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Superstack Nostalgia
Miners and Industrial Heritage in Sudbury, Ontario

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

The growth of industrial tourism and heritage has both fascinated and frustrated scholars of deindustrialization. Frequently, workers and class conflict are obscured in or expunged from the official narratives of industrial heritage. This article makes an original contribution to research on deindustrialization and industrial heritage through fieldwork in Sudbury, Ontario – a region that has seen a decades-long process of industrial restructuring. The article draws on 26 qualitative interviews with current and retired nickel miners and analyzes workers' reflections on local mining history. It examines how workers understand the foreign takeover of the mines, job loss, and the transformation of Sudbury's regional economy away from blue-collar industrial employment. The article then explores the growth of regional tourism based around the mining sector, looking particularly at Dynamic Earth, an attraction that teaches visitors about the history of nickel mining through guided tours of a closed mine. On the one hand, workers critique what they see as an obfuscation of class conflict in industrial heritage, while on the other hand, they experience these sites as confirmation of the historic contributions nickel miners have made to Sudbury and the surrounding region.

Superstack Nostalgia: Miners and Industrial Heritage in Sudbury, Ontario

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Abstract: The growth of industrial tourism and heritage has both fascinated and frustrated scholars of deindustrialization. Frequently, workers and class conflict are obscured in or expunged from the official narratives of industrial heritage. This article makes an original contribution to research on deindustrialization and industrial heritage through fieldwork in Sudbury, Ontario – a region that has seen a decades-long process of industrial restructuring. The article draws on 26 qualitative interviews with current and retired nickel miners and analyzes workers' reflections on local mining history. It examines how workers understand the foreign takeover of the mines, job loss, and the transformation of Sudbury's regional economy away from blue-collar industrial employment. The article then explores the growth of regional tourism based around the mining sector, looking particularly at Dynamic Earth, an attraction that teaches visitors about the history of nickel mining through guided tours of a closed mine. On the one hand, workers critique what they see as an obfuscation of class conflict in industrial heritage, while on the other hand, they experience these sites as confirmation of the historic contributions nickel miners have made to Sudbury and the surrounding region.

Keywords: deindustrialization, industrial heritage, industrial tourism, mining, working-class culture, nostalgia

Résumé : La croissance du tourisme industriel et du patrimoine a à la fois fasciné et frustré les spécialistes de la désindustrialisation. Souvent, les travailleurs et les conflits de classe sont obscurcis ou supprimés des récits officiels du patrimoine industriel. Cet article apporte une contribution originale à la recherche sur la désindustrialisation et le patrimoine industriel par le biais d'un travail de terrain à Sudbury, en Ontario, une région qui a connu un processus de restructuration industrielle de plusieurs décennies. L'article s'appuie sur 26 entretiens qualitatifs avec des mineurs de nickel actuels et retraités et analyse les réflexions des travailleurs sur l'histoire minière locale. Il examine comment les travailleurs comprennent la prise de contrôle étrangère des mines, la perte d'emplois et la transformation de l'économie régionale de Sudbury loin de l'emploi industriel des cols bleus. L'article explore ensuite la croissance du tourisme régional autour du secteur minier, en s'intéressant particulièrement à Terre dynamique, une attraction qui enseigne aux visiteurs l'histoire de l'extraction du nickel à travers des visites guidées d'une mine fermée. D'une part, les travailleurs critiquent ce qu'ils considèrent comme un obscurcissement du conflit de classe dans le patrimoine industriel, tandis que d'autre part, ils considèrent ces sites comme une confirmation des contributions historiques que les mineurs de nickel ont apportées à Sudbury et à la région environnante.

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Mots clefs : désindustrialisation, patrimoine industriel, tourisme industriel, exploitation minière, culture ouvrière, nostalgie.

On Sunday, 26 September 2021, 39 miners were trapped underground in Vale's Totten Mine in Sudbury, Ontario, after "an incident" in the mine shaft caused the "conveyance for transporting employees" to be "taken offline."[1] Although no major injuries were reported and rescue crews were promptly deployed, the image of workers trapped 4,130 feet below the surface was a sombre reminder of the ever-present danger involved in underground, hardrock mining. The incident also underlined the continuing significance of an industry that, despite partial deindustrialization and quite substantial workforce reductions over the decades, still employs thousands of workers and generates considerable profit for the foreign multinational firms now in charge. Trapped miners or periodic labour unrest – in the form of two prolonged strikes since the Great Recession – puncture an image of "post-industrialism" often predicated on narratively relegating the struggles of industrial unions and workers to the past.[2]

The "place" of industrial workers and their unions in the history and story of deindustrialization is a matter of ongoing political and social contestation.[3] Moreover, this is a struggle frequently fought on the terrain of culture, over the meaning of physical spaces, monuments, and other local sites of historic and symbolic significance. Increasingly, the battle over the narrative and meaning of deindustrialization is also waged within tourist and heritage attractions, parts of an emerging industry based on the supposed allure of "industrial ruination."[4] This article addresses the place of industrial workers in public narratives of deindustrialization through a critical analysis of the rise of an adjacent, though small, "industrial tourism" economy in Sudbury. Unlike many of the cities and towns where industrial heritage sites form part of the historical and narrative construction of deindustrialization, Sudbury

1. "All 39 Miners Trapped Underground in Sudbury, Ont., Have Now Been Rescued," CTV News Northern Ontario, 29 September 2021, https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/39-miners-stuck-underground-at-vale-s-totten-mine-in-sudbury-ont-1.5602107.

2. See John Peters, "Down in the Vale: Corporate Globalization, Unions on the Defensive, and the USW Local 6500 Strike in Sudbury, 2009–2010," *Labour/Le Travail* 66 (Fall 2010): 73–105; Adam D. K. King, "Memory, Mobilization, and the Social Bases of Intra-union Division: Some Lessons from the 2009–2010 USW 6500 Strike in Sudbury, Ontario," *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies* 6, 3 (2017): 53–72. On the 2021 strike, see "Local 6500 Members Reject Tentative Contract, Go on Strike," *Sudbury Star*, 1 June 2021, https://www.thesudburystar.com/news/local-news/local-6500-members-reject-tentative-contract-go-on-strike.

3. See, for example, Tim Strangleman, "'Smokestack Nostalgia,' 'Ruin Porn' or the Working-Class Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 23–37.

4. Elisabeth Clemence Chan, "What Roles for Ruins? Meaning and Narrative of Industrial Ruins in Contemporary Parks," *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 4, 2 (2009): 20–31.

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has not experienced abruptly shuttered factories or permanently closed mills. Rather, a decades-long process of workforce downsizing has resulted in a situation where a still profitable mining industry produces "more with less" while multinational employers periodically seek concessions from what remains of a once militant union and mining workforce.[5] The continued operation of a "leaner" mining industry alongside nascent industrial heritage sites challenges the story of both the industrial development and post-industrial trajectory of Sudbury.

The growth of industrial tourism alongside the continued operation of the nickel mining industry raises questions as to how current and retired miners relate to these local industrial heritage sites. To address these questions, the article analyzes qualitative data from interviews with underground miners at Vale, formerly Inco, the largest mining firm in the region. It first addresses workers' local and intergenerational understandings of working-class history in Sudbury and their experiences of the decline of industrial employment. The article also examines the narrative strategies and social memories that workers draw on in the process of understanding the foreign takeover of the mines and the contemporary place of nickel mining in Sudbury. Against these narratives, the article then explores the growth of regional tourism based in part around the mining sector, focusing on Dynamic Earth, the publicly owned museum and science centre that houses "the Big Nickel" and teaches visitors about the geology and history of nickel mining in the region. The museum uses a series of interactive experiences and a guided tour of a closed mine. The article argues that workers' relation to Sudbury's industrial heritage and tourism sites is complex and multilayered. On the one hand, workers were critical of what they saw as an obfuscation of working-class experience and class conflict, while on the other hand, many saw historical sites such as Dynamic Earth as confirmation of the importance and contemporary contributions of the nickel mining industry. According to many interviewees, Dynamic Earth's tours lacked critical discussion of past struggles and strikes, and particularly the role of workers in improving health and safety at the mines.

Industrial tourism based around Sudbury's nickel mining industry offers a unique case study through which to broaden our understanding of the sociological, cultural, and spatial dimensions of workplace restructuring, deindustrialization, and the way global capitalism has shaped, challenged, and, in many cases, harmed local communities. Through an analysis of workers' and retirees' narratives about work, restructuring, job loss, and ongoing struggles against concessions among those still employed in the mining industry, it is possible to learn about the relationships between workers' experiences of economic change and their expectations regarding labour and employment in the future. Sudbury also offers an opportunity to explore how workers and

5. Bob Russell, *More with Less: Work Reorganization in the Canadian Mining Industry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

retirees from the workplaces on which the industrial heritage sector is based experience the latter's emergence and its representation of workers. Industrial tourist sites often function, whether intentionally or not, as spaces of cultural appropriation that are expected to generate value and revenue out of industrial decline as well as to reconcile local publics to the loss of industry and employment. Expunging class conflict from official narratives can therefore be seen as part of the process of constructing a digestible narrative for outside visitors and patrons. However, as the interviewees in this study demonstrate, sites of memorialization also open opportunities for critical reflection, engagement, and contestation, allowing workers to impart their own reflections on the past and present.

Sudbury, Nickel Mining, and the Birth of Industrial Tourism

Sudbury – once, and perhaps still, renowned for "the Big Nickel," a nine-metre replica of a 1951 Canadian nickel coin and the extractive industry to which it pays homage – is to some degree a mining town now with far fewer remaining miners. When the first signs of global economic contraction set in during the 1970s, the largest mining firm, Inco, began to feel the squeeze of what it considered costly collective agreements.[6] A militant workforce, organized first as the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Local 598 and subsequently certified as United Steelworkers (usw) Local 6500, had made quite impressive collective bargaining gains through the 1960s.[7] The challenges to Inco's profitability in the late 1970s were not strictly the result of the structural power of its unionized workforce, however. Labour costs, combined with issues related to the global nickel and copper markets, weakened Inco and undermined the company's powerful position vis-à-vis its competitors.

For more than a decade, worldwide nickel consumption had been tapering off, and by 1968 nickel production was outstripping consumption regularly. "Overly optimistic projections" were widespread among both government and industry forecasters.[8] Even as production of the mineral continued to outpace

6. For an investigative history of Inco, locally, nationally, and internationally, see Jamie Swift, *The Big Nickel: Inco at Home and Abroad* (Kitchener: Between the Lines, 1977).

7. On the "Mine-Mill" union, see the essays collected in Mercedes Steedman, Peter Suschnigg, and Dieter Buse, eds., *Hard Lessons: The Mine Mill Union in the Canadian Labour Movement* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1995); on the United Steelworkers Local 6500, see Wallace Clement, *Hardrock Mining: Industrial Relations and Technological Changes at Inco* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981); Hans Brasch, *Structure and Operation of the Steelworkers* (self-pub., 2005). This article deals only with Inco-Vale and workers and retirees from this company. Because the article is part of a larger study confined to Vale, I am cautious about generalizing findings herein to the entire regional mining workforce, that is, those currently or formerly employed at Falconbridge-Xstrata and members of Mine-Mill 598 (Unifor).

8. See United Steelworkers of America Local 6500, *Technological Change at Inco and Its*

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the market's ability to absorb it, nickel producers, following faulty forecasts, increased global production and eroded the price of nickel. This overproduction problem was further exacerbated by new nickel sources coming online, many of which were operated by new producers in formerly colonized countries. Inco initially approached this as both a threat and an opportunity. As Jamie Swift has documented, the company pursued extensive foreign investment throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s in an attempt to internationalize and gain a foothold in emerging markets with low labour standards and few environmental regulations.[9] However, global diversification failed to keep Inco, or Canadian-sourced nickel, in its formerly dominant position. In 1950, Canada supplied 80 per cent of world nickel. As the 1970s approached, this figure was dipping below half of world supply and was on a downward trend.[10] Inco, specifically, fared much worse than the industry as a whole: while "the benevolent monopoly" supplied 90 per cent of world nickel in 1950, its contribution had dropped to less than 20 per cent by 1985.[11] Importantly, as other producers increased output, Inco lost its place as a monopoly price setter and faced intensifying competitive pressures in an already slack market. Losing its monopoly position also undermined Inco's ability to pass rising labour costs on to customers in the form of higher commodity prices. Under new competitive pressures, the company thus looked to its primary workforce in Sudbury to shoulder these new financial burdens.

Given the spatial fixity of Sudbury's mineral deposits and mining infrastructure, the company pursued substantial workforce reductions through an intensive project of labour-process innovations, eventually mechanizing and automating huge portions of the mining and refining processes.[12] In 1971, employment at Inco (and USW 6500 membership) peaked at 18,224, after which its decline was "at first slow and irregular and then rapid and steady."[13] By 1986, when the Steelworkers commissioned researchers to study the impacts of new mining technologies, employment at Inco had fallen to 6,518, down 63 per cent from its peak fifteen years earlier.[14] As the USW's study

Impacts on Workers: A Study Sponsored by Local 6500 (Sudbury and Pittsburgh: USWA, 1987); United Steelworkers of America Local 6500, *Technological Change and Job-Loss: The Social Impact on Laid-Off Workers and Incentive Retirees at INCO* (Sudbury and Pittsburgh: USWA, 1988).

9. Swift, *Big Nickel*, 68–73.

10. USWA, *Technological Change*, 2.9.

11. Swift, *Big Nickel*, 28; USWA, *Technological Change*, 4.7.

12. Clement, *Hardrock Mining*; see also Alan Hall, "The Corporate Construction of Occupational Health and Safety: A Labour Process Analysis," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 18, 1 (1993): 1–20.

13. USWA, *Technological Change*, 3.2

14. USWA, *Technological Change*, 3.3

showed, Inco had spent lavishly on research and development between the early 1970s and mid-1980s, introducing new labour-saving technologies as a direct response to union power and rising labour costs. By the 1990s, mechanization and automation were so extensive throughout the mines and refining facilities that the local blue-collar workforce was reduced to less than 10 per cent of the local labour force.[15] When Brazilian conglomerate Vale Ltd. purchased Inco's mines in 2006 amid a rush of foreign direct investment into Canada's extractive industries, slightly more than 3,000 workers remained in a city and surrounding area of roughly 165,000 people.[16]

The loss of blue-collar, unionized work in Sudbury is in many respects an intensified microcosm of wider trends in Canada. From 1981 to 2022, Canadian union density declined from 37.6 per cent to 29 per cent. Because of the significant loss of union jobs in male-dominated, goods-producing sectors (manufacturing, mining, fishing, utilities, construction, oil and gas), male unionization dropped more substantially than the overall decline. While women's unionization remained stable at 31 per cent owing to high public-sector union density in health care, education, and social services, men's unionization rate dropped 16 points, from 42 per cent to 26 per cent.[17] As well, private-sector workers fared worse than their public-sector counterparts. While the unionization rate for the latter grew slightly to reach 71 per cent by 2014, union density in the private sector fell to roughly 15 per cent, down from 18.1 per cent fifteen years earlier.[18]

The implications of these changes are on full display in Sudbury. A substantially weakened union at Vale has been unable to stem the growth of a pool of contingent, non-union, contract workers on whom the mining firms

15. Dieter K. Buse, "The 1970s," in C. M. Wallace and Ashley Thomson, eds., *Sudbury: Rail Town to Regional Capital* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1993), 242–274.

16. On foreign investment in Canadian resource extraction, see Jim Stanford, "Staples, Deindustrialization, and Foreign Investment: Canada's Economic Journey Back to the Future." *Studies in Political Economy* 82 (Autumn 2008): 7–34. For commentary following Vale's takeover of Inco, see David Leadbeater, "Introduction: Sudbury's Crisis of Development and Democracy," in Leadbeater, ed., *Mining Town Crisis: Globalization, Labour and Resistance in Sudbury* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008), 11–48. For Sudbury's population, see Statistics Canada, "Greater Sudbury [Census Metropolitan Area]," Census Profile, 2016 Census, Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

17. René Morissette, "Unionization in Canada, 1981 to 2022" Economic and Social Reports, Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 36-28-0001, 23 November 2022, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022011/article/00001-eng.htm.

18. Statistics Canada, "Unionization Rates Falling," Canadian Megatrends, last modified 17 May 2018, accessed 29 September 2021, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015005eng.htm; Statistics Canada, "Union Status by Industry," table 14-10-0132-01, accessed 29 September 2021, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410013201.

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rely to fulfill various servicing and supply jobs.[19] On the heels of the 2008 global financial crisis, Vale pushed the union into a year-long strike that ended in considerable concessions around pensions, bonuses, and language dealing with contracting out formerly union work.[20] The summer of 2021 saw USW 6500 members again on the picket line, this time successfully defending the retirement health benefits of future hires and over-the-counter prescription drug coverage.[21] These recent episodes of class struggle have been largely defensive. Moreover, their impact on local politics has diminished, because the mines now employ a relatively small number of workers.

As in other local and regional economies dealing with the various challenges of deindustrialization, the city once synonymous with nickel mining has come to see public and private service-sector work account for a much greater share of total employment.[22] Like other resource-dependent local economies, the city and surrounding area has had to pursue alternative economic growth and job creation strategies. Federal, provincial, and municipal public-sector employment have played an important part in Sudbury's labour market restructuring, providing needed job security and livable wages for many in public administration, health care, and education. As the recent financial crisis, "insolvency," and mass termination and restructuring at Laurentian University demonstrate, however, a growth model dependent on public-sector employment carries its own uncertainties under the Progressive Conservative provincial government of Doug Ford, who has demonstrated a commitment to public-sector spending restraint and retrenchment.[23] Other service-sector employment in retail, hospitality, and tourism have been characterized by low wages and general precariousness.[24]

In part, the rise of a tourism industry – and industrial tourism, in particular – conforms to the above model of low-wage service-sector employment combined with partial public funding support. Since the early 2000s, Sudbury's local government, with financial and administrative support from the province

19. David Robinson, "The Mining Supply and Service Sector: Innovation Policies and the Delivery Gap," INORD paper 05-02, Institute for Northern Ontario Research and Development, Laurentian University, August 2005.

20. Peters, "Down in the Vale."

21. "Strike Is Over: Local 6500 Members Vote 85% to Ratify New Deal," Sudbury.com, 4 August 2021, https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/strike-is-over-local-6500-members-vote-85-to-ratify-new-deal-4191425.

22. For the analysis of the historical development of these trends, see C. M. Wallace, "The 1980s," in Wallace and Thomson, eds., *Sudbury*, 275–286; see also John Closs, "Public-Sector Unions in Sudbury," in Leadbeater, ed., *Mining Town Crisis*, 76–87.

23. Joe Friesen, "Laurentian Professors in Precarious Spot as University Navigates Insolvency," *Globe and Mail*, 12 April 2021, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-laurentian-professors-in-precarious-spot-as-university-navigates/.

24. Leadbeater, "Introduction," 24–25.

of Ontario, has placed greater emphasis on growing the region's tourism sector. Science North and Dynamic Earth have emerged as central pillars of this growth model, the latter seeking to generate value out of Sudbury's local mining history. Science North, a science museum with many interactive indoor and outdoor exhibitions, is Northern Ontario's most frequented tourist attraction and operates Dynamic Earth. The science facility opened in 1984 and is overseen by Ontario's Ministry of Culture, while also collaborating locally with Laurentian University. Dynamic Earth, which opened its doors in 2003, offers guided tours of a closed mine, along with other interactive instalments featuring historical mining equipment and mineral sifting. The guided mine tour includes a seven-story elevator that descends the mine shaft and a historical tour designed to take visitors through the history of mining by demonstrating the technological evolution of the industry. Instalments along the tour are outfitted with equipment and facilities from earlier periods, taking tourists from the early 20th century up to the present.[25]

The grounds of Dynamic Earth have also been home to the Big Nickel since the former's opening. Originally the product of a centennial contest and fundraising campaign by local resident and firefighter Ted Szilva, as well as funding and land provided by Inco, the nine-metre coin has remained a local attraction for decades.[26] The "para-public" character of museums and attractions such as Science North and Dynamic Earth thus combines public funding with a revenue-generating model that seeks to draw on and generate value from the history of mining in the region. Unlike many mining memorials that centre labour and workers' struggle for improved working conditions – such as the bronze mining monument in Sudbury's Bell Park – commercial attractions tend to decentre workers' struggles and limit the engagement of workers' organizations.[27] Such a model also tends to be dominated by business or commercial interests and therefore poses challenges regarding how workers, both active and retired, relate to these sites.

Research Methodology

This article draws on 26 qualitative interviews with current and retired underground nickel miners in the Greater Sudbury area (twenty current employees, six retirees), all of whom work or worked for Vale-Inco.[28] Interviews

25. See "About Dynamic Earth," accessed 8 July 2022, https://www.sciencenorth.ca/dynamic-earth/.

26. "Sudbury's Big Nickel Celebrates 45 Years," Sudbury.com, 21 July 2009, https://www.sudbury.com/lifestyle/sudburys-big-nickel-celebrates-45-years-224865.

27. See Karl Beveridge and Jude Johnston, *Making Our Mark: Labour Arts and Heritage* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999).

28. The larger study from which this article derives concentrates on Vale, its history, and its workforce. Therefore, the results presented in this article should not be interpreted as

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lasting between 45 and 90 minutes were conducted between January 2015 and July 2018. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 74 years, with an average age of 48.2 and only one worker (age 45) between 38 and 49 years of age. In the interviews, workers recounted their work histories and, if applicable, those of other family members who worked in the mines. All interviewees were male, reflective of an industry that, despite employing much greater numbers of women in underground jobs now, nevertheless remains male-dominated and masculinized.[29] The study's snowball sampling methodology was not intended to exclude female informants but nevertheless contributed to this result. That no female miners were interviewed is a limitation in terms of the representativeness of the participant sample, though instructive in terms of the analysis of masculinized working-class identity. The gender composition of the sample also somewhat limits the conclusions that can be drawn about workers' experience and interpretations of Sudbury's industrial tourism sector. At the same time, the male sample offered an opportunity to probe the gendered legacy of mining and unionization in the region.[30] Interviewees were also all "white," though some retained ethnic, linguistic, or cultural affiliations that they expressed as meaningful to their identities, particularly French-Canadian and Scandinavian heritages. The ethnic makeup of the interview sample is reflective of Sudbury more broadly. In contrast to Ontario as a whole, where visible minorities account for 29.3 per cent of the total population, in Sudbury visible minorities represent only 6 per cent of the population.[31]

The research was also intended to focus on rank-and-file workers, not elected union officials. Of the 26 interviewees, only 5 had ever held a position in their union local: 4 had held health and safety committee positions, and 1 was previously elected to an executive leadership position. Worker interviewees were also asked about the history of mining in Sudbury and contemporary issues at work and in mining more generally, as well as for their reflections on industrial heritage and the historical representation of nickel mining in Sudbury. Approximately two-thirds (18 out of 26) of interviewees had visited Dynamic Earth and completed a guided tour of the closed mine.

generalizable to other miners and workers in the mining industry regionally. For example, no members of Mine-Mill 598 (now a local of Unifor) employed at Xstrata (formerly Falconbridge) were part of the interview sample. The different union history and culture of Mine-Mill might have shaped alternative sets of understandings concerning the rise of industrial tourism among members of this union. This article does not, however, address these differences.

29. Jennifer Keck and Mary Powell, "Women into Mining Jobs at Inco: Challenging the Gender Division of Labour," INORD Working Paper Series, 30 July 2000.

30. Adam D. K. King, "Gender and Working-Class Identity in Deindustrializing Sudbury, Ontario," *Journal of Working-Class Studies* 4, 2 (2019): 79–101; see also Meg Luxton, "From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees: Housewives and the Unions," in Meg Luxton, Harriet Rosenberg, and Sedef Arat-Koc, eds., *Through the Kitchen Window: The Politics of Home and Family* (Toronto: Garamond, 1990), 105–122.

31. Statistics Canada, "Greater Sudbury [Census Metropolitan Area]."

All interviewees, however, were well aware of Dynamic Earth, as well as other mining commemorations and attractions around the Greater Sudbury area. Those who had visited Dynamic Earth were asked directly about their experience and interpretation of the tour, while both those who had and those had not visited were asked to reflect on the meaning of industrial tourism in the region. Interview transcripts were organized and analyzed using a coding process meant to identity key themes and topics across interviews. However, individual workers' stories were also analyzed by drawing on methodological insights from the tradition of narrative analysis, which allows greater analysis of the internal structure of interviewee narratives.[32] In this way, greater attention was devoted to how individual workers organized their own historical memories of nickel mining in Sudbury. As well, the combination of narrative analysis and a critical reading of the political economy and history of mining and labour in the region allowed a deeper understanding of how interviewees' narratives and reflections had been shaped by the surrounding context.

Deindustrialization and Industrial Heritage: Situating Sudbury

Since deindustrialization was first identified as a growing socio-economic issue in the early 1980s, the body of literature on its causes and consequences has grown substantially.[33] Originally emerging in response to the significant social dislocations caused by shuttered factories and displaced blue-collar workforces, this scholarship has increased and deepened to include such wide-ranging concerns as deindustrialization's cultural and psychological impacts, its historical origins and economic impetus, and labour's efforts to resist and reform affected factories or industries. Oral history and other qualitative interviewing approaches have brought new methodological tools and concerns to bear on the topic, centring the voices of workers and connecting broad economic processes to the lived experiences and collective agency of working-class people.[34] Deindustrialization research has thus remained

32. See, for example, Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Emily Keightley, "Remembering Research: Memory and Methodology in the Social Sciences," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13, 1 (2010): 55–70.

33. On historiographical treatments, see Steven High, "'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973–2013," *History Compass* 11, 11 (2013): 994–1007; Tim Strangleman and James Rhodes, "The 'New' Sociology of Deindustrialisation? Understanding Industrial Change," *Sociology Compass* 8, 4 (2014): 411–421.

34. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Scott D. Camp, *Worker Response to Plant Closings: Steelworkers in Johnstown and Youngstown* (New York: Garland, 1995); Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (Toronto:

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constructively interdisciplinary, in terms of both the range of approaches undertaken and the research questions posed.

Literature on deindustrialization has also developed through engaged relationships between scholars and activists. As Steven High notes, scholars' early interventions addressed worker and community attempts to resist deindustrialization and the political and economic forces behind it.[35] Scholarly efforts, in the service of active political engagement, were made across regions in North America and western Europe to catalogue both the opposition to and losses from industrial displacement.[36] Although this work achieved much of significance, others recognized that to conceive of deindustrialization as a new socioeconomic phenomenon, particularly in the emergent "Rust Belt" midwestern states, risked obscuring deeper historical patterns of capitalist development and spatial dynamics.[37] Recent research by economic historian Aaron Benanav points to the global application of this insight, as the general overaccumulation crises of capitalism shorten the time span between "industrial takeoff" and the first signs of deindustrialization in "emerging market economies."[38] Although these various political-economic, historical, and contemporaneous interventions identified many factors propelling deindustrialization and capitalist reorganization, more attention was needed – and is still needed – regarding deindustrialization's cultural dynamics and effects, particularly historical treatments of class formation and reconstitution.

Scholarship that places workers at the centre of inquiry has sought to address questions about workers' place within local and regional histories, while also broadening the study of deindustrialization to encompass intersections of race, gender, and culture.[39] In particular, research has taken aim at the racial, gender, and environmental inequities of postwar industrialism and traced the

University of Toronto Press, 2003); Steven High and David Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

35. High, "Wounds of Class."

36. For example, see Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, eds., *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Staughton Lynd, *The Fight against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro: Singlejack Books, 1982); Bruce Nissen, *Fighting for Jobs: Case Studies of Labor-Community Coalitions Confronting Plant Closings* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

37. Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's 70-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

38. Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work* (London: Verso Books, 2020).

39. Thomas Dublin, *When the Mines Closed: Stories of Struggles in Hard Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Thomas Dunk, "Remaking the Working Class: Experience, Class Consciousness, and the Industrial Adjustment Process," *American Ethnologist* 29, 4 (2002): 878–900; Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

uneven distribution of deindustrialization's adverse social consequences.[40] This scholarship has sought to situate workers as active subjects in the political, social, and economic processes of industrial transformation, while subsequent work has offered deeper criticisms of both deindustrialization and the original studies tracing its patterns.[41] The latter has taken a number of forms relevant to the research undertaken in this article, such as critiquing what some scholars refer to as "smokestack nostalgia" for equating the longing for good jobs and economic security with romanticized portraits of industrial work.[42] Although this intervention identified a concerning tendency toward nostalgic portraits of industrial employment in some deindustrialization literature, it also risked obscuring what are often quite meaningful attachments to occupation, industry, and the workplace among former industrial workers. This last form of nostalgia is particularly evident in the reflections made by nickel miners in Sudbury.

The renewed attention to culture among deindustrialization scholars, combined with the economic development strategies of many former industrial regions, has thus prompted engagement with what has come to be known as "industrial heritage" or "industrial tourism."[43] Industrial tourism is a growing sector that some commentators argue could offer viable economic options to ailing post-industrial regional economies.[44] These are tempting prospects for communities struggling with the transition away from manufacturing and resource extraction. However, scholars have also criticized industrial heritage and other forms of industrial social remembrance for a tendency to expunge class and class struggle in representations of industrial work. In place of class conflict, industrial tourist sites frequently present a linear narrative of

40. Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Chitra Joshi, "On 'De-industrialization' and the Crisis of Male Identities," *International Review of Social History* 47, 10 (2002): 159–175.

41. Tim Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change," *Sociology* 51, 2 (2017): 466–482.

42. Strangleman, "'Smokestack Nostalgia'"; see also Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

43. Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experience: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006); Lucy Taksa, "Machines and Ghosts: Politics, Industrial Heritage and the History of Working Life at the Eveleigh Workshops," *Labour History* 85 (2003): 65–88; Emma Waterton, "Sights of Sites: Picturing Heritage, Power and Exclusion," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 4, 1 (2007): 37–56.

44. See, for example, Larry Haiven, "Regeneration among Coal-Mining Communities in Canada and the UK: The Role of Culture," in Norene J. Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, eds., *Interrogating the New Economy: Restructuring Work in the 21st Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 195–213.

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industrial development and economic progress, removing workers' struggles for decent wages and safe working conditions.

Moreover, "industrial ruins" tourism can often be voyeuristic and decontextualized, inviting visitors to explore the ruins of former workplaces while forgetting that these sites once sustained livelihoods and communities. Despite its innovative contributions, some research in the subfield of industrial tourism has lost the focus on workers and class relations, specifically as it has moved to analyzing cultural representations and discourse. Sudbury as a case study offers a corrective to this tendency, owing to the simultaneity of industrial tourism and the mining industry on which it is based. In other words, active and retired nickel miners from Vale engage with the rise of industrial tourism in Sudbury not as detached observers but as active participants in the very industry on which this "tourism" is based. In interviews, workers expressed nuanced positions regarding the meaning of a site like Dynamic Earth. Workers and retirees interviewed for this article have their own critical reflections about heritage and tourism sites that, in certain respects, treat them as historical relics in an industry whose time has passed.

The Intergenerational and Local Making of Class and Occupational Identity

Scholarship on deindustrialization has thus grown considerably across sociology, history, political economy, and geography. Indeed, an interdisciplinary field is now well established that places impacted and "displaced" workers at the centre of economic restructuring, plant shutdowns, capital flight and outsourcing, and the resultant industrial job loss.[45] An important aspect of this research deals with "worker adjustment," that is, the lives of former industrial workers at and outside of work as "post-industrial" forms of labour begin to characterize affected local economies. However, less is known about processes of the making and reproduction of working classes in localities where deindustrialization has not meant full shutdowns but instead entailed major restructurings, foreign acquisition, and workforce reductions, as is the case in Sudbury. The larger study of which this article is a part contrasts Sudbury to more fully deindustrialized cases and explores the impacts of job loss and restructuring in the nickel mining industry. In particular, this research is concerned with the reproduction of workers, their families, and unions in the context of partial deindustrialization.

The reproduction of working-class identity among nickel miners is strongly related to occupational identity. Among interviewees, this attachment to occupational identity stretches across generations. What Tim Strangleman

45. Steven High, "Placing the Displaced Worker: Narrating Place in Deindustrializing Sturgeon Falls, Ontario," in James Opp and John C. Walsh, *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver: ubc Press, 2010), 159–186.

identifies as "networks" based around occupation and the social ties of work and industry in mining communities is an apt description of many current and retired workers in this study.[46] To a certain degree, mining occupational identity is a variation on what David Harvey (borrowing from Raymond Williams) refers to as "militant particularism."[47] The occupational pride of being a miner has, historically, aided the process of class formation and provided a shared sense of local identity around which to mobilize fights against employers and management. For some workers interviewed, being a miner is not necessarily about skill or craft but about their conception of mining's place in their community and its history, as well as the virtue of hard work, which, despite the growth in female employment, still retains noticeably gendered connotations. For example, Charles and Tim, two interviewees separated in age by nearly two decades, both described a sense of pride in their occupation:

> I started when things were really going (...) just about everybody I knew was applying at Inco or working there. It became a huge part of your life. I mean, the work was hard, awful sometimes, but I was able to raise a family, put food on the table (...) Things definitely improved. It was cleaner, the pay got better. It was union, you know. And I felt good about my work. Being at Inco was a common thing because so many people worked there. But it was something to be proud of too.[48]

> Working at Inco was good. Right, we had our disagreements (...) everyone knows that. But miners have a strong sense of pride. It's important work. I could see that right away, especially the way old-timers were. When you'd hear 'em talk about the way things was and that, you knew it was tough. But you knew the workers made it better.[49]

These interviewees discussed occupational identity in ways that created a sense of historical continuity, positioning mining employment as a source of both pride and economic stability. This historical reading of mining employment also furnished interviewees with material to interpret and critique their current circumstances, as well as the state of the local economy – at times in progressive directions, in other instances with noticeably gendered implications. For Charles, occupational pride was secured in part through a gender division between work and home and the "family wage" that supported this gendered division of labour. His job allowed him to "raise a family," something that he understands as both a point of pride and a masculine obligation.

46. Tim Strangleman, "Networks, Place and Identities in Post-industrial Mining Communities," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25, 2 (2001): 253–267.

47. David Harvey, "Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place, Space, and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams," *Social Text* 42 (Spring 1995): 69–98.

48. Charles (71 years old), interview by Adam King, 28 June 2017. In all excerpts from interviews, an ellipsis in parentheses indicates a pause in speech. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of interviewees.

49. Tim (52 years old), interview by Adam King, 10 February 2015.

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Because workplace restructuring, the loss of secure mining jobs, and the growth of precarious employment have transformed many young workers' lives, we see noticeable differences in their reflections about gender and work. For example, younger workers in the sample who had begun work as non-union contractors in less secure jobs told stories of how their female partners worked various, often precarious or contingent, jobs. When interviewees secured full-time, unionized jobs in the mining industry, some of their female partners withdrew from the labour market, while others continued in paid employment. For workers such as James, the ability for his partner to work solely at home was a measure of the security provided by unionized employment at Vale's mines. "When I was contract, things were not good," he said. "We weren't *struggling*, but it was tough sometimes because I didn't know what was going to happen a lot [in terms of job security]."[50] For others, like Anthony, couples' combining of unionized work at the mines with relatively precarious service-sector work was described as typical and understandable given trends in the local economy. "Even with getting full-time at Vale, it's not the '50s, we both need to work, even if the second income isn't much," Anthony recounted. "That's the way it is now."[51] Yet the partial deindustrialization of Sudbury, represented by job loss at the mines and the relative growth of retail and public-sector jobs, has in other ways buttressed the occupational identities of miners. As members of a shrinking proportion of the local workforce, and with the relatively better conditions of their mining employment under threat, many interviewees react to these labour market changes by reiterating the importance of mining to Sudbury. They re-emphasize their occupational identities and what they see as the continued centrality of blue-collar work in an increasingly service-oriented region.[52]

Notice, as well, the way that Tim described how occupational pride is transmitted via the stories workers tell one another about their shared history. According to many interviewees, younger workers gain a sense of their shared history within a workplace environment where workers depend on one another for safety and solidarity. When miners recount memories and tell stories, they engage in the transmission of a shared sense of collectivity and occupational identity. This happens in the informal places and practices of social interaction. For many interviewees, mining is an occupation about which to show pride because it is historically important both to individual families and to the broader community. Miners' occupational identity was further reinforced by the intergenerational nature of employment at the mines. Of the 26 workers interviewed during this research, 17 had family members who currently or

50. James (34 years old), interview by Adam King, 10 February 2015.

51. Anthony (37 years old), interview by Adam King, 18 May 2015.

52. Similar themes are found in Jane Parry, "The Changing Meaning of Work: Restructuring in the Former Coalmining Communities of the South Wales Valleys," *Work, Employment and Society* 17, 2 (2003): 227–246.

previously worked in the nickel mining industry. The discourse of pride in mining also finds reflection in certain aspects of industrial heritage, though as we will see, workers are also critical of official narratives – such as those offered in the guided tours of Dynamic Earth – that downplay or obfuscate struggles between themselves and the mining companies.

Interviewees frequently associate pride in being a miner with local histories of class conflict that they understand to be central to making mining a "good job." Stories about past strikes regularly make use of refrains such as "miners fight back." In this way, workers draw on a historical association between their occupation and a propensity for militancy. For these workers, it is not simply *work* that serves as a point of pride, as scholars concerned about "the end of work" might suggest.[53] Rather, it is the *forms* of work and class relations that unionization generated. According to interviewees, unionization gave workers both greater material security and a sense of dignity, which came from employers having to negotiate with their union, and public recognition of labour's central place in society. The loss of skill, or even the overall decline in mining employment in the community, does not seem to diminish the resources that occupational identity offers to class formation. Being a miner remains an important form of class identification, despite the difficulties that historically specific occupational identities can generate when the material conditions that gave rise to them begin to change. Miners' retention of a strong occupational identity, even among those who are relatively new to their jobs, helps to explain the way interviewees interpreted deindustrialization and job loss, as well as the rise of industrial heritage in Sudbury.

Localizing and Historicizing Working-Class Struggle

How interviewees described the history of class struggle and deindustrialization in Sudbury was also bound up with the ways they think about Inco's previous ownership of the mines. In many interviews, this form of nostalgia took the form of workers comparing Inco with their current employer, Vale, to illustrate various points about the contentious labour relations approach of the latter, as well as the negative impacts of local job loss.[54] Although, as we will see, some interviewees' narratives about Inco underwent interesting shifts and changes of emphasis depending on the topic or point in history they were discussing. Workers tended to fit Inco into their narratives in three distinct ways: when they talked about the former owner's historical significance; when they emphasized regional class opposition in the course of discussing strikes

53. Karen R. Foster, *Generation, Discourse, and Social Change* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Tim Strangleman, "The Nostalgia for the Permanence of Work? The End of Work and Its Commentators," *Sociological Review* 55, 1 (2007): 81–103.

54. Roberta Aguzzoli and John Geary, "An 'Emerging Challenge': The Employment Practices of a Brazilian Multinational Company in Canada," *Human Relations* 67, 5 (2014): 587–609.

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and industrial conflict and juxtaposed Inco's "bigwigs mostly in Toronto" to workers in Sudbury; and when they told stories about Vale's 2006 takeover.[55]

Workers frequently engaged in the first of these ways of remembering Inco when giving general reflections on mining and its place in Sudbury's history, or when they were discussing job loss at the mines and the general shift to a more service-based local economy. To a certain extent, this somewhat nostalgic reading of Inco and nickel mining's past coincides with the narratives presented at a heritage site like Dynamic Earth. During many interviews, workers remembered Inco as more benign than Vale, less hostile to workers, and generally concerned about the well-being of Sudbury and its surrounding communities. Themes of supposed company benevolence, charity, or community development and quite bitter class struggle sometimes appeared within single interviews, even when conclusions drawn from each of these themes were not necessarily compatible or reconcilable. Stories about "Inco homes" (i.e. company-owned homes that many workers later purchased) illustrate this point. One retiree, for example, emphasized his ability to eventually "buy my Inco house" as evidence that the company provided benefits to workers outside of the workplace in ways that the current employer does not.[56] Similar examples concerning Inco-sponsored community events or "public" spaces also underline how some workers thought about the former company's supposedly positive role in the broader community.

There were, however, countertendencies wherein even those workers who engaged in the latter type of nostalgic memorialization of Inco also underscored working-class opposition and class conflict. In the latter instances, Inco often appeared as an opponent in episodes of class struggle. In such narratives, the "benevolent monopoly" ceased to be a member of the community and was spatially repositioned as representative of the powerful forces shaping Sudbury's fortunes from afar.[57] For example, consider how Peter, who was nearing retirement, positioned Inco in the course of describing the 1978–79 strike:

> That strike, it was a battle, like it was a real turning point for the community. After, to me, Inco wasn't a part of what I think of as Sudbury. Does that make sense? Like, what mattered was profits going to people in Toronto or wherever, not people here being able to support their families and have a decent life. As you probably know, pensions (...) that was a big issue. Workers were saying how people here put in a lifetime of work and wanted a guarantee to have a good retirement. Seems perfectly reasonable to me.[58]

55. Dale (55 years old), interview by Adam King, 12 February 2015.

56. Leon (72 years old), interview by Adam King, 12 February 2015.

57. Swift, *Big Nickel*, 28.

58. Peter (50 years old), interview by Adam King, 10 February 2015. For historical background on the 1978–79 strike, see Luxton, "Ladies Auxiliaries"; Carol Mulligan, "Remembering 1978–79," *Sudbury Star*, 9 January 2010.

According to Peter, contentious strikes, such as took place in 1978–79 at Inco, exposed how the company placed its business interests ahead of community cohesion. He assessed the workers' demands for economic security as "perfectly reasonable" and retrospectively questioned Inco's commitment to the community as a result of its resistance to providing this.

Part of Inco's project of being a good "industrial citizen" throughout its years of ownership in Sudbury involved various paternal and charitable activities in the workplace and community, gestures that company management likely imagined would ameliorate workplace tensions and improve the company's public image.[59] In workers' stories, however, strikes denoted occasions where Inco failed to live up to this image. As a result, in discussing these instances, interviewees narratively exiled Inco from the community. In doing so, workers drew a distinction that Thomas W. Dunk highlights between working-class Northern Ontario and urban Southern Ontario, where class power and cultural distinction represent modes of differentiation and control.[60] However, this geographical distinction could take the form, as in one interviewee's recollection, of complicating the internal structure of Inco itself. For Alain, Inco's management was beset by its own internal contradictions overlaid on the spatial distribution of power in Ontario:

> Inco, you know, it forced us into strikes, yes. But in my time, there were always managers who were friends, neighbours and so on, you know? Obviously, any company of that size has powerful interests at the top that don't give a shit about the worker here in Sudbury. You might get into it with a manager over this or that issue, but when it comes to a year on a picket line (...) no one here in the community wants that.[61]

"Powerful interests at the top" were positioned by Alain as not *of* the community and therefore as not considering the implications that actions taken in pursuit of narrow economic interests alone might have on the community.

Such notions of community could at times become complicated when managers who were also "community members" were positioned as, in some sense, allies. However, aside from some sympathetic comments about "local" managers, workers drew strongly on notions of place in describing their understanding of working-class identity in Sudbury. It is useful here to consider Alessandro Portelli's distinction between the "residual community" and the "substitute community."[62] In the case of the former, Portelli describes the spatial and cultural bonds of "organic community," whereas he understands the latter to consist of purposeful and political organization. What is

59. Tim Strangleman, "Rethinking Industrial Citizenship: The Role and Meaning of Work in an Age of Austerity," *British Journal of Sociology* 66, 4 (2015): 673–690.

60. Thomas W. Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 48–57.

61. Alain (56 years old), interview by Adam King, 10 February 2015.

62. Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 186.

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interesting to note is how workers in Sudbury framed the "substitute community" of working-class opposition and union organization as drawing on the bonds and meaning of community. A reservoir of meaning in the imagined togetherness and shared identity of locality is put to use in forging solidarity and pursuing improvements in the workplace. Many interviewees demonstrated this process of regionalizing working-class identity when they described their work lives and union experiences in Sudbury. For example, Tim explained, "A lot of what makes Sudbury what it is, is workers' attachment to this place. That might be hard to understand for someone who didn't grow up here or stay here. But, I think anyway, a lot of what explains the strength of the union over the years is how people feel about their community here. If someone is trying to attack that, it's like they're attacking your way of life."[63] For Tim and others, strong community ties helped to explain the reproduction of working-class organization. In many respects this is a variation on a theme that sociologists and social historians have identified when the formation of capitalist class relations come into conflict with established ways of cultural, economic, or political life.[64] However, this is not only a process confined to the past formation of working classes but also a feature of their reproduction. In the case of miners in Sudbury, place-based identities continued to influence how workers understood themselves and their interests, against the backdrop of partial deindustrialization, shrinking employment at the mines, and foreign acquisitions of mining firms.

Vale's 2006 takeover of Inco was a fraught local, and to some degree national, event. For some interviewees, having Brazilian-based Vale as their employer has led them to re-emphasize "community" in distinct and oppositional ways. In certain cases, workers expressed sympathy for managers they regarded as being harmed or treated badly by Vale. Many managers and supervisors with whom workers had the most direct contact at work were neighbours or possibly even friends. Vale's outsider status at times led workers to downplay the disparities in power and control that exist between themselves and some sections of management. Ian, a relatively new employee, described his frustration with Vale's control over his immediate superiors: "Like, sometimes it's ridiculous. These Vale guys won't let supervisors make decisions that they should be making (...) and it holds us guys up, you know? It seems like they're obsessed with control at every level. Like, a piece of equipment breaks and buddy [his supervisor] is calling some guy in who knows where – Brazil? I don't know – to make sure he can order something. Just stupid. I feel bad for a lot of managers now."[65] According to this interviewee, Vale disrupts work through its

63. Tim, interview.

64. For example, see Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Vivek Chibber, "Rescuing Class from the Cultural Turn," *Catalyst* 1, 1 (2017): 27–55.

65. Ian (26 years old), interview by Adam King, 29 June 2017.

cost-cutting and direct control of managers and supervisors in Sudbury. Again, he positioned this as emanating from "Brazil," juxtaposing the company's foreignness to the local commonalities of those with whom he works – even if the job of some of these people is to direct and manage his labour. This is a telling example of how the spatial reorganization of production complicates and reaffirms place-based class identities. Interviewees in other instances drew on "Canadianness" and national identity to make similar points, positioning themselves in opposition to their current employer's "foreignness." The spatial reorganization of ownership therefore poses challenges to building international solidarity and combating nationalism and xenophobia.[66] Even such emphases on national difference, however, demonstrate the influence of locality and place on workers' understanding of class in the mining industry in Sudbury. As the place identified with ownership has shifted from Toronto to Brazil, workers accordingly articulated class opposition in their narratives along national rather than regional lines, with at times xenophobic or racist implications. Such attachments to regionalized working-class identity do, however, help to explain workers' understandings and critiques of industrial heritage in Sudbury.

Industrial Heritage: Memorializing Workers while Expunging Class

Against the backdrop of industrial heritage sites and the more general local history of nickel mining, workers form their own reflections on the history of mining and their place within it. As noted above, many interviewees described nickel mining and Inco as symbols of Sudbury's importance to Canada and, by extension, workers' contributions to the former owner's corporate success and historical image. For example, Charles, a retired miner, summarized what he saw as Inco's centrality to Sudbury and Canada, emphasizing how he and others were able to "get decent jobs" in a place that at the time offered few other avenues to economic security: "You know, 'the Big Nickel.' That's Sudbury's image, right. When you drive in here even, almost any direction, the landscape tells it. But that was Inco, it was a huge part of what made Sudbury what it is (...) gave us a place to get decent jobs without much else around (...) and was huge for Canada as a whole, as far as I'm concerned."[67] Charles' observations reflect a common way of framing companies that have restructured or moved away from local communities.

In fact, Inco's place in Sudbury resembles what certain scholars of deindustrialization describe as "smokestack nostalgia."[68] Studying workers

66. Adam D. K. King, "When Capital Comes North: The Discursive Challenges to International Solidarity among Nickel Miners in Sudbury, Ontario," *Global Labour Journal* 11, 3 (2020): 254–270.

67. Charles, interview.

68. Strangleman, "'Smokestack Nostalgia.'" For further reflection on nostalgia, see Fred Davis,

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World's tallest smokestack, Sudbury, 1976.
Photo by Peter Forster. Creative Commons. Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence.

experiencing economic restructuring through the prism of nostalgia alerts us to the interplay between social remembering and current aspirations. In the context of deindustrialization, nostalgia is almost never an uncritical reflection; as such, it usually tells us much more about the present than it does about the past. It often marks an "unease with contemporary culture," pointing to peoples' objections to aspects of contemporary life by using what was supposedly better about the past, whether real or imagined, as a template for criticism.[69] Among workers interviewed for this study, Inco often symbolized particular qualities of Sudbury's history, such as the importance of stable blue-collar, male employment, or the transformation of the natural environment in the region. This could also take the shape of pointing to industrial landmarks as symbols of nickel mining's collective history. As one example, the Inco Superstack figures prominently in how workers discuss Inco and the natural environment. A piece of industrial construction erected as a result of pressure from the union, the community, and the provincial government over mounting environmental damage and pollution, the Superstack functioned as a symbolic and historical landmark for interviewees, many of whom imagined that it represents both nickel mining's regional importance and workers' central place

Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia (New York: Free Press, 1979); Bryan S. Turner, "A Note on Nostalgia," *Theory, Culture and Society* 4, 1 (1987): 147–156.

69. Strangleman, "'Smokestack Nostalgia,'" 33.

in the community.[70] This is especially the case since Vale announced plans to remove the Superstack and replace it with two smaller, and more efficient, industrial stacks. The company's plan to demolish the Superstack elicited public demands regarding the structure's meaning and historical significance, as well as the prospect of designating it a landmark.[71]

Svetlana Boym makes a distinction between "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia," wherein the former imagines a return to the past, and the latter points to the potentialities and missed opportunities of the past while remaining oriented to the future.[72] In Boym's terms, interviewees tended toward "restorative nostalgia," underlining in particular the former stability of life and work at Inco. We can read this tendency in Doug's reflection on Inco:

> In a lot of ways Inco was huge for Sudbury. No question, we had to go on strike many times to win things for the men out there. But we have to remember too, that if the mines hadn't been here, there'd have been nothing to strike about, would there? I look around now, with so many people out of work, or they got this job, then that one…the stability of Inco, when so many worked there (…) that was important.[73]

The place of strikes and other episodes of class struggle sat uneasily in many interviewees' recollections. Strikes were frequently positioned as creating the conditions for stable employment at Inco. Yet in other examples, former Inco employees who discussed the company's regional and national significance tended to neutralize class struggle in the making of Sudbury, seemingly in order to more fully integrate workers themselves into this history.

Throughout the workers' interviews, the tensions between nostalgic memorialization, on the one hand, and celebrations of local histories of class struggle, on the other, mirrored the critique many interviewees have of Dynamic Earth, the "Big Nickel," and other forms of industrial heritage. Workers' struggles are part of local mining history, as embodied in a place like Dynamic Earth, while simultaneously disruptive to it. For example, during Dynamic Earth's guided tours, one is struck by the emphasis on technological progress in the form of upgraded tools, machinery, and underground infrastructure along the tour. Agentless technological progress appears to be the cause of improvement in such areas as workplace health and safety and workers' rights. Within attractions like Dynamic Earth there is a certain "museumification" of the nickel

70. See the account of former USW 6500 president Homer Seguin, *Fighting for Justice and Dignity: The Homer Seguin Story* (self-pub., 2008).

71. Mike Commito and Kaleigh Bradley, "'It's History, Like It or Not': The Significance of Sudbury's Superstack," *Active History*, 29 July 2015, originally posted 17 November 2014, https://activehistory.ca/2015/07/activehistory-ca-repost-its-history-like-it-or-not-the-significance-of-sudburys-superstack/.

72. Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *Hedgehog Review* 9, 2 (2007): 7–18, 13; see also Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

73. Doug (65 years old), interview by Adam King, 30 June 2017.

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mining industry at work.[74] A former worksite now converted into an industrial tourist attraction and museum represents a competing narrative that partially frames the mining industry as a relic or an attraction. As one worker playfully remarked, "People coming to see the Big Nickel or go to Dynamic Earth I always found kinda funny. It's not where I'm heading to on a day off [laughs]. But it shows I guess how things change, but Inco is still there, in a way."[75] This reflection nicely encapsulates the contradictions between the "museumification" of the mining industry and that industry's continued centrality to the local economy, including interviewees' work lives. Partial deindustrialization and its attendant industrial job loss have shifted the overall local economy toward a much greater reliance on public and private service-sector employment, yet the miners interviewed nevertheless described their work as still central to regional prosperity. The experience of having their industry and jobs be the topic of a heritage attraction led some interviewees to express both gratitude for what they recognize as commemoration and skepticism over what they articulated as an erasure of the strikes and conflict that are a central part of Sudbury's history of mining.

In Sudbury, a relatively new mining heritage industry coexists with mines that are still open and highly profitable. Unionized workers, though they might be influenced by the "museumification" of mining, nevertheless read the materiality of industrial heritage in critical ways. Some interviewees used sites of industrial or historical importance as mnemonic devices in the reproduction of working-class identity, remembering them for their association with workers' struggles. This is in keeping with the insights of deindustrialization scholars who highlight the roles that materiality and tangibility often play in how workers actively remember work and workplaces.[76] As an example, Walter displayed the impulse to preserve physical reminders of his work by showing me various hand tools he had kept from his early days of mining. Moreover, when we finished our interview, he gifted me a handful of refined nickel balls approximately the size of marbles from a chest drawer in which he had stored dozens. Walter had appropriated this processed nickel as a physical reminder of his many years of labour in the mining industry.

Tension remains between what many workers recognize as commemoration of mining and miners in heritage attractions such as Dynamic Earth and the lack of attention to the working-class struggle that was historically necessary to transform mining into the formerly stable industrial job that it was. This tension is amplified by the negative employment impacts of deindustrialization. In a context where work at the mines accounts for a diminishing share of regional employment, industrial heritage and the "museumification"

74. High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, 9.

75. Dale, interview.

76. For example, see Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

of the industry appeared to workers as contradictory – on the one hand treating their trade as a source of pride and revenue generation, while on the other presenting mining as a thing of past, despite its continued presence.

Conclusion

Like similarly affected local economies once dependent on industrial production or resource extraction, deindustrialization in Sudbury has posed significant challenges for workers and their families. The decline of mining jobs as a share of local employment has meant diminished income and employment security and a general growth in precariousness, as evidenced by the accounts of the youngest workers in the interview sample. The converse side of the slow decline of industrial employment at Sudbury's mines is the growth of service-sector employment in the regional economy. Thankfully, for local workers some of this employment growth has taken the form of relatively stable, secure, and unionized public-sector work. However, other service-sector work – frequently precarious and feminized – also accounts for a large portion of new job creation. The miners interviewed in the course of this research had their own critical reflections on these changes, at times deploying mining labour as a normative employment form against which to critique the instability and low wages of service-sector work, which, in many instances, was the place to which their female partners found themselves relegated in the local labour market.

The persistence of a much "leaner" mining industry – historically speaking – alongside these employment trends also permits us to pose interesting questions of Sudbury as a particular case study of deindustrialization. This article has considered the meaning of industrial landmarks and industrial heritage attractions through qualitative interviews with current and retired nickel miners. Industrial heritage in the context of a still profitable mining industry now dependent on far fewer workers raises a host of contradictions and tensions. As this article has argued, understanding how workers at Vale experience and understand the commemoration of nickel mining, at sites such as Dynamic Earth, "the Big Nickel," and the Superstack, requires that we situate their narratives within the broader history of mining locally. Workers' interpretations of industrial heritage sites are bound up with how they remember former mine owner Inco, as well as how they remember strikes and other forms of class struggle, in their own personal and collective histories of the nickel mining industry. The prior centrality of mine work in Sudbury contributed to a shared sense among interviewees that they have played an important historical role in the regional economy. Moreover, local and intergenerational understandings of being working class were strongly attached to ideas about community. For workers interviewed herein, Sudbury is a mining town, irrespective of the number of workers still employed at the mines.

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This article has examined workers' narratives to better understand how they view the growth of regional tourism based in part around the mining sector. Dynamic Earth, through its guided tours of a closed mine, offers a glimpse into a discourse of mining history geared toward tourism. Workers' relations to Sudbury's industrial heritage and tourism sites are two-sided. On the one hand, they openly critique what they see as a lack of recognition of workers' struggles. Strikes, many interviewees emphasized, transformed nickel mining into a stable industrial job. "We fought for what we have," one worker summarized. "I don't think those fights are a big part of something like Dynamic Earth."[77] On the other hand, interviewees at times discussed sites such as the "Big Nickel" and the Superstack as important physical commemorations, confirmation of the historic importance of the nickel miners and the mining industry more broadly. However, among current miners, there is more than a little discomfort with commemorations of an industry that is still prominent, one in which workers' struggles for economic security and safe working conditions are ongoing.

77. Charles, interview.