

Newsletter of On the Move's  
Newfoundland and Labrador Field Team

# on the move partnership



## On the Move On the Rock

December  
2015

The Happy Holidays Edition!

*On the Move on the Rock* is biannual newsletter that aims to share the progress of ongoing research, training and activities by members of the NL field component of the *On the Move* Partnership.

Research for the *On the Move* Partnership is taking place over 7 years across Canada. This newsletter highlights the exciting research being conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The NL field team is comprised of university researchers, students and partners, including government departments, community organizations, industry and labour. Together we hope to better understand employment-related geographical mobility (e.g. long distance commuting) in our province, how it is changing and how it impacts individuals, families, businesses and communities.

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### What's On the Go?

Sandrine Jean and Kelly Vodden are co-organizing the Housing Forum: "Housing and the mobile workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador" scheduled for the Spring of 2016. The event will bring together several partners such as the On the Move Partnership, NL Home Builders, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Municipalities NL (MNL), Newfoundland & Labrador Housing & Homelessness Network, End Homelessness St. John's, and the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy Development of Memorial University. The Housing Forum is funded through the Public Engagement Accelerator Fund of the Public Engagement Office of Memorial University.

Save the date! The Annual NL team forum will be held on Jan. 29, 2016.

Sharon Roseman and Diane Royal's Bell Island research was featured on a CBC's Ideas program. You can listen to Crossing the Tickle here: [www.cbc.ca/player/play/2679819955](http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2679819955)

### RefWorksWebinar!

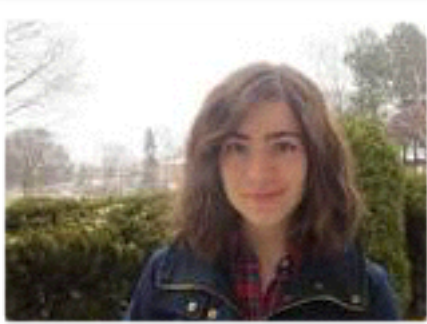
Interested in learning to use this reference tool? Kathleen Fitzpatrick will be offering a webinar in the new year. The date will be announced soon.

# Our Student Researchers

## Leanna Butters

She came to Newfoundland for the first time in September, but that's provided enough time for the On the Move student trainee Leanna Butters to reflect a little upon different kinds of mobilities. "Coming from

Toronto, my general sense of mobility has been about transience. A community exists in the particular moment you are part of it and there is always change. Here in Newfoundland mobility is different. It's almost as if mobility has a trail," she said.



Much of that trail is visual, Leanna explained. "Even architecturally, mobility creates a totally different area, so there's a physical difference for sure."

A graduate student at Memorial University, Leanna is interested in the convergence of built and natural spaces in urban areas, particularly the environmental, cultural, and social implications that result from such intersections. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto in Architecture (Design) and History. For her Masters research, Leanna will be studying employment-related geographic mobility and its impact on planning and land-use, specifically in the Deer Lake region of Newfoundland.

Leanna said coming to Newfoundland and Labrador was a bit of a spur-of-the-moment decision. She had actually been looking into landscape architecture programs. But then she came across the Environmental Policy program and emailed Kelly Vodden. "I just really appreciated her views in terms of community development. Architecture takes a very narrow focus in terms of planning, looking at one property and how it fits into its immediate surroundings. Planning looks at a much larger area and how to make things work for entire communities."

Part of what she wants to do with her research is to examine how the changing housing architectures might be representative of social tensions that exist in connection to the transience of some. "Whatever research comes out of this will be able to contribute to understanding resilience. I want to understand how communities can improve in a positive way and what kinds of environmental or cultural measures can impact community divides," she said.

-written by Michelle Porter

## Michelle Porter

At its best, research can have a way of changing the way you look at the world. This has happened to me as the result of the research project I put together when I entered the geography department a little over four years ago. Now, as I move toward the end of the dissertation journey, I find that my research has led me to reflect not only upon the ways in which notions of mobility, place, and home connect, relate and overlap in the personal life stories told by rural people on the island portion of Newfoundland, but also upon the way my life has shaped my own stories involving those ideas.

When the OTM project began, I started as an affiliated student trainee and decided to let my research take me where it needed to be. I adopted a *Stories First* approach, which includes aspects of life history, oral history, personal narrative, and feminist systems theory approaches. In brief, the *Stories First* approach required that attention to stories lead every stage of the research and gave priority to analysis of the vernacular knowledge embedded in the personal life

stories shared with me.

My findings have been as broad and varied as life stories can be.

Women told stories about returning home, about changes in living home in rural Newfoundland, and stories about movement. The descriptions of movement left the strongest impressions upon me: there are particular connections being made and sustained in rural Newfoundland that link place and mobility. More details about those observations will appear in a future paper!



-written by Michelle Porter



## Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador communities offer a particularly long view of employment-related mobility. From the Basque whalers to the post-Moratorium fishery, our historic and defining 'commute' is readily seen in our shoreline-hugging settlements. The shocks of the 1990s collapse in cod populations on our local governments and the residents they serve reverberate to this day. A generation of individual choices related to work prospects elsewhere have affected all of us.

Municipalities Newfoundland & Labrador (MNL) was formed in 1951 to represent the interests of the growing number of municipal councils in the province. At that time, there were approximately 50. Today there are 276 incorporated municipalities representing 89 percent of the provincial population. Over 97 percent of these councils are paying members of MNL and they drive our considerable advocacy and policy efforts. MNL CEO Craig Pollett represents the organization in the *On the Move Partnership*.

As an OTM partner, MNL brings both the extensive reach of its sector network and the experience of local government leaders to the research project. Whether addressing the patterns of work-related travel within the Northeast Avalon, or longer trips to Long Harbour, Voisey's Bay, Fort McMurray or beyond, municipal councils have an interest in where their residents work. Travel drives all kinds of decision-making: where to shop; whether and where to invest in a property; whether a partner stays at home with the children; or even whether or not to volunteer locally or run for a seat on Council. Better understandings of how employment-related mobility will shape our communities in years to come must inform how we govern.

MNL has been engaged in the planning of a forum to examine housing and the mobile workforce with Dr. Kelly Vodden and Dr. Sandrine Jean.



Photo:  
The final day  
of the 2015  
Convention  
earlier this  
month, shot  
in the  
Gander Arts  
and Culture  
Centre  
theatre.  
It was a full  
house.  
The  
delegates  
are watching  
the  
Provincial  
Leaders'  
Forum  
hosted by  
MNL.

# On the Move researcher relocates to China for work

LACHLAN BARBER

At the beginning of August I woke up early on a cool, misty morning and drove the winding road away from Burin, Newfoundland, where I had been conducting field research for the OTM construction component with Barb Neis. From there I flew to Halifax and a few days later I landed in Hong Kong, where I would soon start a new job in the geography department at Hong Kong Baptist University (BU). One week around the bay, the next in a dense, crowded, international city on the edge of China.

BU was founded by American Baptists in the 1960s and has developed into a secular, publicly-funded research and teaching institution. I am fortunate to live in

staff housing in an area called Fotan that is about half an hour from the university.

My daily commute offers a telling glimpse into Hong Kong's industrial past and its present and future reality as a Special Administrative Region of China. The minibus I hop on in front of my building zooms down a hill through an old manufacturing district. Next, I jump on a train that provides a direct link to Hong Kong's closest neighbour, Shenzhen. The East-Rail Line, as the train is known, has a frequency of two minutes at rush hour and every car is packed. On weekends and holidays shoppers from across the border replace commuters, not an uncontroversial

fact in this era of regional integration. I get off in Kowloon Tong where the final leg of my commute, a walk around the People's Liberation Army's Hong Kong barracks, awaits. This large plot of land will be redeveloped into luxury housing well out of reach of the students, faculty and staff at the university.

This is my new commute, in my adopted home of Hong Kong, far from Burin, far from St. John's. From this distance, adapting to new rhythms, I continue to work on my OTM research, while also thinking about the work and employment-related geographical mobilities - local, trans-border, international, global - that make this city tick.

## NL OTM Research Project Update

SANDRINE JEAN TRAVELS TO ALBERTA TO INTERVIEW WORKERS

Ten days in Alberta provided a chance for *On the Move* researcher Dr. Sandrine Jean to see the other side of labour mobility.

Dr. Jean's research focuses on how mobility and attachment are intertwined in the lives of mobile families in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Alberta. She is interested in housing choices and family-work balance of workers and families. Her interviews in the Southern Shore of Newfoundland have to date principally resulted in talking with women whose partner is working away.

This July trip allowed her to hear how men who travel to Alberta for work experience labour mobility. The trip was intense, she said. And it was her first time in Alberta. With other *On the Move* researchers, Dr. Jean completed over 50 interviews in ten days, spending most of her time between Fort McMurray and the

work camps north of the city. The longer hours of daylight provided the energy boost they needed to be as productive as they could during this field work. "The sun set at midnight," she said. "And it rose around four in the morning, while workers were packing their lunches in brown bags, ready to leave."

The trip is the result of December's *On the Move* meeting during which Dr. Jean connected with research assistant and OTM trainee Marcella Cassiano and with Dr. Sara Dorow, both from the University of Alberta. Dr. Dorow invited Sandrine to join the research team. "I thought it would be interesting to see the other end of the spectrum and not only to interview the women who stayed behind, but also the men who went away," she said. "I was getting only one side of the picture." It is hoped that this field

work experience will result in multiple outcomes.

She is collaborating with Dr. Dorow and Marcella Cassiano on a paper that will use the Tim Horton's store by the Hwy 63 in Fort McMurray as a unique case study to exemplify the need to pay special attention to fixities and moorings as an integral part of mobility. This grounded empirical research looks at the ways in which community-making and spaces of fixity enable, and even sustain, mobile lifestyles by acting as point of anchors for many different people.

Dr. Jean is also interested in the practices of home and of home-making, either when 'at home' or 'away from home'. She hopes to return to Alberta in the coming year to explore how work space arrangement and working rhythms impacts employment-related geographical mobility.

# Picture Profiles



Above: View from the daily commute to work in Hong Kong.  
Credit: Lachlan Barber



Above: A workers' camp outside of Fort McMurray (December 2014)  
Credit: Sandrine Jean



Above: View of an oil sands site from the Highway 63.  
Credit: Sandrine Jean



Left: Dr. Sandrine Jean and Marcella Cassiano driving to the worker camps in Alberta.  
Credit: Sandrine Jean

## What We've Been Doing...

- Work continues in the nickel processing project, with trainee Joshua Barrett now conducting follow-up interviews after completing a questionnaire of workers at the Vale site in Long Harbour. A big thanks to Vale and their workforce for their participation!

Questions about the On the Move Project?  
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Newsletter Editor: Michelle Porter

- Sharon Roseman and Diane Royal of Memorial University's Department of Anthropology are proceeding with their project on intra-provincial ferries. They are looking at the community and household-level impacts of the ferry service on Bell Island, on the experiences of commuters and mobile workers reliant on the Bell Island-Portugal Cove ferry, and on intra-provincial ferry workers generally. Sharon and Diane will conduct fieldwork relating to the impact of the arrival of the MV *Legionnaire* that will begin operating on the Bell Island-Portugal Cove service in the spring of 2016.
- Heather Hall and Kelly Vodden are editing a special section in *Extractive Industries & Society* called "Long-distance Commuting in the Mining, Oil and Gas Sectors: Implications for Rural Regions."
- Nicole Power and her team have been busy conducting focus group discussions and interviews with apprentices in the skilled trades. The Apprenticeship Project is documenting the mobility patterns of apprentices engaged in training on campus and on the job and examining how patterns and experiences of mobility are shaped by provincial and interprovincial policies, access to training, local labour market conditions, family commitments and so on. They plan to continue this work into the winter!