

Widening the Context: Change in the Culture of Small Cities

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second issue of the Small Cities Imprint publication series, a publication initiative of the Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project at Thompson Rivers University. The research focus of the CURA is on mapping quality of life and the culture of Canada's small cities, a vital component of which has been the participation of numerous student research assistants from many disciplines and interests working side by side with CURA faculty in collecting, analyzing, and communicating knowledge in a variety of projects. This issue of the Imprint Publication, which has been created almost entirely by undergraduate students, is a good example of this; indeed, the entire appearance of this Imprint has been created by Emily Hope, a visual arts student and research assistant specializing in media design.

In this issue we feature three student articles, each presented initially as conference papers then submitted to a peer-review assessment process similar to the practice of many academic journals. Each article was reviewed – in a standard “blind referee” manner -- by at least one student and one professor, and revisions were made. We are very pleased to publish the work of these young, promising scholars and hope that you will enjoy the richness of their discussions as well as the depth of their research.

While the content of each varies, these articles continue the focus on the life of the small city; each widens the context of cultural change, asking us to consider elements – hitherto little documented – that challenge our awareness of the small city dynamic. In Ashlynn Harris's article we see a historical approach in setting context for the ongoing discussion of the fate of a former sanitarium, the Tranquille property, just outside of Kamloops, now in disrepair. In order to see a fuller picture, especially in understanding the fate of important landmarks, she suggests that we need to examine the stories of the pioneering Cooney and Fortune families, both of whom operated ranches in the area. Eden Dovauo takes a somewhat similar tact, asking us to consider a historical moment of technological change when the differential froth flotation method profoundly altered the system of resource extraction. In examining the particular mining practices of Kimberley, B.C., she effectively brings together technological and social analyses, concluding that the new technology allowed for both longevity as well as specific forms of community development. Gregory Sawisky has written a comprehensive and revealing article about the impact of the weekly community newspaper in central Alberta. Based on a number of primary data sources including personal interviews, he provides answers to key questions, asking, for example, about the role of the newspaper in the community, its difference from the big city newspaper, and, finally, the very future of the small town newspaper.

We are also pleased to present a podcast of a panel of six student researchers who took part in the Northwestern Undergraduate Conference at Thompson Rivers University in January 2010. Each of these has worked on CURA projects; all share valuable insights and reflections on a diversity of activities that reveal a deeper – and certainly a more personal – understanding of undergraduate research. The six are Eden Dovauo, Emily Hope, Bonnie Klohn, Fiona Osborne, Gregory Sawisky, and Conrad Scott.

Finally, we are no less pleased to offer two finely presented posters put together by undergraduate students who took part in a CURA mini-Conference in November 2008, sponsored by Geography professor Gilles Viaud, as a component of his course, Geography 481, The Geography of Small Cities. Each poster utilizes urban theory and supportive data to reconsider defining characteristics of small cities in British Columbia. The students involved are Jake Hughson, Kyle Nadler, Allysha Sorba, and Kyle Vike.

James Hoffman, Professor, Theatre
Thompson Rivers University