



Come Hell or High Water: Identity and Resilience in a Mining Town

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Abstract

Mining communities, particularly those entirely dependent on mineral resources, are especially vulnerable to economic downturn due to the non-renewable nature of the industry and reliance on external market factors. For residents who live in mining towns and have strong ties to the industry, the loss of major employment deals a particularly devastating blow. Research has shown that mining creates a particular sense of identity and community, which persists long after the resource is exhausted. Although much research has been conducted on how communities adapt to and cope with closure, little is known about the role that identity and sense of community play in this process. Around the world, mining developments bring significant prosperity to communities, regions, and countries with several actors depending on the industry for economic stability. Without an understanding of the many ways mining communities adapt to closure, we are unable to use this knowledge to help resource-dependent regions persevere through eras of economic bust and resource-based turbulence.

Introduction

On 31 August 1984, the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) ceased all mining-related operations at Buchans. Although the closure process had begun five years earlier in 1979, key staff remained until the 1980s. While such a closure process seems mundane to the average reader, those familiar with the community are aware of the profound impacts deindustrialisation posed. Buchans, a small, isolated town located in insular Newfoundland, was built in the 1920s in a concerted effort to extract mineral resources efficiently. ASARCO, in partnership with the Anglo Newfoundland Development Company, built Buchans and sourced the necessary labour for mining activity. Buchans then became and remained a company town in all aspects, with all amenities, services, facilities and livelihood provided by ASARCO. The atmosphere of complete company control was felt by

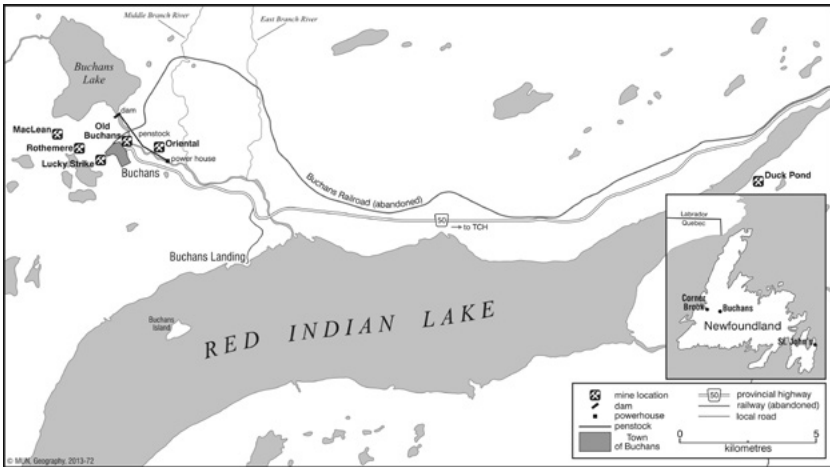


Figure 1. Locations of community and mine sites and inset showing town of Buchans in relation to NL cities. Map courtesy of Charlie Conway, MUN.

residents, who were bound by a strict set of rules that allowed them to live and work in the community.

Accordingly, the impacts of closure were more devastating than they would have been had the town not been completely built and supported by the mining industry. Mining activity itself ended in 1982, after 55 years of mineral production and the extraction of over 17 million tons of a complex, multi-metallic, high-grade ore.¹ The Buchans operation was generational and several families depended on the mine for their livelihood.

Mining communities, particularly those entirely dependent on mineral resources, are especially vulnerable to economic downturn due to the non-renewable nature of the industry and reliance on external market factors. For residents who live in mining towns and have strong ties to the industry, the loss of major employment deals a devastating blow. Research has shown that mining creates a strong sense of identity and community,² one which persists long after the resource is exhausted. Although much research has been conducted on how communities adapt to and cope with closure, little is known about the role that identity and sense of community play in this process. Around the world, mining developments bring significant prosperity to communities, regions and countries with several actors depending on the industry for economic stability. Without an understanding of the many ways mining communities adapt to closure, we are unable to use this knowledge to help resource-dependent regions persevere through eras of economic bust and resource-based turbulence.

It is no secret that in many single-industry, resource-dependent towns, mine closure and subsequent economic declines threaten the very viability

of the community. The literature surrounding mining communities and other single-industry towns suggests that there are numerous ways to cope with crisis and closure. Of course, not all initiatives and measures work, and some communities, due to a suite of factors and circumstances, become ghost towns – forgotten relics of eras of discovery and boom. Mining communities face a particular set of factors that influence their capacity to adapt to closure. The fact that mining industries are sensitive to external factors such as market prices increases their vulnerability to boom and bust cycles.³ The reality that many mining communities are located in rural and remote regions, often with few other industries to fall back on, further exacerbates this vulnerability. In the event of closure, several key players have the responsibility to react to, and cope with, the situation. These include the company, the state, local employees and the community and region.⁴ However, these actors do not operate each in their own vacuum. Their roles are interconnected and interdependent. In this sense, collectivity and collaboration are keys to successfully mitigating and adapting to the numerous impacts associated with mine closure.

Despite facing tremendous challenges, Buchans, the very existence of which as a community came from the mine, survived closure. This feat has been accomplished in large part due to the strong sense of identity and community that residents have. The sense of community prevalent in the town fuelled the efforts to ensure the perseverance and survival of Buchans. The impact that identity and sense of community has had on these community development efforts and subsequent resilience is investigated in this paper. The already strong sense of identity in Buchans, the product of the shared experiences of living in a mining town, contributed to community survival and cultural regeneration, as seen through the actions taken by residents in response to the crisis of closure and the strong leadership emerging from the ASARCO era. However, to understand and appreciate these efforts fully, one needs to recognise the tenacious sense of identity and community that the residents – known collectively as Buchaneers – value and share.

An important component of this research, and of the methodology itself, is an oral history of the Buchans region during and after the ASARCO era. Both contemporary and historical accounts are important in understanding changing social dynamics and landscapes, or as Perales attests, in reconstructing historical narratives.⁵ As Richie observes, oral histories are valuable because they embrace unexpected narratives and add ‘an ever wider range of voices to the story’, thus making the narrative more complex and more interesting.⁶ Although carrying out oral history interviews can be a complicated and challenging process, Richie suggests that conducting them can be ‘enormously satisfying and rewarding’.⁷ Oral histories ensure that aspects of the past which may have been neglected are preserved and chronicled for future research and knowledge.⁸

Forging a sense of identity and community

Paternalism is at the heart of identity formation and sense of community in Buchans, both directly and indirectly. Paternalism is a style of management that is based on controlling a populace or limiting their freedom and responsibilities in their supposed best interest. Company paternalism dominated most, if not all, aspects of everyday life for the residents of Buchans, including work, leisure, and living accommodations. However, the provision of goods and services is beneficial to both employer and employees, as according to a former ASARCO mine manager, ‘any company knows it’s better to have people as happy as they can be.’⁹ Although the control exerted over residents of Buchans was domineering, the relationship between company and community was mutually beneficial in that residents enjoyed a standard of living much higher than that in other similar-sized resource-dependent communities in the province. While profits were undoubtedly ASARCO’s top priority, the company believed that fostering an environment that yielded a contented workforce was in its best commercial interests. Mining companies often created company towns and other paternalistic environments with the goal of fostering higher productivity and preserving labour peace.¹⁰ In Buchans, paternalistic policies formed the basis for community development (both socially and economically), leading residents to identify strongly with each other and with the landscape. Subsequently, the common experience of persecution by the company brought individuals together and helped form the basis of group identity. The identities expressed by residents are due to a combination of factors, each of which played a role in the sense of identity and community that Buchaneers hold. Nevertheless, it is the *interconnectedness* of



Figure 2. *Lucky Strike headframe (deckhead) illuminated atop Main Street.*
Photo courtesy of Pauline Dean

these factors that is accountable for identity. Residents in Buchans reaffirmed their connections to each other and the community through the provision of amenities, goods and services, labour disputes and the nature of mining work. Additionally, isolation and the community's closed-town origins are somehow representative of, or influenced by, paternalism.

Mining produces a unique sense of identity due to several factors, including its dangers, a peculiar work environment and the relationships formed underground. As Mary Murphy attests, 'the dangers of mining cemented bonds of male friendship' in a workplace where men were required to trust each other and look out for any potential hazard.¹¹ Metheny contends, in her study of an American coal-mining community, that 'to understand the heart of this community – the common bond that unified Helvetica's residents and gave this community social cohesion . . . – one must have an appreciation for the experiences of the coal miner who labored deep within the earth.'¹² Mining towns have a distinct identity and sense of community¹³ and because of its status as a company town, many residents and interviewees indicated that these feelings were multiplied in Buchans. When one participant was asked if he thinks there is such thing as a 'mining identity' he responded poignantly, stating 'Well I'll tell you, if that's true for most mining towns, then it's a thousand times truer for Buchans'.¹⁴

For many, the relationships that were forged beneath the surface of the earth translated into social relations in the community. Many interview respondents believed that this bond came both from the nature of underground work and from the particular socio-economic class to which the miners belonged. Some referenced the danger of working underground and the fact that miners often looked out for one another below the earth's surface, which led to a sense of fellowship or camaraderie. As Memorial University economist (and former Buchans miner) Wade Locke noted, belonging to the same social echelon resulted in cohesion, and that this is essentially 'what defined Buchans'.¹⁵ Another remarked on this environment as contributing to the sense of camaraderie underground, because 'you knew how you were doing, you knew what your workplace was like and that kind of looking after each other, without competition'.¹⁶

This combination of risk and socio-economic uniformity contributed to how residents in Buchans related to one another and identified as a community. One participant noted the effect that working closely in the mines had on people in Buchans, suggesting that by being both co-workers and neighbours, the relationships were stronger than they may have been in other communities where work and home were less connected. He remarked, 'I would say it had a deep impact on people here. People that worked here worked side by side and now they're neighbours.'¹⁷ Former union leader and miner John Budden describes the bond as a fellowship:

The fellowship ... That's the only word I would use for it. Everybody watched everybody's back, everybody cared for everybody. And being a mining town, what miners normally do is work and drink beer ... and probably fight, but the next day everybody would look after everybody else's back.¹⁸

The fellowship that was forged underground outlived mine life and continues to contribute to the post-mining identity. A frequent comment amongst participants was that if given the opportunity, many would return to the mines. As one participant stated, 'I more or less loved everything about it ... If I could do it I'd go back down and go at it again',¹⁹ while another declared that 'I don't think you'll find any miner that says that they didn't enjoy being underground'.²⁰ Former miner Kevin Head was quick to point out his enjoyment of the type of work of hardrock miners, describing it as 'the best job of my life'. However, he was quickly interrupted by his wife Ruth, who recounted to Kevin that 'you turned your boys off, they never wanted to go near the mine'. Kevin then thought for a moment and responded, 'I didn't want them to go in the mines either. It was something I loved doing, but ... it's a dangerous job.'²¹

The resounding sense of identity and community that exists post-closure has been documented by several scholars,²² and is further illustrated in the case of Buchans. Residents continue to feel attachment to the community and mining landscape in the town despite the closure of the mine. David Robertson's observation of residents' views of the mining landscape, being inherently different than those of non-residents, is crucial in understanding the attachment to the mining community despite the impermanence of industry. He noted that while the landscapes under discussion are the same, the meanings they take on for different individuals are momentous. This sentiment is echoed by residents in Buchans, whose response to the idea that they should have been aware that mining camps close and prepared to move, has been one of emotion and determination. It is clear that community cohesion and sense of place forged in Buchans during the ASARCO era aided the community's ability to endure the crisis of closure.

Economic development and cultural regeneration

In Buchans's post-ASARCO landscape, many actors were involved in economic adjustment and adaptation, with much of the momentum for community survival generated from local residents. Social cohesion and community support have been instrumental in the fight for survival, which some have suggested motivates individuals to work together out of common interest and strengthens the potential for positive results.²³ The strong sense of identity and social cohesion present in Buchans fostered these efforts, ultimately resulting in the perseverance and resilience of the town through its most challenging period, immediately following closure.

In the wake of ASARCO's departure, several organisations took the reins of community development, contributing to the community's resilience. Local development associations and groups were created in an effort to harness local resources and mitigate the effects of closure. In the process of deindustrialisation, several pieces of infrastructure were turned over to these groups and used in new endeavours. However, the most crucial resource was social capital, and here as elsewhere a key component of community resilience is the engagement of community members, particularly in adaptation to change and unpredictability.²⁴ Because of their identity as Buchaneers, residents banded together to ensure community survival.

The period of the 1970s was a time of flux and volatility for Buchans, particularly due to the dwindling mine life, with two strikes occurring in 1971 and 1973 as the result of rising tensions between ASARCO and its workers. The uncertainty of living in a company town facing imminent closure inspired residents to become involved in community and regional development. A series of initiatives in the 1970s, including the seminal report of the Buchans Task Force, reflected a number of factors that led to community development and resiliency, including union leadership and the creation of a number of community development groups. In 1975 the provincial government established the Buchans Task Force to evaluate the socio-economic implications of the anticipated mine closure. The Task Force undoubtedly laid the foundation for groups considering new economic pathways for Buchans post-ASARCO. Members of the Task Force included representatives from provincial government departments, ASARCO, residents from the Town (ASARCO's initial settlement) and Townsite (the area adjacent to the town comprised of resettled workers who built houses outside the town's parameters), a local development association and United Steelworkers Local 5457. They held meetings and consultations and drew from local knowledge to ultimately complete their report, which was published in 1976.²⁵ Since the purpose of the Task Force was solely to undertake a study of the impending mine closure and compose a report, it disbanded after meeting these objectives.

The Task Force report included several recommendations to mitigate the detrimental effects of the impending mine closure. Two of the most substantial recommendations were the incorporation of the community (which took effect in 1979), and the divestment of assets from ASARCO (which took place over the course of several years). The divestment of assets by ASARCO provided the community with infrastructure that could increase the chances of economic investment. Many of these structures were taken over by the Buchans Development Corporation (BDC), a local development group. Mine assets such as the rock shop and what is now the Red Ochre Inn hotel, which was formerly a staff house, were controlled by the BDC.

Buchaneers themselves led a series of initiatives to mitigate the impacts of the mine's closure on the town. In 1984, on the same day of mine closure, Sean

Power was elected as mayor of Buchans. Power, whose family had mined in the community for generations and who was the coordinator of the local development association, was a driving force behind the Buchans Joint Committee. Frustrated with the disparate and uncoordinated efforts of the several groups operating in the community, Power formed the Joint Committee.²⁶ This committee had two members from each of the development groups and local special interest groups, including the Town Council, Red Indian Lake Development Association (RILDA), Buchans Action Committee, the union and the hospital committee. The committee was essentially led by the Town Council, which was accountable to the residents of Buchans. Once formed, the Joint Committee's objective was to develop and orchestrate a coordinated strategy for adjustment and adaptation to the mine's closure. This committee spearheaded projects such as obtaining worker-transition funding, bidding for a federal penitentiary, pushing for the establishment of the development corporation, and the community-based television project in collaboration with Memorial University's Extension Services which will be discussed below.²⁷

Without financial resources, the community's efforts would have been in vain. Federal programme funding was a key component that contributed to the community's development initiatives, and one that has assisted many mining communities in the wake of closure.²⁸ When the mines closed local leaders soon realised that the federal Modified Industry and Labour Adjustment Program (MILAP) could be instrumental in financially supporting residents and workers who wished to remain in the community. MILAP was a federal programme that aimed to help workers in Canada who worked in industries that were hit hard by a sudden change causing layoffs. The programme preceded the Community Futures Program, which was initiated as part of the Canadian Jobs Strategy. MILAP had two stages. The first stage provided workers with relocation and retraining funding as well as money for the community to use to develop and execute a strategy for the recovery of the local economy. The second stage (Level 2) would give every worker aged 55 and over and any worker whose years of service at the mine plus his or her age, equaled 80, the equivalent of top Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits until they reached the age of 65. In Buchans, this transition to retirement applied to 140 families whose members had devoted their lives to the mines. For these individuals, finding employment elsewhere would have been difficult due to their age and potential lack of education or training in other fields. While these residents were too young to qualify for pension benefits, MILAP bridged their income between their working lives and retirement.²⁹ The funding was crucial in allowing these families to stay in the community while being able to sustain themselves. Phase 1 of MILAP was obtained relatively easily when the Member of Parliament for the area secured approximately \$500,000 in federal funding for retraining, mobility funds for workers, hiring a consultant and staff, and a small travel budget. However, securing Phase 2,

which would give direct benefits to workers, was significantly more difficult due to recent federal cuts to the programme. Despite all odds, on December 23, 1985, federal cabinet minister John Crosbie announced MILAP Level 2 for Buchans.³⁰

Two of the most crucial attempts to plan for the future of Buchans occurred in 1985, a year after closure: the transmitter programme (also known as the television project) and a three-day seminar on single-industry communities. Memorial University's Division of Extension Services (also known as MUN Extension) was involved in both of these events, helping disseminate and mobilise knowledge about the community and the initiatives being undertaken. MUN Extension became involved in the community once the university became aware of Buchans's plight through the media. Extension Services was a university group founded to promote community and rural development, using field workers and interactive media to achieve these goals, and it is credited with promoting the establishment of several non-governmental organisations in the province and influencing development policies.³¹ The field worker from MUN Extension who visited Buchans recognised that the leaders were challenged to find ways to disseminate all the details of the town's survival strategy to its residents. It was an intricate strategy for those who were not involved with it daily, and local leaders feared that some initiatives might not have been well understood by residents.³² MUN offered its assistance by undertaking a television project that would involve broadcasting a discussion on the town's future to the community in an attempt to better inform the residents of their options and their leaders' plans. Local leaders felt that if the residents clearly understood the strategy and their options, they could better decide their future.³³

This initiative was overwhelmingly well-received by Buchans residents. On the first night of programming 100% of the televisions in the community were tuned into the event, and on the second night this figure dropped only slightly, to 98%. According to Sean Power, who was mayor at the time, the broadcast brought people together and reinforced pride and solidarity.³⁴ An important guest was the mayor of Springhill, Nova Scotia, who joined the programme by telephone. Springhill, a once-booming mining town, now had a penitentiary as its primary employer. This was an important comparison as Buchans was currently campaigning to have a federal penitentiary built in the community.³⁵

Later that year, Buchans hosted a three-day seminar on single-industry communities. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the issues facing single-industry towns around the country and to find potential solutions. It encompassed industry representatives, government representatives, local leaders and experts on single-industry communities. To organise the seminar, and to guide discussion, the community established the Buchans Planning Committee, comprising town leaders, industry and union representatives. The seminar was planned and sponsored by RILDA, while Memorial University

of Newfoundland's Extension Services assisted with the planning and recording of the proceedings. The seminar not only brought together individuals from similar communities to share their knowledge and experiences, it also brought the plight of Buchans to the attention of the country through media involvement and a report on the seminar.³⁶

Attachment to place became a focal point of the seminar and many pointed out the strong relationship residents had with the community. At the time of the seminar, Buchans was 57 years old, which many residents emphasised was a substantial amount of time for families to become attached to the town. Many speakers emphasised the fact that while the mine had died, the community had not, with local leader Sandy Ivany likening the closure of the mine to the diagnosis of a terminally ill patient marked by stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.³⁷ The speeches illuminated the devotion Buchaneers felt to the community and their dedication to survival. Both the seminar and video initiative brought Buchaneers together and reinforced resilience and community regeneration through strongly felt identity. Not only did the initiatives give residents a better understanding of their options, it enabled and empowered them to remain steadfast in the quest for a future for their community. This ensured that the spirited sense of place that had developed could be harnessed for community development and resilience by encouraging residents to remain hopeful about the future of their town. As one participant in the seminar suggested, 'we've made in our communities the major investment of our lives'.³⁸ However, the activities of the 1985 seminar also show that a reinforced sense of identity can emerge from community development and economic adaptation and thus not only serve as an impetus to them. One interview participant commented on a new sense of identity that labelled Buchaneers as 'survivors':

We were looked upon by government and outside as survivors, so there was a community identity after the mine closed that we were survivors.³⁹

The reciprocal relationship between resilience and identity evident in these examples and narratives emphasises the interconnectedness between the two concepts. Furthermore, the strong sense of community within Buchans contributed to the motivation to become involved in community development in the wake of mine closure.

In 1986, a year after MUN Extension Services assisted with the seminar, MUN's Division of Educational Technology produced a short film on the community, entitled *Buchans: A Community not a Mining Camp*.⁴⁰ The film focuses on the town's struggle to survive after the 1984 closure of the mines and the strong sense of community felt by residents. Additionally, in documenting for a larger audience the community's resilience, the film no doubt reinforced that very sense of resilience and identity. Drawing heavily on the

1985 seminar, the film documents life in the town, in a way normalising the post-mining community; cars drive up the road, women push strollers and teenagers congregate outside the local convenience store – all images one would expect from any town across the province or country. The film ends with local leader Sandy Ivany reciting a poem written by a young child in a concentration camp during World War II, in which the speaker ponders a world of destruction juxtaposed with the beauty of the sun and blooming flowers. Carrying a powerful message of resilience for those facing uncertainty and adversity, the poem concludes, 'If in barbed wire, things can bloom/ Why couldn't I? I will not die'.

In the wake of mine closure, numerous economic initiatives were implemented in Buchans, helping to sustain the community with both optimism and economic benefits. When community leaders began planning for the town's future, there were three primary economic development objectives: the establishment of a development corporation, the acquisition of MILAP benefits and successfully lobbying for the federal penitentiary to be built in Buchans. During this period, a full-fledged campaign was launched in pursuit of the penitentiary. When the federal government announced plans for a new penitentiary in the province, local leaders immediately began campaigning for the location to be in Buchans. Arguing that the penitentiary would mitigate the impact from the jobs lost from mine closure, leaders continued to build support from the province. The effort was well orchestrated and passionately fought. As former mayor Sean Power recalls:

We lobbied very hard for the penitentiary, we visited pretty much every community including St. John's in the province to try and get their support and by lobbying publicly and with full page newspaper ads and so on to try to win the sympathy of the province and we were successful [in gaining support].⁴¹

According to Power, leaders recognised that without the prison, the town would be unable to provide the number of jobs needed to sustain its economic base. Community leaders had obtained MILAP and successfully established the BDC and in addition negotiated the assets from ASARCO, which the BDC would oversee. However, without the penitentiary, leaders feared the strategy for economic revitalisation could not be achieved.⁴² In spite of these efforts, it was later announced in 1988 that the penitentiary would be built in Harbour Grace, much to the dismay of Buchaneers.⁴³

Despite the efforts of local leaders in the immediate post-closure era, local development initiatives lost momentum in the 1990s. According to Sean Power, there were three primary reasons why this happened. The first was that, because of the difficult decisions Buchaneers were faced with, many families lost interest in local development. During this period, many individuals and families were forced to leave the community and seek employment

elsewhere. The second reason was that media interest in the town began to fade. According to Power, a key to Buchans's success was the support garnered from the province and country. If citizens in Newfoundland and Canada were continually discussing Buchans, political support would follow. While Buchans managed to hold the headlines for quite some time, it eventually faded from media coverage. Finally, although leadership was instrumental in bringing Buchans through the immediate post-closure period, leaders eventually tire. After such a long struggle and after the devastation of losing the bid for the federal penitentiary, leaders were willing to step back and let others have a chance at community development.⁴⁴

Although there has been little significant development activity from local groups over the last 20 years, some development groups still exist in the community. The continuation of groups such as RILDA and the BDC speaks to the dedication of residents to fight for a future for their community. Despite losing its core funding in the 1990s, RILDA is one of the few regional development associations in Newfoundland and Labrador that are still operational. Currently, the focus of these Buchans groups is on heritage, highlighting the importance of the community's history and the strong connection between the past and the future. Another key agency is the municipal council. The council frequently communicates with mining and exploration companies operating in the area, such as Teck and Buchans Minerals, to discuss upcoming development. It also maintains an up-to-date website with community history, events, information on local businesses, and minutes from each council meeting.

Resilient communities develop material, sociopolitical, sociocultural, and psychological resources to face and overcome adversity.⁴⁵ Additionally, interacting as a collective unit and utilising strong leadership capacity are crucial components of community resilience.⁴⁶ In the wake of mine closure at Buchans, the establishment of numerous development groups and the undertaking of development initiatives highlighted the level of community engagement and involvement in Buchans. Material resources, such as the acquisition of ASARCO assets, have been crucial in ensuring long-term economic income for the community. The community was effective in mobilising resources from federal and provincial funding agencies, including the Community Futures committee and MILAP benefits (federal) and the RILDA (provincial). Community engagement, combined with the right material and financial resources, added some degree of economic stability to the community. Based on my observations of the past and current situations, it appears that psychological resources in Buchans are not always obvious, but have indeed been important to community resilience. The emotional distress caused by losing the primary employer in a single-industry community was enormous. However, in the immediate post-closure period, residents rallied together in an effort to secure a future for Buchans. Working collectively toward community resilience showed residents that they were not alone in

their struggle and that there was a supportive social environment for development. The 1985 seminar and the associated video productions were important psychologically in emphasising and reinforcing community identity, highlighting the identity-based resilience efforts in the community. While Buchans has had significant social capital, many scholars suggest that community resilience is not only about the *capacity* to act, but is reflected in the actions that have been taken.⁴⁷ The strong sense of identity and community in Buchans is what inspired residents to become involved in more than three decades of actions to save the community in anticipation of, and in response to mine closure.

Leadership and legacy

The survival of Buchans can be largely attributed to the leadership that saw the community through closure. The various initiatives discussed above depended, at least in part, on the role of community leaders to effectively harness resources and mobilise community action. Wilson-Forsber highlights the importance of leadership in community resilience. To be effective, leaders must be recognized as such both by community members and by political agencies responsible for the community's fate.⁴⁸ Because leadership was so well respected in the community, it became easier for leaders to establish themselves in the eyes of external agencies and pool resources for community development. In addition, community leaders were involved in the local union, emphasising the extent of union solidarity within the town and reflecting their important roles during a tumultuous era in the town's history. Another prominent pool of leaders could be traced to generations of family connections who worked for the company. These second, third and fourth generation Buchaneers were immersed in company and community.

With so many development groups operating in the community and local area, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, it was crucial to have effective leadership to ensure that limited resources were harvested and pooled successfully.⁴⁹ It was typically residents who took on the leadership roles that made these organisations and activities possible. In this respect, residents become involved because they have a vested interest in the community and a deep-rooted devotion to the town. Many of these roles tend to be unpaid and rely heavily on volunteerism to carry out the mandates of the organisations described above.

Motivation to become involved in community affairs is often cited as coming directly from the mining experience. When asked why he became involved with the local council, current mayor Derm Corbett was quick to point to other community leaders and residents as inspirational. Their connection to the community was instrumental, he notes, in encouraging his involvement in municipal government:

I was very impressed by the spirit of people, the determination to make a life even after their lives fell apart, their loyalty to each other and their loyalty to the piece of ground that they lived on . . . what most people couldn't understand was that it's not a house—it's a home, and they had their blood, sweat and tears sunk into this place.⁵⁰

Similarly, former mayor Sean Power suggested that he felt obligated to play a role in community development and that he owed it to the numerous men and women who had built the town through mineral extraction. In fact, some participants attributed the successful procurement of MILAP funding and, in part, the subsequent economic stability of the community to him.⁵¹ Other participants involved in development initiatives post-closure noted that individuals owe it to their communities and neighbours to contribute what they can to local initiatives and projects.

Many interview respondents maintained that because of potential mining operations, the future of Buchans is indeed promising. As previously discussed, Buchans hosts a spirited sense of place, fostered primarily through the mining industry. Residents look back on the heyday of Buchans with nostalgia, and look forward to the future of the town with a sense of hope. It has long been said in the town that despite the vast quantities and high grade of ore extracted, the mother lode was never found. This gives a tremendous sense of optimism to local residents. Speculation in the community has even gone as far as placing the potential location of this theoretical ore body under Red Indian Lake. As one participant noted, 'If you're looking for new mines, always look in the site of an old one'.⁵² In 2007, mining in fact did return to Buchans. Exploration efforts led to the development of the Duck Pond copper-zinc mine, located approximately 20 kilometres from Buchans. After



Figure 3. Former Buchans Mayor Sean Power during the 1985 Buchans Transmitter Program. Screenshot from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Digital Archives Initiative.

seven years of production, Teck Resources, the proprietor of Duck Pond, announced in January 2014 that mine life was down to just over a year, and by Spring 2015 the mine would be closed. Although exploration activities in the region have been consistently carried out since the 1980s, news of the impending Duck Pond closure has reinvigorated local interest in a new discovery. Anecdotal information suggests that residents remain optimistic about the future of mining in the region and welcome all exploration activities with open arms.

Given the town's prosperous history, residents are highly receptive to new mining, with many suggesting that the future of Buchans depends on the mining industry. As several participants remarked and one individual asserted, 'Mining is key to the survival of Buchans. That reality only grows stronger by the day.'⁵³ Others remarked on the excitement that exploration activities bring to the region and how welcome new mining activity would be. As one interviewee told me, 'I love to hear the hum of a drill. I never look at it as a noise, I always look at a drill as being something where there might be another mine.'⁵⁴ Many expressed excitement at the prospect of a new reserve discovery and cited the ongoing exploration as indicative of that possibility. Given the relative location of Buchans and surrounding communities, several individuals are certain that some inclusion of mining is required for the town's survival, with one suggesting that optimism is also crucial. As Buchans mayor Derm Corbett stated:

[T]he future of this town without a play in mining is an extremely difficult future because geographically we're situated in an isolated area . . . you cannot be involved in a mining town, whether it's as a mayor or a councillor or a resident, without being an optimist.⁵⁵

In a region that is rich in mineral resources, with a heritage built by the mining industry, there is an abundance of optimism that mining will bring renewed economic prosperity and stability to the area. It is important to note, however, that there is a continual search for diversification in the town, with many residents owning small enterprises such as photography services, hunting and tourism businesses, stores, restaurants, parcel delivery to and from the service centre of Grand Falls-Windsor, and butchering and meat processing. However, all businesses are still largely dependent on the existence of a main employer in the area (the mining sector) to provide the incomes residents use to support local business ventures. As one participant who owns and operates a local hardware store noted, the income brought into the community, primarily by the Duck Pond mine, is crucial for local businesses like his.⁵⁶ It also allows local businesses to create more jobs, an indirect impact of the mining industry. However, as he suggests, the relationship between operator and consumer is reciprocal, and in a business such as a store, when

residents have less money they spend less money, and '[when] it's hard for one, it's hard for everybody, that's what it seems like'.⁵⁷

In the wake of the mine closure, community resilience in Buchans emerged in large part due to the sense of community and place-based identity that was cultivated by mining activity and the paternalistic atmosphere that defined the town for more than half a century. The willingness to become involved, take on leadership and volunteer roles, and fight for the community was born out of a sense of place and devotion to Buchans. This social cohesion which was formed through decades of shared history and struggle as a form of social capital has been immensely valuable in Buchans's struggle for survival. Social cohesion can come from a variety of factors, including common or shared goals. For local residents, working together to ensure Buchans's survival was a crucial component of the community's social cohesion. Resilience, particularly community resilience, is a product of social cohesion and capital. When residents work together toward a common goal, and are brought together through shared experiences, their dedication proves much deeper than in instances where these factors are not present. Thus, in a sense, social cohesion can be mobilised and fostered to contribute to resilience. It is important to note that during data collection for this study, each participant was asked what they felt had made the community so resilient. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed stated that 'the people' were the driving force of community resilience, a sentiment that echoes the literature. Residents form the basis of communities and in the immediate post-closure period community support was instrumental for the survival of Buchans.

Conclusion

Resource-dependent and single-industry communities hold potential for survival and cultural regeneration through periods of resource depletion and economic downturn, despite the uncertainty and instability upon which their towns may be founded. My hope for this research is that by telling the story of this community, particularly through its members' own words, relevant lessons from the town can be applied elsewhere. As one participant succinctly pointed out:

If anything, because we have so much left to learn from an era in Buchans slipping from living memory, that importance and significance of the mine isn't fading, it's growing.⁵⁸

Not only is understanding the complex relationships among residents, company and landscape crucial in determining how Buchans survived closure, but it is also pivotal in its potential application to other resource-dependent communities. Additionally, it is clear from the Buchans experience that

technology can be an important component of community resilience, as demonstrated through the television project and the involvement of MUN Extension Services. Senior levels of government are also key actors as they often provide financial resources and support that contribute to community development and resilience. Clearly, there are several distinct factors that led to Buchans residents' having a unique sense of cohesion and community. They included isolation, control, labour disputes and the nature of mining work – and all were inherently influenced by paternalistic policies. However, devotion to the community and to the struggle for resilience is not necessarily unique to Buchans. Individuals can form connections to their workplace, industry and community even without a paternalistic approach to management. What needs to be clear, though, is that this same sense of community and perseverance, fuelled by hope and optimism, can be harnessed in an effort to mitigate the effects of a devastating loss of industry. This is the story of Buchans.

There are currently several mining-dependent communities in Newfoundland and beyond that are operating under the lingering knowledge of eventual closure. The same phrase was constantly repeated during interviews, that 'the day a mine opens is the day it starts to die', echoing the knowledge of impermanence and uncertainty. And while closure is undoubtedly devastating and sometimes occurs with relatively short notice, the reaction and adaptation to closure does not need to be unprepared or uncertain. The history of company towns and the legacy of resulting ghost towns requires that we approach inevitable and unavoidable closure proactively. Having a plan founded in local knowledge as well as sound research can be a tremendously useful resource for communities whose primary employer has been lost. In Buchans, this was achieved through the establishment of several development groups and initiatives spearheaded by local leaders.

Despite the knowledge that all mines are eventually exhausted, there is a spirited sense of place and identity that can emerge from living and working in a mining town. This forms the basis for cultural regeneration. For residents, the bonds that form both with each other and with the place they live in are difficult to break and often transcend mine life. While for some communities the end of the resource signals the inevitable end of the settlement, others continue to fight for perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity. In the 1985 seminar on single industry communities, local leader Sandy Ivany alluded to the mine closure announcement as similar to a diagnosis of a terminal illness. What is paramount, he asserts, is hope – without which, communities fail to survive hardship. As Ivany so eloquently concluded, hope springs eternal; and where there is hope, there is life.

Notes

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- 15 Interview with Wade Locke, July 2013.

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- 17 Interview with Jim Yetman, June 2013.
- 18 Interview with John Budden, August 2013.
- 19 Interview with Jim Yetman, June 2013.
- 20 Interview with John Budden, August 2013.
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