

Introduction and Personal Context:

Growing up in Northwestern Ontario, I am interested in how Aboriginal residents of my region accommodate industry by changing aspects of their lifestyles. I intend to do my Master's thesis on how remote Aboriginal communities accommodate long-term interactions with mining companies through social and cultural change.

I graduated from my Honour's Bachelor of Geography program in June 2012 with first class standing (over 80% average), a Mapping Sciences certificate, and the Undergraduate Award in Geography. This is awarded by the Department of Geography to a high ranking student who shows promise for graduate work. I am currently pursuing my Masters of Environmental Studies in the Northern Environments and Cultures program (MES-NECU) at Lakehead University. I selected this program because it has an interdisciplinary focus and the classes provide a strong research training component. These classes teach research methods that allow me to demonstrate the ability to conduct original research through a thesis and completion of course work in research methods. This program enables me to acquire the knowledge and experience sufficient to conduct, assess, and interpret research and scholarship in the field.

I have already gained some research experience working as an assistant for five months for my supervisor, Dr. Dowsley, to generate statistics and graphs on country food consumption for communities in Nunavut. I am also currently writing chapters using data from Dr. Dowsley's field research in Nunavut for a community book product.

Research Context:

Research has shown that social relations between Aboriginal groups and mining companies have been stressed and there continues to be ongoing conflict over resource extraction in Canada (Keeling and Sandlos 2009; Mills 2011). With growing mining development in remote areas there is an increased opportunity for Aboriginal employment, but there are also threats to maintaining traditional Aboriginal cultural activities such as hunting, due to the restructuring of people's time (Fitzpatrick 2007; Gibson and Klinck 2005; Mills 2011). Increased employment can also threaten social stability because it provides higher incomes that can contribute to increased rates of alcohol and drug abuse, resulting in assault and family violence (Angell and Parkins 2011). One of the observations regarding social problems in remote communities is that those with strong involvement in cultural activities have fewer social problems and higher levels of confidence and self-worth (Condon et al. 1995). Thus, an investigation into cultural activities may also help to mitigate social issues caused by resource extraction activities.

Inuit communities in Labrador and Ojibway communities in Northwestern Ontario, have experienced growth due to mining employment, but concurrently experience increasing social issues and a loss of culture (Archibald and Crnkovich 2006, Sosa and Keenan 2001). There is much research concerning the effects from mine employment on Aboriginal communities (Gibson and Klinck 2005; Shandro et al. 2011), but no literature has addressed how the residents of these communities have accommodated the mine in aspects of their daily lives or provided solutions to enhance communities. I will take a *new approach* by examining how two case study Aboriginal communities (Nain, Labrador, and the Ojibway of the Pic River, Ontario) culturally accommodate employment at their neighbouring mines.

Objectives:

This proposed study compares the interactions between the Inuit community of Nain and Voisey's Bay Nickel Mine in Labrador with the Ojibways of Pic River First Nation (Pic River) and Marathon

PGM Corporation in Northern Ontario. This study will take a multidisciplinary approach by examining the cultural impacts of both mines on the Aboriginal communities: the changing social issues resulting from the mine, the changing economic situation, and the resulting cultural adaptation brought on by the mine. This study seeks to capture first-hand knowledge from Aboriginal participants relating to how the presence of the mine and mine employment have affected their lives and the practise of cultural activities. ***This study will examine how the Aboriginal communities have culturally accommodated the mine*** and explore the accommodations that have been most beneficial to communities. In order to gain other important perspectives on mine impacts and accommodation this study will also seek to examine the policies of Voisey's Bay Mine and Marathon PGM that relate to Aboriginal culture. The main questions this study seeks to address are:

- Do the Voisey's Bay Nickel Mine and Marathon PGM have policies that reflect the cultural activities of the Nain and Pic River regions?
- How have the Voisey's Bay Nickel Mine and Marathon PGM affected Aboriginal cultural activities and social issues?
- What modifications to their lifestyles and behaviours are Aboriginal communities adopting that result from their accommodation of mines?

Methodology:

The identification of how the two case study Aboriginal communities have culturally accommodated mines will be driven by interviews in the summer of 2013 with Aboriginal participants in the communities of Nain and Pic River. I will compare the Inuit and Ojibway's mine interactions because they represent different cultures from different regions, but both groups have relationships with mines less than ten years old. Contacts have been made in Labrador through Dr. Southcott in cooperation with the Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic (ReSDA) SSHRC MCRI; contact with Pic River has also been initiated through existing research contacts with Dr. Dowsley. The research participants will include mine employees, their family members and community leaders such as Elders, politicians and social workers. Voisey's Bay Mine and Marathon PGM employment policies regarding Aboriginal accommodation at the mine will be collected by interviewing mine employees, and conducting archival research with company documents (if permitted). Participants will be selected using a snowball sampling method and will be interviewed using face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Guest et al. 2013; Scott and Garner 2013). The goal will be to conduct at least 30 interviews with Nain Inuit, 30 interviews with Pic River residents, and at least 3 interviews with representatives from either mining company. Qualitative analysis techniques will be used to identify common themes in the interviews related to cultural accommodation of the mine (Gray 2009). The methodology for each group of participants will follow the requirements of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This study will pay particular attention to ethics concerning Aboriginals and large corporations.

Contribution to the Advancement of Knowledge:

This study will provide a better understanding of the cultural accommodations made by Aboriginal communities in response to mine development and employment. It will enable policy makers to make more informed and beneficial policies for Aboriginal employment to create a better working atmosphere while mitigating the effect that mine employment has on traditional Aboriginal cultural activities. It will also identify successful accommodations that can then be initiated in other Aboriginal communities to retain traditional cultural activities and decrease negative social issues.

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