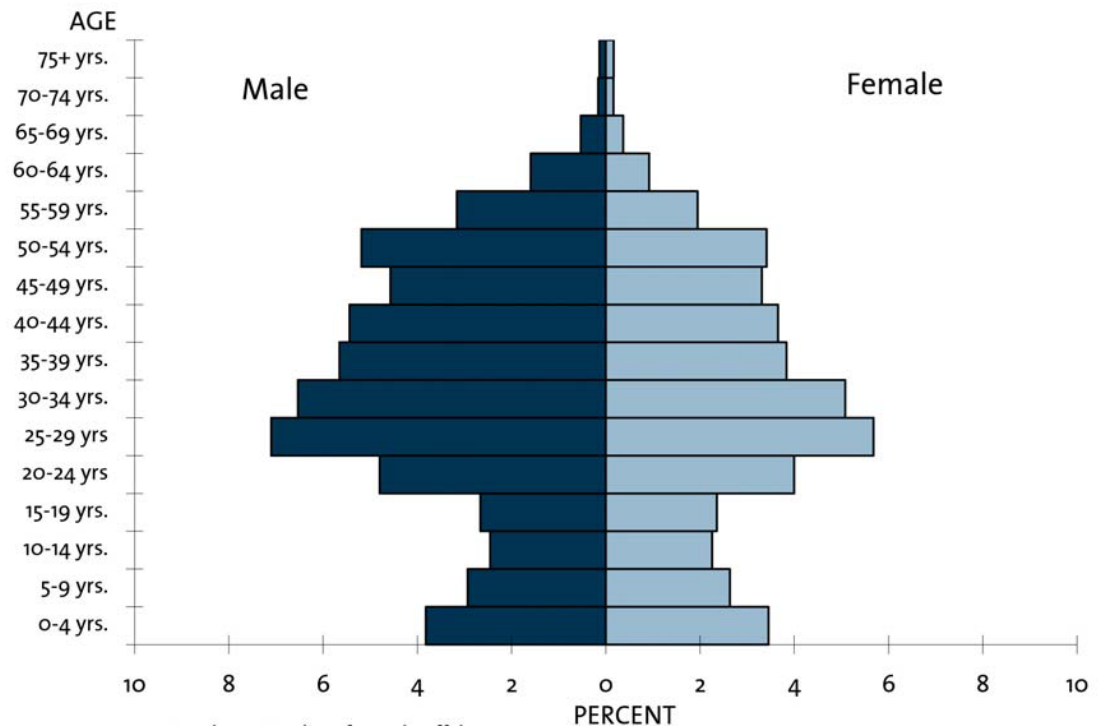
- Gender Ratio

- Smaller than expected

- 57% male
- 43% female

- Age Structure

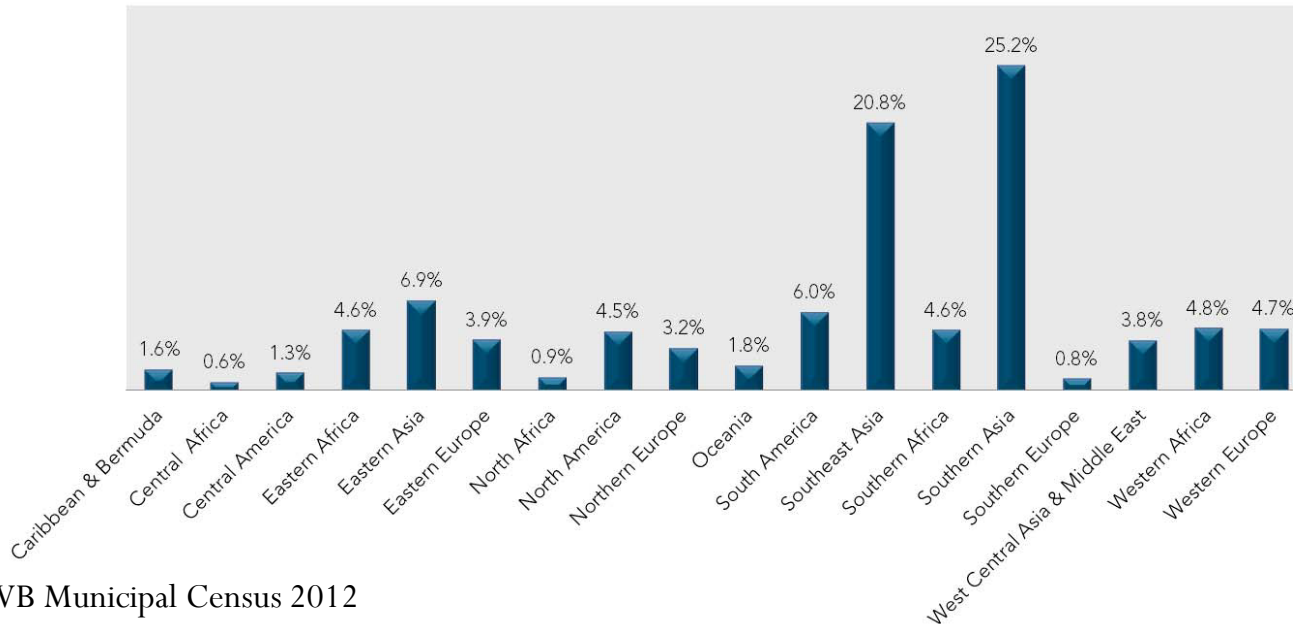
- 67% between 20-54 yrs.
 - 23% in 20-34 yr. bracket
- 31% under 25 yrs.



Source: RMWB Municipal Census 2012

Fort McMurray: Demographic Context

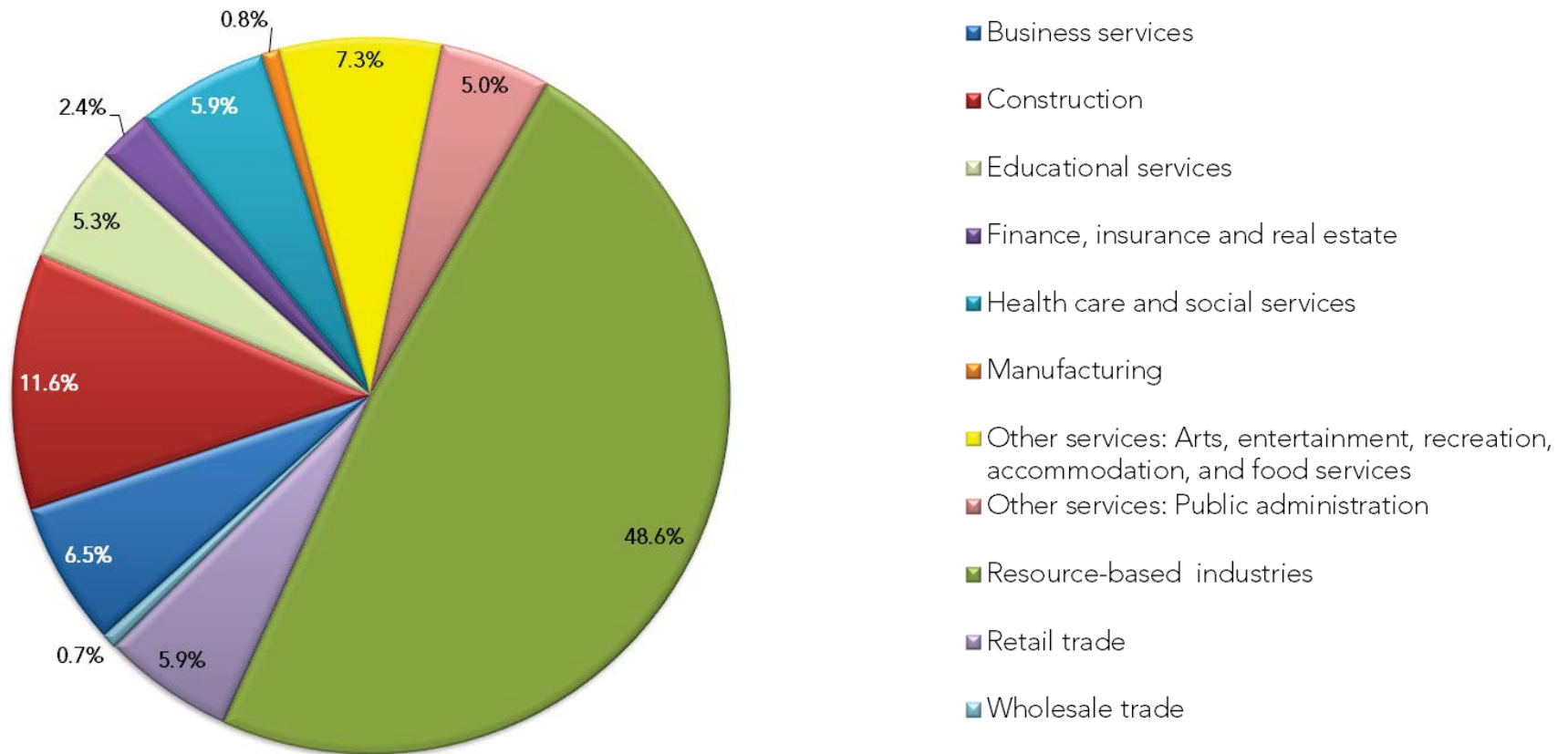
- 14.6% foreign-born
 - 25.2% South Asia
 - 20.8% Southeast Asia
 - 6.9% East Asia
 - 6.0% South America
- Among Canadian-born...
 - 53.2% AB
 - 16.5% NL
 - 8.4% ON
 - 6.9% BC



Source: RMWB Municipal Census 2012

Fort McMurray: Economic Context

Percentage of the Population Employed by Industry Type, 2012, RMWB



Source: RMWB Municipal Census 2012

Project I: Urban Planning in a Resource-Dependent Community



Future Plan for Fort McMurray Downtown area

Source: <http://www.planningalliance.ca>

Urban Growth Terminology

- “Boomtown”
 - Francaviglia 1991
 - Geographically isolated and concentrated
 - Stratified population landscapes
 - Community identity linked to natural resource development
 - Hostetter 2011
 - Exponential growth fueled by high demand for (usually) one resource
 - Speculation fuels growth
 - Excessive consumption
 - Three phases of boomtown development
 - Over-production of the built environment
 - Excessive consumption
 - Decline and scaling-back

Urban Growth Terminology

- Other Terms
- “Company Town”
 - Business AND real estate owned by same company (Dinius and Vergara 2011)
- “Single-Industry Town”
 - At least 80% of pop employed by a single industry (Porteous 1987)
 - Unbalanced labor force (Lucas 1971; Randall and Ironside 1996)
- Preferred terms
 - “resource-dependent community”
 - “natural resource boomtown”



Urban Planning in a Resource-Dependent Community

- Three Goals of Canadian Resource Town Planning (Stein 1952)
 - Separate land uses
 - Design neighborhoods to create community cohesion and interaction (ex. “Radburn-style” neighborhoods)
 - Build economic diversity into long-range plans
- Research Question
 - How are local planning realities impacted by global forces in Fort McMurray?
- Methods

Results

- Three challenges to urban planning in a resource-dependent community
 1. Collecting reliable census data
 2. Providing for affordable housing
 3. Long-term planning during periods of exponential growth

Challenge 1: Collecting Reliable Census Data

- Under-reporting of “shadow” population
- Impact of FIFO population
- Lack of flexible prediction models
- Dependency on oil company predictions



Campground within city limits

Challenge 2: Providing for Affordable Housing

- High salaries = rising living costs
- Existence of shadow population indicates lack of housing
- Income measures mask difficulties faced by low-income earners
- Solution: New housing projects
- Challenges
 - Acquiring land from the provincial government
 - Changes in housing typologies
 - Changes in mortgage rules



New apartment/condo development in
Timberlea

Challenge 3: Balancing Growth with Long-range Planning

- Planning in boomtowns
 - Tends to focus on essentials (housing, infrastructure) rather than quality of life measures.
- The balance in Fort McMurray
 - Infrastructure: Bridge and Road Construction
 - Quality of Life: Leisure and Recreation Amenities
 - Re-branding



MacDonald Island Park



Experience Your Island Playground



MacDonald Island
Park



Suncor Community
Leisure Centre
at MacDonald Island Park



780-790-1812 • www.macdonaldisland.ca



<http://workabov.com/onthefly/2011/07/08/macdonald-island/>
<http://www.prudentialfortmcmurrayre.com/our-region/P21>

Re-branding Fort McMurray



The Bigger Picture for Planning and Growth



Advertisement in front of new condominium complex
Timberlea Neighborhood

- Hybridization of planning models
- Resource-dependent communities tied to world systems
 - Local resource production
 - Global supply and demand
- Fort McMurray as a future planning model

Part II: Building Social Capital among the Newfoundland Population



T-shirt for sale in a Fort McMurray gift shop

Migration and Social Capital

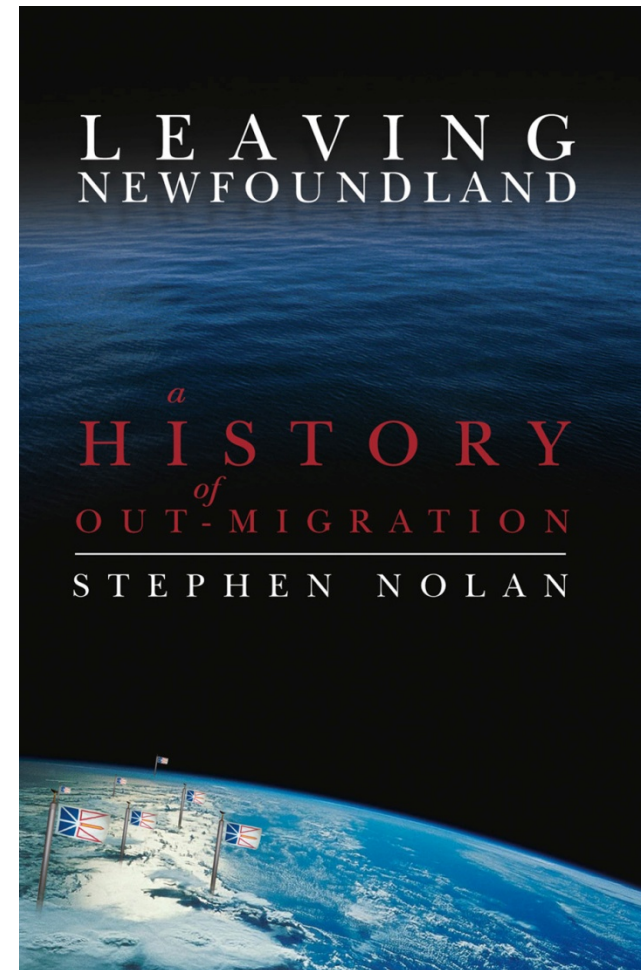
- Social Capital: The value of being able to mobilize and maintain effective social networks to gain access to resources
 - Important in the destination AND the place of origin
- Purpose: To determine how media is used by Newfoundland migrants to build social capital in the destination and place of origin
 - Resource: knowledge of home
 - Important for return migration

Social Capital Theory

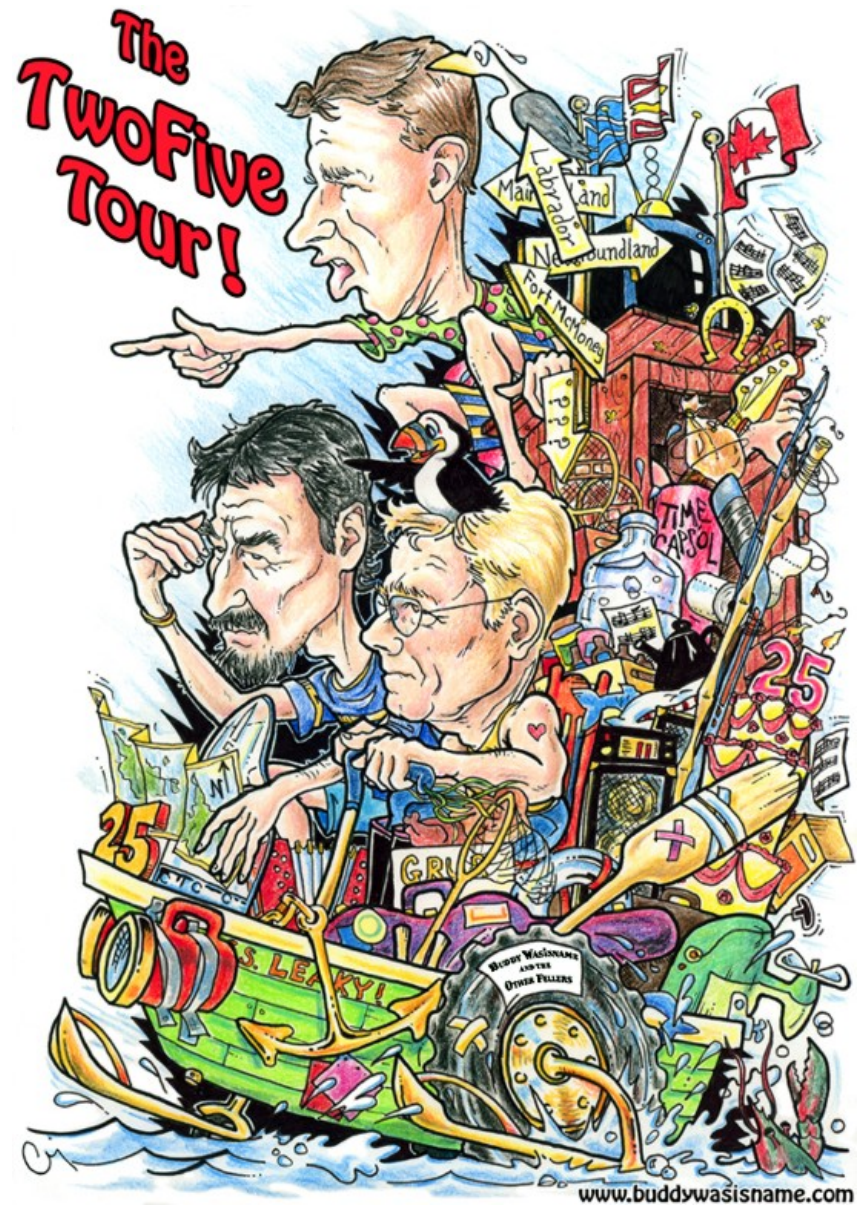
- Bourdieu (1986)
 - The value of and resources obtained through relationships with others, or networking.
 - Focus on individual
- Coleman (1990)
 - Must be some part of social structure
 - Must facilitate interaction between individuals who are part of that social structure
 - Focus on interdependency between individuals
- Putnam (2000)
 - The value that results when contacts between people increase productivity of those people
 - Accumulated through processes of bonding (exclusive) and bridging (inclusive)
 - Focus on organizations as entities that facilitate these processes

Newfoundland and Out-Migration

- A way of life
- Negative Net Migration since 1972
 - Exception 2008-2013: small positive net migration
- 1992 Cod Moratorium: Most significant period of out-migration
- Alberta's "great sucking sound"
 - (Roy MacGregor of *The Globe and Mail*)



- NL/AB Cultural Connection
 - Clubs and bars in Ft. McMurray w/pictures of NL
 - NL music groups tour to Alberta
 - NL radio stations get requests from AB Newfoundlanders
 - 16.5% of Ft. McMurray population is from Newfoundland (2012)
 - Imprint on landscape leads to over-estimates by respondents



Buddy Wasiname and The Other Fellas

Newfoundland - Ft. McMurray Cultural Connection



Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with Newfoundlanders living in Ft. McMurray



Results

- Myth of return is strong among most participants, especially new arrivals and those without children in Fort McMurray
- Maintaining connections with and knowledge of home is essential if migrants ever want to return.
- Radio is the most important medium through which knowledge of home is maintained (TV and social media were secondary)

Radio as Cultural Connection

- Radio listening has long been a part of Newfoundland culture
- Radio is “local” for Newfoundlanders
- Connection between hinterland (Fort McMurray) and heartland (Newfoundland)

The letters 'OZ' are rendered in a large, three-dimensional, metallic font. The 'O' is a simple ring, while the 'Z' has a small rectangular piece missing from its bottom right corner, suggesting a weathered or industrial aesthetic.



Radio Stations in the St. John's Radio Market

Radio in Ft. McMurray



K-rock 100.5 Store Front in Ft. McMurray

Discussion

- Commonality in interviews: myth of return
- Multiple forms of media important
- Media provides access to resources
 - Resources = knowledge about NL, connections to people

Concluding Thoughts

- Implications of migration for urban planning and culture groups in Fort McMurray
- Impact of migration seen from top-down and bottom-up perspectives
- Migration is driven by local and global forces
 - Local
 - Availability of oil (in Alberta)
 - High-wage jobs in oil industry (esp. for Canadians)
 - Abundance of employment opportunities in subsidiary industries
 - Global
 - Demand for oil and energy resources (esp. by US and China)
 - Price and price fluctuation of oil
 - Political tension in other oil-rich regions (and b/t those regions and the US)
 - Role of multi-national corporations
 - Existence of pipelines and other means of transport
 - Limited employment opportunities in Newfoundland

Thank you!

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Gas station b/t Edmonton and Fort McMurray