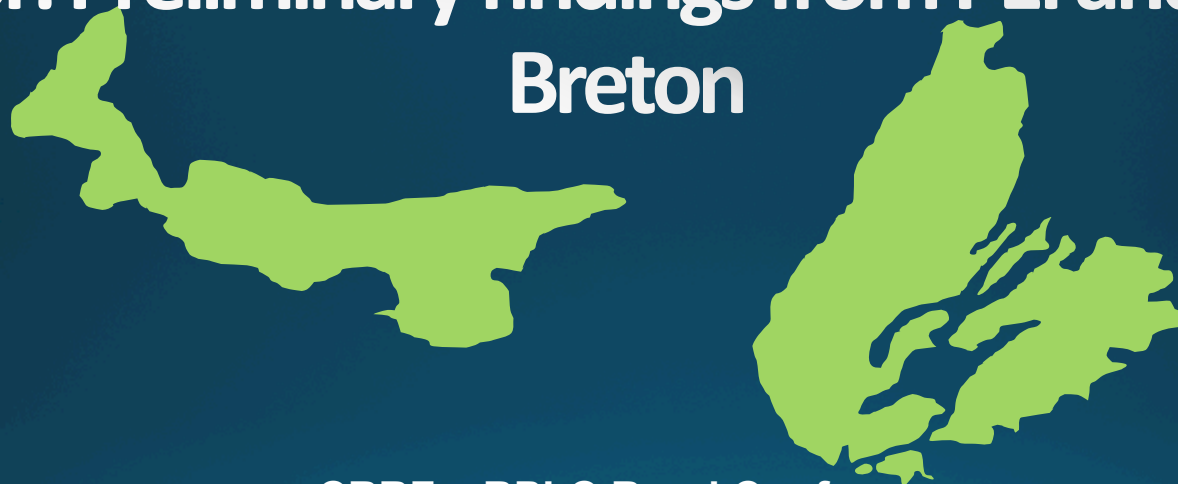


Intergenerational family stories of mobile labor: Preliminary findings from PEI and Cape Breton



CRRF – RPLC Rural Conference
Guelph, October 12-15, 2016

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SSHRC  CRSH

Tale of Two Islands

- Project: Exploring **intergenerational** impacts of labor mobility
- Intergenerational interviews:
 - 10 families (5 CB/ 5 PEI)
 - Min 3 interviews per family
 - Commuting parent, home parent, grandparent
- Completed: 27/31
- Coded & Analyzed: 11/31

Impacts: Children

- Children make it harder.
- Younger - Sadness and behaviour changes.
- Older - Normalized situation
- Child(ren) become the link between present and absent family members.

“It wouldn’t be as bad if there wasn’t a child. Children just make it so much harder.”

“As soon as he is gone, she is a totally different child. ... She stabbed two kids with pens. ... She also bit other kids”

“In a sense they don’t know any different. She is not crying, not that you want her to be crying. I wonder if she misses him sometimes”

Impacts: Commuting Parent

- Missing dates and events.
- Sacrificing relationships.
- Not Knowing – being kept in the dark. Disconnection.

"I don't really know what I am missing. I have never done this before. I hear about it from Lisa and my parents or her parents"

"The kids are always the focus ... the rest of the family and friends, my relationship with them has to be sacrificed."

"I'm sure there are things she doesn't tell me."

Impacts: Home Parent

- Hectic life
- Mental Health

"It is definitely hard for sure trying to do everything yourself, even communicating with him."

"I think depression has come on gradually since he left to a point where I don't want to talk to people or be out in the community."

"She suffers from a lot of anxiety. She was going to counselling, ... Jeremy has been home for about two and a half weeks now and I have seen such a big difference in her."

Impacts: Grandparent

- Extra responsibilities
- Always taking care, never cared for
- Time supporting commuting family comes at expense of other children/grandchildren.

"Sometimes I just want to go home and say I had a really busy day at work. I always do what she needs me to do. I'm just totally exhausted."

"It's like a fifty pound weight off my shoulder for a few days when he comes home."

"The last thing I think of before I go to bed and the first thing I think of when I get up"

"nobody cares how I am doing."

"I wanted to see [other grandkids]. I haven't seen them in a long time. Lisa would be really jealous and really upset."

Mobile work families and place

- Location decisions to be near support networks. – sometimes reluctantly.
- Rooted in home
- Rural living as added challenge – driving long distances to get kids to activities (hockey, etc)

“we decided to buy the house here in [Baytown] because my parents just live down the road from us, not far at all. That’s why we are here. ... I don’t know what I would do without them.”

“Didn’t want to have my wife and kids with nobody around to help her.”

“We like living in rural Cape Breton. We think it’s a good place to bring up children. Our families are here. ... it’s a part of us.”

“The only reason I am here is strictly for my parents and Julia to go to school here.”

Mobile work families and community

- Community phenomenon
- Community perceptions of wealth and leisure.
- Blame and judgement – why not accept less?
- Social isolation – rumours and gossip.

“my neighbour right here right next to me he works out West. The house next door, they have like kids, and the husband is gone 80% of the time. And my other neighbour, he works at West.”

“people think because you work out west you are making lots of money, but I don’t think that’s the case now”

“You should be home with your kids instead of going away. If you hadn’t of bought such a big house then you could”

“you can’t get too close to anybody or else you have rumors going around about you.”

Concluding thoughts

- Mobile work is difficult for families with children
- Significant individual and family impact across generations.
- Mobile work requires the mobilization of significant family energy and social capital.
- Tight knit families living in proximity provide support network for mobile workers. Industry exploits these relationship to secure labour supply.
- Commute work changes relationships and roles within the family and to the community.

Questions

