PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVES: GEOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS

Edited by
Bernard D. Thraves
Lamberhurst, Kent
UNITED KINGDOM

Contents

Preface

The last four years have been challenging ones for Prairie Division Canadian Association of Geographers (PCAG). As with much of academia, PCAG was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset, PCAG's 2020 annual conference and business meeting, which were to be hosted by Brandon University, were cancelled for sound logistical reasons. Undaunted, Brandon then hosted a successful video conference in September 2021. Unfortunately, this success was not followed in 2022 and 2023 when a combination of factors including low registration numbers led to the cancellation of conferences, which had been planned by University of Winnipeg and Lakehead University. During much of this time, interest in *Prairie Perspectives* waned. Historically, PCAG annual conferences have proven a rich source for papers, which have been published later in the journal. However, following the very successful 2019 conference in Moose Jaw and the publication of volume 22, no papers were received by the editor for a period of over three years. Fortunately, following a call for papers in November 2022, five papers were received between March and August 2023. Following a lengthy review process, they appear here in volume 23 of *Prairie Perspectives*.

In the first paper, Julia Siemer focuses on the experience of the recent pandemic and identifies the limitations of choropleth mapping for visualizing standardized COVID-19 data. Professor Siemer then investigates suitable thematic mapping methods including the use of location quotients, pie maps, and an ecumene mask to better present the geography of the pandemic. Franck Chignier-Riboulon draws the reader's attention to the long-term vulnerability of three bilingual communities in the Red River Valley, and to more recent threats to their cultural identity posed by an influx of new residents linked to the growth of metropolitan Winnipeg. Professor Chignier-Riboulon's paper represents a milestone for *Prairie Perspectives* insofar as it is the first French language paper to be publish in the journal. Remaining in southern Manitoba, John C. Lehr focuses on the concept of borders as they apply to Hutterite society. In this context he distinguishes between 'hard' political borders that have defined much of Hutterite history and settlement geography, and 'soft' borders set by Hutterites themselves that control relationships within Hutterite society and the relationships of Hutterite colonies with the secular world. Justine Backer, Joanne M. Moyer and A. John Sinclair then turn the reader's attention to environmental action by comparing the sustainability work of two faith-based congregations in Winnipeg. Their analysis considers both the catalysts for and barriers to taking action, and explores how faith interacts with sustainability commitments and action. In the final paper, Bernard D. Thraves draws on community profile data from the 2021 Canadian census to describe the demographic and housing characteristics of Saskatchewan's resort villages. He identifies that most villages are defined by high growth rates and elderly population structures, and are dominated by well-maintained, relatively high value, single-detached dwellings. The volume concludes with a brief biographical profile of each author and a statement of recent achievements in geography departments within the Division.

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Bernard D. Thraves
Lamberhurst, Kent
United Kingdom
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Mapping Saskatchewan's COVID-19 Data

Julia Siemer

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Regina

Key Messages

- The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need for effective mapping strategies for daily epidemiological data.
- The choropleth technique is an effective, but limited, way to visualize standardized COVID-19 data.
- Cartographically designed maps are better suited to inform the public about COVID-19 outbreaks than written reports and data tables.

During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022), daily updates of COVID-19 statistics were communicated to the public in Saskatchewan, partly in map form. This study investigates suitable thematic mapping methods to effectively visualize publicly available COVID-19 data sets. Consideration needs to be given to the geographic characteristics of the pandemic and the nature of available data before a suitable thematic mapping method can be identified. Sample maps have been created to illustrate which kind of maps can easily be created.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, data visualization, thematic mapping, choropleth map

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak to be a worldwide pandemic. The need for effective visualization of pandemic-related data became readily apparent in early 2020 when various stakeholders needed to communicate the development of the pandemic to the public. Thematic mapping of pandemic data is an essential tool for understanding the spread of the disease, the impact of the pandemic, and the effectiveness of interventions. Thematic maps help prioritize resources and interventions, monitor the situation, and communicate the impact of the pandemic to a broader audience and experts in the field.

One of the first public applications documenting the worldwide spread of COVID-19 cases was the COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University in the United States (Johns Hopkins University 2023). This application uses GIS technology to visualize daily COVID-19 statistics. It has, over time, grown into a sophisticated tool that includes updated data on new cases, total cases, deaths, administered vaccine doses, and various rates such as case-fatality ratio or incidence rate. While the dashboard focuses on the United States, it has, from the beginning, also been a source for global monitoring of COVID-19 cases. Another example of global pandemic mapping, albeit much smaller in its scope, is the WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard (World Health Organization 2023). At the height of the pan-

Correspondence to: Julia Siemer, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Regina, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina SK S4S 0A2
Email: Julia.Siemer@uregina.ca

demic, the Canadian government likewise published interactive maps almost daily indicating total cases and rates by provinces and territories (Government of Canada 2023), as did many other countries for their respective regions.

The need for discussion of suitable cartographic methods and related research was identified early by researchers in fields ranging from health research to data mining and data visualization (e.g., Budd et al. 2020; Juergens 2020; Lan et al. 2021; Rosenkrantz et al. 2020; Underwood 2021). In 2020, the Canadian Geographic magazine—a bi-monthly magazine with a wide circulation among the general public—published a series of COVID-19 maps of Canada on its website and briefly discussed the need for adequate data visualization and general design implications for Canada's specific geographic reality (Brackley 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Disease maps are not a new type of map, an early example being the map of the plague in Bari in 1690–1692 by Filippo Arrieta which was published as early as the 17th century (Koch 2017). While thematic methods for mapping disease data have long been established (e.g., Koch 2017; Waller and Carlin 2010), the urgent need to integrate daily 'big data' and cartographic design became evident during the early days of the pandemic. Rinner (2021) offers an overview of cartographic applications of Canadian and other COVID-19 data and highlights the need for careful consideration of correct techniques and meaningful visualization. Common mistakes in worldwide COVID-19 maps during the early stages of the pandemic are reviewed and discussed by Juergens (2020). Thematic mapping can be effective and helpful in different areas of pandemic management. Such maps can be used to visualize the spread of a pandemic by illustrating the number of cases and deaths in other regions and showing how the disease has evolved. Maps can help to identify areas where the disease is spreading rapidly and where resources and interventions are needed.

Additionally, thematic maps can help to understand the impact of the pandemic on different populations, including the most vulnerable communities. This information can be used to prioritize resources and interventions based on need. Thematic maps can also be a valuable tool for identifying high-risk areas. They help identify regions with a high number of cases and those which are at greater risk of a further spread of the disease. This information can be used to implement targeted measures to prevent the spread of the disease in these areas. Furthermore, thematic maps are utilized to monitor the effectiveness of interventions to reduce the spread of the disease. This information can be used to adjust strategies and allocate resources based on what is working and what is not. Moreover, thematic maps help communicate the pandemic's status and impact on different populations. This information can raise awareness and promote understanding between the public and decision makers.

The research objective for this study was to first examine existing Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 maps, and then to create cartographically designed thematic maps using the same publicly available COVID-19 data sets to illustrate the spread of the disease throughout Saskatchewan in a more meaningful manner. The maps shown in Figures 4 to 7 are the result of this study and use only data that is available to the public.

Official pandemic mapping in Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan declared a provincial health emergency on March 18, 2020, and shortly thereafter provided COVID-19 statistics during regular press conferences and on its website (Government of Saskatchewan 2023a). The first published map 'Cases and Risk of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan' appeared on April 3, 2020. The map displayed total cases of COVID-19 infections, number of deaths, hospitalizations/ICU hospitalizations, and the number of recovered persons for each of seven colour-coded regions. These numbers were first placed within the map body and in later versions next to the map depicting the seven regions within the province. On August 4, 2020, the government introduced 13 new COVID-19 zones (Figure 1). The need to establish these zones and 32 subzones stemmed partly from the change in health care administration in Saskatchewan in 2017 when the then existing 13 health regions were dissolved and replaced by one Saskatchewan Health Authority. Following this change, various health data sets have typically only been released at provincial or Health Authority levels.

The general map layout and type of information for the Saskatchewan COVID-19 maps based on the new zones remained the same. In addition to these basic maps, the government introduced an interactive dashboard (Figure 2) which allowed the user to select one particular COVID-19 zone at a time and display the total population and the COVID-19 statistics (active cases and new cases) for the respective subzones. The website also listed data on total cases, the seven-day average of daily new cases, deaths, active cases, daily new cases, hospitalized cases, recovered cases, daily new tests, and the total tests for the larger COVID-19 zone. It is important to note that these dashboard maps did not include any cartographic design, as they did not include any colours or symbols other than the zone boundaries. While the historic daily COVID-19 maps of the 13 zones, as presented at the regular press conferences, are still available on the government website, detailed data at the subzone level are no longer accessible via the dashboard after the government stopped publishing daily updates on February 6, 2022. Following this decision, the Government of Saskatchewan published first weekly and then bi-weekly 'Integrated Epidemiology Situation Reports' until September 2022. The last of the reports included two cartographically designed maps showing test positivity rate and vaccination status, respectively (Government of Saskatchewan 2022b). Both maps are choropleth maps depicting these two rates for each COVID-19 zone. This report marks the first time that the province has published cartographically designed thematic maps on COVID-19-related data (Figure 3).

As of October 2022, the government has published no COVID-19-specific reports but has instead switched to a monthly 'Community Respiratory Illness Surveillance Program (CRISP) Situation' report, which is accessible online (Government of Saskatchewan 2023b).
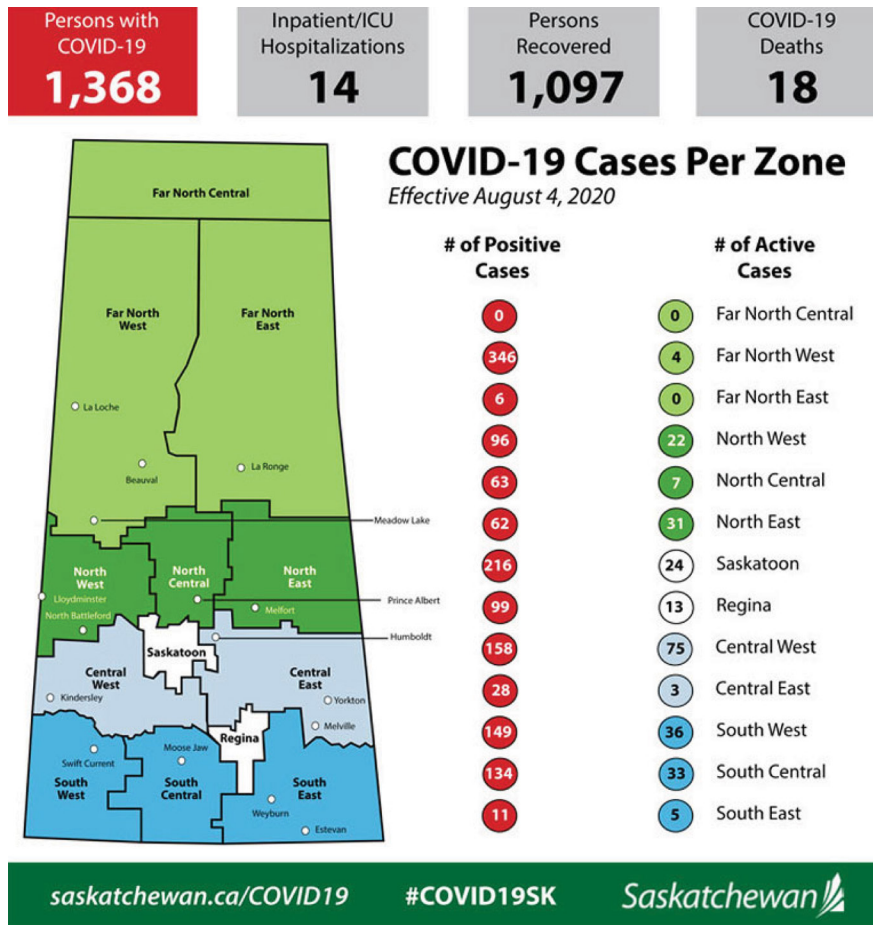
Figure 1
Sample of Government of Saskatchewan COVID-19 map, August 4, 2020
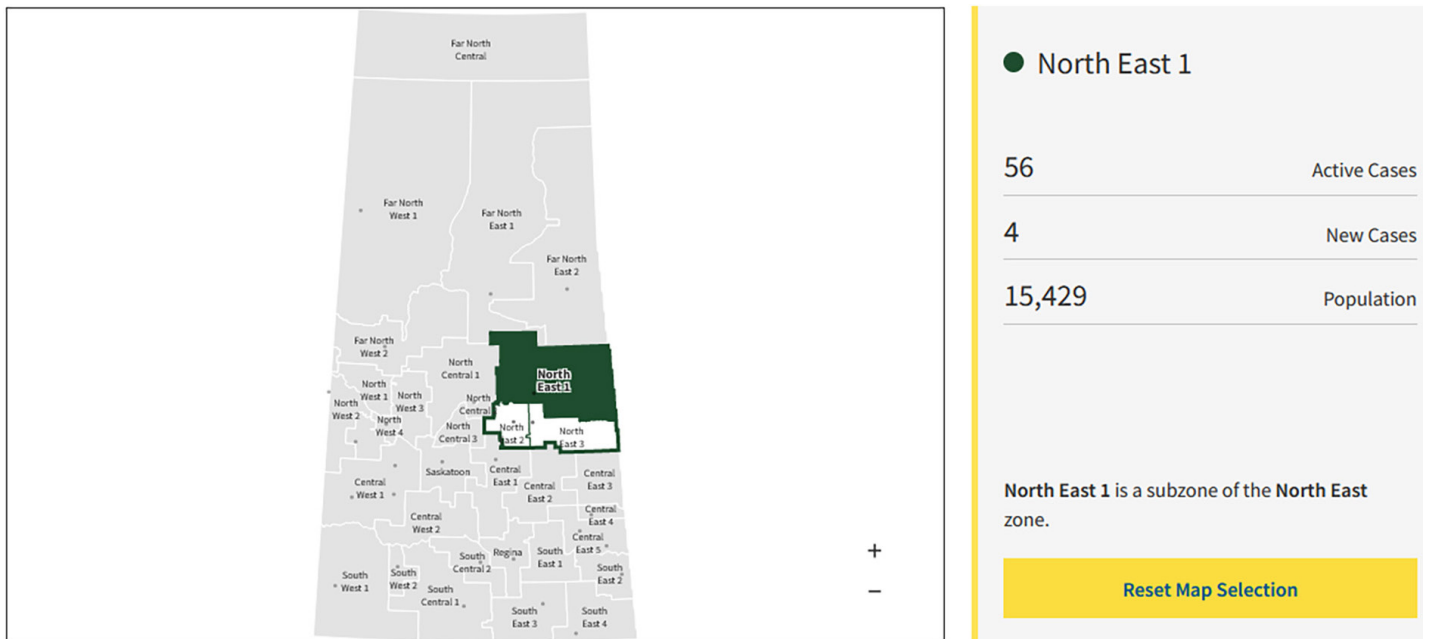Source: Government of Saskatchewan (2020)

Figure 2
Screenshot of Saskatchewan's dashboard, North East 1 subzone highlighted with numbers for February 6, 2022
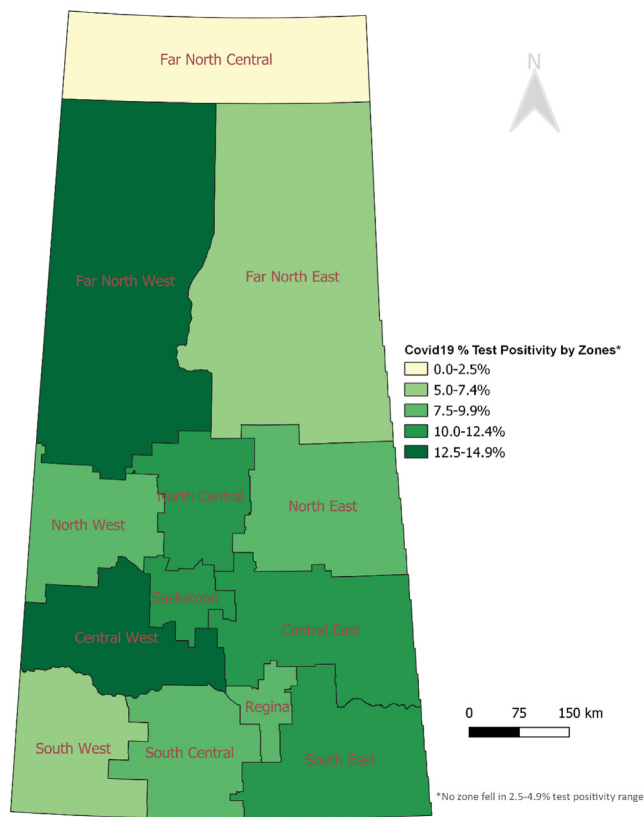Source: Government of Saskatchewan (2022a)

Figure 3
Government of Saskatchewan map of COVID-19 test positivity by zone
Source: Government of Saskatchewan (2022b)

Cartographic considerations for mapping COVID-19 data

At the start of every cartographic project, the question arises as to how a particular phenomenon can be visualized best. The overall goal is to create effective, easy-to-read and visually appealing maps that allow users to read and interpret the maps quickly. The nature of a phenomenon and the nature of the available data—or the data to be collected—are crucial when choosing a mapping technique. Both aspects can be arranged along the discrete-continuous and abrupt-smooth scales first introduced by MacEachren (1992). First, the nature of the phenomenon to be visualized needs to be considered when choosing an appropriate mapping method. COVID-19 cases can be categorized as a phenomenon in the middle of the discrete and continuous spatial scale. Due to the disease's air-borne nature, the virus spreads quickly and smoothly within a limited space. Given the mobility of people carrying and spreading the virus, new cases are distributed across a broader space continuum and potentially across boundaries. Second, the nature of the data describing the phenomenon needs to be considered. While the COVID-19 disease has a specific pattern of geographical distribution, the type of available data describing this phenomenon may not reflect that nature. Particularly in the case of sensitive medical information

such as the locations of individual infections, data are typically not published and are therefore not available for mapping in the public domain. In Saskatchewan, COVID-19 data are publicly available only as aggregated numbers of discrete data points for the 13 COVID-19 zones and, to a limited degree, for the 32 subzones. Although the Saskatchewan Health Authority has recorded the postal code for the residence of every verified CO-VID-19 case (Government of Saskatchewan 2022a), it has, due to privacy concerns, not made this spatial information publicly available. The spatial aggregation of the collected data limits the possibilities for detailed mapping of concentrations of various COVID-19 statistics within the province.

Mapping techniques
Among various thematic mapping techniques, the following have been identified as appropriate to map COVID-19 data in Saskatchewan.

The choropleth technique, one of the most commonly used methods of thematic mapping, produces a type of thematic map representing data by shading or colouring areas based on the data values associated with those areas. The areal units of a choropleth map can be any size and shape but are typically administrative units such as states, provinces, or statistical areas such as census enumeration areas or health regions. Of particular concern in choropleth mapping is the size and shape of these areas. An established principle of choropleth maps is that they are not suitable for representing absolute values or raw data counts as they apply colour or patterns to areas of varying sizes which in themselves are perceived by the map user as a variable when interpreting the map. Larger areas provide the most significant visual impact but are, at the same time, most likely to generalize the actual pattern of distribution within that area. On the other hand, small areas often have more uniform distributions of phenomena but have a relatively low visual impact and can therefore be overlooked by the map user (Slocum et al. 2023). Choropleth maps represent data by using classification, aggregation, and colours or patterns. They are best suited for representing phenomena and data that are continuous in nature and change abruptly at boundaries. Particular importance has to be given to the choice of data classification when designing choropleth maps. While standard classification methods such as equal intervals, quantiles, and natural breaks exist, it is essential to reflect the nature of the existing data when grouping their data values. Choropleth maps are based on aggregating data values at the regional level, which means that the data values for individual locations are summarized and represented as averages for the entire region. Accordingly, choropleth maps are typically not the best choice for visualizing data with a high degree of regional variability. At the same time, they are easy to visualize, and data is often readily available to create this type of map.

Proportional symbol maps are another type of thematic map. They represent data using circles, squares, and other point symbols whose size is proportional to the data value associated with each location or area. Proportional symbol maps are well suited for representing data values that are either absolute or relative.

They allow for the representation of patterns in the data, such as spatial clusters or outliers. Proportional symbols can be multivariate, meaning they can simultaneously represent multiple data variables using different symbols, colours, or shapes.

Heat maps are a third type of thematic map that uses colour to represent data values. They are often used to represent data with high spatial density or spatial clustering, such as the distribution of disease outbreaks across a geographic region. These maps use a colour ramp, ranging from cool colours (e.g., blue) to warm colours (e.g., red) to represent data values. The colour used for each location is determined by the data value associated with that location, with higher data values represented by warm colours and lower data values represented by cool colours. This type of map can be based on simple observations of a phenomenon across space or upon advanced statistics, such as determining statistically significant spatial clusters of high values (hot spots) and low values (cold spots). Heat maps are well suited for representing continuous data that changes smoothly over an area and can effectively show the variation and concentration of data values across a geographic region. Heat maps are typically visually appealing and make it easy to understand concentrations, patterns, and trends in the data.

Based on the available COVID-19 data for Saskatchewan, the only practical thematic mapping techniques are the choropleth and proportional symbol map. Due to privacy concerns regarding locational data of COVID-19 cases, hotspot maps, which better reflect the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be directly created. However, Geographic Information System (GIS) technology allows for creating hotspot maps using randomly placed locations of data points within COVID-19 subzones. While it is possible to generate hotspot maps based on these randomly placed points, it is crucial to consider the reliability and usefulness of these maps for interpretation.

Sample visualization of publicly available COVID-19 data in Saskatchewan

The date of January 21, 2021 was randomly selected for all sample maps in this study. The author recorded daily COVID-19 case numbers at the subzone level as they were temporarily published by the government on its website until February 2022 (Government of Saskatchewan 2021). Figure 4 shows a choropleth map of the infection rate, defined as active COVID-19 cases per 10,000 people for January 21, 2021, in Saskatchewan. To improve the quality of a traditional choropleth map, an ecumene mask was combined with the COVID-19 subzone boundaries (Figure 4). The term ecumene describes inhabited land and places where people live or work permanently. Statistics Canada (2022) defines inhabited land to delineate the ecumene as land having a population density of 0.4 people per square kilometre or, in the case of fewer than the minimum population of 1,000 people, being associated with a population centre. These boundaries can easily be used to improve choropleth maps of ratios and rates in areas which exhibit a highly dispersed distribution of population such as Saskatchewan (Brackley 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Siemer 2017). Caution is necessary when this ecumene

mask is used to map space-dependent variables such as population density, as the smaller spatial units affect the density values and require recalculation of these values (Siemer 2017). Although COVID-19 cases located outside of the ecumene are excluded from this visualization, mapping only populated areas of a subzone improves the overall quality of the map by highlighting those areas with relatively high population numbers over those with very low population numbers.

Figure 5 shows another choropleth map depicting different statistics of COVID-19 cases. This map uses a locational quotient (LQ) to highlight the share of COVID-19 cases in different subzones within the province. A location quotient is an analytical statistic that measures a region's share of an activity compared to a larger geographic unit. The LQ has traditionally been used in analyzing the economic activity of different regions but has increasingly been used in other disciplines such as criminology (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993; Wuschke et al. 2021). For this map, an LQ is computed as a subzone's share of active COVID-19 cases compared to active COVID-19 cases in the entire province. The LQ is calculated as follows:

$$ LQ = \frac{C_s/P_s}{C_P/P_P} $$

where
LQ = Location quotient
C_S = Count of active COVID-19 cases within the subzone
P_S = population within the subzone
C_P = Count of active COVID-19 cases within the entire province
P_P = population within the entire province

An LQ of 1.0 means that the subzone and the province have the same share of active COVID-19 cases. An LQ < 1.0 means that the subzone has a lower concentration of active COVID-19 cases, whereas an LQ > 1.0 means that the subzone has a higher concentration of active COVID-19 cases than the province.

Figure 6 shows a proportional symbol map of COVID-19 cases, using pie charts of varying sizes to incorporate active cases and daily new cases for January 21, 2021, in one symbol. This type of map highlights the overall absolute distribution of cases throughout the province.

Figure 7 shows a simple hot spot map derived from active COVID-19 cases within each subzone. As discussed above, no locational data is available for individual COVID-19 cases in Saskatchewan. Therefore, points were randomly placed for all active COVID-19 cases within the boundaries of the ecumene of a COVID-19 subzone. Similar to the limitation caused by the ecumene mask when used for choropleth maps, incorporating these boundaries might exclude individual cases of infection from being mapped in cases where they are from areas of a subzone that is not considered inhabited. Based on these randomly placed points, a hot spot map was created using ArcGIS Pro software.

Saskatchewan – COVID-19

**Infection Rate by Ecumene
per COVID-19 Subzone**
January 21, 2021

Infection Rate
New cases/10,000 people

- 4.51 – 5.00
- 5.01 – 15.00
- 15.01 – 30.00
- 30.01 – 50.00
- 50.01 – 225.00

No new cases

Uninhabited land

N

0   100
        km

Cities

- \> 200,000 people

- \< 40,000 people

The term 'ecumene' describes inhabited land. It refers to land where people are permanently living or working. Statistics Canada defines inhabited land for the purpose of delineating the ecumene as land having a population density of 0.4 people per square kilometre or, in the case of fewer than the minimum population of 1,000 persons, being associated with a population centre. The ecumene boundaries used for this map series are based on the 2016 census.

Prince Albert

Saskatoon

Moose Jaw   Regina

Data Sources: Government of Saskatchewan (2021), Statistics Canada (2022)
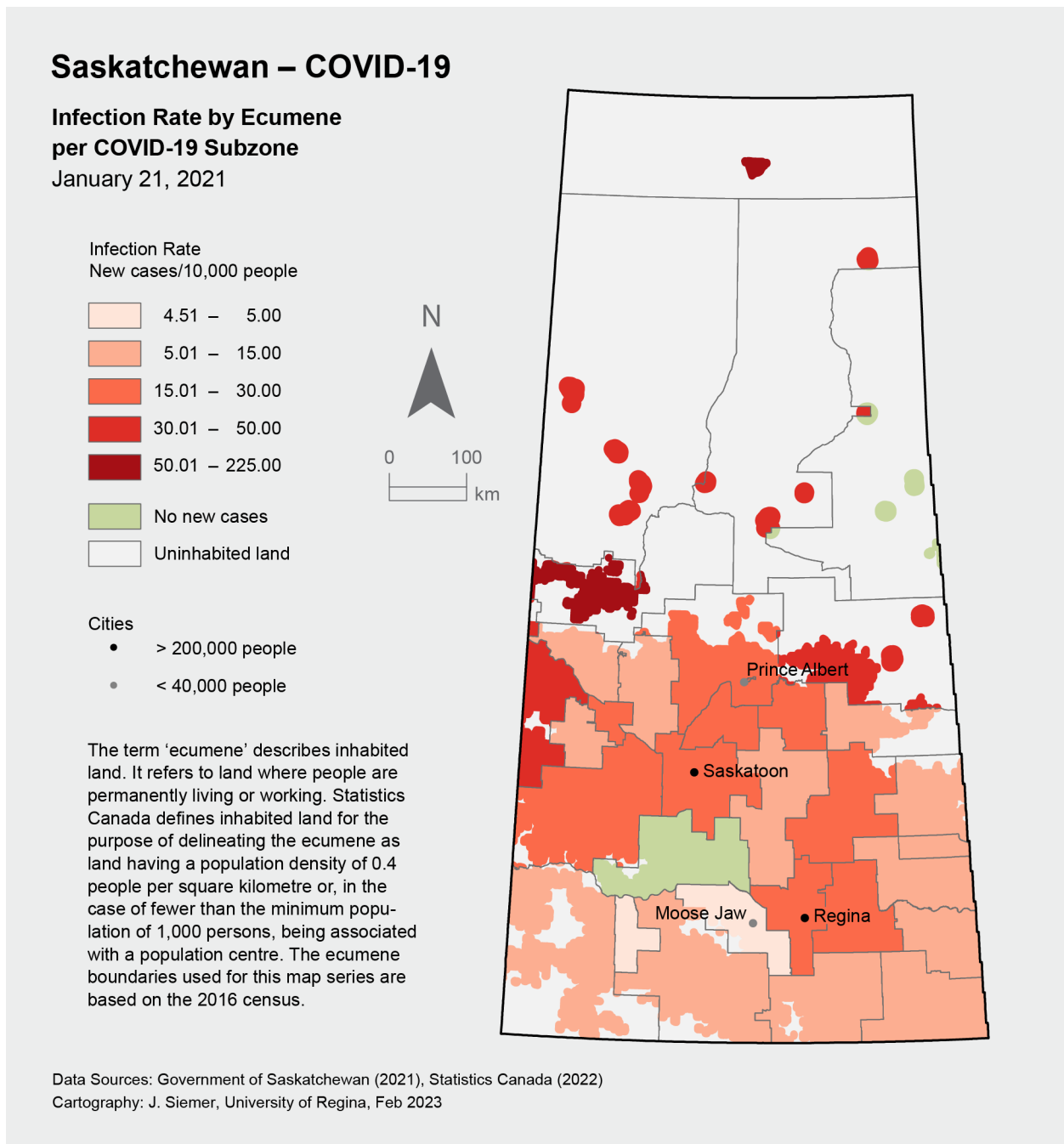Cartography: J. Siemer, University of Regina, Feb 2023
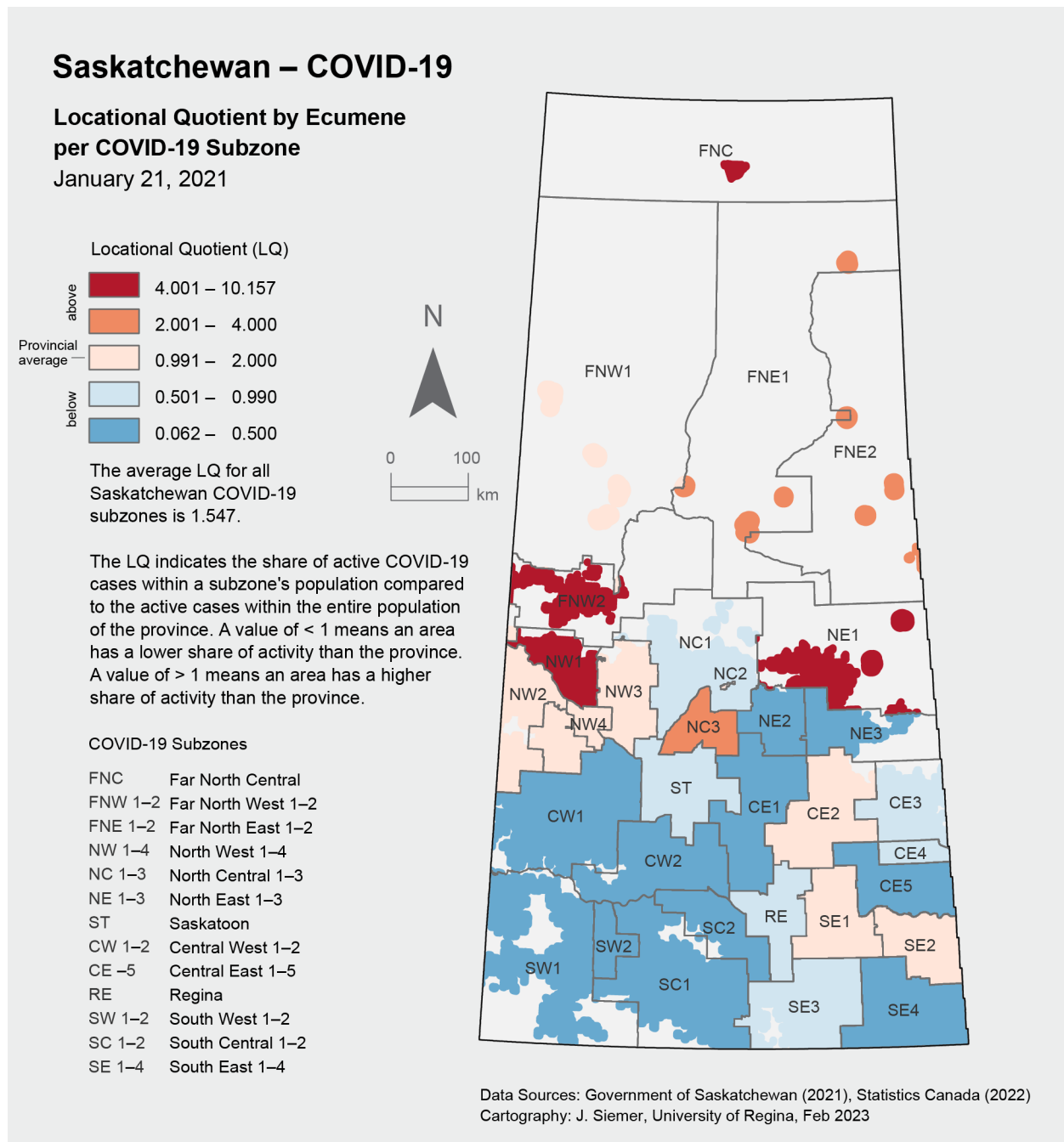
Figure 4
Infection rate per COVID-19 subzone, January 21, 2021

Figure 5
Locational quotient—Active cases on January 21, 2021

Figure 6
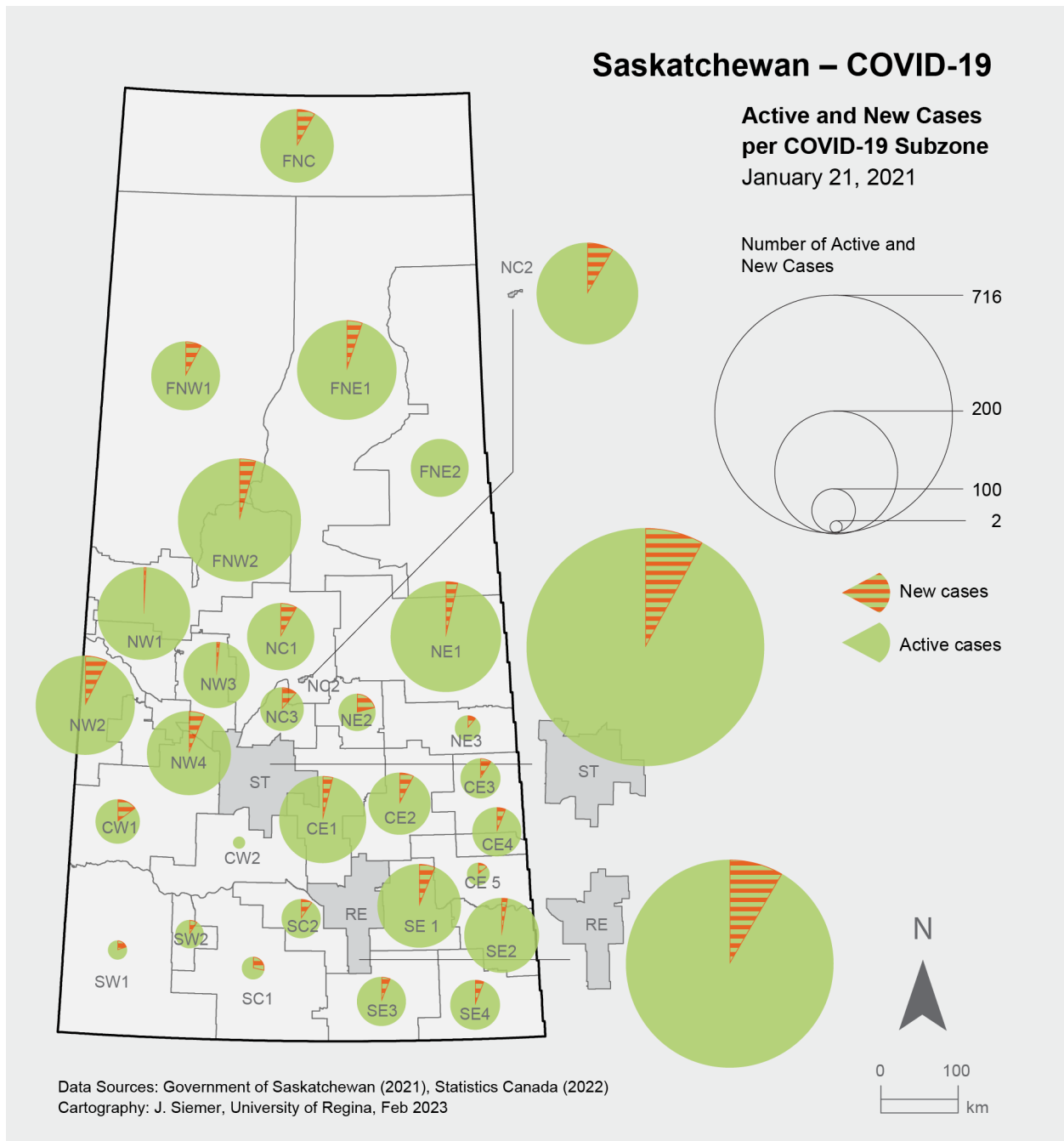Active cases and new cases by COVID-19 subzone, January 21, 2021

Saskatchewan – COVID-19

**Heat Map of Active Cases
per COVID-19 Subzone**
January 21, 2021

Active Cases reportet for
January 21, 2021

Low number of cases

High number of cases

Uninhabited land

Cities
- \> 200,000 people
- \< 40,000 people

N

0   100
km

This heat map is based on reported active
cases of COVID-19 infections which have been
randomly placed within each COVID-19
subzone's inhabited area.
Any interpretation of this map should be done
with caution as this analysis is not based on
'true' geographic location of reported infections
but rather an approximation of their location
within a populated area of a COVID-19
subzone.

Prince Albert

Saskatoon

Moose Jaw   Regina

Data Sources: Government of Saskatchewan (2021), Statistics Canada (2022)
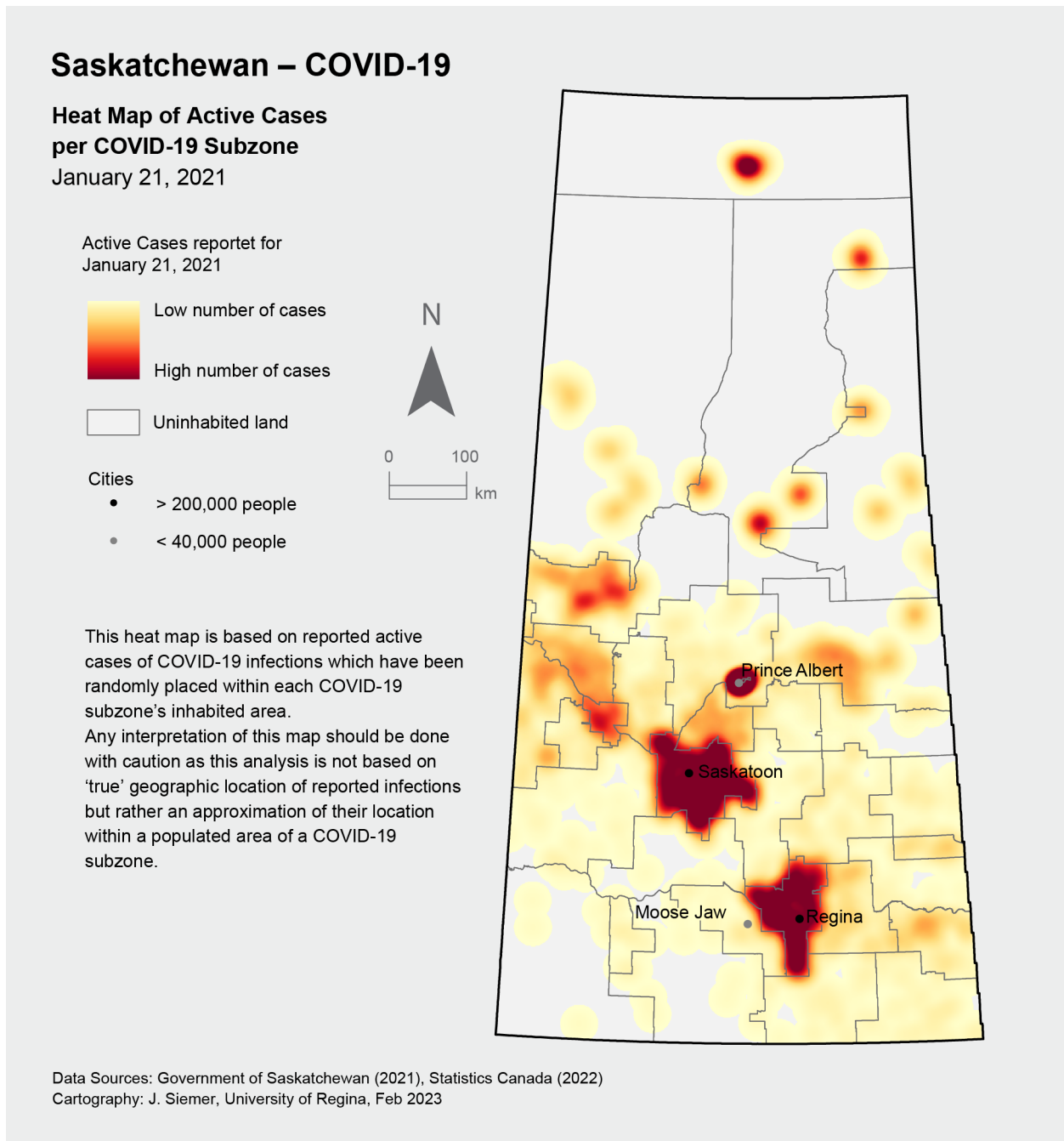Cartography: J. Siemer, University of Regina, Feb 2023

Figure 7
Heat map of active cases per COVID-19 subzone, January 21, 2021

Discussion

The maps shown in Figures 4 to 7 demonstrate how publicly available COVID-19 data can be visualized cartographically using GIS technology by highlighting COVID-19 concentrations and patterns throughout the province.

The map Infection Rate by Ecumene per COVID-19 Subzone (Figure 4) highlights infection rates (224.2 and 50.0, respectively) in ecumene pockets in the Far North Central and Far North West 2 zones of the province. The introduction of the ecumene mask highlights the inhabited areas within a COVID-19 subzone but can also pose a problem in cases where an ecumene pocket extends across boundaries. In those cases, the user may form the impression that there is a difference in infection rate within the populated area pocket. This is unlikely the case, but this limitation can be considered acceptable compared to the downside of not using the ecumene mask at all. Comparing this representation to the map produced by the government (Figure 1), it is evident that referencing the raw counts of new COVID-19 cases has little value when trying to show the true infection rate among the COVID-19 subzones. Although the government introduced the interactive dashboard in August 2020, it failed to visualize any proportions or rates but simply provided population numbers per COVID-19 subzone next to the boundary map.

Using the LQ as another indicator of COVID-19 activity in the province shows a similar pattern of active infections (Figure 5). The relatively sparsely populated COVID-19 subzones of Far North Central (pop. 2,649), Far North West 2 (pop. 17,752), and North West 1 (pop. 11,073) exhibit very high LQ values (10.157, 4.415, and 4.208, respectively). In addition, the North East 1 zone (pop. 15,429) also has a very high share of active cases (4.121). The Far North Central zone stands out among these highly affected zones with a level of COVID-19 activity that is 6.6 times the provincial on average (1.547). This uneven distribution is entirely lost when raw counts of infections are published without any reference to population distribution or other statistical measures.

Figure 6 shows raw counts of active and new infections by COVID-19 subzones and highlights the two largest population centres (Regina and Saskatoon) of the province. Not surprisingly, these two cities and their surrounding areas exhibit the highest infection numbers. Due to the combination of active and new infections in one pie chart symbol, this map allows for the detection of future trends. This proportional symbol mapping technique is a simple way to visualize raw counts of infections and allows for the quick comparison of different zones and their neighbours.

Lastly, the heat map of active COVID-19 cases (Figure 7) highlights a concentration of cases in Prince Albert which is not depicted in the previous maps. This map is also based on raw counts of infections but also takes a subzone's area into consideration. On January 21, 2021, Prince Albert had 426 active cases. Compared to Regina (2,113 active cases) and Saskatoon (2,485 active cases) this number is low, but due to the fact that the hotspot map is based on points randomly placed within a COVID-19 subzone, a hot spot is created for the Prince Albert area. Prince Albert's city boundaries are identical with the subzone North Central 2 boundary, which is relatively small at 71 km^2 compared to the sizes of the zones that include the cities of Regina (8,287 km^2) and Saskatoon (11,113 km^2) and their surrounding areas. A similar explanation applies to the hot spot for the area of Stony Rapids, the only ecumene pocket shown for the Far North Central COVID-19 subzone.

Maps depicting other topics such as death rates or recovery rates could be designed based on the publicly available data sets at the COVID-19 zone level. Unfortunately, no socioeconomic data have been published by the government for the COVID-19 zone or subzone levels. Due to the fact that the COVID-19 boundaries do not coincide with Statistics Canada's census boundaries, it is impossible to map vulnerable populations and the impact COVID-19 had on them with the data sets provided. The ability to analyze the effect COVID-19 had on vulnerable populations at a finer spatial level such as city neighbourhoods would certainly be desirable. However, the Government of Saskatchewan has not published any such COVID-19 data for either Regina or Saskatoon, although other provinces have provided such data for their major urban centres.

Conclusion

Mapping sample COVID-19 data for Saskatchewan has shown that with the proper application of cartographic methods the usefulness of maps for the purpose of planning, analyzing, and communicating can easily be improved. Relatively straightforward data preparation allows for the mapping of a variety of standardized statistical measures rather than visualizing raw data as provided in the daily COVID-19 maps. Particularly, Esri's dashboard technology can be used much more effectively than its application by the Government of Saskatchewan during the pandemic. The sample maps presented in this study can all be incorporated within the Saskatchewan Dashboard and could turn it into a truly interactive mapping tool.

Accessing a detailed COVID-19 data set for this study has proven difficult. Data have only been readily available at the low spatial resolution of COVID-19 zones, including the boundaries. Access to a more detailed data set for the entire period of the pandemic would allow for mapping the geographical and temporal development of the disease and could be useful for future responses to similar crises.

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Polarisation urbaine et culture dominante : Winnipeg et ses villages francophones, de la fragilisation à l'effacement ? Le cas des villages de Ritchot

Franck Chignier-Riboulon
Université Clermont-Auvergne

Messages clés

- Le développement de la zone de navettage de Winnipeg fragilise les villages francophones.
- Ces villages étaient déjà fragiles à cause d'une longue histoire de minoration et de domination de l'anglais.
- L'arrivée de nouveaux habitants moins connectés au village ancien accentuera encore la faiblesse du français, dont l'usage continue de se perdre.

Les francophones sont une minorité linguistique reconnue au Canada. Malgré une politique culturelle fédérale de soutien, leur nombre décroît, hors Québec, depuis des décennies. Dans ces espaces, la prégnance de l'environnement linguistique est telle que le français est devenu de moins en moins une langue d'usage du quotidien. Au Manitoba, cette fragilité est désormais accentuée par l'étalement urbain de l'agglomération de Winnipeg. La municipalité de Ritchot, au sud de Winnipeg, abrite plusieurs villages concernés par ce navettage : Sainte-Agathe, Saint-Adolphe et Île-des-Chênes. L'installation présente et surtout future de nouveaux habitants transformera la vie de ces villages, par le jeu de la minorisation et de la minoration, l'anglais s'imposant toujours plus comme la langue commune. Ces villages bilingues sont d'autant plus concernés qu'ils sont installés au bord de l'autoroute A75 et de la voie rapide 59, qui mènent vers Winnipeg. Dans quelques années, en raison de la dimension des projets d'urbanisme et de leur juxtaposition aux villages anciens, le processus aboutira peut-être, à un quasi effacement de cette communauté présente depuis plus d'un siècle.

Mots clés : minorité linguistique, minorisation, minoration, périurbanisation, fragilisation

Introduction

Le phénomène de périurbanisation s'est imposé dans le temps géographique long. Il débute aux Etats-Unis dès les années 1920 et fait déjà l'objet de premières analyses (Hinman 1931; McKenzie 1933, cités par Brétignolles 2015 : 20). L'intensification

et l'expansion de ce phénomène, facilité par la motorisation des ménages, se sont traduites par des études et des prises de position au fil du temps (Bauer et Roux 1976; Donzelot 2004; Haumont 2001; Jaillet 2004). Son inscription marquée dans l'espace attise ces débats, et ils ne sont pas achevés. En effet, l'impact démographique, social et géographique est très net : plus de

la moitié de la population états-unienne vit en banlieue, et l'Australie et le Canada s'en rapprochent (Gordon et al. 2015). Dans ces conditions, les débats sont renouvelés (Abbott 2023; Bacqué et al. 2016; Damon et al. 2016). Aujourd'hui, aux diverses questions passées et présentes (métropolisation d'espaces ruraux, sauvegarde des terres agricoles ou affaiblissement de petits centres de services) s'ajoute celle touchant à la durabilité, entre mobilités et densification urbaine. Si le mouvement est décrit depuis longtemps désormais, il n'a pas été étudié de la même manière, ni avec le même regard selon les pays (Brétignolle 2015). Ainsi, l'approche statistique et géographique demeure complexe, et parfois floue, au Canada comme en France (Dusserre-Bresson 2018), les limites de la banlieue (*suburb*) et du périurbain (*exurb*) fluctuant. Par-delà ces approches restent néanmoins les principaux paramètres qui caractérisent cette réalité : d'un côté, pour les nouveaux résidents, un marché foncier et immobilier habituellement moins cher, une densité de voisinage longtemps plus faible et des taxes locales plus mesurées ; de l'autre côté, les effets d'un domicile éloigné du lieu de travail : le navettage, la dépendance automobile, et la distance de services urbains. Cependant, la réalité est plus complexe, le périurbain est une mosaïque et sa diversité de plus en plus grande, quelles que soient les situations urbaines (Bacqué et al. 2016; Nicolaides et Wiese 2016; Poiret 2017).

Pour les villages d'installation, le changement est également majeur, ces nouveaux ménages apportant leur culture, entre style de vie et demande d'aménités, des éléments connus (Salamon et Tornatore 1994; Simard 2007) uniformisant les lieux. Dans le cadre canadien la préservation des minorités linguistiques est une problématique supplémentaire, moins universelle, mais toujours prégnante, surtout dans les provinces où les communautés se raréfient, par assimilation et minorisation, le Manitoba en étant un bel exemple au sein des Prairies.

La situation de Winnipeg et *a fortiori* du Manitoba est pourtant bien loin de celles de métropoles plus grandes telles Toronto et Montréal. Winnipeg a d'ailleurs une banlieue relativement modeste et moins de flux et navettage. En revanche, des problèmes plus spécifiques existent, liés au climat et aux rivières. La dureté de l'hiver se traduit par une dégradation fréquente de la chaussée (affaissements, nids de poules) et la présence de confluences (et de voies ferrées) contraint le trafic, embouteillant les ponts aux heures de pointe. Le rapport temps/distance reste toutefois favorable, ce qui encourage la croissance des pavillons et des condominiums. L'urbanisation et le développement sont également défendus par des élus locaux des municipalités voisines, soucieux de bénéficier de cette dynamique. Dans cette perspective, les municipalités ne bénéficient pas toutes des mêmes conditions de desserte. Celles qui sont traversées par des voies rapides sont davantage confrontées au processus d'étalement. La croissance démographique qui en résulte contribue à fragiliser la pratique de la langue, déjà mise à mal par des décennies de déclin.

La municipalité de Ritchot est symbolique de cette évolution (Figure 1). Ses villages bilingues de Sainte-Agathe, Saint-Adolphe et Île-des-Chênes sont directement concernés. Dans un premier temps, les nouveaux occupants sont surtout intéressés par l'accessibilité de la capitale provinciale, plutôt que par les caractéristiques linguistiques de la municipalité de leur résidence. Leur présence s'explique par cette accessibilité, ou par le prix du foncier, la culture locale ou son histoire étant rarement un facteur de décision dans un déménagement ; mais cela existe, comme à Saint-Boniface (un quartier de Winnipeg), notamment pour des salariés de l'Université Saint-Boniface. Ils forment ainsi un petit entre-soi spatial. Dans un second temps, ces nouveaux habitants se territorialisent progressivement. La territorialité renvoie à des formes d'attachement aux lieux vécus (di Méo 1998) ; ces attachements mobilisant les acteurs au travers de réseaux locaux, d'activités communes et de sentimentalisation de l'espace. Cependant, dans une situation de domination culturelle, la territorialisation des arrivants ne freinera guère l'anglicisation des villages. Au contraire, ces ménages tendent à accroître la minorisation du groupe bilingue, et la minoration déjà présente se perpétuera. Dans cet article, le terme minorisation renvoie à une mise en minorité quantitative, elle exprime la baisse relative ou absolue d'une population par l'arrivée d'une autre ou par un différentiel démographique. Le mot fait l'objet de questionnements récurrents, certains, récents, le rapprochant toujours davantage du phénomène de discrimination (Blanchet 2005; Hambye 2019). L'idée de mineur en revanche est empruntée à Gilles Deleuze (1993). Selon ce dernier, la situation des minoritaires n'est pas uniquement la conséquence d'une logique de nombre ; le groupe minoritaire subit également une moindre valorisation ou une dévalorisation de ce qu'il est, en premier lieu de sa langue dans cet article. Cette dévalorisation peut être voulue, héritée ou liée aux enjeux sociaux et individuels d'une époque donnée. Il n'est donc pas toujours conscient mais résulte d'une situation.

Cet article s'inscrit dans une entrée de géographie culturelle, incluant une dimension de psychologie sociale. Cela signifie que son objet dépasse l'action publique (et ses qualités et défauts) et se préoccupe en premier lieu de la pratique sociale : le français est-il présent dans l'espace public, s'entend-il chez les commerçants, est-il d'usage hors des services publics bilingues ? L'offre francophone présente au Manitoba est un atout mais n'est donc pas une fin. Le texte proposé est principalement issu d'un travail de terrain effectué en septembre 2016, et complété en 2018. Il repose sur des entretiens semi-directifs, de l'observation participante (dans les bars, commerces et restaurants…) et de l'analyse de documents d'urbanisme et de planification, municipaux et métropolitains. 19 acteurs locaux, tous francophones, ont été interrogés (Tableau 1).

Les francophone du Manitoba, entre héritage et luttes pour exister

L'usage du mot francophone est récent au Manitoba (Blay 2021), mais il synthétise désormais cette réalité minoritaire. Longtemps nommés « Canadiens français », puis « Franco-
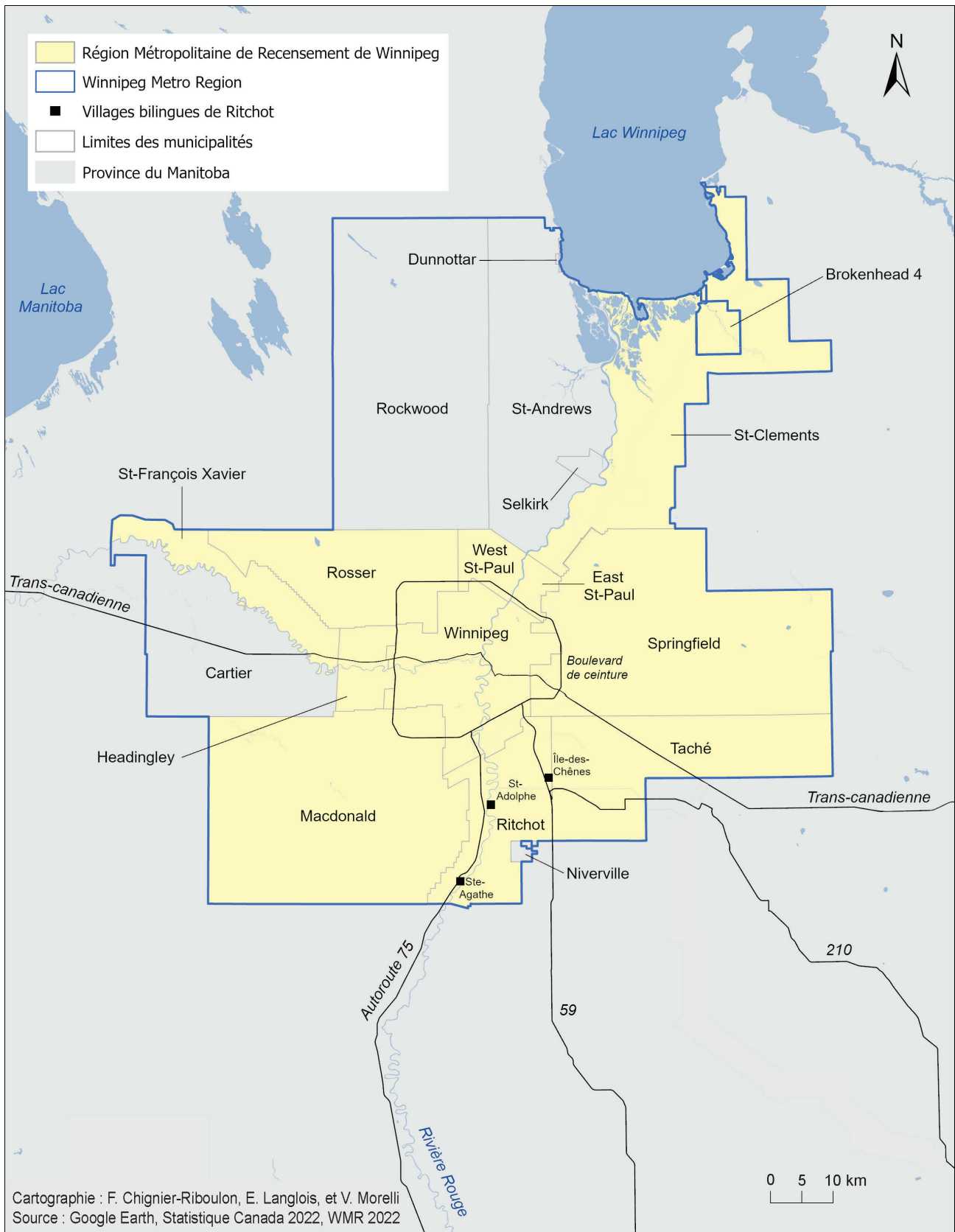
Figure 1
Ritchot, une municipalité intégrée dans le périmètre de Winnipeg Metropolitan Region

Tableau 1
Dates des entretiens et professions des personnes (interrogées)

Entretiens	Dates	Catégorie professionnelle
Entretien 1	8/9/2016	Journaliste
Entretien 2	8/9/2016	Recteur
Entretien 3	9/9/2016	Bibliothécaire
Entretien 4	9/9/2016	Historien
Entretien 5	9/12/2016	Postier
Entretien 6	9/12/2016	Commerçante
Entretien 7	13/9/2016	Employé banque
Entretien 8	13/9/2016	Gestionnaire de camping
Entretien 9	13/9/2016	Conseiller santé
Entretien 10	13/9/2016	Prêtre
Entretien 11	14/9/2016	Bibliothécaire
Entretien 12	14/9/2016	Enseignant
Entretien 13	15/9/2016	Elu
Entretien 14	15/9/2016	Elue
Entretien 15	15/9/2016	Employée DSFM
Entretien 16	16/9/2016	Employé mairie
Entretien 17	16/9/2016	Employée mairie
Entretien 18	19/9/2016	Enseignant
Entretien 19	19/9/2016	Assureur

Manitobains », la principale institution les représentant, la Société de la Francophonie Manitobaine, a, depuis quelques années (2017), décidé d'employer l'expression « francophones du Manitoba ». Ce choix inclusif fait référence à la diversification des populations employant cette langue, tout particulièrement en raison de l'accueil d'immigrants, francophones ou allophones. L'évolution de la sémantique témoigne également des enjeux actuels : cette minorité linguistique décline par son assimilation au groupe majoritaire, mais aussi par sa faible natalité et sa forte exogamie, le besoin d'un renouveau démographique par l'arrivée de ces migrants lui est nécessaire. Historiquement, la vallée de la rivière Rouge (Figure 1) s'inscrit pleinement dans le contexte canadien-français (Blay 2016; Martel 1979), même si elle est également importante pour d'autres communautés (les Mennonites, par exemple), chacune bâtissant son histoire propre. Née aux États-Unis, elle se jette dans le lac Winnipeg, et représente avant tout une rivière du patrimoine canadien, par sa dimension historique et culturelle.

Les héritages culturels d'un monde métis, rural et francophone

La vallée de la Rouge, au sud de Winnipeg, a une importance symbolique au Canada, particulièrement pour les Prairies. Cette région a été un carrefour entre les Amérindiens et les voyageurs, venus de la vallée du Saint-Laurent, pour négocier des peaux, au nom de la compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson. À pieds et en canot, hivernant souvent sur place auprès de groupes des premières nations, prenant femme et s'intégrant localement, ces hommes participèrent à fonder le groupe métis. La concurrence des légitimités territoriales, c'est-à-dire la défense de leurs droits fonciers, opposés à ceux des nouveaux arrivants (troupes anglaises et colons), puis l'épisode Louis Riel, le chef métis opposé à la couronne britannique, donnèrent un sens identitaire aux implantations le long de cette rivière (Martel 1979). La trame cadastrale le long de la rivière perpétue ce passé. Par la suite, des familles venues du Québec, poussées par la pauvreté et le besoin de terres, s'implantèrent et densifièrent le peuplement local.

Longtemps agricoles et éloignés de la capitale provinciale, ces villages conservèrent une autarcie certaine, et la plupart des relations sociales s'exprimaient en langue française. Cette langue était celle du vécu local, de sa sociabilité. La municipalité rurale de Ritchot témoigne de ce passé (Mailhot 1986). Son nom renvoie à l'engagement de clercs, venus structurer et perpétuer une communauté, au nom du projet expansionniste de l'Église catholique (Lasserre 2001). Dans cette logique de concurrence des légitimités, l'institution catholique souhaitait contrebalancer la colonisation anglaise par la multiplication d'îlots villageois dans l'Ouest canadien ; ces îlots devant constituer autant de points d'appui tenus par des prêtres. Dans l'imagerie stratégique du haut-clergé ces points d'appui étaient unis par un réseau alliant foi et langue, le français étant un outil plus qu'un objectif. Concrètement ces implantations en réseau constituaient un maillage géographique s'opposant à l'existence d'autres maillages, dont celui des villages anglophones. Cependant, dans un contexte de domination et de politiques de minoration et de minorisation, cette stratégie ne fonctionna pas.

Une longue histoire de discrimination

Le projet initié par l'Église fut finalement un échec, malgré l'arrivée de Québécois, puis d'Européens sur la fin du 19e siècle, au Sud-Ouest, sur la « montagne », à Saint-Claude ou à Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes (Chignier-Riboulon 2017; Painchaud 1987). Les logiques de domination, de minorisation et de minoration contribuèrent à cet échec. Dès lors, le mineur dévalorisé est au-dessous, hiérarchiquement, du majeur, et une relation entre dominant et dominé fonctionne activement. Elle se perçoit, dans notre cas, au travers de la mise en retrait du mineur ou de l'emploi de la langue dominante dès qu'un anglophone est présent, ce qui a été précisé par la majeure partie de nos interlocuteurs (Tableau 1). Par ailleurs, la faiblesse numérique de cette minorité linguistique, depuis plus d'un siècle, est telle que ses membres sont nécessairement bilingues, parlant même souvent mieux l'anglais que le français, comme l'ont souligné la plupart des personnes interrogées (celles travaillant dans l'éducatif avant tout).

Si l'objectif de cet article n'est pas de retracer dans le détail l'histoire locale et provinciale, l'évocation de grands moments s'avère utile, car la fragilité actuelle de cette population, et le recours nécessaire à une immigration francophone, proviennent de décennies de minorisation et de minoration. Ainsi, dans un premier temps l'échec de la stratégie catholique s'explique par la minorisation rapide de ce groupe en raison de l'arrivée de colons. Ces derniers provenaient des régions anglophones

de l'Est du Canada (Ontario), mais aussi, un peu plus tard, d'immigrants européens (Ukrainiens, Mennonites…). Dans un second temps, les différentes politiques menées pour minorer ce groupe ont eu pour effet la disparition de leurs droits (Blay 1987, 2016), en particulier politiques et scolaires, avec tout particulièrement l'abolition de l'officialité du français en 1890 et de l'enseignement en français en 1916.

Ce monde francophone de l'Ouest canadien a alors longtemps lutté pour retrouver ses droits (Blay 2016). Leur obtention tardive, essentiellement à partir des années 1990, est contrebalancée par une assimilation forte, à l'image de toutes les provinces où l'anglais est largement dominant (Mougeon 2014). Aujourd'hui, la dernière génération qui utilisait le français comme principale langue d'échange du quotidien est âgée ; et pour les plus jeunes, il s'agit souvent presque d'une langue étrangère. Les communautés francophones du Manitoba sont alors bilingues de fait, car leur pourcentage est désormais inférieur à 3% (Statistique Canada 2022), et leur vie privée et professionnelle s'effectue essentiellement en anglais, quelle que soit la taille démographique de la communauté, ce que confirment tous les entretiens réalisés. Certaines institutions dédiées, tel le Conseil de Développement Economique des Municipalités bilingues (CDEM), travaillent à un maintien du fait francophone. Cependant, malgré leur bonne volonté et leur utilité sociale, l'action de ces acteurs demeure marginale face aux évolutions démographiques, sociétales et économiques. Ainsi, la disparition progressive du français dans l'espace public se combine avec son affaiblissement dans l'espace privé : même chez les ménages francophones, la télévision ou les relations familiales se font fréquemment en anglais. Cette dimension sociale est soulignée par les personnes interrogées, dont certaines maîtrisent mieux l'anglais que le français, car bien qu'elles s'expriment avec aisance dans cette dernière elles emploient plus fréquemment l'anglais au quotidien. Sans surprise celles qui ne travaillent pas ou peu dans un milieu francophone ont une maîtrise moins grande. Au final ces villages sont devenus des « espaces sous tension » (Gilbert et Lefèbvre 2008), une tension constante et multiforme à laquelle participe le mouvement d'exurbanisation actuel.

La polarisation toujours plus forte de Winnipeg

Les logiques de métropolisation sont des phénomènes d'échelle internationale, anciens maintenant, mais leurs retombées ne sont pas les mêmes selon les espaces. Au Manitoba, la population est relativement peu importante (1.3 million en 2021), et elle est concentrée dans la partie Sud de la province. Surtout, avec son poids démographique dans la population du Manitoba (Tableau 2), l'agglomération urbaine (Figure 1), la Région Métropolitaine de Recensement (RMR, ou CMA en anglais, *Census Metropolitan Area*) définie par Statistique Canada (Murphy et al. 2019), est en situation de primatie.

Elle s'impose en termes démographiques, économiques et de commandements. De fait, les autres villes n'existent pas, ou si peu. Les deuxième et troisième villes de la province, Brandon et Steinbach, ne comptent que, respectivement, 51,000 et 18,000 habitants, environ. Dans ces conditions, Winnipeg concentre l'essentiel de la croissance passée, et à venir, avec des conséquences en termes de desserrement urbain.

Une structuration progressive de la croissance winnipégoise

À l'échelle provinciale, cette polarisation démographique urbaine a entraîné la mise en place de plans successifs d'aménagement et de croissance, pour organiser ce développement. Winnipeg Capital Region, fondée en 1998, et devenue Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR) en 2018, est une structure de coopération et de gestion regroupant 18 municipalités (Figure 1). L'appartenance de Ritchot à WMR renforce l'impact de la structure et de ses politiques d'aménagement sur son territoire.

En raison de sa forme et de sa superficie (Figure 1), la croissance démographique de Winnipeg est longtemps restée contenue dans les limites de la municipalité, voire à l'intérieur du boulevard urbain qui la ceinture. Cet espace à proximité du boulevard est aujourd'hui de plus en plus urbanisé, avec une multiplication de condominiums et de lotissements. Le poids numérique de la municipalité centrale distingue toutefois Winnipeg d'autres villes canadiennes. À elle seule, elle représente 55% de la population manitobaine et la WMR 66% de cette même population (Tableau 2). Ce taux s'est accru au fil du temps, la polarisation étant toujours plus forte.

Une suburbanisation et une exurbanisation réelles, mais moins prononcées que dans d'autres métropoles canadiennes

Si le poids de Winnipeg est important dans la population totale de la province, cet accroissement est avant tout le résultat de l'urbanisation des marges internes de la municipalité, puis de leur densification. En effet, environ 88% (Savage 2019) de la population de la RMR habitent à moins de 10 kilomètres de l'hôtel de ville, donc dans la ville-centre. Les proportions sont toutes autres dans d'autres grandes villes canadiennes, et tout

Tableau 2

Croissance de la Région Métropolitaine de Recensement de Winnipeg (RMR) et de la Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR)

	1986	1996	2006	2016	2021
			milliers d'habitants		
Winnipeg	595	618	633	705	749
Winnipeg RMR	625	667	695	783	835
WMR	668	708	733	822	874
Manitoba	1 063	1 114	1 148	1 278	1 342

Source : Statistique Canada (1987, 2002, 2012, 2022)

particulièrement à Toronto, où l'évolution s'apparente à celles des villes états-uniennes. L'étalement y est plus prononcé et, surtout, la banlieue est devenue la principale source d'emplois, et, de plus en plus, la destination première des navetteurs, avec l'émergence, puis l'affirmation, d'autres pôles urbains au sein de l'ensemble.

Si l'étalement urbain winnipégois est moins prégnant qu'à Toronto, la part de l'extra-centre (5 km autour de l'hôtel de ville) a néanmoins baissé entre 1996 et 2016, de 7 points (Savage 2019). Cette déconcentration s'est faite, en premier lieu, au sein des limites de la municipalité. Cependant, bien qu'encore modeste en comparaison avec d'autres villes, le nombre d'habitants vivant en périphérie plus lointaine s'accroît, passant de plus de 60,000 en 1986 à près de 150,000 en 2021. Si la progression demeure encore faible, sur 35 ans, elle n'est pas négligeable pour des populations rurales encore peu nombreuses. Le Plan de développement de WMR pour les 30 prochaines années prévoit un accroissement général de la population (WMR 2022). En 2021 (au recensement), la population de WMR est de 874,290 habitants, selon les projections, elle passerait à plus d'1 million d'habitants en 2050, selon un scénario bas, voire à près de 1.1 million avec un scénario haut. De fait, ces projections représentent de 27 à 40% de croissance de la population actuelle. Cette croissance attendue est également différenciée selon les couronnes de l'agglomération, notamment en termes de densification. Le Plan prévoit ainsi de baisser la surface des terrains constructibles.

La municipalité de Ritchot est incluse dans Winnipeg Metropolitan Region, et donc dans ses perspectives d'expansion. Pour ce qui la concerne, le Plan de développement envisage un doublement de la population en 2050 (WMR 2022) ; cette population est actuellement de 7,469 habitants (Tableau 3). En fonction des hypothèses retenues, elle passerait à 14,222 (projection basse) ou à 15,316 (haute). De la même manière, le nombre d'emplois futur est estimé à 3,022 ou 3,250, selon les deux scénarios pris en compte. Or, en 2020, le total d'emplois comptabilisés sur la municipalité est de 1,468. Là encore, il s'agit au moins d'un doublement. Dans ces conditions, l'expansion concerne, et surtout concernera, des villages jadis épargnés, comme Saint-Adolphe ou Sainte-Agathe, ou en cours de transformation, tel Île-des-Chênes. Situés à 20 ou 30 kilomètres du centre, ils permettent de rejoindre très rapidement la ville capitale (en une trentaine de minutes). Pour ces villages, ce changement à venir représente un apport important de nouveaux habitants et une transformation de leurs réalités vécues. Un choix accompagné par la municipalité.

Tableau 3
L'évolution de la population de Ritchot de 1996 à 2021

1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
5 248	4 958	5 051	5 478	6 679	7 469

Source : Statistique Canada (2002, 2012, 2022)

La municipalité de Ritchot, entre stratégie de croissance et affaiblissement de la communauté francophone

Le désir de vivre dans une municipalité rurale ne s'arrête pas aux choix des ménages, il se conjugue avec les politiques municipales. Elles fournissent une offre de logements neufs, et, dans l'avenir, si possible des emplois sur place, pour réduire le navettage. La municipalité de Ritchot borde celle de Winnipeg, au sud (Figure 1), et sa partie nord (Grande Pointe) en est devenue une banlieue. Elle est principalement desservie par l'autoroute A 75 et la voie rapide 59, deux axes majeurs de communication. Appartenant au périmètre d'aménagement de la WMR, et pour répondre au défi du développement, les deux municipalités rurales de MacDonald et de Ritchot se sont associées pour définir un Plan de développement (entretiens 13 et 16), organisant la croissance à venir de chaque village (ajouter le dernier de McDonald). Le desserrement et l'aménagement de la croissance de Winnipeg représentent une opportunité d'expansion et de valorisation du foncier.

La municipalité de Ritchot présente l'originalité de s'être construite autour de plusieurs villages, avec Île-des-Chênes comme chef-lieu. Dans ce cadre, chacun des villages est une entité propre, conservant une communauté de vie, bien que le chef-lieu offre des services municipaux (écoles, notamment).

La forte croissance démographique actuelle

Cette situation géographique et cette volonté politique se sont déjà traduites par une croissance de la population ; une croissance forte, pour une municipalité qui connaissait une stagnation ou un déclin il y a 20 ans (Tableau 3).

La croissance démographique rapide de la municipalité n'est cependant réellement perceptible qu'à partir de 2016, avec de nombreuses arrivées de personnes depuis 2011. Cette augmentation est supérieure à celle de Winnipeg (11.6 contre 6.6 entre 2016 et 2021). Les projections de croissance sont même très élevées, en lien avec les projets d'aménagement et de développement pour chacun des villages. Le choix d'ouvrir davantage à l'urbanisation va donc entraîner une poursuite de ce changement démographique. Ces plans et leur mise en œuvre se concrétisent et se concrétiseront par un bouleversement profond du paysage, transformant, structurellement, les villages originels. Sur Île-des-Chênes les condominiums ont été privilégiés, alors que les maisons individuelles seront nombreuses sur les deux autres villages.

Chacun des villages est l'objet d'un plan particulier. Sur Sainte-Agathe, le Plan de développement (Figure 2) est principalement orienté vers le développement d'activités économiques. Il repose sur l'utilisation de l'autoroute comme vecteur de développement. Pour l'instant le développement est modeste, se bornant à quelques activités de service, dont une station services. Dans ces conditions, la population ne s'est guère accrue, même si des espaces à urbaniser sont prévus dans la continuité du village actuel. Dans le futur le centre névralgique devrait basculer vers l'autoroute et l'extérieur, comme l'ont précisé plusieurs

personnes (entretiens 13 à 17). Cet élargissement de l'espace urbanisé n'est pourtant rien en comparaison de Saint-Adolphe. Dans ce second village est attendue une véritable métamorphose de l'espace habité (Figure 3). Lancé au début des années 2010, le projet n'en est qu'à son commencement. A l'été 2022, la tranche 1 a débuté, les premières maisons sont construites et occupées, l'aménagement de la trame viaire et la viabilisation vont permettre de continuer l'opération. Les tranches 2 et 3 sont en début d'aménagement ; le Plan de développement prévoyait une série de plans d'eau, et le premier est en préparation. Ces espaces aquatiques offrent à la fois un agrément paysager et sont une des manières de gérer le risque d'inondation. La situation présente stimule déjà la démographie de Saint-Adolphe (Tableau 4), qui est déjà presque aussi peuplé que le chef-lieu. Il est alors probable que l'achèvement futur aboutisse à une disparition de son paysage et de son style de vie traditionnels, les nouveaux habitants devenant majoritaires.

Effectivement, cette transformation paysagère en cours et à venir représente une véritable métamorphose, autant en termes démographiques que d'espaces de vie. De fait, les villages anciens étaient souvent de taille modeste, Saint-Agathe ne compte toujours que 643 habitants en 2021 alors que Saint-Adolphe en totalise déjà 1,595. Ce même village a vu son nombre de logements privés augmenter de plus de 200 entre 2006 et 2021, et le projet ne fait que démarrer.

Les entretiens (13, 14, 16, 17) menés à la mairie ont notamment mis l'accent sur l'ampleur du projet de Saint-Adolphe. Il est question d'au moins 3,000 habitants supplémentaires en fin de projet et de 1,200 masons. Lors des débats publics sur la mise à jour du Plan de développement de MacDonald-Ritchot, en 2022, des habitants se sont interrogés sur cette croissance à venir (Sawatzky 2022). Pour contrebalancer la croissance de ce type de villages, le Plan de développement 2020–2050 de WMR prévoit de renforcer les centres de municipalité, pour qu'ils restent les lieux majeurs de services des municipalités. Dans ce cadre, les élus ont souligné qu'Île-des-Chênes bénéficierait de cette mesure : le commerce y resterait concentré et une nouvelle zone d'habitat y est prévue, au sud (Sawatzky 2022).
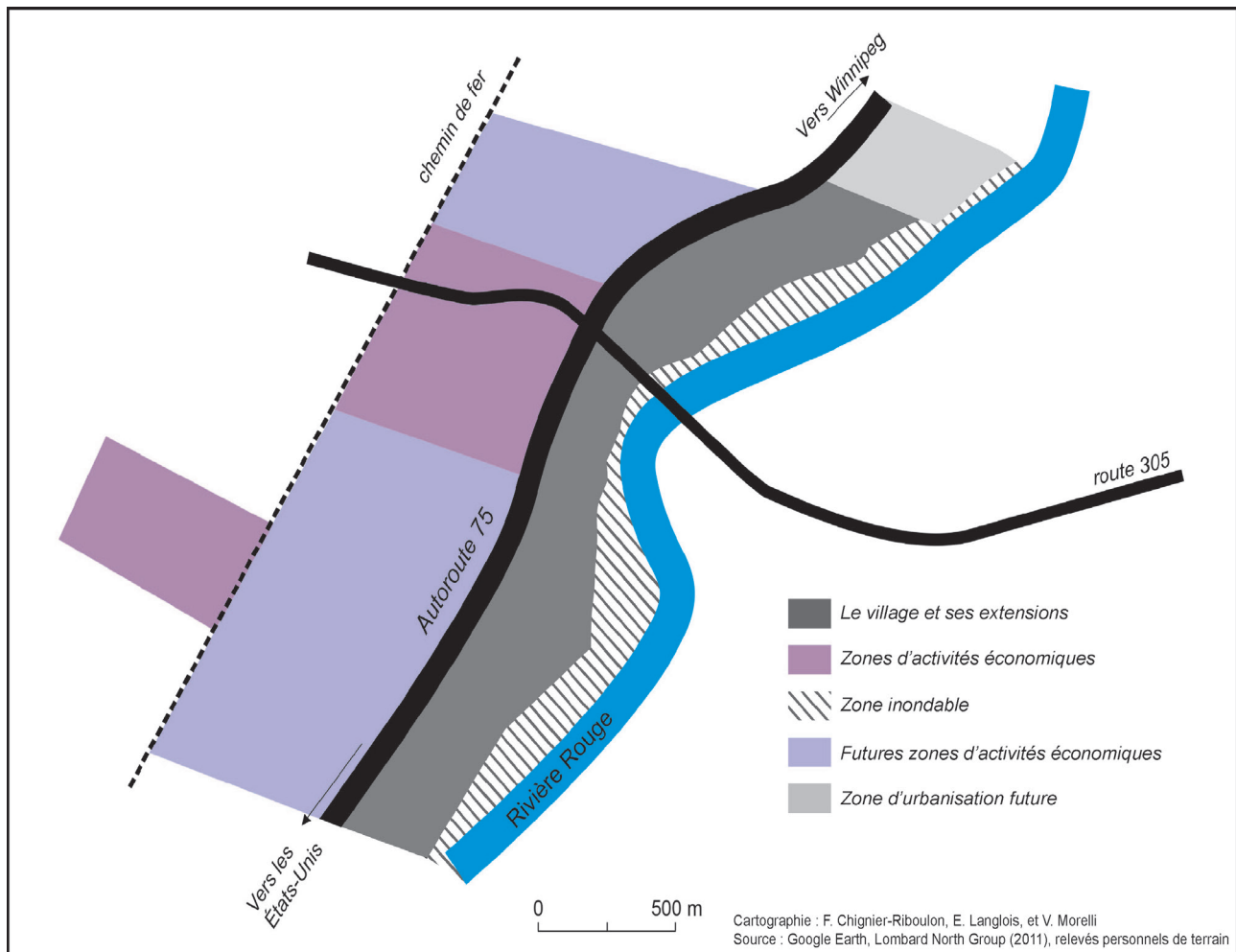

Figure 2
Sainte-Agathe : un projet de développement économique le long de l'autoroute 75
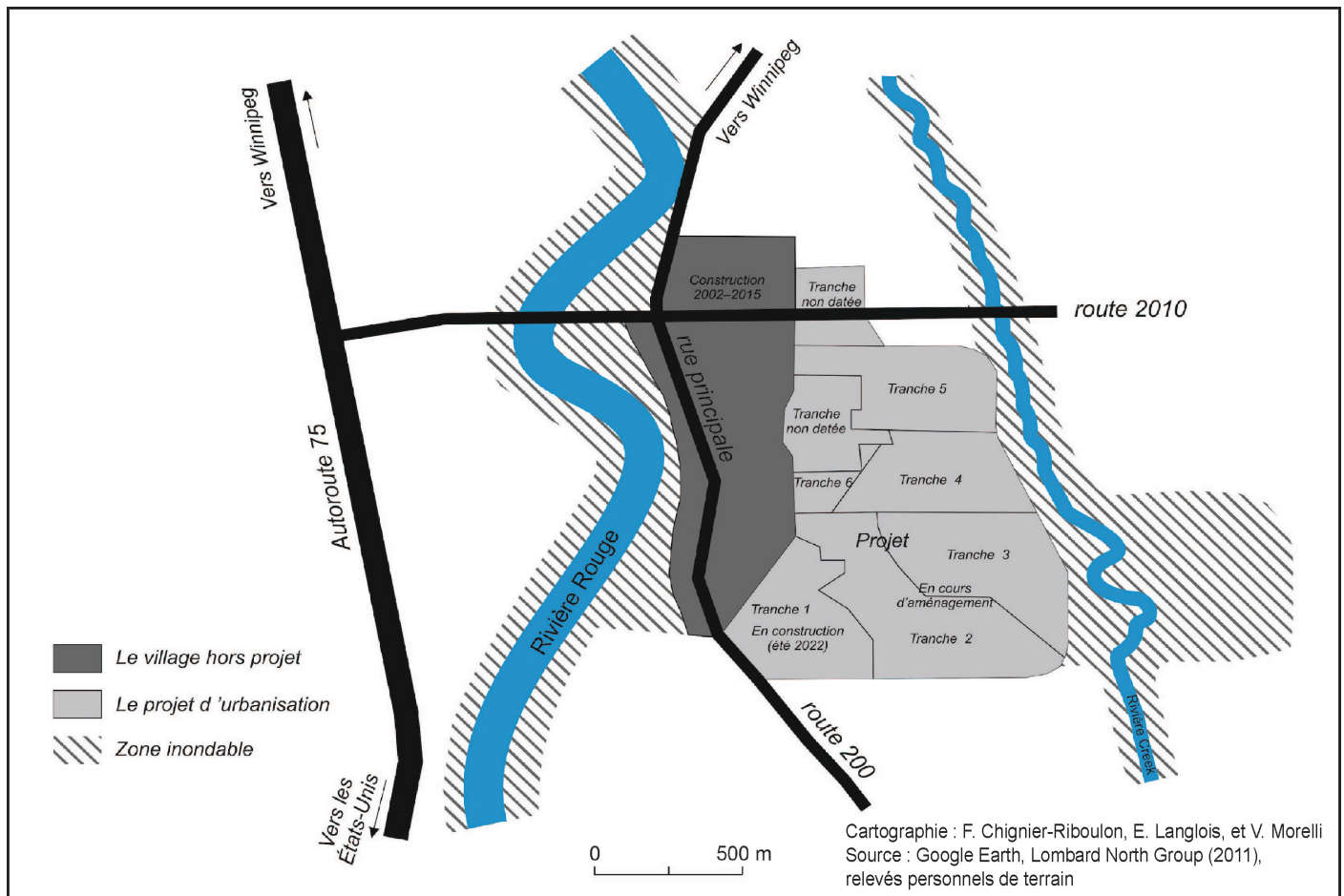
Figure 3
Saint-Adolphe : le bouleversement à venir d'un village

Tableau 4
L'évolution de la population des trois villages bilingues, de 2006 à 2021

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Île-des-Chênes	1 208	1 253	1 546	1 606
Sainte-Agathe	434	614	637	643
Saint-Adolphe	1 048	1 117	1 367	1 595

Source : Statistique Canada (2012, 2022)

Un contexte contemporain de minorisation et de minoration

Les villages bilingues de Ritchot vont devenir en quelques années de véritables villages-dortoirs. Le choix d'installation des nouveaux habitants répond avant tout à un accès aisé à Winnipeg, tout en bénéficiant d'un logement moins coûteux qu'en ville, même si cette situation a partiellement changé (conjoncturellement ?) depuis la pandémie de COVID-19. L'objectif de densification et de diversification de l'offre de logements, voulue par WMR (p. 45), pour accueillir une population plus mixée, va également se traduire par la vente de parcelles plus petites. Les activités économiques à venir (Figures 2 et 3) seront également connectées de plus en plus à l'autoroute ou aux voies rapides (la route 59 pour Île-des-Chênes, Figure 1) et, *de facto*, toujours plus déconnectées des logiques villageoises. La polarisation des déplacements sur l'agglomération urbaine, par le jeu d'un réseau en étoile, devrait alors davantage s'imposer, aux dépens des cohérences villageoises. D'ores et déjà, une partie de ces nouveaux résidents fait ses courses directement à Winnipeg, à proximité de son lieu de travail ou sur la route du retour à Ritchot, car le choix est plus grand en ville (entretiens 1, 15, 18). Toutefois, si les perspectives de créations d'emplois sont tenues, les effets seront moindres, grâce à une offre d'emplois sur place. Dans tous les cas de figures, les villages seront différents. L'objectif n'est pourtant pas ici de défendre un passé révolu ou une nostalgie, l'aménagement et le développement sont des réalités nécessaires, et souhaitées par les élus, et par nombre d'habitants (Sawatzky 2022).

Toutefois, ces villages sont officiellement spécifiques ; ils sont reconnus comme des espaces désignés bilingues (Figure 4). Ils continuent malgré tout de subir minorisation et minoration, en dépit des politiques fédérales et provinciales. Pourtant ces

politiques ont eu tendance à s'étoffer au fil du temps touchant l'éducatif, la santé, le social, voire l'économique, mais elles demeurent insuffisantes pour que la langue minoritaire reste une langue d'usage du quotidien. Les entretiens réalisés montrent que les personnes sont unanimes sur cette question. Leurs conclusions s'orientent entre acceptation du fait, fatalisme, découragement, mais aussi volonté de résister. Dans ce dernier cas, l'attitude est volontariste, se traduisant par une demande du service en français, quand il existe. Cette diversité d'attitudes est d'autant plus compréhensible que toutes les personnes sont parfaitement bilingues, passant sans problème d'une langue à l'autre.

Une spécificité linguistique désormais reconnue mais un soutien qui reste insuffisant

Après des décennies de luttes, les francophones du Manitoba ont obtenu une certaine reconnaissance de leurs droits linguistiques. Le retournement de situation a été très graduel, par exemple à partir de 1963 pour l'école, mais là aussi très progressivement (Jourdain 2011). L'accélération est avant tout venue de l'extérieur de la province. La reconnaissance du bilinguisme (1969) et surtout la charte des droits et libertés (1982) ont permis d'institutionnaliser un bilinguisme fédéral, et un soutien aux communautés et politiques provinciales.

À l'échelle provinciale, le 20e siècle est à la fois une longue période de soumission et de luttes, avec des temps-forts (1983–1984, par exemple) et une certaine révolution tranquille à la manitobaine (Hébert 2012). Le changement s'est lentement concrétisé avec les premiers services en français à partir de 1989, ce qui est finalement très récent. La création d'une structure autonome de gestion des écoles francophones (1993), la Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM), a été représentative d'un pas en avant, et symbolique d'un siècle de revendications, mais, encore une fois, tardif, les nouvelles générations vivant de moins en moins dans un milieu familial francophone. Depuis ces années 1990, la politique provinciale a constamment été élargie, par exemple avec la délimitation, rappelons-le, de périmètres où vivent des groupes francophones, les régions désignées bilingues (Figure 4). En dépit des progrès réalisés, ces dispositifs restent bien modestes face aux réalités de déclin linguistique. Il existe bien une offre provinciale et municipale en français. Cette offre est pourtant assez limitée : par exemple, il suffit qu'une seule personne parle français dans les services municipaux, habituellement à l'accueil, pour que le contrat soit rempli. De plus, il est rare que les documents municipaux soient en français, et
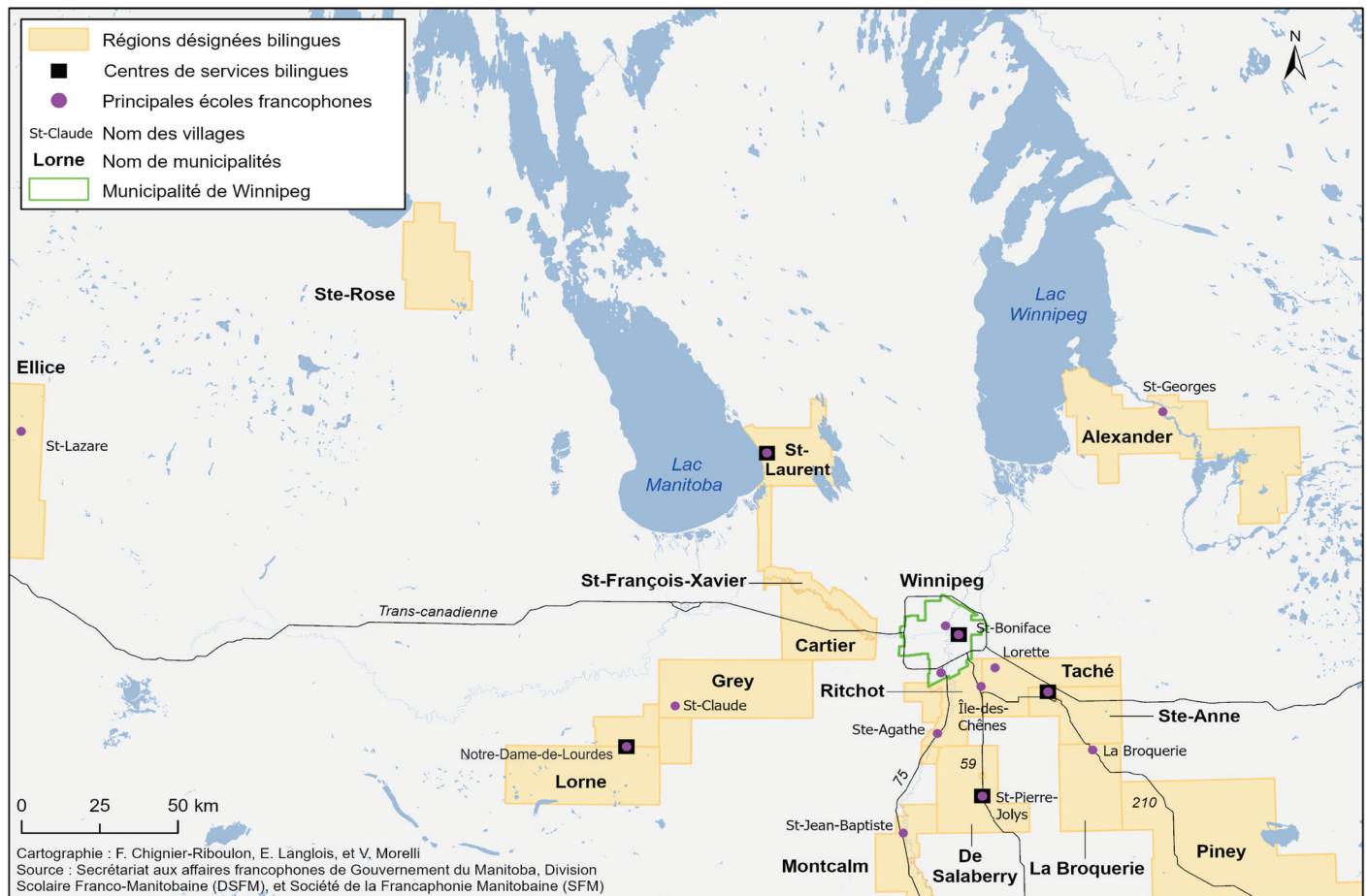

Figure 4
Les régions désignées bilingues par le Gouvernement du Manitoba

même tout simplement les comptes-rendus des conseils municipaux. Cela n'incite donc pas à l'usage de la langue.

C'est en conséquence une politique de protection moins active qu'elle n'y paraît. Cette politique est même parfois contrebalancée par d'autres mesures. Ainsi, la politique d'amalgamation a fragilisé des municipalités autrefois fortement francophones, comme Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, intégrée à Lorne, ou Saint-Claude à Grey. Les avancées dans le domaine législatif sont pourtant importantes, et les rapports annuels du Secrétariat aux affaires francophones témoignent avec nuances du travail réalisé et des contraintes existantes. Cependant, le portage de terrain paraît souvent être *a minima*, et il se conjugue, rappelons-le, avec une minorisation liée à l'arrivée de nouveaux habitants, qui seront de plus en plus nombreux. Dans ces conditions, les politiques publiques et la minorisation n'aident guère au maintien linguistique, surtout que les échanges à l'échelle municipale et les documents distribués (d'urbanisme ou bulletins municipaux, par exemple) ne se font qu'en anglais. À ces réalités s'ajoutent les évolutions sociétales (exogamie, Internet, plus grande maîtrise de l'anglais que du français) et une permanence de la minoration.

Ce déclin démographique en situation très minoritaire n'est pas limité à la situation provinciale. La tendance générale est globalement identique pour les francophones hors Québec ; à l'exception de quelques espaces, tel Moncton (Roy et Billette 2012), la part des francophones baisse inéluctablement. Ainsi, si l'on s'en tient à la définition officielle sur la langue officielle principale parlée, seules 18% des personnes parlent encore le français à Ritchot, selon les données de Statistique Canada (2022), avec des disparités importantes selon les villages. Le maximum est atteint à Sainte-Agathe, avec 38% (Statistique Canada 2022). Pour les employés municipaux, « À Sainte-Agathe, ils tiennent le français » (entretiens 16 et 17). Ce taux est beaucoup plus faible à Île-des-Chênes et Saint-Adolphe avec, respectivement, 19% et 23% (Statistique Canada 2022). Les chiffres sur la principale langue parlée à la maison présentent un taux moitié plus bas à 11% dans les deux communautes (Statistique Canada 2022). Là encore Sainte-Agathe se distingue avec 30% (Statistique Canada 2022). Dans tous les cas, le français a presque disparu de l'espace public (rue, restaurants, hôtel de ville), ce que la plupart des entretiens confirme. Ces chiffres ne sont guère surprenants. Ils s'inscrivent dans une évolution connue de longue date.

Minoration et assimilation sociale

En dépit des politiques ou des efforts individuels et collectifs, marquant une vitalité, l'assimilation progressive est fréquente (« on est avalés », entretien 18 ; « la langue se perd », entretiens, 1, 4, 7, 10, 18, « je n'entends plus de français dans la rue », entretien 3, ou « guère à la poste », entretien 5), sur ces villages ou ailleurs dans les Prairies. Par exemple, lors d'une fête locale, dans le gymnase, les sexagénaires se parlaient en français, et les enfants jouaient en anglais. Les phénomènes sont bien connus et soulignés par les acteurs locaux. Les enseignants et les conseillers scolaires pointent que le français est devenu une langue scolaire, et n'est plus guère une langue sociale (entretiens 9, 12, 15, 18), comme ailleurs au Manitoba. Les membres du personnel éducatif luttent même au quotidien pour que l'anglais ne soit pas la seule langue dans l'espace public scolaire (couloirs, cour de récréation) ou périscolaire (arrêts de bus). Certains parlent même « d'étiolement » (entretien 15) ou de disparition à venir (entretiens 2 et 9). Les commerçants (y compris La Caisse) comptent désormais ceux qui s'adressent à eux en français (entretiens 5, 6, 7, 19), souvent les plus vieux. Le curé (entretien 10) précise que la messe en anglais est pleine, contrairement à celle en français, ou que les services (mariages, enterrements) se font de plus en plus en anglais, à cause d'un nombre toujours plus grand d'anglophones dans les familles (assimilation, exogamie). Le discours dans les bibliothèques est plus optimiste (entretiens 3 et 11), mais seule la gestionnaire du camping est très positive (entretien 8) ; sa spécificité linguistique lui amenant les clients du Québec et du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Cette situation de domination culturelle et de décroissance d'un groupe culturel n'est pas propre au Canada, bien entendu. Les groupes minoritaires (gaélophones d'Écosse, bretonnants en France, Tibétains, berbérophones en Algérie ou au Maroc…) sont soumis aux mêmes logiques. D'autres groupes (Rohou 2011) connaissent des situations bien pires que celle de la minorité francophone du Manitoba (Welsch et Endicott 2005), et ils ne leur restent souvent que « le désespoir de n'engendrer que de l'indifférence » (Paré 1992, 21). En effet, souvent, derrière les discours officiels, voire les engagements, la règle est à l'homogénéisation (France, Italie, notamment, et bien d'autres), et la langue minoritaire demeure dévalorisée dans les relations sociales. Elle perd de fait progressivement de son utilité sociale, malgré l'optimisme fréquent des enquêtes officielles. La prégnance de la langue dominante (Colonna 2020, pour la Corse, mais ce qu'il écrit est valable pour les autres langues dites régionales en France), dans le travail, les espaces publics, les commerces ou sur les médias défavorise la langue minoritaire, puisqu'il ne faut pas exclure ceux qui ne la parlent pas. L'environnement social absorbe alors tendanciellement le minoritaire qui perd peu à peu l'usage de sa langue. Par-delà l'utopie officielle (Carlos 2020; Dorais et al. 2018), son bilinguisme décroît vers le monolinguisme du dominant. L'attitude sociale visant à diminuer la valeur ou l'importance d'un groupe, inériorisé de fait même s'il ne l'est plus de droit, se perpétue, en dépit des politiques de soutien. Le groupe reste en situation de mineur. Le mot parle de lui-même et s'applique, au Canada, à d'autres situations, telles celles des Ojibwés ou des Cris. Toutefois, sont également connus les effets positifs de la concentration démographique, des logiques d'isolement et de vitalité de la vie communautaire (Chignier-Riboulon 2017), pour n'en citer que quelques-uns. Chacun de ces éléments apporte une possibilité de résistance. Des politiques volontaristes ont aussi des effets positifs, comme en Espagne avec le catalan ou le basque. La situation de la minorité linguistique au Manitoba se place dans une situation de l'entre-deux.

La minoration présente n'est, certes, pas celle du passé, mais les générations de langue maternelle française sont toujours moins nombreuses, par assimilation ou non transmission de la

langue (Mougeon 2014). Dans ce contexte de domination, et malgré les évolutions institutionnelles, l'anglicisation de la vie sociale se perpétue car la réalité vécue est dissymétrique. Et le travail de terrain, sous ses différents aspects, renforce cette perception ; il conduit en conséquence à plus de modestie que les chiffres des recensements (Lepage et al. 2012). Ces derniers donnent des éléments déclaratifs, utiles, mais évaluant mal le vécu quotidien. Très concrètement, seul l'anglais est présent dans les commerces de Ritchot, et dans l'espace public plus généralement. Les francophones de Sainte-Agathe, les plus nombreux en pourcentage, sont invisibles, à moins de pénétrer dans les foyers. Le français se cantonne de fait au domaine privé, familial en premier lieu. En dehors du cercle familial, les personnes interrogées relèvent que le français est utilisé dans une logique d'interconnaissance, si l'interlocuteur est connu comme francophone. Son utilisation dans l'espace public qui lui est réservé (les écoles francophones, par exemple) est plus institutionnelle que sociale, car il y a, rappelons-le, peu ou pas de français hors des salles de cours.

Dans ces conditions, les statistiques officielles ne sont qu'un aspect de l'existant. Leur confrontation avec les usages vécus du quotidien les nuance. C'est dans ce contexte que lors des entretiens est soulignée l'accélération de l'anglicisation avec l'arrivée des condominiums. Certains s'amusent d'ailleurs à les appeler les « champignons » (entretien 18), car ils poussent très vite, trop vite.

En guise de conclusion : de la dualité à l'effacement

La fragilisation de ces très petites communautés n'est pas propre à cette région, ni à cette langue, puisque les langues autochtones sont dans une situation bien plus grave. Mais le risque d'un effacement apparaît toujours plus probable, avec l'appui d'une forme de minorisation spatiale et d'une minoration sociale. La liberté d'installation et de circulation est un droit fondamental. Il n'en demeure pas moins que penser et accepter des projets si vastes sur des espaces fragiles (Roth 2017) accroît leur mise en péril. L'utilisation du français, déjà réduite à des cercles d'amis ou à de petites institutions, comme une garderie ou une bibliothèque, va continuer à disparaître du paysage culturel. Les interventions des urbanistes, des promoteurs, des architectes et des élus ne se limitent pas à redessiner un environnement physique ou à prévoir un développement. Aménager l'espace, c'est toucher le territoire des hommes, leur vie sociale, leur présent et leur avenir.

Certes, la vitalité culturelle dépend aussi de la volonté des minorités concernées (Thériault 2007), de leur volonté affirmée de continuer à exister. Il s'agit alors d'une prise de conscience d'une utilité sociale et communautaire, pour la transmettre et la faire vivre. Et ce désir n'existe peut-être plus suffisamment. Les habitants francophones ou bilingues ont dès lors une responsabilité individuelle et collective, ainsi le titre de Thériault et Meunier (2008) est éclairant : « que reste-t-il de l'intention vitale » au sein de ces petites communautés affaiblies et dispersées ? La question mérite d'être posée, même si l'engagement

individuel et collectif demeure, car le portage communautaire, large, reste nécessaire à toute résistance constructive. Dans ce cadre, les institutions obtenues sont des moyens, pas des fins, même si rien n'est facile. Cependant, n'est-ce pas aussi de la responsabilité des acteurs de l'urbain d'offrir les conditions de l'épanouissement de ce groupe linguistique ? Plus largement, cela pose aussi la question de la personnalité de ces villages, ou d'autres similaires ? Ce ne sont pas uniquement de vieilles pierres ou des villages parmi d'autres. Chaque lieu est histoire et personnalité, au sens social et culturel avant tout. Il ne suffit pas de rappeler que tel festival ou fête a lieu chaque année, la langue est aussi une richesse qualifiant et spécifiant un territoire, au sens d'un espace approprié, sentimentalisé. Dans le cas contraire, le risque, dans le futur, sera une folklorisation de l'héritage, une forme de passé esthétisé (et commercialisé, Chignier-Riboulon 2012) mais ne parlant plus guère aux contemporains.

L'urbanisme contemporain dessine fréquemment une ville monotone : les mêmes condominiums ou maisons partout, les mêmes rues en impasses pour les lotissements, les mêmes zones d'activités étirées le long des voies rapides… Un monde reproduit à l'identique que l'on retrouve dans de nombreuses villes, d'un État à l'autre. Faudrait-il alors entrer dans une logique de patrimonialisation pour préserver la langue ? Du point de vue du bâti ces villages n'offrent rien de spécifique, hormis peut-être leurs cimetières, témoins d'implantations pionnières, d'alliances matrimoniales. Généralement ces villages sont nés humbles et mêmes pauvres dans ces grandes plaines. Une patrimonialisation culturelle alors ? Pourquoi pas ? Cependant, les acteurs publics locaux montrent peu d'empressement, si ce n'est souvent pour des politiques d'amalgamation, culturellement destructrices, sauf dans quelques cas de refus (Chignier-Riboulon 2020). Un autre volet pourrait être une forme de classement patrimonial linguistique. Il favoriserait la protection et l'intérêt public, voire le tourisme, ce qui peut être positif, mais conduirait éventuellement aussi à renforcer la place de la langue communément parlée, pour accueillir les visiteurs, à l'image du gaëlique dans les Hébrides extérieures, en Écosse (Chignier-Riboulon 2018).

La diversité sous toutes ses formes est une richesse, une manière de distinguer un lieu d'un autre, et cette distinction ne saurait se résumer à une place centrale ou à un monument symbolique, prétendant offrir une centralité ou un cœur iconique. Ne pourrait-on pas envisager des projets plus modestes, davantage intégrés à la vie sociale locale, et respectueux de l'environnement minoritaire fragile ? Dans cette perspective, la dimension ethnolinguistique ne devrait pas être oubliée, surtout dans ce pays ; en effet, elle est non seulement une richesse, mais aussi, finalement, une des manières de distinguer la société canadienne, de lui donner une personnalité propre, pour la différencier de son voisin états-unien.

Remerciements

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Hutterites: A borderland society

John C. Lehr

Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg

Key Messages

- Borders have played a key role in Hutterite history.
- Hard (political) borders have shaped the geography of Hutterites in North America.
- Soft boundaries created by the Hutterites themselves continue to determine Hutterite spatial behaviour.

The Hutterites are a German-speaking Christian pacifist Anabaptist group that crossed borders in Europe and North America in their search for sanctuary. They practice community of goods and live in colonies of between 100 and 150 people. Hutterites regard their colonies as religious arks in a secular sea. Although hard political borders have played critical roles in Hutterite history, soft borders set by Hutterites themselves control relationships within Hutterite society and the relationship of the colonies with the secular world.

Introduction

In recent decades borders and borderlands have garnered increasing attention from scholars in a variety of disciplines, including history (Baud and Van Schendel 1997; Evans 2006; Gutiérrez and Young 2010; Hernández 2011; Mochoruk 2023), gender studies (Segura and Zavella 2008), sociology (Facio 2010), epidemiology (Lara-Valencia and Laine, 2022) and geography (Widdis 1997, 2010, 2019). Borders have been conceptualized both as places of convergence and places of separation, sometimes physical, artificial, arbitrary, or cultural (DeLay 2013). Hämäläinen and Truett (2011, 339) contend that borderland historians have told mostly small-scale tales, privileging local description over large scale conceptualization. This cannot be said of current geographic research.

Border studies have considered borders in world-wide locales, with the US-Mexican and US-Canadian borders the geographic foci of a high proportion of borderland studies. For the most part such studies revolve around political borders: the 'hard' boundaries etched into legislation and demarcated by fences and barriers. Yet such borders constitute only part of the complexity of borders within which lives are lived. We ignore unmarked 'soft' borders at our peril; they may be socially demarcated but confine us as effectively as do physical barriers (Ardrey 1966; Gülzau et al. 2021; Hall 1966).

This paper considers the multiplicity of borders as experienced by the Hutterian Brethren, a unique social group whose society, history, and geography has been shaped by its shifting relationships with international, national, and social boundaries. It attempts to address the questions posed by Faires (2008, xii)

Correspondence to: John C. Lehr, Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9
Email: j.lehr@uwinnipeg.ca

of: "When, why, how, and to whom, do borders matter?" In addressing these questions, it considers the many different borders that determined Hutterite history and continue to affect Hutterite daily life. Information about the Hutterites' experiences with political borders is drawn from an array of published sources including Evans (2021), Hofer (2004), Hostetler (1974), Janzen (1999), Janzen and Stanton (2010), Katz and Lehr (2014), and Laatsch (1971). The soft borders of Hutterite life have received less attention. The arguments advanced in this paper are based on over three decades of observing Hutterite life, mostly in Schmiedeleut colonies, numerous visits to colonies in Manitoba and hundreds of informal conversations with colony members.

Political 'hard' borders

The Hutterian Brethren, usually referred to as Hutterites, are a German-speaking Protestant Christian people who are pacifist and believe that only by holding "all things common" can one practice a truly Christian life. Accordingly, they practice community of goods, living in colonies (*Bruderhofs*), usually between 70 to 100 people. Their worldview is shaped by their conviction that the colony is an ark of righteousness adrift on a secular ocean of sin. Their history has been covered in numerous popular and academic sources. John Hofer, a minister on a Manitoba Schmiedeleut colony, provides an authoritative synopsis (Hofer 2004), as does Victor Peters (1967, 9–50) but a more detailed record is available in the two volumes of *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* (2004). Recent studies by Janzen and Stanton (2010), Katz and Lehr (2014), and Evans (2021) all review Hutterite migration history while considering Hutterite society in a wider context.

From their inception Hutterian Brethren have occupied theocratic and geographic borderlands. Questioning the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church and deviating from the tenets of newly minted Lutheran doctrines involved crossing several theological borders. The resultant persecution triggered a series of cross-border migrations from their points of origin in Carinthia and Moravia to eastern Ukraine where they settled in the late 1600s before remigrating to the United States, where they settled in South Dakota in the early 1870s.

The Hutterites arrived in the United States as three separate and distinct groups under three leaders: Jacob Wipf, a schoolteacher (*Lehrer*), Michal Waldner, a blacksmith (*Schmiede*), and Darius Walter. Over time they developed minor differences of dress and appearance, becoming known as the *Lehrerleut* (Teacher's people), *Schmiedeleut* (Smith's people), and *Dariusleut* (Darius' people) (Peters 1967, 44). The boundaries around each group were seldom breached by intermarriage. They established their first colonies in the James Valley area of South Dakota.

Not all Hutterite families that migrated to the United States settled in colonies. About half settled independently on individual homesteads. Known as the *Prairieleut* they eventually integrated with the surrounding Swiss-German Mennonite congregations, losing all connection with their communal brethren (Peters 1967, 42).

In 1898, five months of conflict between the USA and Spain raised fears among the Hutterites that conscription would be introduced. Earlier, when the Hutterites and their Mennonite brethren had arrived in North America, the Canadian federal government had offered exemption from military service as an inducement to settle in Canada. Many Mennonites took advantage of this and were granted reserves of land in southern Manitoba for their exclusive settlement. At the time the Hutterites chose not to take advantage of the offer, preferring the economically more advanced United States. In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, the Dariusleut decided to establish a colony in Manitoba as a potential refuge should one be required. In 1899, they paid $20,000 for 880 acres in four Townships strung along the Roseau River southeast of Dominion City. Nineteen families (52 people) led by Minister Jacob Hofer and Colony Boss D. Waldner formed the new colony (Manitoba Archives; Franklin RM). The land was rough and flood-prone, but the colony ran cattle and sheep, and its grist mill captured the business previously possessed by Dominion City, largely because the colony provided overnight accommodation for Ukrainian settlers hauling their grain from southeastern Manitoba (Lehr 2011, 90).

As the likelihood of conscription receded, Hutterite fears diminished, and Canada's attraction faded. Across the international boundary lay a better economic climate, superior transportation links, easier access to markets, better land, and a cluster of colonies. After six years in Canada the colony sold its land and retreated to South Dakota.

When the United States entered the First World War on the Allied side in 1917, a wave of anti-German hysteria swept through the nation. Hutterites were forcibly conscripted and imprisoned when they refused to serve. Two died in military prison at Fort Leavenworth from brutal treatment while incarcerated there and in Alcatraz (Stoltzfus 2013). Hutterite property was seized and sold off at bargain prices. The proceeds were used to buy war bonds. This triggered a cross-border movement to Canada. The six Schmiedeleut colonies moved to land purchased in Manitoba, the four Dariusleut and four Lehrerleut moved to land purchased in southern Alberta (Evans 2021, 18–30). Crossing the international border was complicated by its closure in 1919 while the colonies were in the process of relocating. Some members, in the process of moving north, were stranded in the United States, unable to join their fellows in the new Canadian colonies. Not until 1934 were the last of these unfortunates able to reunite with their fellows in Alberta (Evans 2021, 41–42).

High birth rates, coupled with the Hutterites' experience that colonies functioned best when the population was around 120 to 150 people, meant daughter colonies were established with regularity, thus antagonizing an already suspicious rural population fearful of dominance by German-speaking aliens (Katz and Lehr 2014, 23–29). The political process was long and convoluted but culminated in the 1940s with limitations placed on the size of colonies, and restrictions put on locations (Evans 2021, 51–66; Laatsch 1971). These new spatial restrictions varied by province

and date of enaction. All set arbitrary boundaries that forced the colonies to disperse more widely than they wished. In Alberta, it led new colonies to locate as far afield as the Peace River district and reduced the concentration of colonies in southern Alberta, pushing colonies across the provincial boundary into Saskatchewan. In Manitoba, the effect was to stop the concentration of colonies in Cartier Municipality, dispersing them more widely throughout southern Manitoba. These restrictions were all rescinded by the 1970s. Today, land prices play a crucial role in directing the spatial expansion of the colonies (Lehr 2019). It is the price of land that is driving the Schmiedeleut to locate new colonies in eastern Saskatchewan, not repressive legislation.

Social 'soft' borders

Regardless of the *leut* to which they belong, all Hutterites live in a milieu circumscribed by boundaries set by the colonies themselves. As Agnew (2020, 58–60) has pointed out, the concept of a border is intertwined with ideas of cultural homogeny, with an us vs them dichotomy. Borders in such cases are not necessarily physical, nor is space the sole determinant of separation. For the Hutterites, an isolated colony location is desired to protect against contact with the secular world. Isolation, though, is not necessarily a function of distance, whether it be from another colony or a major metropolitan centre. Social distance and geographic distance can be conflated. Proximity to a major highway may cause a colony to be more exposed than one accessible only by secondary unpaved country roads. Although Hutterites are commonly seen in Winnipeg, as they patronize shopping centres, various retail outlets, and medical facilities, very few Winnipeggers could pinpoint a colony location. For example, Sturgeon Creek Colony and Rock Lake Colony are respectively located only a few kilometres from the western and northern outskirts of Winnipeg, yet few Winnipeggers are aware of their precise locations since Hutterite colonies are marked but not named or identified as colonies on Canadian topographic maps, although they are on United States' topographic sheets. Furthermore, it is rare for a colony's location to be indicated by an official road sign, although some colonies have erected signs for the benefit of visitors from other colonies and companies with whom they do business. To remedy the difficulty of locating colonies, the *Hutterite Telephone Directory* publishes colony geographic co-ordinates in decimal format that is used by most GPS devices. Some years ago, I was driving from Winnipeg to visit Rock Lake Colony but was unable to locate it. I asked a local farmer for its location, but although aware of its existence he was unable to direct me to it. I found later that I was than less than five kilometres away from the colony!

The placement and layout of colonies reflects their desire for separation from the secular world. Colonies are located away from major highways and, in the parklands, are screened from view by trees. Evergreen Colony, near Somerset, Manitoba, is located at the side of a provincial highway, but is entirely screened from view by a densely planted row of pine trees. In the sub-humid regions of southern Saskatchewan and Alberta, where trees fare poorly, colonies such as Box Elder Colony and Cypress Colony compensate by locating well back from the gravel provincial highways. Only one colony, Blumengart, in Manitoba, is bisected by a public road. It was founded as a Mennonite village in 1876. When its population migrated *en masse* to Mexico in 1922, the village was bought by Milltown Colony and used as a new daughter colony.

Gender roles affect the social boundaries of Hutterite society. Within the colonies most work is gendered, which affects how both sexes perceive social boundaries within and beyond the colony. Men work in agriculture, and in ancillary operations. Women work in the domestic sphere, at home, in the colony kitchen and colony garden. In their daily life during the winter women tend to remain within the residential core of the colony, as their roles require them to step beyond their houses only to work in the colony kitchen, use the laundry, visit the kindergarten, or attend church. In summer, their sphere of action widens. Time is spent in the colony garden. In colonies with an industrial operation, which among the Schmiedeleut is increasingly common, women are employed in a secretarial/administrative capacity. Thus, within colony limits women have a far more restricted territory and are less likely to venture beyond the colony boundary on a regular basis.

Occasionally soft borders are breached, perhaps for symbolic reasons. There is a rigid seating plan for communal meals. Each adult has an assigned place in the main dining area, which is also segregated by sex, men on one side, women on the other, with the seating order arranged according to age (Katz and Lehr 2014, 58–59). Children under 15 years eat in the separate children's dining room under the supervision of the German teacher. Places are assigned according to age, with the youngest members sitting with the most senior members. In the past, men were served by the women, but increasingly meals are served buffet-style. At a *hulba*, a celebration to mark an engagement, and some weddings, gender roles are reversed when the young men of the colony serve the newly-engaged or newly-married couple, guests, and other colony members. These practices do not always apply to non-Hutterite guests.

For women, the significance of the soft borders surrounding the colony is compounded by the reluctance of many colony leaders to allow women to hold driver's licenses, although many women skillfully drive tractors and other vehicles on colony property. While men may leave the colony independently for work-related reasons, it is uncommon for women to do so, unless it is for a group activity such as berry-picking.

This has changed over time, and continues to do so, partly owing to technological change. In the 1930s, horizons were far more limited because roads were poor and horses were the primary transportation mode. Spheres of daily action expanded as roads improved and motor vehicles replaced horse-drawn transport. A measure of this is seen in James Valley Colony, which kept a log of all off-colony trips until the late 1960s when trip frequency and increased access to colony vehicles made the exercise redundant.

Colony leaders also set boundaries hoping that observance of them will buffer their society from the onrush of cultural mo-

dernity. The Hutterites' retention of traditional dress helps to define their members when they cross from their realm into the secular world outside the colony, but it offers no protection from the penetration of secular values into the colony. No matter how desirable isolation may be from a religious standpoint, interaction with the sinful secular world can only be limited, it cannot be avoided completely. Thus, radios and televisions remain prohibited, but land-line telephones were eventually permitted. By the mid-1990s land-line telephones were common in colonies of all the leute, although some of the more conservative Lehrerleut colonies still only have a telephone in the colony office. Fax machines were allowed, and all colonies now have one (*Hutterite Telephone Directory* 2019). But smartphones and the internet are a different matter, causing problems for the colonies.

Computers and smart phones enabled the secular world to easily penetrate the borders the Hutterites had placed around their colonies. Flip phones that did not give access to the internet were not seen as a problem. They were regarded as a useful tool for communication, but smartphones connected to the internet were seen as a real threat to the moral security of the Hutterite community. Similarly, computers without connection to the internet were not seen as threatening, but if connected were seen by Schmiedeleut leaders as breaching the borders of righteousness. In their *Ordnungen und Konferenz Briefen* (*sic*) [Regulations and Conference Letters], which dictate the behavioural norms of the Schmiedeleut colonies, the leut's leadership urged caution in allowing any access to the internet, though they recognize that if the colonies are to remain economically efficient, access to the internet is required (Katz and Lehr 2019). For a few years, communal phones were loaned out to colony members for use while travelling. Now smartphones are common, despite the reservations of colony leaders.

In the mid-1990s, the Schmiedeleut suffered a major schism triggered by a dispute over leadership and the direction in which the then head of the leut was leading the colonies. Two factions of the Schmiedeleut emerged, a more progressive Group I and a conservative Group 2. Like most religious disputes, that between the Schmiedeleut groups was intense and emotions ran high. Each group was convinced of the righteousness of their position. Mostly colonies agreed to support one or the other side, but occasionally individual families felt strongly enough to leave their colony and join a colony that aligned with their views. Some even crossed the international boundary to do so. Although the dispute has now abated somewhat with the passing of the controversial Group I leader, it appears that the split will be permanent. At the height of the dispute, colony members were forbidden to visit their relatives living in colonies affiliated with the other group, though this was often ignored. Inter-group marriage was discouraged but again this injunction was not heeded by some young people. Many leaders were realistic and sanctioned existing relationships. Nevertheless, reduced contact between members of the different groups reduced opportunities for young people from Group I and Group II to meet and strike up any romantic relationship. It remains to be seen whether this schism will be repaired and eliminate the theological border between the two Schmiedeleut groups.

Territories and their borders within colony limits differ from those encountered in mainstream secular society. Most obvious to outsiders is that Hutterites do not knock to request permission to enter a fellow colony member's home. Generally, they enter and, if nobody is present, will call out to announce their presence. During a recent visit to James Valley Colony in Manitoba, I remarked that I had not seen a doorbell or knocker on a Hutterite colony. I was immediately informed that I would never see one. People simply open the door and walk in, a behaviour that would be regarded as unacceptable in most secular societies, where the threshold concept carries great significance in the demarcation of territory (Hall 1966). This behaviour pattern does not extend to outsiders, only to community members.

Within colony grounds, outsiders can easily be identified by their secular (non-Hutterite) dress. Hutterites can easily determine the leut to which a fellow Hutterite belongs by minor differences in clothing styles and, among men, by beard styles and headgear.

Hutterites move freely within their colony's limits, although traditional gender roles dictate that the communal kitchen is primarily women's domain, as is the kindergarten and the laundry. Within colonies with an industrial component the manufacturing area is male domain; in all colonies the carpenter's, electrician's, mechanic's, and smith's shops are male preserves, along with virtually all areas associated with agriculture.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 outbreak appeared in Canada, new borders emerged as existing borders were closed in attempts to control threats that were largely perceived to be external (Lara-Valencia and Laine 2022, 665–677). Divisions appeared within the Hutterite community centring on the efficacy of precautionary measures and the risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines. Some colonies, such as Baker Colony, a Schmiedeleut Group 1 colony in Manitoba, enthusiastically endorsed vaccination, even printing stickers proclaiming, in the Hutterische dialect, *Ich bin Gimpft fir COVID-19* [I've been vaccinated for COVID-19] (*Winnipeg Free Press* 2021). This was not well received by a substantial proportion of the Hutterite community that is suspicious of vaccines. The colony toned down their endorsements after receiving considerable backlash within the Brotherhood, accompanied by behaviour that contradicted basic Hutterite values (Anon 2023).

The imposition of travel restrictions by the United States and Canadian federal governments affected the colonies' cross-border trade and inter-colony trade, but perhaps the greatest impact was on Hutterite social life. Baptisms and weddings were postponed as restrictions on gatherings were mandated by provincial health agencies (Maendel 2020). The Hutterite practice of the bride moving to the groom's colony means that most families on a colony have strong family connections with other colonies. Visiting relatives on these colonies is an important element of colony life and is done with a frequency that might surprise outsiders. During the COVID lockdown, Group I colonies used technology to overcome the restrictions placed on gatherings and visits to other colonies (Wollman 2023), but this option was not open to the more conservative Group II colonies.

The Hutterites, for all intents and purposes, are a closed community. They do not proselytize, and it is rare for an outsider to join and remain a member. An attempt by the Schmiedeleut to merge with members of the *Bruderhof*, an evangelical communal group founded by Eberhard Arnold, raised tensions within the leut but introduced new blood into the community. The *Bruderhof* emulate Hutterite society but are more liberal—or less traditional—in their approach to worship (Zablocki 1971). Some intermarriage occurred, largely confined to Crystal Spring Colony led by the late Jacob Kleinsasser, the architect of the merger. Although the merger ultimately failed, there are now a few non-traditional Hutterite names listed under Crystal Spring Colony in the *Hutterite Telephone Directory* (2019). These new members are all within the more liberal Group I colonies. Group II colony, James Valley, has a member who joined the community as an adult in 1998, married a colony girl, and with their seven children family is now a fully integrated member of the colony (Hofer, Johnny 2019, 196). To join entailed spending time in Germany to study the language, and learning the Hutterische dialect, the lingua franca of the Hutterites. The rarity of such occurrences testifies to the difficulty of crossing the cultural/spiritual border that separates the colony from the non-communal secular and Christian worlds.

It may seem paradoxical but the greatest threat to the Hutterites is not the secular world but evangelical Christian groups who promise salvation without the sacrifices of communal living. These groups are unwelcome on the colonies. Consequently, they attempt to penetrate the colonies' borders by reaching out to Hutterites when they are beyond the colonies' protective bounds. In Medicine Hat and Lethbridge, in a region of Alberta with many Lehrerleut and Dariusleut colonies, proselytizing Christian sects operate booths in neutral territories, such as shopping malls, and places known to be frequented by Hutterites on visits to town (Tardieu 2022). Dedicated to "rescuing disaffected members of Hutterite colonies or Plymouth Brethren congregations," *Run Away Hutterite* maintains toll free telephones and the *Colony to Society Association* maintains an office in Calgary and a Facebook page offering assistance to anyone wishing to leave (CSA 2023). That such organizations exist speaks to the significance and power of the unmarked soft borders surrounding Hutterite society. Just as illegal immigrants seeking to cross an international boundary might need the assistance of a courier or smuggler, so do dissident colony members who want to leave the colony and cross the border into the secular world.

Conclusion

Hutterite society, like all societies, functions within the context of borders. Unlike most other societies, the Hutterites, by virtue of their geographic distribution across state, provincial and the international borders, have been acutely aware of their significance throughout their history. The soft borders set by religion and culture are a crucial part of Hutterite life, defining space within the colony and controlling the spatial relationship between Hutterites and the secular host society. The survival of the colonies in North Dakota contrasts with the rapid assimilation of the *Prairieleut* Hutterites, demonstrating the effectiveness of the self-imposed soft borders of those who live in community. Seldom marked on the ground, these borders are an essential element of Hutterite life, and as has been suggested here, are no less difficult to cross than the sometime militarized borders between sovereign states. The soft borders of Hutterite life, if we can bowdlerize Edmund Burke's remark, are as thin as air, but as strong as links of iron.

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Sustainability action in faith communities: A comparative case study of two Winnipeg congregations

Justine Backer
Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

Joanne M. Moyer
Environmental Studies and Geography, The King's University

A. John Sinclair
Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

Key Messages

- The environmental action evident in these two Winnipeg congregations included education, practical greening, and some activism and advocacy.
- Leadership and institutional structures at the congregational and broader faith community level are significant factors in supporting or obstructing environmental engagement for congregations and their members.
- Faith contributed to environmental work in different ways: as a primary motivator or as a sustainer for work motivated by factors unconnected to faith.

Faith communities have been in dialogue with the environmental movement, and the sustainability project more broadly, since the 1960s and provide an interesting entry point for considering action on sustainability. The dearth of empirical research on faith-based sustainability activities in Canada provided the impetus for our consideration of the sustainability work of faith communities at the congregational level in Canada. The research used a qualitative case study approach involving two congregations working on sustainability and included a survey, interviews, and observation. The data reveals action on sustainability at the congregational level and within the broader community, which we ground in the broader contexts of the congregations' national faith bodies. The analysis considers catalysts for and barriers to taking action, and explores how faith interacts with sustainability commitments and action, providing a unique Canadian perspective.

Keywords: faith-based environmentalism, sustainability, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, Winnipeg

Introduction

Since the inception of the environmental movement in the 1960s, it has been in dialogue with religions and faith communities. This conversation was most famously sparked by White's (1967) paper in *Science* which identified Judeo-Christian worldviews that justified environmental exploitation and degradation and called for either a new religion or a renewal of biblical and theological interpretations. The ensuing literature took a variety of different approaches.

Some theologians within various faith traditions began developing eco-theologies that found environmentally friendly imperatives within their teachings and scriptures (e.g., De Vos et al. 1991; Foltz et al. 2003; Ehrenfeld and Bentley 1985; Schaeffer 1970). The most ambitious of these projects was sponsored by Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology, which hosted conferences and produced multiple volumes in the late 1990s that described ecological imperatives within different world religions (e.g., Hessel and Ruether 2000). This body of literature is largely prescriptive, exhorting members of a particular faith community to accept and abide by these new or revived interpretations.

Another body of works has assessed the degree to which pro-environmental attitudes correlate (or not) with religious commitment. Gathered largely through survey data, the results of this research are somewhat ambivalent (Djupe and Hunt 2009; Kidwell et al. 2018), though they often show that Christians, particularly in the United States and within specific denominations, typically have lower levels of environmental concern and commitment than society at large (e.g., Clements et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 2016). These empirical data have contributed to fairly widespread assumptions, especially within the environmental community, that faith in general, and Christianity in particular, function primarily as contributors to the problem. Examples of Christian voices, such as the Cornwall Alliance (Cornwall Alliance 2023) and the Acton Institute (Acton Institute 2023), denying climate change or opposing most measures to mitigate it, and decrying the environmental movement as anti-Christian, support these perceptions (Gould and Kearns 2018; Zaleha and Szasz 2015). Typically, barriers such as an anthropocentric worldview that promotes human domination of nature, a singular focus on spiritual salvation, and distrust of science are cited as the reasons why Christians are less committed to sustainability (Fowler 1995; White 1967; Zaleha and Szasz 2015).

A contrasting stream to these views also emerged and it argued that faith-based approaches to environmental and sustainability issues might contain unique strengths and attributes that are missing from the efforts of governments, scientists, and secular environmental activists (e.g., Gardner and Peterson 2002; Hitzhusen 2006; Oelschlaeger 1994). Faith communities, it was posited, have a unique set of resources, can influence worldviews, engage large audiences, provide space for communication and connectivity, and use institutional and economic resources to build programs and connect people (Bomberg and Hague 2018; Caniglia et al. 2015; El Jurdi et al. 2017; Veldman et al. 2014).

These claims were followed by empirical studies investigating faith-based sustainability activities. Initial studies were largely descriptive and anecdotal, demonstrating the range of activities and faith communities involved. Descriptive studies for particular contexts continue to be produced (e.g., Gottlieb 2006; Gould and Kearns 2018; Johnston 2013; McDuff 2010, 2012; Moyer 2018; Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). This work has matured into more analytical inquiries, for example, identifying the types of theological and worldview frames that are employed (e.g., Kearns 1996; Jenkins 2008; Moyer and Scharper 2019; Scharper 1997), seeking empirical evidence for the unique attributes and roles assigned to faith communities, and documenting their particular approaches to action and mobilization as well as their shortcomings (e.g., Ellingson 2019; Glaab and Fuchs 2018; Kerber 2014; Koehrsen 2021; Lysack 2013; Smith and Pulver 2009; Smith and Veldman 2020).

The latter stream has also initiated consideration of congregational-level activities, which is the focus of our study. At the congregational level, sustainability concepts are typically communicated through a committed leadership, who have the authority to influence faith community members' attitudes towards sustainability (Caldwell et al. 2022; Koehrsen 2018; Lakhan 2018; Tsimpo and Wodon 2016), though sustainability action may be instigated through committed congregational leadership (e.g., a priest or minister), a group of faith community members, or top-down through leadership organizations (Kidwell et al. 2018). Environmental sustainability messages within faith communities are typically framed in their faith language and perspectives, which contrasts with secular groups that use other messaging, such as ecological degradation. This kind of faith framing of environmental sustainability can potentially engage an audience of people that might not otherwise connect with sustainability practices (Bomberg and Hague 2018).

Although faith communities have potential to increase participation in sustainability activities, research in this area is still lacking in Canada and elsewhere (El Jurdi et al. 2017; Ives and Kidwell 2019; Johnston 2013; Morrison et al. 2015). In particular, there are many questions and minimal evidence available to confirm any long-term environmental change and contributions to sustainability by these communities (Caldwell et al. 2022; Moyer 2018; Smith and Pulver 2009). While there has been a range of studies conducted in the United States, there has been minimal research on faith communities and environmental sustainability in Canada. As such, the purpose of this paper is to study the sustainability action of faith communities at the congregational level, and to identify the foundations and barriers individuals and collective groups face in pursuing such action, including the role of faith. Following Vaidyanathan et al. (2018), who note the lack of attention to how institutions shape or impede action within faith communities, we ground the action of our case communities within both the institutional infrastructure of their local congregations and their broader Canadian and international structures and cultures.

Several of the terms used in our research have multiple and contested meanings. We define sustainability as promoting healthy social and ecological systems, reconciling "social justice, ecological integrity, and the well-being of all living systems on the planet" (Moore 2005, 78). Faith is understood as a commitment to an ultimate concern, often but not always involving beliefs and practices related to the divine or the transcendent, as expressed in a particular cumulative tradition that has grown through and continues to evolve within a particular social and cultural context (Haynes 2007; Smith 1963; Thomas 2005). Faith communities are organized communities that share "…systems of belief, ritual, institutional life, spiritual aspiration, and ethical orientation that view human beings as more than simply their social or physical selves" (Gottlieb 2006, viii).

Our focus is local faith communities that meet regularly for worship and other activities in a particular space. We will use the terms "congregation," which is more general, and "parish," which is specific to Roman Catholics and some other Christian groups, to describe these communities.

Methods

This research employed a qualitative case study strategy (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Initially, we established a list of 19 national level faith communities in Canada, such as the United Church of Canada and the World Sikh Organization of Canada, that were active on sustainability and/or environmental issues (see Backer 2019 for a complete list). The national level list was identified based on an internet search and telephone interviews completed by the second author as part of a larger research project (Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). Building on the national level list, we searched for local congregations that were meeting regularly and that were working on sustainability or environmental issues. We employed broad web searches, using keywords such as "sustainable mosque," or "sustainable Catholic church," and searching by province, territory and major city. Then we reviewed congregations' websites for indications of sustainability engagement. This work revealed that Christian websites had far more sustainability information than non-Christian. It should be noted that this does mean that other faith communities have less commitment to sustainability. Rather, Christians are more established and organized, while other faith communities often consist of more recent immigrants and are therefore focused on pressing concerns related to establishing themselves in Canada (Appoloni and Eaton 2016; Moyer and Sinclair 2022).

The list of local congregations was ranked from most to least active on environmental sustainability using available online information. For example, the presence of a dedicated environment committee, sustainability programming, and available resources for faith community members, were considered in determining rank. This information resulted in a long list of 30 congregations from across Canada that we identified as being active on sustainability issues, which we then considered for case study selection (see Backer 2019). Through visiting the websites and in some cases speaking with members of these congregations we identified the 10 most active from which we planned to choose case study congregations. We aimed to select case congregations that (1) were highly active in terms of the range and number of their sustainability activities; (2) were large enough communities to provide access to a sufficient sample size of participants; (3) together provided a diversity of faith groups to move beyond the largely Christian focus within the existing literature and to express the range of faith communities in Canada; and (4) were willing to participate. We considered congregations from across Canada, but information provided on websites was minimal. We contacted congregations for more details and were able to connect more easily with congregations in Winnipeg, where the lead author was located and had connections. Several congregations in Winnipeg emerged as both highly active and eager to partici-

pate. We chose to balance geographic reach and diversity with the advantages of focusing the study in Winnipeg. These benefits included the possibility of having three case studies instead of just two, and allowing the lead author to extend the research time in field, which resulted in attendance at more congregational events and making more contacts.

We pursued three case congregations in Winnipeg: St. Ignatius Parish (Roman Catholic), the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg (UUCW), and a Muslim mosque. The mosque, however, was not as environmentally active as they initially appeared to be, and were not fully committed to participating in the research. Thus, we chose St. Ignatius and UUCW as our final two cases studies. We deemed that these two communities would provide for interesting comparisons in several ways. While both are environmentally active at the congregational level, their institutional contexts are very different. The Unitarians, along with the United Church, constitute the top tier of environmentally active faith communities in Canada, while the Roman Catholics have a more varied record (Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). This set of cases also promised a modicum of interfaith diversity. Both communities have roots in the Christian tradition, but the Roman Catholic church is foundational to the Christian family tree, while the Unitarians have moved beyond their Christian roots. They have become a unique community that is in many ways more secular than most faith communities, but still exhibits many of the characteristics that define faith. Their commitment to an "ultimate concern" does not require, though may include, belief in God, but they still retain a sense of the transcendent, their community activities revolve around communal worship, and they are united by a set of principles that guide ethical action.

Data collection consisted of qualitative questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. The lead author spent approximately two months in 2018 with each congregation building relationships and collecting data. This project was approved by Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board of The University of Manitoba. All interview participants are identified by congregation and a number.

Qualitative questionnaires were administered to congregation members online through Survey Monkey to determine what kind of opportunities for learning about sustainability were available in the community, and what kind of actions had been taken by members. The questions were developed using the literature on faith-based environmentalism. We received 37 responses to the qualitative questionnaire from St. Ignatius Parish and 26 responses from the UUCW.

Semi-structured interviews built on the data collected in the questionnaires, aiming to gather more details about sustainability actions and connecting those actions to faith. The lead author conducted 13 interviews for each case. One participant withdrew from the study, leaving a final total of 25 interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes, and averaged approximately 45 minutes. The majority of case study interview participants were women who were retired. The interview participants self-selected by indicating interest in participating through the questionnaire.

The lead author spent time in the congregations or faith community centres conducting participant observation of congregational activities such as Sunday worship, committee meetings, a documentary screening, and watching for indicators such as advertisements, posters, or other information posted and available to community members, both recent and historical.

The questionnaire data were exported from Survey Monkey and interviews were transcribed by the lead author. Data were analyzed using NVivo software to organize identified themes and categories. The analysis process employed both grounded themes, especially for the questionnaire data, and codes shaped by the literature, using parent themes such as environmental education and creation care.

The cases in context

Table 1 provides a summary overview of key characteristics of the two case congregations. The sections that follow describe the congregations in greater detail and situate them and their environmental activities within the larger context of their faith communities in Canada and internationally.

St. Ignatius Parish

St. Ignatius Parish is a Roman Catholic Jesuit Parish located in central Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It was founded in 1908 and has been at its current location since 1929 (St. Ignatius 2019). The parish is very active with over 20 different ministries including the Environment Committee, the Refugee Committee,

and Development and Peace, the international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada (Development and Peace 2023).

The Environment Committee (EC), which formed in 2006, was the main driver of sustainability activities. Research participants mentioned environmental discourse and activity within St. Ignatius prior to 2006, but sustainability activity was not officially recognized until the formation of the EC. The committee was formed in response to a growing interest in and need for action on the environment within the parish. The goals of the EC are to "provide education to increase awareness of the environment and society's impact on it, and to promote reduce, reuse and recycle in the church and community to minimize the impact on the environment" (St. Ignatius Environment Committee 2017). The EC organizes various sustainability activities in the parish, as well as leading any environmental initiatives.

All sustainability initiatives and events that we identified at St. Ignatius through our qualitative survey, interviews, and document review are described below. All these initiatives were organized by the EC. Besides some possible overlap with other social justice initiatives and the work of some individuals, it appeared there was little environmental work coming from other parts of the parish. One exceptional example of an environmental initiative occurring outside the EC was the installation of LED lightbulbs by individuals within the Knights of Columbus, a service order for Catholic men (Knights of Columbus 2023). No sustainability initiatives were identified as coming from the parish leadership (i.e., the priest); everything was initiated at the grassroots level, bottom-up from congregation members on the committee.

Table 1
Cases in brief

St. Ignatius Parish	First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg
• Strong community presence	• Strong community presence
• Social justice focused (Jesuit)	• Social justice and sustainability focused
• Strong institutional influence (Magisterium)	• Minimal institutional influence
• Large population: services approx. 800 congregation members	• Medium population: services approx. 130 congregation members
• Church demographic: mix of aging population and families, ethnicities	• Church demographic: mix of aging population and families, ethnicities
• Regular services (Mass) every day of the week	• Regular service every Sunday
• Active Environment Committee (EC)	• Active Green Action Committee (GAC)
• EC meets monthly	• GAC meets monthly
• EC- members aging	• GAC- members aging
• Established sustainability activity (waste management)	• Established sustainability activity (waste management)
• Irregular sustainability events, mostly educational	• Regular and frequent sustainability events, including education and worship
• Mixed opinions on how faith supports sustainability	• Consistent opinions/support on how faith supports sustainability (7th principle)

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination worldwide. It has a hierarchical structure, with the papacy at the top, followed by the bishops, then the parishes (Langan 1998). This hierarchical structure gives authority at various levels and allows leadership to govern their respective local, regional, or global bodies. The Magisterium is the teaching office of the Roman Catholic Church, and its materials are communicated through the Pope and through all bishops in communion with the papacy (McFarland et al. 2011; Melé 2011). The Magisterium has developed a collection of teachings on how a Christian should act in social life called Catholic Social Teachings, which have been compiled over time from papal encyclicals, which are doctrinal documents written by popes (Dyrness and Kärkkäinen 2008; Melé 2011). Recognitions of environmental degradation and the need for a Christian response have consistently appeared in papal statements and teachings since

Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (Raven 2016).

In 2015, Pope Francis published *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home*. This is the first papal encyclical that focuses extensively on environmental sustainability, acknowledges the scientific evidence supporting climate change, and emphasizes the risks faced by populations in poverty from a changing climate (Li et al. 2016; O'Brien and Shannon 2016). While the encyclical's focus on "caring for our common home" involves an integrated approach to social and environmental issues, touching on topics ranging across global poverty, pollution, and employment, the main messages discussed by the public and academia are the acknowledgment of the environmental crisis (e.g., Kidwell et al. 2018; Li et al. 2016). This element of the encyclical is significant because it reframes biblical interpretations of human dominion over the earth as stewardship and care (Christie et al. 2019; Kidwell et al. 2018; O'Brien and Shannon 2016), providing followers with a framework for thinking about and approaching environmental issues. However, it has been slow to disseminate because of the way that information is supported at certain levels of leadership, and it is not widely familiar in many Catholic parishes (Ives and Kidwell 2019; Li et al. 2016).

In Canada, commitment to environmental concerns within the Roman Catholic community over the decades has been mixed. Ecological awareness and concern emerged among Canadian Catholics in the 1970s and 1980s, with leadership from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which had staff dedicated to environmental concerns and produced publications on sustainability and other social issues (Gunn 2018; Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). The bishops also collaborated with ecumenical coalitions such as Project North and the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility to address energy, resource development, and Indigenous peoples' concerns (Gunn and Lambton 1999). In recent decades, however, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has pulled away from sustainability concerns (Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). For example, in 2016, the bishops withdrew from KAIROS, an ecumenical social justice organization that has worked actively on climate change, mining, and Indigenous issues (Gunn 2018; KAIROS 2023).

While the leadership from the bishops in Canada has been inconsistent with respect to sustainability, other segments of the Roman Catholic community exhibit robust environmental concern and action, particularly amongst religious communities for women (Taylor 2007). For example, the Canadian Religious Conference is a member of both KAIROS and the newer "For the Love of Creation" ecumenical climate justice initiative. The latter also lists more than 10 congregations of sisters as endorsing organizations, as well as other Catholic organizations like Development and Peace, which is also a member of KAIROS. Development and Peace regularly incorporates environmental concerns into its national and international programming, and the Green Churches Network (GCN 2023) has strong Catholic roots and involvement, especially in the province of Quebec. Other more localized Catholic organizations, such as the Igna-

tius Jesuit Centre, the Elderberry Connection, and the Kairos Spirituality-for-Social Just Centre provide robust environmental programming through education and spiritual development programs, as well as direct conservation of land (Moyer 2018). Despite inconsistent commitment from national level leaders, environmental action within pockets of the Roman Catholic community in Canada remains strong.

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg

The UUCW is also located in central Winnipeg and serves approximately 184 adults and 60 children. The UUCW is the only Unitarian Universalist church in Winnipeg and is very active on social justice issues (UUCW 2020). Social justice activities include the Green Action Committee, the Harvest Food Bank, Global Outreach, and the Friends of Refuge.

Most sustainability-focused activity was organized by the Green Action Committee (GAC). The GAC grew from the awareness of need for environmental action and interest of the UUCW congregation members. The GAC formally started around 2009 with the encouragement of an interim minister, although sustainability discussions and action had occurred before this point. Other committees or individuals have participated or organized sustainability-related work, but the primary focus was not on sustainability, prior to the GAC. The GAC also seemed to be quite active in the broader community, hosting several events and a Sunday service on Earth Day.

Unitarian Universalism is grounded in a shared agreement on seven principles and members are connected through the values contained within them. While there is no requirement to believe in God, Unitarian Universalists believe in the divine as a unity that will grant universal salvation to all people (McKanan 2012). The seventh principle states: "Respect for the inter-dependent web of all existence of which we are part" (Brandenburg 2007; Morales 2012). This seventh principle is considered among Unitarian Universalists to be the "sustainability" principle because it acknowledges the connection between all things, and thus promotes Unitarian Universalists to recognize how their actions impact the environment.

Unitarian Universalism as an institution is represented by the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC). The purpose of the national organization is to promote Unitarian Universalism by supporting, nurturing, and providing various aspects of Unitarianism to its members and national and international communities (CUC 2019). The CUC has a governance model that consists of an Executive Director, Board of Trustees, various employees and partners, and member congregations. As member congregations hold the CUC accountable, there is no structural hierarchy.

In general, environmental sustainability is actively supported in Unitarian Universalist communities, and they have been leaders in environmental sustainability in Canada for many decades (Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021). The CUC published its first resolution on environmental concerns in 1967 and had adopted 11 more by 1988. These resolutions addressed issues such as pollution of water, air, and soil and called for government to create pollution control policies. In recent years, sustainability-

related resolutions have included Right to Clean Air, Water and Soil (2015), Fossil Fuel Divestment (2015), Climate Change Mitigation (2013), Environment (2009), Environment (1999), Proposed Environmental Actions (1999), and Implementation of the CUC Environmental Policy (1999) (CUC 2019). These resolutions have provided a foundation for consistent action among Unitarian Universalists in Canada. The first meeting of the organization that became Greenpeace occurred in a Unitarian Church in Vancouver and "the Unitarian community in Canada has consistently contributed widely to the environmental movement, with active members in many different environmental groups and Unitarian buildings and facilities made available to various environmental causes" (Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021, 1270). A CUC staff person declared in Moyer and Brandenbarg (2021, 1270): "We've done everything from political-type marches, to educational materials, to worship services […] As many ways as you can think of to integrate climate change and environmental issues, we've done and continue to do for a very long time." Finally, the Green Sanctuary Program, promoted by the CUC and Unitarian Universalists in the United States, helps congregations put the seventh principle into practice through environmental justice, worship and celebration, religious education, and sustainable living (CUC 2023). Thus, there is a strong culture of social activism in general and environmental action in particular within the Unitarian Universalist community.

Findings

Sustainability activities

Table 2 outlines the range of sustainability activities undertaken by St. Ignatius and UUCW. The activities can be divided into four broad theme areas: activism; education; environment and conservation; and green church activities, and ranged from letter writing and petitions to implementing ways to conserve energy and reduce waste.

At St. Ignatius, the most prominent and widespread sustainability activity throughout the parish was the reduction of disposable items and the implementation of a new waste management system. The new waste management system included the addition of recycling and compost streams to the existing waste receptacles. The EC also focused a lot of its energy on sustainability education within the parish. The most commonly discussed education initiative addressed reusable items and the waste management system. The EC spent approximately two years discussing waste with parishioners, providing educational material, and assisting parishioners with waste sorting. After introducing a new waste management system, the EC also implemented a waste policy. Information on the waste policy is available at the administration office in the parish.

Activities most discussed by UUCW research participants were the municipal, provincial, and federal electoral forums and educational events held at the parish, as well as composting and recycling. The GAC has organized forums during elections for political candidates to discuss and respond to audience questions about sustainability issues. The electoral forums were also well-attended by the broader Winnipeg community. Education events, such as presentations and film screenings, were frequently available at UUWC. Another frequently discussed activity was the yearly Earth Day Sunday Service that is organized and hosted by the GAC. The service in 2018 included a story related to the earth, hymns, and a sermon on biophilia. During data collection, the GAC reported that they were planning to join the Green Sanctuary Program, and according to their website, they were still working through that process at the time of publication. Beyond the GAC, the whole congregation supports "the right for a healthy environment," has made a statement on the UUCW website, and has sent letters to Manitoba government officials and the City of Winnipeg.

Foundations for action

It is widely recognized in the literature that there is frequently a disconnect between environmental awareness or concern and related action (e.g., Baugh 2019; Biviano 2016; Vaidyanathan et al. 2018). It has also been posited that faith communities can facilitate action (e.g., Biviano 2016; Bomberg and Hague 2018; Seifert and Shaw 2013). To further interrogate this claim, we considered what elements of these communities supported or catalyzed action. Various foundations emerged from the data that supported taking sustainability action, including committee work, educational initiatives, networks within the congregation, and faith. These foundations helped support or catalyze action by delivering tools and information to connect congregation members to sustainability, providing motivation, and facilitating active engagement within their congregations.

Committee work was perhaps the strongest catalyst for action and engagement within the faith communities because in both cases, the sustainability work occurred primarily through the work of their EC or GAC. Regular meetings of these committees acted both as a planning platform, as well as a place for members to brainstorm, exchange, and implement ideas. Given that these committees were the impetus for most sustainability activities, it is notable that in both congregations, sustainability activities were generated from the grassroots, rather than from the upper-level leadership of the congregation.

Educational initiatives, in the form of events, newsletters, and publications were also important. They provided a catalyst for congregation members' learning and a channel for disseminating sustainability information or skills. In most instances, participants who learned from an activity shared information with other congregation members or with others in their personal lives.

Information sharing of this kind, which was foundational to sustainability action, occurred through networks that were facilitated by the faith communities. When a participant learned something or acquired a resource outside their congregation, they brought that information into the community and shared it with other community members. This sharing sometimes fuelled an idea or an activity or just connected members with other resources. For example:

Table 2

Sustainability activities in St. Ignatius Parish and First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg

Activity	St. Ignatius Parish	First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg
Activism	• Letter writing o The EC wrote the Manitoba Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship in 2012 and 2015 on the Green Plan and waste reduction • Petition o Petition opposing the Energy East Pipeline	• Letter writing o Occasional letters sent to politicians o Example: letter to Province on water monitoring, consultation on climate change • Electoral Forums o Mayoral Fast Pitch and Forum • Support for the Blue Dot campaign
Education	• Film o Films include: Blue Gold, An Inconvenient Truth, Scars of Mercury, Rain Forest • Workshop, presentation or speaker o Q and A after presentations o Green fairs hosted by Manitoba Eco Network o Topics include: The Green Psalter, Energy East Pipeline, Genetically Modified Crops, Veolia water issue, Thomas Berry, Voluntary, Simplicity • Waste education o Word of mouth discussion o Posters, flyers o Hands-on application waste sorting demonstration o Compost workshop	• Film (with post-film discussion, pending interest) o Generation Zappped ▪ Film Electromagnetic Radiation ▪ Q and A after film; educational material ▪ Educational material provided with film (articles, etc) o Alberta Tar Sands (co-sponsored with Council of Canadians) o Film on biking (co-sponsored with Biking to the Future) • Workshop, presentation or speaker o Permaculture and biophilia o Climate Change o Manitoba Pork • Religious Exploration through Sunday School: child and youth education provided regularly on Sundays • Book Club o This Changes Everything, Naomi Klein • Bike Workshop o Learn how to navigate biking in Winnipeg, bike maintenance, etc.
Environment and Conservation	• Active transportation o Bike racks purchased by the EC • General awareness o Posters and information available on bulletins and at the church office o Articles used to be written by the EC for parishioners • Green products o Sold fair trade coffee and soap nuts during Coffee Time in the Parish hall after Mass o Products funded by EC • Reusing, Recycling and Composting o Transitioned away from disposable cups to reusable cups and cutlery o Developed a policy pamphlet for waste o Developed a waste management system (for recyling and compost) o Enlisted a compost pickup service o Attempting to become a zero waste church	• General awareness o Information in church newsletter, email, website • Reusing, recycling and composting o GAC coordinates volunteers to set out bins and turn compost o GAC started compost project in 2008/2009 o GAC statered battery recyling in 2013/2014
Green Church Activity	• Greening Sacred Spaces Program (funding from David Suzuki Foundation) o Waste management system o Added sustainability themed books to the parish library (e.g., Renewing the Sacred Balance) • Energy use o Introduced LED lights (Knights of Columbus) • General socializing o Discussion and involvement with waste management over coffee	• Energy use o Energy audit o LED lights o Looking to replace heating system • General socializing o Discussion after Sunday service • Investigating "Green Sanctuary" accreditation • Environmentally themed sermons/services o Earth Day services o Topic examples from Sunday sermons: "A Journey to a greener World," "Renewable Energy and Climate Change" • Partnerships o Winnipeg Havest Depot o Harvest Moon Coop pick up location o Share the plate • General Church Fundraising o Sale of organic honey and fair-trade coffee o Sale of used items (books, furniture, etc.)

I found out about Car Coop through the church, Fruit Share through the church, so it hasn't necessarily taught me that, 'oh you should forage for food in order to reduce the distances that stuff gets trucked.' I know that, but it's given me another option to do that. And then I joined Fruit Share, and then that kind of goes out from there. It becomes part of what feeds my life and gives me all these different ways of connecting with people and finding my peeps (UU09).

Socializing as a sustainability activity is an example of participants utilizing networks within the congregation to share information.

Finally, faith provided a foundation for action on sustainability in varying ways. At both UUCW and St. Ignatius, research participants discussed how their faith motivated or was linked to their sustainability activity. In Table 3, we summarize the faith-based sustainability motivations shared in the questionnaire, listed in order of frequency, with the most frequent highlighted in bold. We developed three categories grounded in the data to describe how faith was related to sustainability activities and we have provided an illustrative quote for each.

Supportive but not motivating: Participants engaged in sustainability for reasons not linked with their faith (e.g., as citizens of the world or sustainability work preceded faith participation), but their faith or the faith community supported this engagement.

I was definitely on that journey [towards sustainability] before I joined the UUCW. But one of the reasons I've stayed with the UUCW is because on so many different levels it's a community of people that are like minded… So, there's a lot of comfort in being in a community in which people actually get that [sustainability] and are working in the same direction (UU09).

Connected but independent: Participants linked aspects of their faith to sustainability, such as teachings and documents, but still saw their faith and sustainability as separate.

I've always tried to recycle, I was always one of those post hippies, […] for a long time, I've been conscious not littering, and that was the early days when recycling was unheard of, of course, so I guess it's mainly both. You know because you want to do good for the earth, and it's part of your faith to take care of the earth. That's also my personal belief too (SI09).

Fully integrated: Participants did not differentiate between their faith and sustainability and viewed them as "one in the same."

I would say that they aren't different for me, my faith is connected to my respect for the planet. I see it as a gift from God, and as we interact with this gift from God, when we behave in a poor way with the environment, we are showing a disrespect for our creator. […] Jesus said love your neighbour as yourself, and you can't do that by misbehaving with the environment. You can't love others and not love the environment (SI13).

At UUCW, most participants said their faith, or very specifically, the faith community, supported their sustainability activity, but that this was not their primary motivator. Strong connections to Unitarian Universalist faith were discussed less frequently. Most participants at UUCW joined the community because its principles supported their personal convictions, but their commitment to sustainability already existed. Some made connections between their faith and sustainability once they were in the community, and all felt supported by their community in terms of sustainability actions, but most motivations came from outside the faith community, with the congregation playing a more important role in supporting such actions. At UUCW, more participants discussed their faith motivations in relation to their faith community, rather than their personal faith convictions.

In contrast, at St. Ignatius most participants said sustainability was connected but independent from their faith or that faith and sustainability were fully integrated. This seems to suggest that St. Ignatius participants have a stronger faith connection to sustainability, linking it more frequently to their personal faith. While participants at St. Ignatius indicated a strong relationship between their faith and sustainability, they also noted that this relationship was not enough to overcome some barriers to action on sustainability.

Barriers to action

To further illuminate the disconnect between environmental concern and related action, we also asked about and noted barriers to sustainability action. Table 4 lists the types of barriers shared by participants. As the table illustrates, St. Ignatius faced more barriers than UUCW. The most significant of these barriers

Table 3
Faith-based motivations sumarized

St. Ignatius Parish	First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg
• **Take care of God's creation (creation care)**	• **Seventh principle**
• Interconnectedness of the universe	• To be responsible for living on this earth
• *Laudato Si*	• Unitarian Universalist principles consistent with personal principles (chose church because of principles)
• Part of Christianity/Faith part of who I am	
• Care for future generations	• Protect Mother Earth

will be discussed below, as well as partici-
pants' reflections on faith as barrier.

While faith in general, and specific in-
terpretations of doctrine or scripture in
particular, are often cited as a fundamental
barrier to environmental engagement (e.g.,
Fowler 1995; White 1967; Zaleha and Szasz
2015), participants at both St. Ignatius and
UUCW stated that faith was not a barrier for
them to their sustainability work. Instead,
as described in the previous section, they
expressed various ways in which faith pro-
vided a support or a motivation for their ac-
tions. Aspects of the faith community and its
structure, however, did pose challenges.

Participants at St. Ignatius were divided
about the degree of support provided by the
leadership for their activities. Some partici-
pants described the parish leadership as sup-
portive of their activities, while others felt
they needed more support from the top. The
degree of support given seemed to depend
on the type of sustainability focus and was
also shaped by the busyness of the leader-
ship, who could not give direct support to all
parish activities. Some St. Ignatius partici-
pants also noted hierarchical structures and
a lack of institutional support as a barrier to
sustainability activity. Participants discussed
how current leadership within St. Ignatius
has approved events and programs they have
implemented, but there were obstacles associated with these ap-
provals. For example, after promoting a politically contentious
anti-pipeline petition, the EC was no longer allowed to make
announcements about their activities during mass, hand out
flyers, or speak with parishioners about EC events in the main
church area (though other ministry groups within the parish did).
Instead, they had to limit their communications with the con-
gregation to word-of-mouth advertising during coffee time in
the basement. Participants felt that greater support from leader-
ship would improve the EC's effectiveness and increase overall
awareness and action.

Political affiliation was also raised as a barrier by several
participants at St. Ignatius. The EC's work became politically
polarizing at times. Some participants felt this was the reason
the EC received less support than other committees. For exam-
ple, as noted above, the EC organized a petition opposing the
Energy East Pipeline that was mentioned by several participants.
Within the last decade, pipelines have become a divisive issue
in Canada, both geographically and politically. Typically, voters
in oil-rich provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan vote Con-
servative and support pipelines, while support is more mixed in
other jurisdictions. Supporters of more left-leaning parties, such
as the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois, are more
likely to oppose pipelines (Ipsos 2018). The EC was asked to
stop the petition within the parish because it was perceived as a

Table 4
Barriers to sustainability action

St. Ignatius Parish	First United Universalist Church of Winnipeg
Physical Infrastructure	
• Old building with unsustainable systems	• Old building with unsustainable systems
Organizational and Institutional	
• Hierarchal structures of church	
• Politics	
• Lack of institutional support (top down)	
• Communication	
Personal and Interpersonal	
• Time and commitment	• Time and commitment
• Priorities	• Priorities
• Human nature	• Human nature
• Personal ability	• Controversial topics
• Politics	
• Attitudes and perceptions	
Communication	
• Access to information	• Access to information
• Ability to communicate message	
Financial	
• Limited resources	• Limited resources
Demographics	
• Large population	• Dispersed population

political issue, not a parish issue. As a result, the EC could only
hold activities in the parish hall if they were approved through
the church hierarchy.

Some participants noted that many St. Ignatius members
were politically conservative. As one participant described, this
was a barrier to sustainability because environmental messaging
is frequently framed around liberal agendas and provides less
for conservatives to connect with.

> People link environmental stuff with the left, so people hear
> that and think: uh oh. And the left has conflated all of these is-
> sues. And now that we're in a really kind of hostile world, par-
> ticularly against Catholicism, they don't understand the bigger
> theories and framework, and rightly so… I think the big barrier
> is, as soon as you start talking sustainability, you're really say-
> ing: I'm a liberal and I want to come and tell you guys that
> you're stupid and colloquial and misogynistic and colonial,
> and all that stuff. And people don't want to hear that (SI11).

In this participant's opinion, the division between the political
left and right has turned many Catholics away from environ-
mentalism, as they have not been provided with an appropriately
inclusive framework for approaching sustainability issues.

Other barriers were less specific to the faith context, such
as time, setting priorities, capacity, and funding. At UUCW, the

barriers discussed mostly had to do with people. For example, participant UU02 discussed barriers as, "Time. Commitment. I think just people deciding that this is something they can and want to prioritize right now" (UU02). St. Ignatius participants also discussed the sheer size of their congregation and related challenges in getting visibility for the EC and its activities.

Discussion

The results of the case studies of St. Ignatius and UUCW provided insight into the kinds of sustainability activity occurring in Canadian faith communities, the foundation that sustainability action was built on, and barriers to such action. The sustainability activities outlined in Table 2 reveal that each congregation contributed to the general trend of what Koehrsen (2018) calls "greening in religion" with an increase in environmentally sustainable activities in local faith communities. The activities undertaken at St. Ignatius and UUCW mirror the three primary areas of common activities noted by Moyer and Brandenbarg (2021) among faith leadership organizations in Canada, namely: (1) formation activities, which shape, promote, and support environmental sustainability commitment and action within faith communities through education, worship, and theological discourse and development; (2) practical actions such as building retrofits, installing solar panels, carpooling, and developing community gardens, focused on the buildings, properties, and life of the faith community; and (3) advocacy and activism, which focus externally on changing government policy, industry behaviour, and public opinion. In both this study, and Moyer and Brandenbarg's (2021), education, followed by practical greening, were the most prominent actions, while activism/advocacy actions were present, but often more contested, as political activism was at St. Ignatius. This mirrors Lysack's (2013) finding that most faith communities in Canada are focusing on simple, base-level sustainability activities, such as local green initiatives and greening buildings. Similarly, in a study of the faith communities' websites in the Greater Toronto Area, Caldwell et al. (2022) found that community actions (e.g., community gardens, local hands-on remediation, promoting non-car transport) were the most common. UUCW did go beyond these base-level activities with local political initiatives, such as the Electoral Forums, but the majority of their work followed the norm of locally or congregationally focused activities.

When considering their activities in context, an interesting pattern emerges between these two cases with respect to their situation within their larger national and international faith communities. The UUCW's GAC had a more robust program, with more frequently planned activities that were more integrated into various aspects of congregational life. They also experienced fewer institutional barriers than St. Ignatius. At UUCW, leadership supported the GAC and incorporated environmental sustainability messaging into sermons, confirming that leadership who regularly communicate messages to a congregation can influence sustainability attitudes (Koehrsen 2018; Tsimpo

and Wodon 2016). This contrasts with St. Ignatius whose leadership did not overtly communicate these messages.

At UUCW, the faith connections, expressed mostly in terms of their seventh "sustainability principle," which provided a unifying justification for environmental work but was not significant in instigating sustainability as a grounding motivation. That is, the majority of UUCW participants stated that their faith was not the primary reason they became involved in environmental work, though it contributed to sustaining that work. In their investigation of religion's different roles in shaping environmental action, Vaidyanathan et al. (2018), also found that for many, faith provided a justification for action, in the form of religious teachings that supported it, but was not the most important motivator, which derived from more general or secular moral discourse. In UUCW's case, this is perhaps related to both the heterogeneity and flexibility, in terms of belief and doctrine, within the Unitarian Universalist community, which may lend itself less to creating a strong basis for motivation and commitment. Similar nuances emerged in Baugh's (2019) research with a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Los Angeles, in which Unitarian values in general, and the Seventh Principle in particular, were cited as "requir[ing] them to protect the environment" (99), but participants stated that the connections between their religion and their environmental connections were weak. Instead, like at UUCW, the faith community supported and facilitated action, rather than motivating it.

At the same time, it is likely that the UUCW's GAC programming owes some of its robustness to the larger culture of general activism, and environmental commitment in particular, that is present within the larger CUC community. Even though the UUCW participants did not acknowledge the contributions of the broader Unitarian Universalist community, and the GAC was working from the bottom up within the UUCW, we identify here evidence of Kidwell et al.'s (2018) "eco-theo-citizenship," through which a combination of practical actions and cultural values (e.g., the sustainability principle) cement environmental care within a group's understanding of good citizenship. The unity of the shared principles, the many environmental statements adopted by the CUC over several decades, and the habits of social action, combined to create this type of citizenship.

In contrast, more participants in St. Ignatius's EC expressed a fully articulated theology for environmental sustainability, which provided more explicit faith-based motivation for their work, but they struggled to implement that work within their parish context. They faced more institutional and structural obstacles, reflecting the ambivalent and inconsistent commitment to sustainability concerns at the national leadership level (i.e., the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops) described above. For example, Lysack (2013), in research that was conducted before the publication of *Laudato Sí*, found that clergy in Canada have been apathetic, indifferent, or even hostile to engaging or promoting environmental concerns such as climate change, and noted that "Roman Catholic clergy appear to be the most closed and resistant (despite the excellent documents on climate change that the bishops and the Vatican have produced)" (168). Gould and Kearns (2018) observe that despite strong ecological messages

from three popes since the 1980s, parish level environmental concern and action in the United States have changed little. The St. Ignatius case helps to illustrate why, as an example of intradenominational tension in religious environmentalism (Koehrsen et al. 2022). Such tensions can occur when lower levels within a hierarchy (e.g., parish priests or the Canadian bishops) resist environmental programming and strategies championed by upper leadership, such as the Vatican, or when local initiatives are blocked by broader institutional processes or sanctions. The St. Ignatius case exhibits both types of intradenominational tension, as the following illustrates further.

The influence of Catholic Social Teachings and Pope Francis's (2015) encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, at St. Ignatius and within the broader Roman Catholic community raise interesting points of consideration. These theological pieces, along with earlier contributions, such as Pope John Paul II's statements supporting care for creation (Gottlieb 2006), provide a well developed, faith-based connection to sustainability that can be deployed by leadership and local congregations. These teachings did provide motivation for many of the Catholic participants, but these motivations and commitments were not shared across the whole faith community. In 2018, when the research reported here was being conducted, *Laudato Sí* was not broadly known or discussed within the St. Ignatius Parish. This is similar to other Catholic communities, where local endorsement of the encyclical has not been consistently strong nor has *Laudato Sí* delivered the impact that many hoped (Ives and Kidwell 2019; Koehrsen et al. 2022; Li et al. 2016). The encyclical officially recognizes "caring for creation" within the Magisterium, but there seems to be a disconnect from the highest level of the Church through the church leadership to the congregational level (Ives and Kidwell 2019). This disconnect prevents the eco-theo-citizenship evident in the Unitarian Universalist community from growing within the Catholic community, because the links between values and beliefs, actions, and broader cultural expectations cannot be fully forged and are less likely to become embedded in members' religious identity (Vaidyanathan et al. 2018). Although St. Ignatius participants had strong connections to faith and sustainability, these were not enough to fully overcome the existing barriers, particularly the hierarchal structure of the church. This begs the question whether the messaging would be more accepted by the wider Catholic community if it were supported at all levels of the hierarchical structure, particularly local parish leadership.

In a diverse context such as St. Ignatius, politically sensitive and divisive environmental issues and related actions also posed challenges, which did not arise in the more politically and culturally homogenous community at UUCW. The notion that political affiliation is a key indicator for determining environmental commitment is well established in the American context. Democrats are much more likely to be concerned about climate change, for example, than Republicans, and these affiliations typically override the influence of faith communities (e.g., Biviano 2016; Ives and Kidwell 2019; Li et al. 2016; Morrison et al. 2015; Veldman et al. 2014). National level faith leaders in Canada reflecting on barriers to faith-based engagement frequently mentioned how diverging political affiliations within diverse faith communities presented serious obstacles to environmental action, particularly in the form of political advocacy and activism (Moyer and Sinclair 2022). The St. Ignatius case illustrates this situation at the congregational level, and these finding indicate that similar political dynamics are operating within both Canadian and American contexts.

Advocacy and activism are frequently a point of scrutiny, since societal level change is necessary to address environmental issues like climate change (Hayhoe 2021). In a study investigating faith communities' action on climate change in Canada, Lysack (2013) observed that many congregations are focusing on green buildings and personal change, prioritizing the local and personal over action that would bring about change at macro political and economic scales. He argues that this personal/local focus acts as a barrier to broader political advocacy. Kearns (2011), however, noted that in the United States, faith-based campaigns aimed at changing government policy and industry behaviour regarding climate change have been difficult and yielded minimal success, and therefore, faith groups have shifted their efforts towards personal, congregational, and institutional actions such as building retrofits, installing solar panels, addressing energy consumption and efficiency, and exploring alternative food practices. There are, however, examples of conservative, evangelical Christians overcoming the barriers to political activism, particularly when the environmental threats affect them directly, or when they are associated with issues of social justice (Billings and Samson 2012; McDuff 2010, 2012). Questions surrounding what encourages or prevents faith communities from engaging politically are complex and bear further investigation.

Beyond their role in shaping and mediating values and beliefs that might provide motivation or justification for sustainability work, faith communities can provide a different form of support in their ability to bring groups of people together. Veldman et al. (2014) describe this function as providing "platforms for connectivity." Biviano (2016) found that connecting within a congregational platform yields multiple benefits, including providing space that supports developing new worldviews and processing spiritual experiences, reinforcing shared values, and facilitating action through cooperation and synergistic energy. The importance of the committees in both cases as foundations for action, and their role in information sharing, as well as processing ideas and implementing action, underscore the significance of this function. The local faith communities were able to connect people with one another to engage with environmental sustainability and bridge the gap from top to bottom in a way that the hierarchical structure could not.

The barriers that arose within these case studies are interesting, given that the most commonly cited barriers to faith-based, and especially Christian, environmental concern and action relate to belief systems – for example, human dominion, God's sovereignty over nature, and a focus on spiritual salvation (Haluza-DeLay 2008; White 1967; Zaleha and Szasz 2015). The more significant barriers in these cases, however, appeared to be political framing and affiliation, and organizational structures and limits. It is possible that the commonly perceived obstacles

were behind St. Ignatius' leadership's reluctance to promote *Laudato Sí* and support the EC's activities, and these obstacles certainly exist within some faith communities, and would probably be more present where environmental activities are less prevalent. Based on our findings, however, it is clear that the barriers to environmental engagement by faith communities need to be considered with more nuance and include a broader sphere of potential obstacles. In particular, more attention should be paid to how environmental narratives often express liberal framing which may alienate conservatives who might otherwise be on board if they were presented with narratives that align more closely with their values.

Conclusion

Results show that both faith communities took action at the congregational level and within the broader community to act on sustainability, with a strong focus on waste management and environmental education. Both cases also exemplified forms of political activism on sustainability. This was discouraged at St. Ignatius, which the literature has shown often occurs in the context of faith communities (e.g., Kidwell et al. 2018), yet there was still desire among the committee members to try such action.

Many of the actions tended toward the lower hanging sustainability fruit of waste management and energy retrofits, as others have noted (Kidwell et al. 2018). These types of action do not address the deep-seated sources of unsustainability, but they may help to further sustainability and sustainability thinking, by laying the groundwork for tackling even tougher issues such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The barriers to action on sustainability that our participants identified, such as hierarchical structures, politicization of issues and interpersonal complexity, also made action on higher order sustainability transitions difficult.

Our findings also show that faith and faith communities can shape environmental action in different ways. Faith can motivate action through its beliefs and teachings, which is the most commonly discussed form of influence (e.g., Bomberg and Hague 2018; Caniglia et al. 2015; Gardner and Peterson 2002; Veldman et al. 2014), and was most evident at St. Ignatius. It can also provide a forum in which behavioural habits are developed, refined, and reinforced in a way that does not rely on explicit or declarative religious teachings (Vaidyanathan et al. 2018). And it can provide a community of support and accountability for engaging in countercultural environmental work (Baugh 2019; Biviano 2016). These latter forms of influence were evident in both congregations, though perhaps more profoundly at UUCW, and are identified by Veldman et al. (2014) as one of faith communities' most valuable resources.

These findings also confirm that faith communities are participating in the broader environmental movement in Canada, for example, by providing spaces for broader discourse (e.g., election forums attended by the broader community) and by speaking to contentious societal issues through petitions and letter writing. While secular groups sometimes view faith groups as backward with respect to social and environmental issues (Ives and Kidwell 2019), the faith communities in this study have shown a variety of contemporary sustainability activities. Given the work of these faith communities and others (e.g., Moyer and Brandenbarg 2021; Kidwell et al. 2018), this shows the potential for environmental non-governmental organizations and other secular groups to link more with faith communities on sustainability work to generate a stronger collective voice. Likewise, if more information was available on the sustainability activity of faith communities across Canada, more faith communities could partner and expand their networks internally within their broader communities.

As a small, local, comparative study, our results are limited. Nonetheless, we view them as valuable because they confirm empirically that findings from other regions apply in a Canadian context, and they illustrate two very different ways faith-based environmental action occurs, within distinct institutional and community contexts, and with different motivations and challenges. Further research is needed, involving more cases from diverse faith groups, a wider range of participants, and information across multiple levels of organization. This study's results suggest avenues for future research and provide insights to help shape them. A broader survey of congregational involvement in environmental sustainability in Canada would be valuable, as would more in-depth comparative studies, capturing regional differences across the country, as well as focusing on ethnic, class, and regional minorities. To understand the barriers to engagement, there is also need for studies addressing congregations that are not participating in any environmental sustainability activities. Finally, given its prominence in our findings, further investigation into the barriers to and catalysts for political advocacy is merited, which could be compared and contrasted to barriers and catalysts within broader Canadian society.

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Saskatchewan's resort villages: An introduction to their evolution, administration, and demographic and residential characteristics

Bernard D. Thraves
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Regina

Key Messages

- Most resort villages occupy lakeside locations and are sited within easy driving distance of major urban centres.
- Village administrations demonstrate a commitment to sound environmental management and orderly development through bylaw enactment and community planning.
- Villages exhibit above average growth rates, elderly population structures, superior housing stocks, and prospects for future growth and residential development.

Resort villages have formed a distinctive feature of Saskatchewan's settlement geography for over 100 years. In the absence of attractions offered by coastal and mountain environments, resort villages have developed around the amenities of lakeside locations. With few exceptions, all villages are located within short travel distances of one or more of Saskatchewan's major urban centres. All villages are represented by an elected mayor and village council, and most have implemented a range of planning statements and bylaws to help ensure sound resort management and orderly development. Discussion draws on community profile data from the 2021 census to describe the demographic and housing characteristics of the villages. These are contrasted with those of Saskatchewan and the cities of Regina and Saskatoon. Most villages are defined by high growth rates and elderly population structures. Owner-occupied housing stocks are dominated by well-maintained, relatively high value, single-detached dwellings. Planning provisions and demographic trends suggest further growth of resort villages is likely.

Keywords: history, location, planning, population, housing

Introduction

The 2021 Census of Canada identifies 951 census subdivisions in Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada 2021). These include 296 rural municipalities, 251 villages, 172 Indian reserves, and 166 cities and towns. The classification also identifies 40 resort villages (Figure 1). Whereas resort villages can be found in many parts of Canada, Saskatchewan is one of only two provincial jurisdictions for which small communities serving as resorts are specifically identified in the census. Typically, these communities provide summer vacation homes or rental accommodation for persons who normally reside in more urbanized environments. Although these non-permanent residents provide resort villages with much of their identity, it is only their permanent or 'usual' residents whose geography is recorded in the census, and it is this population that forms the focus of this study. Discussion

Correspondence to: Bernard D. Thraves, Bernard.Thraves@uregina.ca
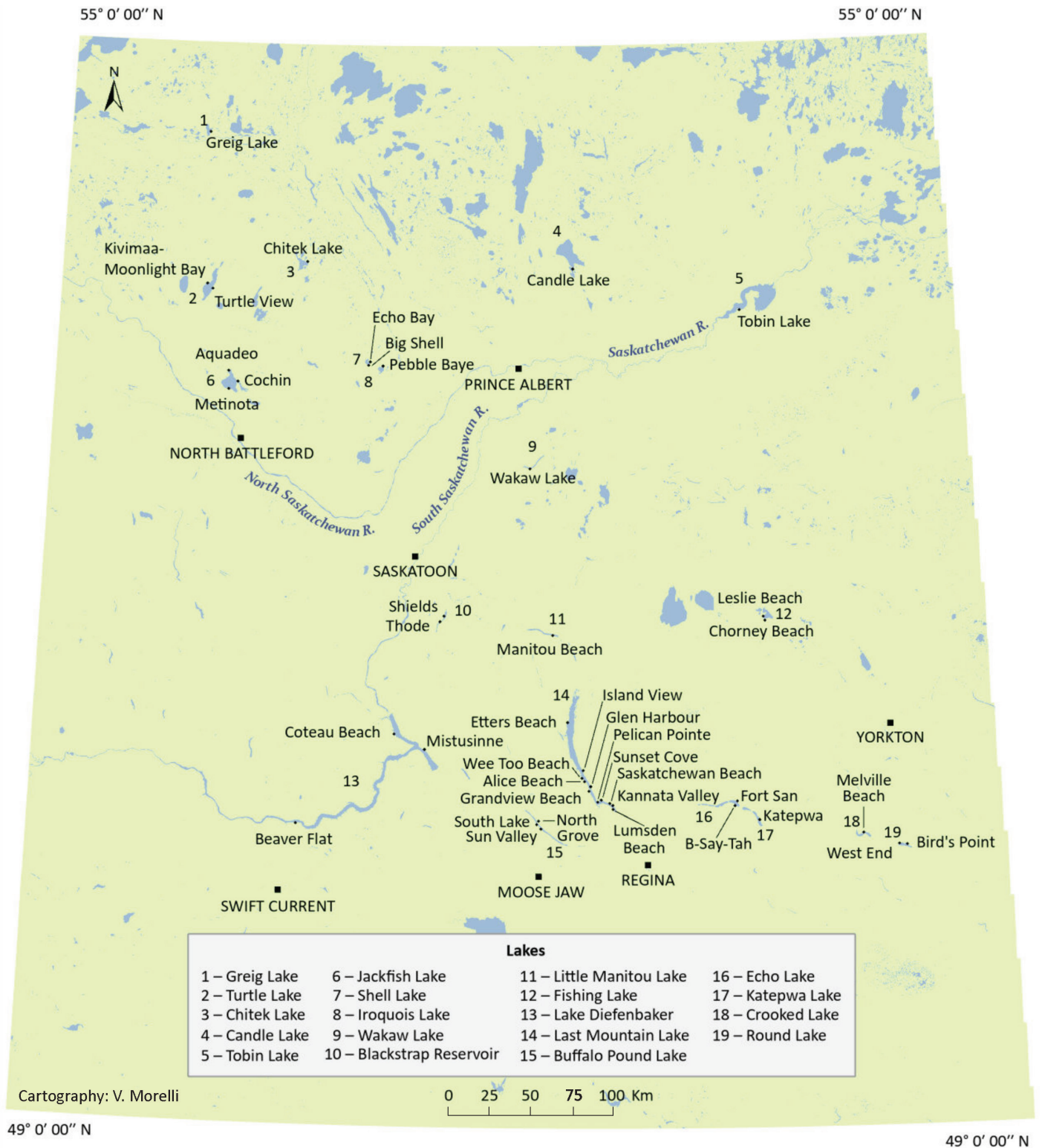
Figure 1
Location of resort villages

traces the evolution of the villages, and describes their physical settings and aspects of local administration and planning. It then reviews the population and housing characteristics of the villages, and contrasts these with those of Saskatchewan and the cities of Regina and Saskatoon.

History

The founding of Saskatchewan's resort villages has spanned approximately 100 years and mostly taken place during three distinct phases (Figure 2). The first villages were incorporated during or soon after World War I when access was provided by an expanding railway network and increase in automobile ownership. In 1915, B-Say-Tah, located on the south shore of Echo Lake, became the first village to incorporate. However, its origin can be traced to the early 1900s and to the establishment of a fish hatchery in 1913 (McLellan 2006). Today, the hatchery is operated by Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. As Saskatchewan's only aquaculture facility it provides fingerlings and mature fish to 135 public waterbodies throughout the province (SWF 2023). Incorporation of B-Say-Tah was followed in 1918 by the incorporation of Lumsden Beach, the first of 11 resort villages now sited along the shores of Last Mountain Lake (Figure 1). Lumsden Beach traces its origin to 1905 when the United Church acquired a site on the west shore of the lake for development of a youth camp (LBC 2023). The community still functions as a camp for young persons but has not shared in the population and residential growth experienced by many resort villages.

Perhaps the most notable resort village dating from this time is Manitou Beach, which incorporated in 1919. The village is sited along the southern shore of Little Mountain Lake, the restorative saline waters of which were well known to the region's indigenous peoples long before Euro-Canadian settlement of the area. In the early 20th century, this natural resource became the basis for "the most popular summer resort on the prairies, offering an alternative, and became a rival for Banff Hot Springs" (Watrous 1996). Resort attractions included dance halls, min-eral hot bath houses, clinics, and massage parlours plus a supporting array of restaurants, retail establishments, and several types of accommodation. Based on these attractions, Manitou Beach thrived during the 1920s but experienced decline during the Depression of the 1930s, and in the 1940s. Since the 1980s the resort has recovered and become an important centre for spa tourism.

Other resort villages that incorporated during the first phase were Saskatchewan Beach (1919) located near the southern extremity of Last Mountain Lake, and Metinota (1924) sited on the southern shore of Jackfish Lake. Following this, no further incorporation of resort villages took place until the mid-1950s when a second phase of incorporation was initiated by the Katepwa Lake communities of Sandy Beach (1954) and Katepwa Beach (1957). This phase also included the incorporation of Etters Beach in 1965. It remains the only resort village located toward the northern end of Last Mountain Lake.

The third and most striking phase of incorporation extended from 1977 to 1994, when 30 villages completed incorporation, with incorporations peaking between 1981 and 1983 (Figure 2). Resort villages that incorporated during this phase included the 'northerly' communities of Candle Lake (1977), Greig Lake, (1983), and Tobin Lake (1983). Since 1983, further incorporations have been few. The community of Leslie Beach located on the south shore of Fishing Lake incorporated in 1999. In 2004, the resort villages of Sandy Beach, Katepwa Beach, and Katepwa South amalgamated to form the resort village of District of Katepwa (Saskatchewan Gazette 2004). Similarly, in 2020 the organized hamlets of Indian Point-Golden Sands and Turtle Lake Lodge amalgamated to form the resort village of Turtle View and thus became Saskatchewan's 41st resort village (Saskatchewan Gazette 2019; Turtle View 2022). This change in status was not acknowledged in the 2021 census and at time of writing reliable comparative data for the village is not available. For this reason, the village is excluded from the discussion of resort village population and housing characteristics presented later in the paper. In contrast to these developments, the resort village of Sunset View Beach was dissolved in 2015, the village
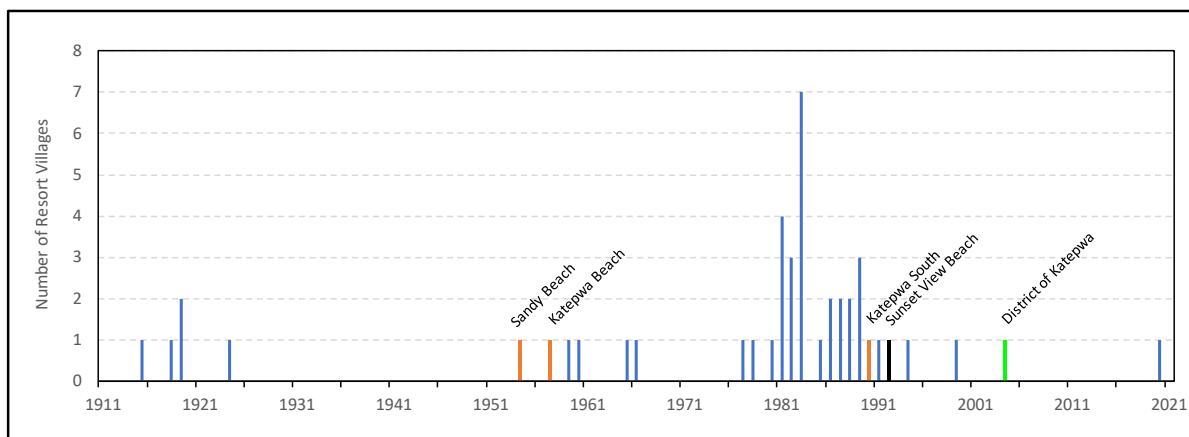

Figure 2
Growth in the number of resort villages by year of incorporation
Source: Saskatchewan, Ministry of Government Relations

then reverting to the status of an organized hamlet in the RM of Mervin No. 499.

The comparative absence of resort village incorporations since 1983 is attributable in part to the requirements for incorporation introduced by Part IV, Division 1, Section 51(1) of *The Municipalities Act, 2005* and its subsequent revisions (Saskatchewan 2005). Currently, the Act requires that an organized hamlet seeking incorporation as a resort village must have been an organized hamlet for at least three years, and meet certain prescribed minimums including those for population, number of separate dwellings or business premises, and taxable assessment. If applied retroactively, it is doubtful whether many of today's resort villages would meet these requirements.

Location and site characteristics

Saskatchewan's resort villages are not randomly located. Instead, all are found between 50° 30′ N and 54° 30′ N, and sited adjacent to large waterbodies (Figure 1). This distribution means the villages are restricted to 5 of Saskatchewan's 11 ecoregions with 19 of 41 (i.e., all villages including Turtle View) located in the Moist Mixed Grassland Ecoregion, and a further 13 in the Aspen Parkland Ecoregion. Most of these villages are sited at the foot of steep bluffs that fringe relatively shallow quasi-linear lakes carved by glacial meltwaters during the Late Pleistocene or Early Holocene epochs. Four each of the remaining resort villages are located in the Mid-Boreal Upland Ecoregion and the Boreal Transition Ecoregion. These villages are sited along the shores of generally irregularly-shaped moderately shallow lakes set in forested environments. With the exception of Tobin Lake, which was formed by construction of the E.B. Campbell Dam (formerly Squaw Rapids Dam) across the Saskatchewan River in 1963, the lakes trace their origins to natural geologic and geomorphic processes. A single resort village is located in the Mixed Grassland Ecoregion of southwest Saskatchewan.

The overall distribution of resort villages means that most are located within easy reach of one or more major urban centres in southern Saskatchewan. Thus, assuming an average driving speed of 80 km per hour, 18 of the 41 villages are located within a one-hour drive from one or more of the major urban centres, and a further 21 villages are within a two-hour journey (Table 1). Only Greig Lake in the Mid-Boreal Upland Ecoregion and Tobin Lake in the Boreal Transition Ecoregion are located at greater distances. Close proximity to major urban centres provides resort village residents with the dual benefits of the opportunity to commute for work and reasonable access to high level services. In this manner, Sun Valley located on the western shore of Buffalo Pound Lake can claim that its proximity to Moose Jaw and Regina has made it "an ideal cottage and commuting location leading to an increase in year-round residents over the past five years" (Sun Valley 2022). Similarly, Wee Too Beach, located on the western shore of Last Mountain Lake, claims that "Being only minutes from Regina, you can still work in the city and commute or have a [*sic*] easy trip on weekends" (Wee Too Beach 2023).

Proximity to or access from resort villages is not shared equally among the major urban centres. Based on road distances, proximity to villages best favours residents of Regina. Of the 41 resort villages, 13 are located closer to Regina than to any other urban centre. These include 10 of the 11 villages located along the shores of Last Mountain Lake (Figure 1). North Battleford and Prince Albert are each most proximate to six resort villages. Those closest to North Battleford include Aquadeo, Cochin, and Metinota on the shores of Jackfish Lake, whereas Prince Albert provides comparatively close access to Tobin Lake and Candle Lake, the latter being Saskatchewan's most populous resort village. Moose Jaw and Yorkton are each most proximate to five resort villages. Those relatively close to Moose Jaw include North Grove, South Lake, and Sun Valley sited along the shores of Buffalo Pound Lake. Yorkton provides relatively easy access to or from the villages of Bird's Point, Melville Beach, and West End each of which occupies a lakeside location within the Qu'Appelle Valley. Rather surprisingly perhaps in view of its large size and potential to generate new residents and seasonal vacationers, Saskatoon is most proximate to only four resort villages. However, these include the communities of Shields and Thode which are sited along the western shore of Blackstrap Reservoir and serve in part as bedroom communities for Saskatchewan's largest city. Finally in this context, Swift Current's relatively isolated location means it is most proximate to only one resort village, Beaver Flat.

As befits their village status, 27 of the 41 resort villages each occupies an area of less than 1 km^2, and only one village, Candle Lake, has an area greater than 5 km^2. Visual comparison of maps showing census subdivision boundaries with Google Earth satellite imagery suggests that as many as half of resort villages are overbounded, that is their subdivision boundaries extend beyond their built-up or effectively settled areas. Pebble Baye sited along the northern shore of Iroquois Lake provides a striking example (Figure 3). The census records the village as having an area of 0.68 km^2 and a population of 69, yet Google Earth imagery shows that approximately 60% of the village subdivision is devoid of settlement (Google Earth 2023; Statistics Canada 2022a). Hence, the stated population density of 101.2 persons per km^2 is effectively an understatement of the true density. At the other end of the village spectrum, Candle Lake has an area of 62.9 km^2, which places it in the same league as Moose Jaw (65.8 km^2) and Prince Albert (67.2 km^2). Its population of 1,160 is dispersed across 20 residential subdivisions. These fringe the southern and western shores of the lake, but are widely separated from each other by extensive areas of wooded or wetland terrain (EMRC 1995). Given these characteristics, the recorded population density of 18.4 persons per km^2 seems a gross underestimate of the true density of residential areas, and of limited value for comparative analysis. In sum, the recorded population density values for resort villages should be read with a degree of caution. Inspection of remote sensing images, maps, and field observation suggests it is more reasonable to consider resort villages as having population densities similar to those of low-density suburban developments in Regina and Saskatoon.

Table 1
Locational characteristics of resort villages

Resort Village	Waterbody	Ecoregion	Nearest Major Urban Centre	Approximate Road Distance (km)
Kannata Valley	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	52
Saskatchewan Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	54
Lumsden Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	57
Sunset Cove	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	63
Pelican Pointe	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	65
Glen Harbour	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	69
B-Say-Tah	Echo Lake*	Aspen Parkland	Regina	76
Fort San	Echo Lake	Aspen Parkland	Regina	76
Grandview Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	81
Alice Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	83
Island View	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	84
Wee Too Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Regina	84
Katepwa (District of)	Katepwa Lake*	Aspen Parkland	Regina	94
Metinota	Jackfish Lake	Aspen Parkland	North Battleford	34
Cochin	Jackfish Lake	Aspen Parkland	North Battleford	35
Aquadeo	Jackfish Lake	Aspen Parkland	North Battleford	46
Turtle View	Turtle Lake	Mid-Boreal Upland	North Battleford	106
Kivimaa-Moonlight Bay	Turtle Lake	Mid-Boreal Upland	North Battleford	116
Chitek Lake	Chitek Lake	Boreal Transition	North Battleford	156
Greig Lake	Greig Lake	Mid-Boreal Upland	North Battleford	204
Wakaw Lake	Wakaw Lake	Aspen Parkland	Prince Albert	75
Candle Lake	Candle Lake	Mid-Boreal Upland	Prince Albert	83
Echo Bay	Shell Lake	Boreal Transition	Prince Albert	107
Big Shell	Shell Lake	Boreal Transition	Prince Albert	111
Pebble Baye	Iroquois Lake	Aspen Parkland	Prince Albert	111
Tobin Lake	Tobin Lake	Boreal Transition	Prince Albert	190
South Lake	Buffalo Pound Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Moose Jaw	37
Sun Valley	Buffalo Pound Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Moose Jaw	37
North Grove	Buffalo Pound Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Moose Jaw	43
Mistusinne	Lake Diefenbaker	Moist Mixed Grassland	Moose Jaw	113
Etters Beach	Last Mountain Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Moose Jaw	118
West End	Round Lake*	Aspen Parkland	Yorkton	81
Bird's Point	Round Lake	Aspen Parkland	Yorkton	86
Melville Beach	Crooked Lake*	Aspen Parkland	Yorkton	86
Leslie Beach	Fishing Lake	Aspen Parkland	Yorkton	112
Chorney Beach	Fishing Lake	Aspen Parkland	Yorkton	114
Thode	Blackstrap Reservoir	Moist Mixed Grassland	Saskatoon	41
Shields	Blackstrap Reservoir	Moist Mixed Grassland	Saskatoon	47
Manitou Beach	Little Manitou Lake	Moist Mixed Grassland	Saskatoon	123
Coteau Beach	Lake Diefenbaker	Moist Mixed Grassland	Saskatoon	135
Beaver Flat	Lake Diefenbaker	Mixed Grassland	Swift Current	55

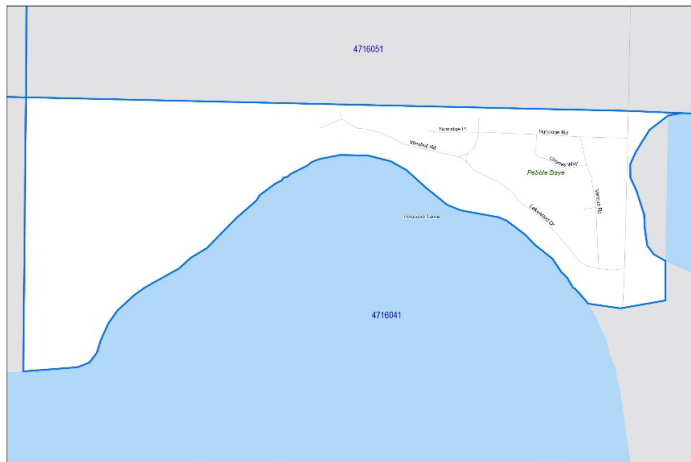* These lakes are located in the Qu'Appelle Valley

Figure 3
Overbounded Pebble Baye subdivision
Source: Statistics Canada (2022a), Google Earth 2023

Administration and planning

All resort villages, irrespective of their size, are represented by an elected mayor and councillors (or aldermen). In most instances, council meetings are held regularly with minutes posted on village websites where they exist. The day-to-day governance of most villages is guided through the application of bylaws. These vary considerably in number among the villages but typically include bylaws regulating building and demolition, solid waste management, the operation of vehicles, control of noise and other nuisances, the use of firearms, and the setting of recreational fires and discharge of fireworks. A major concern of resort villages, and particularly those located in forested environments, is the risk of devastating fire damage and the limited resources villages possess to counter such risk. For this reason, several villages have entered into fire agreements with neighbouring municipalities for the provision of fire protection services. One such agreement is that entered into by the resort village of Metinota with the RM of Meota No. 468, and the village of Meota. Under terms of the agreement, fire protection services are provided to Metinota by the village of Meota based in part on an arrangement to share operating costs (Metinota 2012).

Almost all villages have adopted either a basic planning statement or an official community plan. Typically, planning statements are generalized expressions of goals, objectives, and policies with respect to residential, commercial, and recreational development, and the provision of services. They are prepared as bylaws in accordance with Sections 39 and 42 of *The Planning and Development Act, 1983*, and implemented through the simultaneous adoption of zoning bylaws (Saskatchewan 1983). Their overarching aim is to ensure orderly development whilst protecting the environment. Examples of planning statements include those of Chitek Lake (Chitek lake 2004) and Pelican Pointe (Pelican Pointe 2000). Official community plans are more detailed and comprehensive in scope. The power of municipal councils to prepare and adopt official community plans is granted under Section 29 of *The Planning and Development Act,*

2007 (Saskatchewan 2007). Any such plan must be prepared in consultation with a registered professional planner. It must also be adopted by bylaw in accordance with Part X of the Act, which requires public participation in the approval process. Examples of community plans include those of Alice Beach (Alice Beach 2010) and Thode (Thode 2021).

When counted across all resort villages, official community plans are slightly more numerous than basic planning statements. In most instances, both planning instruments outline policies to guide residential and commercial development, and other forms of resort management, but the extent to which commercial development is encouraged varies considerably. In Candle Lake, restrictions on commercial development appear to be few. Twelve commercially (C) zoned areas are located throughout the village. The zoning bylaw identifies 20 permitted uses for these areas including retail stores, restaurants, banks, medical offices, and personal services esblishments, and an even greater number of discretionary uses. The latter includes hotels, service stations, night clubs and brew pubs, but quite specifically, not cannabis businesses and production facilities. The village website hosts an extensive directory of businesses, most of which are locally based. Despite this support for commercial enterprises, Candle Lake's Chamber of Commerce is cognizant of a need to approach commercial development with a view to environmental sustainability:

> Our community is keenly aware of the fine balance between economic growth and a healthy environment. It is for this reason that we seek the kind of business that can take advantage of our incredible location with minimal environmental impact. Opportunities that can sustain our strong tourism background at the same time attract a new kind of investment that will provide a greater spectrum of employment opportunities and, most importantly, will preserve our key asset: the natural environment (Candle Lake 2022a).

Other resort villages with substantial commercial development and/or zoning for further commercial activity include Cochin and Manitou Beach.

A more conservative approach to commercial development is practiced in District of Katepwa, Saskatchewan's second largest resort village. Recognition of existing resort and recreation commercial uses and provision for limited growth of these uses is provided by resort commercial (RC) zoning. Future permitted uses under this zoning classification are restricted to passive recreational facilities such as picnic areas and play parks. Other uses such as hotels, gas bars, convenience stores, and eating and drinking establishments are only allowed as discretionary uses even though they might be identified as permitted uses in some resort villages (District of Katepwa 2014). In several resort villages, including Lumsden Beach, Glen harbour, and Mistusinne, community service (CS) zoning is applied in place of strict commercial zoning. Permitted uses in this zoning classification are ones identified as supporting the primary residential function of the villages and typically include places of worship, cultural institutions, community centres, recreational areas, and public works. In several villages, including Echo Bay, North Grove, and Sunset Cove, provision for commercial development is strictly limited or effectively prohibited in order to protect the basic residential function of these villages. The village of Thode provides a clear rationale for such policy:

> The primary function of the Resort Village is to provide a residential community in a resort setting. The Resort Village is not a service centre for the surrounding area and has no plans to develop a service centre. Commercial services are available in other municipalities near the Resort Village. [. . .] Commercial development shall not be permitted [. . .] except in the form of limited accessory home occupations/home-based businesses at the discretion of the council (Thode 2021).

In recognition of their shared interests, several resort villages have sought membership of regional planning groups. For example, the Qu'Appelle Valley resort villages of Fort San, B-Say-Tah, and District of Katepwa along with adjoining municipalities and stakeholders are signatories to a formal agreement that created the Calling Lakes Planning District Commission in 2011 (CLPDC 2013). Its stated interests include promotion of environmentally responsible growth in the Qu'Appelle Valley, enhancement of its economic base, and creation of greater recreational, cultural, and heritage opportunities for residents of and visitors to the valley. Although sanctioned by government, the Commission has no legislative authority. Instead, its decisions are offered as guidance to participating councils. In this role the Commission has been instrumental in drafting the Calling Lakes District Plan under Section 102 of *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*, and in facilitating its adoption by the councils (CLPDC 2013; Saskatchewan 2007). In similar fashion, Candle Lake and the RMs of Paddockwood No. 520 and District of Lakeland No. 521 are founding members of the North Central Lakelands Planning District and signatories to the *North Central Lakelands Planning District Official Community Plan* (NCLPD 2013). Policies outlined in the plan are mostly derived from consolidation of an existing development plan for the RM of Lakeland and basic planning statements for the RM of Paddockwood and Candle Lake.

The collective interests of resort villages are promoted by the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS 2022). PARCS was founded in 1983. In 2021, 37 of 41 resort villages were subscribing members of the association. PARCS serves as an independent advocacy organization in lobbying government agencies such as Environment Saskatchewan and Water Security Agency on issues affecting resort villages and other cottage communities. The latter includes organized hamlets that are cottages communities, rural municipalities with cottage communities, and cottage owners' associations. PARCS held its first annual conference in 1987. Since 2009, it has published an online newsletter which serves as an information forum for all resort communities and as a promoter of environmental awareness and stewardship. The newsletter is currently published on a near weekly basis.

Population

In recent decades, growth in both the number and population of Saskatchewan's resort villages has been dramatic. In 1981, the census provided population counts for 13 resort villages (Table 2). These had a combined population of just 873. Since 1981, the population of the villages has increased at every quinquennial census interval except between 2006 and 2011. In 2001, the then 42 resort villages had a combined population of 3,227. By 2016, the count for 40 villages had grown to 4,759 (+47.5%). Thereafter the population grew by a further 2,026 to a total of 6,785 (+42.6%) between 2016 and 2021. This phenomenal growth rate has dwarfed population change elsewhere in the province, but seems to have provoked little comment. In comparison, during the latter 5-year period, the population of Saskatchewan increased by a comparatively modest 3.1%, and that of Saskatoon and Regina by 7.7% and 5.3% respectively. Moreover, Saskatchewan's 251 villages (i.e., non-resort villages) experienced a population decrease of 2.9% thereby confirming the long-term decline in most parts of Saskatchewan's rural population (Hall and Olfert 2015; Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2022a). Several factors are suggested to explain the rapid growth in both the number and population of resort villages. These include lifestyle choices favouring some non-urban environments, the general prosperity of the province, increasing opportunity to seek early retirement, and the first retirements of Saskatchewan's baby boom population. The latter refers to the population born between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s, which, assuming a conventional retirement age of 65 years, started to reach retirement age by the second decade of the current century.

When reviewing the population of Saskatchewan's resort villages, it is important to keep in mind that most villages are small. Thus, despite the overall growth rates noted above, 17 of 40 resort villages recorded in the 2021 census still had populations of less than 100, and only 10 villages had populations

Table 2
Growth in the number and population of resort villages, 1981–2021

Population Range	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021*
				Number of Villages					
0–19	3	14	14	16	10	1	4	4	-
20–49	6	7	13	11	15	13	17	10	6
50–99	-	3	4	6	6	11	7	11	11
100–199	3	3	5	5	8	8	7	9	13
200–299	1	1	1	2	2	6	3	3	4
300–399	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	4
400–499	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
500–999	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
≥1,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total Villages	13	28	38	41	42	40	40	40	40
Total Population	873	1,285	2,331	2,657	3,227	4,492	4,092	4,759	6,785

* Excludes count for Turtle View, Saskatchewan's 41st resort village, which was incorporated in 2020.

Source: Saskatchewan Bureau of statistics (n.d.), Statistics Canada (2017, 2022a)

greater than 200. The small size of these villages means that even modest absolute increases in their populations can produce large growth rates. For example, between 2016 and 2021 the population of Etters Beach grew by 30.3%, but this represented an increase of just 10 persons on its 2016 base population of 30. During the same period, similar or even greater growth rates were recorded for all villages with the exceptions of Wakaw Lake and Wee Too Beach. The latter recorded population decreases of 8.3% and 5.1% respectively, but again on the basis of single-digit changes in their population counts. This said,

dramatic growth rates have not been restricted to the smallest villages. Candle Lake, Saskatchewan's most populous resort village, registered an increase of 38.1% between 2016 and 2021 as its population ballooned from 840 to 1,160. Among resort villages, Candle Lake has recorded the largest population count at each quinquennial census since 1981. Its population is now greater than that of 106 of Saskatchewan's 149 towns and swells to between 9,000 and 15,000 during the summer months when seasonal residents and vacationers visit the community (Candle Lake 2022b).
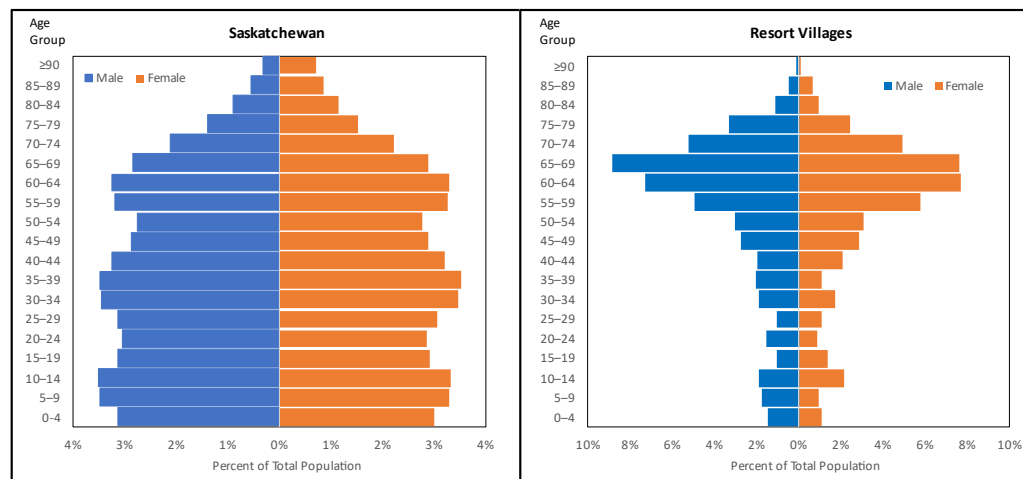

Figure 4
Comparative composition of Saskatchewan population and aggregated resort village populations, 2021
Source: Statistics Canada (2022a)

Providing that detailed population data on age and sex are available, the structural composition of any population can be summarized and portrayed in the form of a population pyramid. In the case of Saskatchewan, the population 'pyramid' for 2021 is quasi-columnar in form with changes between successive 5-year age groups largely reflecting historic fluctuations in the provincial birth rate (Figure 4). Significant closing of the pyramid only occurs in the population aged 70 years and above. A child dependency ratio of 31.4 dependents (i.e., those aged 0 to 14 years) per

100 non-dependents (i.e., those aged 15 to 64 years) is balanced by an old-age dependency ratio of 27.8 dependents (i.e., those aged 65 years and over) per 100 non-dependents. Slightly lower dependency ratios are recorded in both Regina (child – 28.4, old-age – 23.7) and Saskatoon (child – 27.5, old-age – 22.9). The structural composition of Saskatchewan's population, and those of its two largest cities, is typical of those found in post-industrial societies which have completed demographic transition.

Detailed population data are not readily available for all resort villages. The small size of Sunset Cove (2021 pop. 21), Greig Lake (24), and Pelican Pointe (38) means that population counts by sex and 5-year age groups for these communities are suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act. Consequently, the population pyramid presented in Figure 4 depicts the aggregated population counts for just 37 of 40 villages. It exhibits an extremely narrow base combined with major widening of the structure only occurring in the population aged 55 years and over. This structure suggests the relative absence of young families and middle age adults and is expressed in a low child dependency ratio of 17.3 dependents per 100 non-dependents and an extreme old age dependency ratio of 64.9 dependents per 100 non-dependents. Moreover, old age dependency is equal to or greater than 100 in 10 of 37 villages, and exceeds child dependency in all villages with the exceptions of Coteau Beach and Shields. In sum, the population structure of Saskatchewan's resort villages has more in common with those of planned retirement communities than it does with demographically mature populations such as those of Saskatchewan, Regina and Saskatoon.

The old age structure of Saskatchewan's resort villages is further defined by measurement of their median age populations. In 2021, median age exceeded 60 years in 21 of the 37 resort villages, and was less than 50 years in only three villages. Among the latter, Coteau Beach with a median age of 37.6 years had the distinction of being the only resort village with a median age less than the 38.8 years recorded for Saskatchewan. The next lowest median age of 40.4 years was recorded by the village of Shields. Not surprisingly perhaps, Shields promotes itself as "the best kept secret in Saskatchewan and is the ideal place to retire or *raise a young family* [emphasis added]" (Shields 2023). In a similar vein, the village of Thode, which had a relatively low median age of 50.4 years when compared to other resort villages, proclaims itself as "a great place to raise a family" (Thode n.d.). These claims form part of a broader pattern of self-assessments in which many villages seem keen to promote themselves as ideal places to live by stressing not only their recreational amenities but also their inclusiveness, family orientation, and picturesque settings (Table 3).

Perhaps the most unexpected finding from this review of resort village populations is revealed by their sex ratios. The sex ratio of a population measures the number of males per 100 females in that population. In post-industrial societies, this number is invariably less than 100 largely because of the higher age-specific death rates and lower life expectancy of males, and it is usually least among elderly populations. In 2021, Saskatchewan's sex ratio of 98.9 conformed with this norm, as did the

respective sex ratios of 96.7 and 96.6 for Regina and Saskatoon. In contrast, the sex ratio for Saskatchewan's resort villages was 105.6, and was greater than 100 in 24 of 37 villages and equal to 100 in a further three villages. The consistency of this finding across many villages suggests it cannot be attributed to statistical noise caused by low population counts. Moreover, the ratio exceeded 100 in Candle Lake (110.9) and District of Katepwa (103.8), Saskatchewan's two most populous resort villages. One possible explanation for this finding is that males, when compared with females, hold a greater preference for lifestyles emphasizing the recreational opportunities or solitude of 'the great outdoors.'

Housing

Based on residency status, the census records both the number of private dwellings in a given geographic area, and also the number of those dwellings occupied by permanent residents. In 2021, 87.5% of private dwellings in Saskatchewan were occupied by permanent residents. Corresponding rates for Regina and Saskatoon were 92.9% and 92.6% respectively. These rates differed greatly from that of resort villages where only 36.9% of private dwellings were occupied by permanent residents, and just four villages recorded rates greater than 50%. Most notable among the latter were the villages of Shields and Thode which had permanent residency rates of 73.5% and 71.0% respectively, thereby reflecting their secondary roles as dormitory suburbs for Saskatoon. The low residency rates of most resort villages are explained by their primary function as summer holiday locations for home owners who normally reside elsewhere, and as a source of rental accommodation for seasonal vacationers.

The composition of resort village housing stock differs from that found in Saskatchewan and its largest cities. In 2021, single-detached houses and apartments accounted for 71.6% and 18.7% of permanently occupied private dwellings in the province (Table 4). Semi-detached houses, row houses, and movable dwellings together accounted for a further 9.4% of dwellings. Housing in both Regina and Saskatoon exhibited similar diversity, although relatively fewer single-detached housing units and a greater admixture of apartments were recorded as is common in large urban housing markets. In comparison, resort village housing exhibited much less diversity. Single-detached houses accounted for over 95% of permanently occupied private dwellings, and were the only housing type found in 21 of 37 villages for which data were available. Semi-detached houses, row houses, and apartments together accounted for barely 1% of dwellings, although movable dwellings were locally significant, especially in the villages of Aquadeo and Island View where they accounted for 40% and 27% of the owner-occupied housing stock. In part, the dominance of single-detached houses in resort villages reflects policies expressed in basic planning statements and official community plans wherein the construction of such dwellings on large lots is often encouraged.

Since 2001, Saskatchewan has experienced a generally strong economic performance and significant increase in popu-

Table 3
Resort village self-assessments and promotional claims

Resort Village	Self-assessments and promotional claims
Alice Beach	A family orientated resort village
Aquadeo	A great vacation spot and a fantastic place to live
Beaver Flat	A comfortable lakeside community
Big Shell	The place for fun, family and friends
Candle Lake	Where friends & family meet - Saskatchewan's brightest light
Cochin	Summer or winter, this is one of Saskatchewan's best recreation and leisure sites!
Echo Bay	Ours to enjoy ... ours to protect
Etters Beach	Peace and tranquility to all who visit!
Glen Harbour	A friendly community [and] a fantastic place to live!
Grandview Beach	A great place to start your day
Island View	Picturesque safe growing resort community
Kannata Valley	A stunning, picturesque, friendly village
Katepwa	A special place for everyone
Kivimaa-Moonlight Bay	Home of the Turtle Lake Monster
Manitou Beach	Home of unsinkable experiences
Metinota	Provides modern amenities and all the friendly charm and security of a familiar neighbourhood
Mistusinne	We love this place!
North Grove	Warm, inviting community with neighbours you can trust / popular place for singles, families, and retirees to live either seasonally or year round
Saskatchewan Beach	Welcome to the sunny side of the lake
Shields	A small community with big spirit. the best-kept secret in Saskatchewan
South Lake	The place you'd rather be…/ an increasingly popular place for people to live either year round or seasonally
Sun Valley	An ideal cottage and commuting location leading to an increase in year round residents over the past five years
Sunset Cove	Our residents are friendly and accommodating
Thode	A great place to live and raise a family
Wee Too Beach	A modern friendly community / a great place to escape / get away from the hustle and bustle of the big city / having a [*sic*] eastern view makes for great sunrises

lation following decades of minimal population growth or even decline (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2022b; Statistics Canada 2023). Much of this growth has taken place in Regina and Saskatoon and is expressed in part in the age of their housing stocks. By 2021, 26.9% of occupied private dwellings in Regina and 30.5% in Saskatoon had been built since 2001. Although impressive, these rates were exceeded by that of resort villages where 36.4% of occupied private dwellings dated from 2001. The comparative recency of much housing construction in resort villages was reflected in data on the maintenance of dwellings. Thus, whereas 7.3% of owner-occupied dwellings in Regina and 4.2% in Saskatoon required major repairs in 2021,

only 2.5% of dwellings in resort villages were similarly identified, and these were restricted to just 6 of 31 resort villages for which data were available.

The recent construction of much resort village housing and its high standard of maintenance is associated with above average housing values. Evidence for this is provided by owner-assessed sales values of privately owned housing. In 2021, the average value of privately owned housing in Saskatchewan was $324,400 (Figure 5). Appreciably higher average values of $361,600 and $393,600 were recorded for Regina and Saskatoon. The median value of the same housing was slightly less in

Table 4
Composition of occupied private dwellings by structural type, 2021

Structural Type	Saskatchewan %	Regina %	Saskatoon %	Resort Villages %
Single-detached house	71.6	63.1	54.5	95.1
Semi-detached house	3.0	2.8	3.7	0.3
Row house	4.4	6.5	6.9	0.3
Apartment or flate in a duplex	2.5	2.4	6.1	0.3
Apartment in a building that has <5 storeys	13.8	20.1	23.9	0.3
Apartment in a building that has ≥5 storeys	2.5	4.8	4.4	0.0
Other single-attached house	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4
Movable dwelling	2.0	0.2	0.4	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

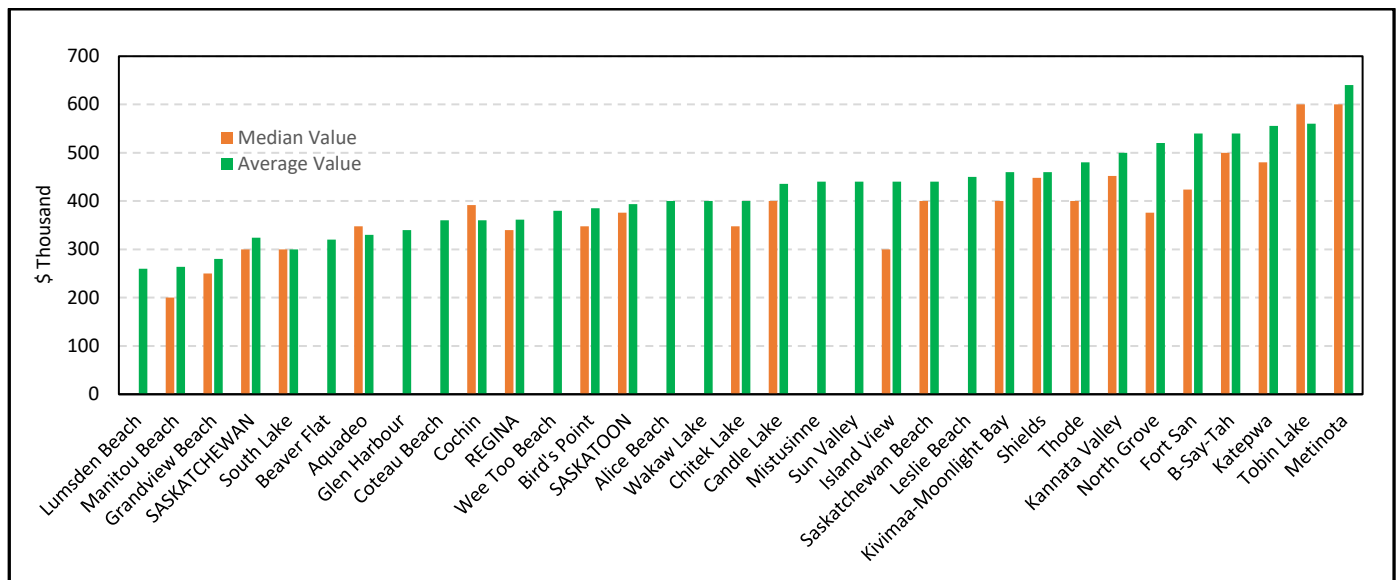Source: Statistics Canada (2022a)

Figure 5
Owner-assessed sales value of private dwellings
Source: Statistics Canada (2022a)

each case. In 2021, average value data was available for 30 resort villages, with median value data limited to just 20 villages. In all but 3 of 20 instances where both values were recorded, average values exceeded or equalled median values. The total data set ranged considerably from a median value of $200,000 for housing in Manitou Beach to an average value of $640,000 for housing in Metinota. The data set further shows that housing values in almost all resort villages exceeded those of Saskatchewan, and were greater than those of Saskatoon in approximately two-thirds of resort villages. Clearly, much resort village owner-occupied housing is of high value. Nevertheless, this analysis should be read with a degree of caution. Whereas relatively high housing values are beyond doubt, they could be attributed to factors other than to the age of properties and their state of repair. Such factors might include proximity to amenities (e.g.,

lake frontage), lot and dwelling size, and architectural features, as well as the incomes and purchasing powers of owners.

A flourishing housing sector is clearly evident in many resort villages. Moreover, several supply related factors suggest that further growth of the villages is virtually assured. Foremost among these is the provision for growth outlined in basic planning statements and official community plans, and their associated zoning bylaws. The overbound status of many resort villages should help facilitate such growth. As might be expected, the sale of vacant lots and residential properties are widely advertised by major real estate companies such as RE/MAX, Century 21, and Royal LePage. More directly, several village websites, including those of Grandview Beach and Wee Too Beach, invite readers to enquire about real estate sales, whilst others websites go further by providing maps showing the location, di-

mensions and status of lots for sale. For example, in April 2023, the Shields website was offering 16 large fully serviced 1,050 m² lakeside lots, and an equal number of 920 m² lakeview lots (Shields 2023). Similarly, at Chitek Lake, four 1,555 m² residential lots were being offered for sale (Chitek Lake 2023).

The prospect of future demand for permanent or usual residence in resort villages is more difficult to assess, but several factors seem relevant. Foremost among these is the expectation of strong population growth and further aging of Saskatchewan's population in forthcoming decades (Statistics Canada 2022b). Currently, persons aged 55 years and over including baby boomers and early retirees dominate the demographic profile of resort villages, and there is no reason to suspect that village residence will become less popular among persons of this demographic. A second factor relates to the proximity of many resort villages to large urban centres such as Regina and Saskatoon. Whilst the employment opportunities and services provided by these locations will remain, the growth of the telework economy during the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated both the facility for working from home and also the potential for further expansion of the sector (Deng et al. 2020). This evolving relationship should benefit both existing and future village residents. Last, but not least, there is the prospect of heightened interest in resort village residence stemming from the self-assessments and promotional claims posted on village websites, and the optimism expressed in community plans such as that of Bird's Point where "Increasing public demand for recreational property in southern Saskatchewan has caused the value of both vacant lots and existing residences in the Resort Village to increase substantially in recent years; this trend is expected to continue" (Bird's Point 2022).

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has traced the evolution, locational attributes, administration, and demographic and housing characteristics of Saskatchewan's resort villages. Taken collectively, the villages share several characteristics in common. These include their lakeside locations, small size, rapid growth rates, elderly population structures, and relatively new and well maintained single-detached housing stocks. Despite this, not all villages are alike. Environmental settings contrast villages set in grassland and parkland ecoregions with those located in more northerly forested ecoregions. Candle Lake overshadows all other villages in terms of population size and physical area. The villages of Coteau Beach, Shields, and Thode are unlike other villages in terms of their relatively youthful population structures. Variable proximity to major urban centres makes commuting for employment more viable for some villages, and particularly those within a one-hour drive. Whilst many villages provide for commercial development that is consistent with and supportive of their primary residential function, the extent of commercially zoned land and the range of permitted uses varies considerably among villages. Several factors seem likely to encourage further growth of most villages, at least in the short to medium term.

These include provision for additional residential development expressed in existing planning documents, continued demand for resort village residence from retiring baby boomers and an aging population, and the tendency of resort villages to promote themselves as ideal places to live. The challenge for resort villages will be their ability to accommodate this growth without adversely affecting the sensitive environments in which they are set.

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Across the Division

Brandon University

The Department of Geography and Environment at Brandon University (BU) has had a successful year. Dr. Christopher Malcolm was elected President of the PCAG, while Dr. Derrek Eberts remains Past-President. Dr. Eberts was also elected Secretary-Treasurer for the CAG. Dr. Rachel Herron had her Tier II Canada Research Chair in Rural and Remote Mental Health renewed and we hired Dr. Mizhar Mikati on a 5-year contract to cover Dr. Herron's teaching. Dr. Mikati has been studying agriculture food systems in the region. Dr. Dion Wiseman participated in a SSHRC funded project jointly hosted by Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation and Brandon University, with contributions from Queen's University, the University of Manitoba, and Laurentian University, to develop a series of workshops related to the search for missing indigenous residential school children. Dr. Peter Whittington was a co-applicant on a successful NSERC Alliance Strategic Missions grant to conduct peatland restoration and carbon sequestration in Sudbury. Dr. Alexander Koiter received funding to start a research project on the stratification of phosphorus in agricultural riparian areas. Dr. Malcolm received funding for a human dimensions of wildlife project on urban crocodile management in Puerto Vallarta and successfully conducted the project with colleagues from the Universidad de Guadalajara (UG) Centro Universitario de la Costa campus, through the International Agreement for International Education Cooperation between BU and UG.

Lakehead University

In the past year, Lakehead's Department of Geography and the Environment has continued with efforts at graduate and undergraduate student recruitment and retention. While the department's service courses remain popular, undergraduate student numbers continue to challenge. The number of graduate students in our Master of Environmental Studies program offers hope for the future. The program underwent a successful external review last year and we are in the process of reviewing and implementing the recommendations. Our faculty complement remains steady, with our most recent permanent appointee, Dr. Muditha Heenkenda, being in the process of applying for tenure. We have been able to hire Megan Sheramata for our Orillia campus, albeit on a limited term appointment basis. We have also been spared the necessity of labour action as a result of productive, if very last minute, contract negotiations. For the first time in three years, we will have a collective agreement longer than one year.

University of Regina

The 2022/23 academic year marks the first year when most courses have been taught face-to-face again, and on-campus life has slowly developed to pre-pandemic 'normal'. During the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies celebrated the convocation of 35 graduates in the programs offered by the department (BA and BSc in Geography and Environmental Studies, BA and BSc and in Geography, BA in Environmental Studies, and Bachelor in Geographic Information Science (BGISc)).

Several department members received funding for a variety of research projects or are currently working on ongoing projects. Outstanding among them is Dr. David Sauchyn (PARC) who received several grants, including funding from NSERC, the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency, Suncor Energy Foundation, ENMAX Corporation, and the City of Edmonton.

The department is continuing to work on implementing the redesign of its academic offerings and curriculum due to the continuing reduction in faculty members. The latest loss the department faced is Dr. Joe Piwowar who retired in June 2022. Due to financial struggles of the University of Regina, we are not expecting to replace his position in the near future.

University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota's Department of Geography and GISc has seen significant changes since the last volume of *Prairie Perspectives*. During this time, the chairperson of the department, Dr. Douglas Munski, dealt with the buy-out early retirement of Dr. Paul Todhunter, now a professor emeritus, and whose position was not returned to the department. However, at the end of Dr. Munski's three-year term, there was a successful search for a GISc-Big Data/Transportation GEOG position. This is a UND Presidential Strategic Initiatives research-oriented position that will be held by Dr. Jinwoo Park. Also, during this time, the department began offering a PSM (Professional Science Master's) GEOG degree as an exclusively online program. The transition to Dr. Gregory Vandeberg's return to being the chairperson began on July 1, 2023. Not least, the Department of Geography and GISc is looking forward to hosting PCAG 2024 in Grand Forks. The conference/meeting is being organized in conjunction with Dr. Laura B. Munski of the Dakota Science Center, and the Virginia George Inheritance Fund.

University of Winnipeg

The Department of Geography would like to welcome Dr. Jay Maillet (Instructor II) to our faculty. Jay started in the summer of 2021 and quickly worked to redesign and invigorate the first-year physical geography program while also supporting our new graduate student lab instructors. Dr. Maillet has a background in forestry and dendrochronology and brings a complimentary set of skills to the department. We look forward to many years of collaboration with him.

Since 2021, the department's newly established Master's in Environment and Social Change program has welcomed 22 graduate students. The first cohort of these students has now completed their studies, and a further eight students enrolled in the program in September 2023. During the COVID pandemic, the Geography Department undertook a major renovation to develop a new home for the graduate program. The new space includes workstations, meeting facilities with tele-conferencing ability, and a virtual computer lab with access to high end computing and software.

An important asset for the department is the substantial number of undergraduate student awards created through significant past bequest donations. Recently, scholarships valued at over $11,000 have been awarded to 21 student majors. A further highlight is the department's recent geomatics-based field course in Norway developed in collaboration with civil engineering faculty at NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) Gjøvik. The field course was fully funded through institutional and government funded collaborative grants.

While COVID's impact has been challenging, the return to campus has brought a renewal of academic and educational purpose.

About the Authors

Justine Backer is a graduate of the Masters of Natural Resource Management program at University of Manitoba. She is currently employed as a Senior Business Officer of Partnership and Procurement Opportunities at the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Franck Chignier-Riboulon is a Professuer at Université Clermont Auvergne, France. He is a social and urban geographer, specializing in geopolitics. His current research activities focus on neighbourhood developments, social housing policies, social and racial tensions, school questions in these estates, culture and social attitudes, and social exclusion. His main research interests are illustrated in *L'intégration des Franco-maghrébins* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan 1999).

John C. Lehr is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg, where he was formerly a professor and head of department. His research interests focus on the role of ethnic and religious groups in settling the Canadian West. With Yossi Katz he is the author of *Inside the Ark: The Hutterites in Canada and the United States* (University of Regina Press 2014).

Joanne M. Moyer is an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Geography and Director of the Environmental Studies program at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta. Her research focuses on learning for sustainability and faith-based environmental engagement in Canada. A summative article from this research, with A. John Sinclair, analyses features of faith organizations to explore their roles, strengths, and shortcomings in contributing to environmental governance (*Society and Natural Resources* 2022. 35(8): 836–855).

A. John Sinclair is a Professor and Director of the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba Winnipeg, Manitoba. His main research interest focuses on community involvement and learning in the process of resource and environmental decision-making. His applied research takes him to various locations in Canada, as well as Asia.

Julia Siemer is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Regina. Her current research interests include thematic mapping techniques, analysis and mapping of food accessibility, and cartographic visualization of population distributions. An example of the latter includes an evaluation of cartographic methods for mapping Canada's population (*Potsdamer Geographische Praxis* 2017. 12: 35–49).

Bernard D. Thraves is an Adjunct Professor with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Regina. His research interests focus on population geography, urban geography, the geography of Saskatchewan, and the islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean. He is a co-editor and contributing author of *Saskatchewan: Geographic Perspectives* (University of Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center 2007).