

# **Long Distance Labour Commuting Contributions to Community Capacity in Mackenzie, BC:**

## **Summary Report**

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**Community Development Institute  
University of Northern British Columbia**

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## Table of Contents

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	Page Number
Acknowledgements	3
Availability	4
Project Reports	4
Contact Information	4
1.0 Project Description	5
2.0 Methodology	5
3.0 Results	7
3.1 Experience with Long Distance Labour Commuting	7
3.2 Contributions to the Workplace	8
3.3 Contributions to Community Activities / Groups	10
4.0 Conclusion	10
Appendix A: Tables	12
Appendix B: Consent Form	22
Appendix C: Interview Guide	24

## List of Tables

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	Page Number
Table 1.1: Timeline	5
Table A1: How long have you lived in Mackenzie?	13
Table B1: Prior to the mill closures in 2008, in what sector(s) did you work in Mackenzie?	13
Table B2: How long did you engage in long distance labour commuting?	13
Table B3: Where did you work out-of-town?	14
Table B4: In what sector(s) did you work out-of-town?	14
Table B5: How were your roles / responsibilities different with your LDLC job?	15
Table B6: Did you learn new skills through your LDLC job?	16
Table B7: Did your LDLC job impact the types of opportunities available to you when you returned to Mackenzie?	17
Table B8: In what sector(s) do you work in Mackenzie today?	17
Table C1: Did you experience different policies or procedures with your LDLC job?	18
Table C2: How did your LDLC experience change how you view / approach your workplace environment in Mackenzie today?	20
Table D1: Did your experience working / living in another community change or shape the contributions that you provide to any community activities / groups?	21

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Prince George  
August 2012

## **Availability**

Copies of this report have been provided to the Mackenzie Public Library, the College of New Caledonia, and the District of Mackenzie. Copies of the report have also been provided to all participants. At UNBC, copies have been posted on the Community Development Institute's website: [www.unbc.ca/cdi](http://www.unbc.ca/cdi).

## **Project Reports**

- Hollowing Out the Community: Community Impacts of Extended Long Distance Labour Commuting
- Contrasting Pathways with Long Distance Labour Commuting in Mackenzie, BC
- Long Distance Labour Commuting Contributions to Community Capacity in Mackenzie, BC
- Assessing the Scale and Scope of Long Distance Labour Commuting in Mackenzie, BC

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# Long Distance Labour Commuting Contributions to Community Capacity in Mackenzie, BC

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## 1.0 Project Description

The town of Mackenzie is one of BC's 'instant towns', built in the late 1960s to house the workforce for a new regional forest industry. A significant economic downturn in Mackenzie beginning in early 2008 resulted in the closure of all major forest industry operations (sawmills and pulp and paper mills) in the community. As a result, many forest sector workers had to engage in long distance labour commuting (LDLC). For many of these workers, this was their first experience with LDLC.

This project provides the opportunity to explore the positive contributions that LDLC can bring to enhance community capacity as workers return to their community and apply new lessons and insights to their workplace or to other local projects and community groups within which they participate. As such, this research will provide decision-makers and stakeholders with information to enhance strategic investments, policies, and programs for workplace and community environments.

**Table 1.1: Timeline**

April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UNBC Research Ethics Board process completed.</li><li>• Research team established.</li></ul>
May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project logistics schedule completed.</li></ul>
June 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews completed.</li></ul>
July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of interview data.</li><li>• Completed draft project reports.</li></ul>
August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of draft reports by community partners.</li></ul>
September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final reports completed and distributed.</li></ul>

## 2.0 Methodology

The data and information for this report was conducted through key informant interviews with workers who have experience working out-of-town for extended periods of time.

### *Selecting Key Informant Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with workers during June 2012. The purpose was to explore the contributions that LDLC can make to community capacity in Mackenzie, BC. Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling technique where residents and participants provided recommendations of other workers for the study. Participants were also able to self-identify themselves as potential participants to the research team during community visits. The research team set up a display table at the Alexander Mackenzie Mall during three community visits throughout the month of June. A total of seventeen residents were interviewed, including four women and thirteen men. While many participants were long-time residents of the community,

we also spoke with participants who had moved to Mackenzie within the last five years (Table A1). Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

### ***Research Ethics***

Research conducted by the Community Development Institute is bound by protocols at the University of Northern British Columbia that require all survey or interview guides be submitted to UNBC's Research Ethics Board for review. A key component to this protocol is to provide research participants with a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) that outlines the purpose of the study, how the research process will protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and that their participation is voluntary.

### ***Interview Questions***

The purpose of this project was to explore the contributions that LDLC can make to build community capacity and workers return to the community and apply lessons learned in other work environments. This report assembles a summary of key issues identified from our interviews. A detailed description of questions asked in each section of the interview guide is provided in Appendix C. In general, participants were asked questions in the following areas:

- Personal background,
- Experiences with LDLC,
- Contributions to the workplace, and
- Contributions to community activities and groups.

### ***Analysis***

During each interview, comments were recorded and notes were taken. After a final summary file was created for each interview, qualitative analysis was done to identify, code, and categorize patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Each table consists of theme headings and sub-headings. The theme headings are bolded and have a numerical count beside them of the total number of comments received for that particular topic. Under each theme are sub-headings that are in plain, non-bolded font. These cover the range of issues captured under a key theme. Beside each sub-heading is a numerical count of the total number of participants that raised a specific issue. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, they indicate the number of times that a particular theme was raised.

For example, in Table B6, participants were asked about new skills they learned through their LDLC job. The most prominent theme was safety training. For example, while 3 participants had received their WHIMMIS ticket, two other participants benefitted from receiving their H<sub>2</sub>S Alive. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, the theme of financial benefits was raised 12 times.

### 3.0 Results

To explore how LDLC can contribute to community capacity, participants were asked a series of questions about their training, development, and work place experiences with LDLC. This part of the report describes the key themes running through each section of questions that were posed to the participants.

#### 3.1 Experience with Long Distance Labour Commuting

Participants were first asked to identify the sector(s) that they worked in prior to the mill closures in Mackenzie. Approximately 82% of the workers we spoke with were employed in the forest industry (Table B1). However, we also spoke with workers who were employed in transportation, construction, and a variety of service sectors. When we asked participants how long they engaged in LDLC, almost half of the participants had worked out-of-town for two years (Table B2). Almost 30% of the participants, however, had been working out-of-town for three or more years. Respondents were also asked to identify the locations of places where they had commuted for out-of-town work. Overall, participants we spoke with had commuted not just to a variety of locations across northern BC, but also to a variety of places in the Okanagan, the Kootenays, and the Lower Mainland (Table B3). In Alberta, many of the people we spoke with had commuted to places such as Fort McMurray and Grand Prairie. Key sectors that attracted workers for out-of-town work included oil and gas, forestry, mining, and construction (Table B4).

When we asked participants to describe how their roles / responsibilities were different with their LDLC job, the most prominent difference entailed *new tasks* (Table B5). For example, participants gained experience with fixing, purchasing, and operating new equipment; testing resources and infrastructure; and managing operations. In fact, some participants were given *more responsibilities* as they gained experience with supervising and training staff. Some also felt that more *social skills* were required in their LDLC job environment as they needed to work in teams or engage with ‘difficult’ people. Others appreciated the exposure they had to working in *new industries* in which they had no previous experience.

Participants were also asked to identify new skills learned through their LDLC job. In this case, participants gained knowledge in two key areas: *safety training* and *trades* (Table B6). In terms of safety training, some participants acquired safety tickets such as WHIMMIS, H<sub>2</sub>S Alive, first aid, and mine rescue. One participant cautioned, however, that some tickets expire after a three year period and may not be readily useable in future employment settings. In terms of trades training, participants learned new construction skills and obtained new tickets related to their trade or work in the oil and gas industry. Some participants expanded their *social* or public relations skills by engaging with political leaders, senior executives, and different stakeholders. Furthermore, a number of participants learned to *drive* different trucks and to drive through difficult, mountainous terrain.

For many participants, their work experiences out-of-town impacted the types of opportunities available to them when they returned to Mackenzie in a number of ways (Table B7). First, some felt that their LDLC job *expanded their employment options* by creating opportunities to work



in other areas, to pursue additional contract work, or to obtain a job advancement. Others felt that their *expanded skills* in new industries or leadership gave them an edge with transferrable skills and experience to regain employment in Mackenzie. In some cases, the ability to *expand networks* and contacts through their LDLC job helped some participants to enhance their reputation and acquire a different support network. There were also participants who did not feel that their LDLC job impacted their employment opportunities back in Mackenzie as they were recalled by their union to work at Conifex. Not all participants, however, felt that their LDLC job had an impact on their employment opportunities in Mackenzie. This was particularly the case for workers who had fewer or no supervisory responsibilities compared to their former job in Mackenzie, as well as women who have difficulty re-engaging with industry jobs due to restrictive child care and shift rotation hours of operation. Just over three-quarters of the participants have returned to work in the forest industry in Mackenzie today (Table B8).

### ***3.2 Contributions to the Workplace***

Participants were also asked a series of questions about their experiences with their LDLC job, including how such experiences may have changed their approaches to their work environment in Mackenzie. When participants talked about how policies and procedures with their LDLC job were different from prior job experiences in Mackenzie, four key topic areas stood out above the rest. To start, the most prominent set of differences concerned *safety*. Participants felt positive about more frequent, even daily, safety meetings to address potential hazards on the job site. Job sites in the oil and gas and mining sectors were also perceived to have more safety coordinators hired for the size of the workforce. Incentives were also provided for workers to build up safety points in order to purchase gear or equipment. Several safety measures were undertaken to address transportation safety, including fatigue management workshops and special permits that were required to limit the length of highway truck driving. Some participants also felt that other job sites had stricter drug and alcohol testing in order to maintain safe operations. Such restrictions also went a long way to enhance how safe women felt on the job site. There were, however, some safety concerns expressed about out-of-town job sites, such as the limited implementation of safety standards in the oil and gas field and difficulty addressing complaints in an adequate and timely manner.

In terms of *employment benefits*, some of the workers we spoke with benefitted from a greater variety and flexibility with their health benefits. Benefits, such as a living allowance, helped some workers to overcome concerns about additional costs with LDLC. Concerns were expressed, however, about the length of consecutive work days required to obtain benefits, and some participants who had contract work did not receive any benefits from the LDLC job. Others also felt that more on-site counseling *supports* are needed to help workers cope with both on-the-job stresses, as well as the stresses associated with LDLC (i.e. loneliness, depression, etc.).

***Information and communication*** strategies can affect workplace satisfaction. In this context, participants valued more open and routine communication with workers. This helped to keep workers engaged, committed, and invested in their work environment. Having concerns or issues addressed immediately also helped to maintain smooth operations and reduce stress. In this context, having clear regulations and standards also helped to maintain smooth *operations*.

Participants also valued positive communication approaches rather than the demeaning or foul language used in some out-of-town workplace environments. Of interest, a number of our female participants felt that they were provided with more positive communication in their workplace compared to their male colleagues.

**Shift rotation schedules** may not only impact worker burnout, but can also influence household costs and the time available to spend with family and friends in Mackenzie. The key concerns that participants expressed with shift schedules were the long hours and lack of time off. Some noted that they were provided with longer shift rotation schedules in order to accommodate travel. This can also reduce the frequency in which transportation costs accumulate for out-of-town work. Other participants benefited from shorter shift rotation schedules which allowed them to see their family more frequently. On a positive note, one innovation that was shared was the creation of a ‘mommy’ shift at the Peace River Coal mine in Tumbler Ridge. This is a shorter day shift that supports women’s participation in industry by dovetailing their shift hours with day care options in the community.

A number of participants did not experience any differences with training or hiring procedures. In some work environments, however, drug and alcohol testing, as well as a physical test, were required before **hiring** was done with the company. Others expressed some key differences in the **training procedures**, notably more supportive on-the-job, team environment learning. In fact, many workers noted that they relied on each other for **support**. With respect to supporting women in industry, one participant praised the Mothers to Miners program in Tumbler Ridge. Key concerns for accessing training included limited time available for ongoing worker development and costs. In terms of on-going worker development, best practices for **monitoring and evaluation** identified by participants included daily feedback, annual performance reviews, and close consultation between supervisors and trainers to monitor and alter worker performance.

As eluded to earlier, the availability of **transportation** supports can play an important role to alleviate the stress of workers engaged in LDLC. Key transportation supports identified by participants included the provision of a company vehicle, a company bus, and car pools with workers on the same shift. There were some concerns with restrictions imposed on LDLC workers living in camps. For example, with considerable camp growth, workers were no longer allowed to bring their personal vehicles. As a result, they were required to fly into camp. Others concerns expressed included inadequate travel allowances to cover the full costs of commuting, as well as having to commute on days off.

For the most part, participants had very positive comments to offer about **camp** living environments. In particular, they appreciated the availability of gym / recreational facilities. Several camps made special accommodations for female workers, including being able to have their own room and even a warming hut.

Given the range of experiences that participants had with various policies, procedures, and working environments with their LDLC job, they were asked to discuss how their LDLC experience changed their views or approaches to their workplace in Mackenzie today. The most prominent theme concerned **safety**. Overall, participants felt that they were more safety

conscious and were open to having more stringent safety procedures implemented in their workplace. There were also calls for fatigue management sessions, as well as more safety coordinators in order to monitor and provide feedback to workers. Participant preferences for *shift schedules* were largely driven by the presence of family. People we spoke with were generally more in favour of longer hours and shorter shift rotations in order to allow them to spend more quality time with their family. A key capacity that some participants brought back to their workplace in Mackenzie included better *social and communication skills*, such as conflict management, public relations, and tolerance. Their previous work experiences also lead participants to have greater expectations for more frequent and positive communications about workplace issues. There are also greater expectations to have more *training* tips and on-going feedback to support personal growth. Participants also felt that they expanded their *networks* to access expertise and acquired new skills and *work habits* in order to strengthen their capacity in their work environment. In some cases, participants were applying lessons learned from living environments in other places and camps to *housing* investments in Mackenzie. Furthermore, out-of-town work experienced helped to inform future *career* decisions, build personal confidence, as well as strengthen their *job satisfaction* and a sense of appreciation of their work environment in Mackenzie.

### ***3.3 Contributions to Community Activities / Groups***

Finally, participants were asked if their experience working or living in another community changed or shaped the contributions that they provide to any activities or groups in Mackenzie. Many participants felt that there had been no change with their contributions or engagement with community groups. Others noted that due to limited time and job commitments, either with their LDLC job or their job in Mackenzie, they were no longer involved with community groups. There were, however, some cases where participants were applying new skills acquired through their LDLC job to their volunteer activities within the community, such as risk assessment or cooking skills for community events.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the core themes that came out of the key informant interviews held in Mackenzie to discuss the experiences and contributions that LDLC can provide to build community capacity. Appendix A contains the detailed tables that describe the range of responses to each question. These themes, together with the nuances captured in the appendices, can form the basis for planning programs, policies, and infrastructure investments.

After reflecting upon their LDLC experiences, there have been several positive strengths that participants associate with their workplace in Mackenzie. These include:

- A positive and flexible working environment,
- Shorter shift rotation schedules,
- The provision of training supports before engaging with the job, and
- Opportunities for advancement.

Such strengths can play an important role to attract and retain workers and their families.

Our work explored the experiences and contributions that LDLC can make to community capacity in Mackenzie. While there are a number of issues that fall outside of local jurisdiction, some topics raised in this report may simply become advocacy issues for the District of Mackenzie, industry leaders, or other local leaders with community groups and services. There are, however, a number of issues that can be addressed through local action. Below, we have highlighted some possible areas that leaders, industry, businesses, and organizations in the community can build upon to continue to build the capacity of workers and enhance workplace environments:

- Develop flexible shift schedules and day care to support female participation in industry;
- Consider adopting more flexible benefit packages to respond to the needs of workers;
- Consider adopting stricter safety procedures in order to enhance the safety of the workplace and reduce the stress of workers;
- Offer on-going opportunities and support for capacity and skills development;
- Provide more routine evaluation and feedback to support worker development;
- Support female participation in industry through targeted, strategic training programs for women;
- Invest in developing communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills within and amongst workers;
- Encourage and support initiatives for succession planning and strengthen the capacity / leadership skills of the work force;
- Invest in fatigue management training;
- Provide more on-site counseling supports; and
- Continue to work with regional service providers to develop an inventory of key regional supports in places where a significant number of residents commute for work in order to ensure that they can conveniently and confidentially have access to supports (i.e. counseling, financial advice, housing, health / rehabilitation, transportation) both locally and out-of-town if needed.

Overall, developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy to address these needs is important to help workers and their families cope with the stresses associated with their workplace environments, to strengthen local capacity, and to enhance their quality of life in the community.

## Appendix A: Tables

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**Table A1: How long have you lived in Mackenzie?**

	<b>Number of total respondents</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
Less than 5 years	2	11.8
5-9 years	1	5.9
10-19 years	3	17.6
20 years or more	11	64.7
Total	17	100.0

Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table B1: Prior to the mill closures in 2008, in what sector(s) did you work in Mackenzie?**

	<b>Number of total respondents</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
Forestry	14	82.4
Transportation	2	11.8
Construction	1	5.9
Food and beverage	1	5.9
Government	1	5.9
Housing	1	5.9
Service sector	1	5.9
Total	17	

Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012. Note: participants could provide multiple responses.

**Table B2: How long did you engage in long distance labour commuting?**

	<b>Number of total respondents</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
Less than one year	4	23.5
Two years	8	47.1
Three years	3	17.6
More than three years	2	11.8
Total	17	100.0

Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012. Note range: 2 months to nine years.

**Table B3: Where did you work out-of-town?**


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<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>Alberta</b>
Fort Nelson (2)	Grande Prairie (3)
Fort St. John (2)	Fort McMurray (2)
Prince George (2)	Peace River (1)
Tumbler Ridge (2)	Red Deer (1)
Fraser Lake (1)	
Kamloops (1)	<b>Other</b>
Kilometre 106 (1)	Watson Lake (1)
Merritt (1)	
Mount Milligan Mine (1)	
Nelson (1)	
Smithers (1)	
Sparwood (1)	
Vancouver (1)	
Victoria (1)	

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table B4: In what sector(s) did you work out-of-town?**


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	<b>Number of total respondents</b>	<b>% of total respondents</b>
Oil and gas	6	35.3
Forestry	4	23.5
Construction	3	17.6
Mining	3	17.6
Food and beverage	1	5.9
Protection services	1	5.9
Transportation	1	5.9
Total	17	

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012. Note: participants could provide multiple responses.

**Table B5: How were your roles / responsibilities different with your LDLC job?**

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**New Tasks (13)**

Ordering and purchasing parts / equipment (2)  
Testing chemicals (2)  
Core samples (1)  
Driving truck (1)  
Electrical work (1)  
Fixing equipment (1)  
Operating different equipment (1)  
Project based (1)  
Reporting time used by staff (1)  
Testing well systems (1)  
Using computers (1)

**New Industry (5)**

No previous experience in construction (2)  
No previous experience in oil and gas industry (2)  
No previous experience in food industry (1)

**Social Skills (4)**

Working with difficult people (2)  
More social skills required (1)  
Team work required (1)

**Fewer Responsibilities (3)**

Went from supervisor to worker (3)

**More Responsibilities (3)**

Assumed supervisory role (1)  
Assumed training role (1)  
Learned to manage a shop (1)

**Safety (2)**

More dangerous job (2)

**Schedule (2)**

Irregular hours (1)  
Longer hours (1)

**Other (4)**

No difference (3)  
Continued to train younger workers (1)

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.



**Table B6: Did you learn new skills through your LDLC job?**

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**Safety Training (12)**

WHIMMIS (3)  
H<sub>2</sub>S Alive (2)  
First aid (1)  
Mine rescue (1)  
Mine safety (1)  
Safety training (1)  
Security training (1)  
Training at Justice Institute (1)  
Transportation of Dangerous Goods (1)

**Trades Training (10)**

Construction training (2)  
Sent to Red Deer to obtain job tailored tickets (2)  
Aerial lift operator ticket (1)  
Apprenticeship training (1)  
Chemical analysis ticket (1)  
Fabricating skills (1)  
How to fix broken equipment (1)  
Working with sour gas (1)

**Social Skills (4)**

Interacting with political leaders (1)  
Interacting with senior executives (1)  
Social / people skills (1)  
Working with different stakeholders (1)

**Transportation (4)**

Driving rock haul truck (2)  
Driving in mountainous terrain (1)  
Received training to train other drivers (1)

**Operations (2)**

How to manage a shop (1)  
How to purchase equipment (1)

**Communications (1)**

Radio protocols (1)

**Equipment (1)**

Compactor (1)

**Other**

No additional training received (4)

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table B7: Did your LDLC job impact the types of opportunities available to you when you returned to Mackenzie?**

<p><b>Expanded Employment Opportunities (6)</b>                  Able to obtain job back in Mackenzie (1)                  Created opportunity to work in other areas of protection services (1)                  Created opportunity to work in other provincial positions (1)                  May open own business (1)                  Obtain supervisory position in Mackenzie (1)                  Offered contract work in other resource towns (1)</p> <p><b>Expanded Skills (6)</b>                  Developed leadership skills (1)                  Diversified job opportunities in other sectors (2)                  Edge in training / experience (1)                  Gained experience working in remote sites (1)                  Obtained transferrable driving skills (1)</p>	<p><b>Expanded Networks (4)</b>                  Able to build rapport / reputation with businesses (1)                  Developed industry contracts in case of another downturn (1)                  Expanded networks (1)                  Met different employers / workers (1)</p> <p><b>Negative (6)</b>                  Tickets expire after three years (2)                  Had fewer / no supervisory responsibilities with LDLC job (1)                  No mommy shift exists in local businesses / industries (1)                  Similar opportunities do not exist in Mackenzie (1)                  Unemployed (1)</p> <p><b>Other (8)</b>                  Returned to Conifex after union recalled (4)                  No impact (3)                  Realized what he had in Mackenzie (1)</p>
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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table B8: In what sector(s) do you work in Mackenzie today?**

	Number of total respondents	% of total respondents
Forestry	13	76.5
Property maintenance	1	5.9
Business	1	5.9
Transportation	1	5.9
Medical leave	1	5.9
Total	17	100.1

Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table C1: Did you experience different policies or procedures with your LDLC job?**

**Safety (32)**

Daily safety meetings (4)  
Concerns about dry dust / dry wood due to PG / Burns Lake mill explosions (2)  
Fatigue management training provided (2)  
Able to build up safety points to buy gear (1)  
Assigned simple duties after giving complaints (1)  
Drinking in camp affected women's perception of safety (1)  
Drug / alcohol testing required after job accidents (1)  
Forest industry has no stipulations like mine safety act (1)  
Information shared about potentially unsafe spots (1)  
Lack of safety standards in oil patch (1)  
Little concern about worker safety (1)  
Mine provided colleague support after winter driving accident (1)  
More in-depth meetings on safety (1)  
More information provided about safety procedures / claims (1)  
More safety coordinators hired (1)  
No differences (1)  
No drinking allowed at second camp (1)  
Oil patch mentality is to avoid sick days (1)  
Police patrol for alcohol on mine site (1)  
Routine drug / alcohol testing done (1)  
Safety committee was formed in Mackenzie (1)  
Safety concerns about women in camps (1)  
Safety issues addressed immediately (1)  
Safety paper work required before going anywhere on job site (1)  
Special permits and limits required for highway truck driving (1)  
Tail gate safety meetings (1)  
Women confronted by men in camp (1)

**Employment Benefits (25)**

No differences (4)  
6 acupuncture visits (2)  
6 chiropractor visits (2)  
6 massage therapist visits (2)  
Full dental benefits provided (2)  
Living allowance (2)  
No benefits (2)  
Stock options (2)  
Able to pick benefits (i.e. all dental vs. physio) (1)  
Earned extra 75 cents / hour working weekends (1)  
Longer period of work required to earn benefits (i.e. 500 hours) (1)  
Need to work 90 consecutive days or 6 months to get benefits (1)  
Received \$3/hour towards RRSPs (1)  
Similar benefits provided (1)

**Employment Benefits Cont'd**

Standard, inflexible benefits package provided in Mackenzie (1)

**Information and Communication (22)**

Weekly meetings with workers (2)  
Able to discuss bad drivers with companies (1)  
Call out procedures used to identify last truck (1)  
Demeaning communication with workers (1)  
Foul language not used with female workers (1)  
Foul language used with male workers (1)  
Issues addressed through positive learning / reinforcement (1)  
Longer daily meetings at beginning of each shift (1)  
Management held conference calls with site managers / operators (1)  
More in-depth briefings due to dangers of the job (1)  
More open communication with management (1)  
Must deal with difficult people (1)  
No behind doors closed meetings (1)  
No differences (1)  
No follow-ups on repair reports in Mackenzie (1)  
Non-union environment allowed for more open communication (1)  
Quarterly reports provided to workers (1)  
Some truck drivers would not use radio on logging roads (1)  
Union environments have guarded / adversary driven communication (1)  
Unions in Mackenzie have standards to help how people communicate (1)  
Workers had poor communication skills (1)

**Shift Schedules (22)**

Longer hours (7)  
Rotating day and night shifts (3)  
Fewer days off (2)  
Longer shift rotation schedule (2)  
Regular day hours, 5 weekday shift schedule (2)  
Short shift rotation schedule (2)  
Longer shift rotation schedules to accommodate travel (1)  
Mommy shift at Peace River Coal mine coincides with day care (1)  
More odd hours due to travel assignments (1)  
No days off until contract done (1)

**Training Procedures (14)**

No differences (4)  
Fewer hours of training before on the job (1)  
Learned from project involvement (1)  
Learned mentality of helping co-workers (1)  
Mine had a simulator for training (1)

**Training Procedures Cont'd**

Mothers to Miners Program in Tumbler Ridge (1)  
Project work limited time available for ongoing training / development (1)  
Required to go to expensive driving school (1)  
Same courses offered (1)  
Trained in team work (1)  
Truck driving training was covered in Mackenzie (1)

**Hiring Procedures (13)**

No differences (4)  
Drug test required (3)  
Alcohol test required (2)  
Few women hired in first camp (1)  
Hiring of lots of transients workers produced welcoming environment (1)  
Most people hired were commuters (1)  
Physical test required (1)

**Transportation (12)**

Provided with company vehicle (2)  
Camp no longer allows personal vehicles (1)  
Car pool with employees on same shift (1)  
Mine had a bus (1)  
No transportation provided (1)  
Only travel costs to job site covered (1)  
Paid for travel time (1)  
Required to fly into camp (1)  
Required to travel on days off (1)  
Travel allowance only covered half the costs (1)  
Unable to carpool with people on different shifts (1)

**Camps (11)**

Building put up on blocks (1)  
Camp contained old couches (1)  
Camp had gym / recreation facility (1)  
Camp had one bathroom for every two rooms (1)  
Camp matched genders on each side of bathroom (1)  
Couples not allowed to share rooms (1)  
More amenities provided for women (1)  
Shared one bathroom with 20 men (1)  
Women had their own room (1)  
Women provided with own washroom (1)  
Women provided with warming hut (1)

**Operating Procedures (8)**

Company provided regulations for building logging roads (1)

**Operating Procedures Cont'd**

Interpretation / application of policies / procedures different (1)  
Left on own to work (1)  
More flexible policies / procedures (1)  
More rigid policies / procedures (1)  
No differences (1)  
Smoother operations (1)  
Unions in Mackenzie have standards to achieve consistent job performance (1)

**Supports (7)**

Close knit working group (1)  
Male workers helped to teach women things (1)  
Men helped women to carry things (1)  
No access to counseling in remote job sites (1)  
Shared stories with workers at camp (1)  
Supportive relationship with workers at camp (1)  
Worker provided literacy support to others (1)

**Monitoring / Evaluating Practices (6)**

More feedback provided on daily basis (2)  
Annual performance review was always done with LDLC job (1)  
Daily evaluation of performance (1)  
No differences (1)  
Supervisor and trainer would consult to provide feedback to worker (1)

**Management (4)**

No differences (2)  
Mackenzie mill has too many people making decisions (1)  
Only one person making decisions (1)

**Quality Control (4)**

More high tech testing (1)  
More quality control to avoid impacts on drinking water nearby (1)  
Testing done on quarterly basis (1)  
Workers directly involved with testing (1)

**Technology Applications (2)**

No differences (2)

**Other**

No differences (1)

**Table C2: How did your LDLC experience change how you view / approach your workplace environment in Mackenzie today?**

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**Safety (18)**

More safety conscious (4)  
Need more safety coordinators (2)  
Contract workers do not abide by same standards (1)  
Experience with writing field hazard assessments (1)  
Familiar with safety protocols (1)  
Hills on roads need to be graded down to avoid frost development in shaded areas (1)  
Mines had better dust control vs. mill (1)  
Need a water truck steadily operated by personnel (1)  
Need fatigue management sessions (1)  
Need more drug / alcohol testing at mills (1)  
Need more safety policies and procedures (1)  
Need more yard clean up at mills (1)  
Need weekly safety meetings (1)  
Raised safety concerns about roads (1)

**Shift Schedules (6)**

Prefer short rotation schedules to visit family (2)  
Extra long weekends allow workers to spend more time with family (1)  
Need a mommy shift that coincides with day care (1)  
Prefer longer hours and shorter rotations (1)  
Prefer long rotation schedules to reduce commuting costs (1)

**Social Skills and Relationships (6)**

Conflict management skills (3)  
Better public relations skills (1)  
Gained patience with people (1)  
Tolerance (1)

**Communications (4)**

More frequent communications with company (1)  
More reactive to demeaning communication (1)  
More vocal to express concerns (1)  
Need more positive communication with workers (1)

**Equipment (4)**

Companies no longer replace broken / lost tools (1)  
Meetings required to explain lost tools (1)  
More paper work / protocols to replace tools (1)  
Protocols to replace equipment delays work (1)

**Networks (4)**

Broader networks (1)  
Developing connections with consultants with specific expertise (1)

**Networks Cont'd**

Getting to know key personnel in Victoria (1)  
Having key provincial personnel know local staff (1)

**Work Habits (4)**

Learned to meet budgets (1)  
Learned to meet deadlines (1)  
Learned to work efficiently (1)  
Put in extra / unpaid time (1)

**Career Planning (3)**

Decided that job environment not desirable (1)  
Found job environment boring (1)  
Prefers a job during daylight hours (1)

**Education and Training (3)**

Need literacy supports for workers (1)  
Need tips on training to make job easier (1)  
Provided assistance to workers with limited literacy skills (1)

**Job Satisfaction (3)**

More appreciative of the job (2)  
Appreciates short drive to work (1)

**Housing (2)**

Applied lessons learned from LDLC to housing properties in town (2)

**Roles and Responsibilities (2)**

Contracting work out confuses workers about boundaries of their responsibilities (1)  
Need fewer people making decisions to avoid confusion (1)

**Employment Benefits (1)**

Strong employer RRSP contributions a good incentive (1)

**Personal Development (1)**

More confidence to work in mine (1)

**Strategic Planning (1)**

Involvement with higher level activities provided view of different approaches (1)

**Other (1)**

No change (1)

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

**Table D1: Did your experience working / living in another community change or shape the contributions that you provide to any community activities / groups?**

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**Limited Community Participation (8)**

No longer involved with community groups (5)

No time to visit with friends (3)

**Contributions (4)**

Able to apply risk assessment to work with search and rescue (1)

Applied cooking skills to community events (1)

Purchased gas in town (1)

Purchased groceries in town (1)

**Other (8)**

No change (8)

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Source: Mackenzie Key Informant Interviews 2012.

## Appendix B: Consent Form

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**Long Distance Labour Commuting Contributions to Community Capacity in Mackenzie**  
**Interview Consent Form**

**Purpose** – A key change in Canada’s northern resource towns has been the growth of long distance labour commuting (LDLC). Mackenzie was built in the late 1960s to house the workforce for a new regional forest industry. A significant economic downturn beginning in 2008 meant that many workers had to engage in LDLC. This project will examine how LDLC can build community capacity as workers return to work in Mackenzie and share the new insights and lessons that they have learned from their work experiences in other places.

**How Respondents Were Chosen** - The interview participants were selected from local suggestions of people with an interest in, or experience with, long distance labour commuting. Interview participants were selected for their potential to provide information that can help to better understand the contributions of LDLC on building community capacity. The interview should take about 45 minutes to complete.

**Anonymity And Confidentiality** - The names of participants will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information which may be used to identify individuals. All information shared in this interview will be held within strict confidence by the researchers. All records will be kept in a locked research room at UNBC and will be accessible only to the research team. The information will be kept until the final project report is complete. After which time, shredding and file erasure will destroy all information related to the interview.

**Potential Risks and Benefits** - This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. The project team does not consider there to be any risks to participation. We hope that by participating you will have a chance to provide input into issues relevant to long distance labour commuting and its impacts.

**Voluntary Participation** - Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may chose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose not to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end your participation in the interview at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

**Research Results** - In case of any questions that may arise from this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Greg Halseth (250-960-5826; halseth@unbc.ca) in the Geography Program at UNBC. The final project report will be distributed to all participants.

**Complaints** - Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC (250) 960-6735, or email: reb@unbc.ca

**I have read the above description of the study and I understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.**

---

(Name -please print)

(Signature)

(Date)



**Appendix C: Interview Guide**

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**The Contributions of Long Distance Labour Commuting on Building Community Capacity**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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Participant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Time: Start \_\_\_\_\_ Finish \_\_\_\_\_

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**TOPIC AREAS:**

- Opening Questions
  - Work Experience
  - Contributions to the Workplace
  - Contributions to Community Activities / Groups
  - Concluding Question
- 

**A. Opening Questions**

What is your name and how long have you lived in Mackenzie?

**B. Work Experience**

Prior to the mill closures in 2008, in what sector(s) did you work in Mackenzie?

How long did you engage in long distance labour commuting?

Where did you work out-of-town?

In what sector(s) did you work out-of-town?

How were your roles / responsibilities different with your LDLC job?

Did you learn new skills through your LDLC job?

Did your LDLC job impact the types of opportunities available to you when you returned to Mackenzie?

In what sector(s) do you work in Mackenzie today?

### **C. Contributions to the Workplace**

Did you experience different policies or procedures with your LDLC job?

*Prompt: shift schedules, operating procedures, hiring procedures, training procedures, monitoring / evaluation practices, management, technology applications, information and communication strategies, quality control, transportation, benefits, etc.*

How did your LDLC experience change how you view / approach your workplace environment in Mackenzie today?

*Prompt: shift schedules, operating procedures, hiring procedures, training procedures, monitoring / evaluation practices, management, technology applications, information and communication strategies, quality control, transportation, benefits, etc.*

### **D. Contributions to Community Activities / Groups**

Did your experience working / living in another community change or shape the contributions that you provide to any community activities / groups?

*Prompt: contribution of new skills, new approaches, new ideas, new policies / procedures, etc.*

### **E. Concluding Question**

From the experiences you have had in the community, do you have anything else that has not been touched on here that you would like to comment on?