

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines how community leaders in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Fort McMurray, an oil sands town in northern Alberta, Canada, address the issue of image management when it comes to negative coverage of their community via external media outlets. The ethnographical study employs Goffman's image management theory, McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory and Christians' utilitarianism in media ethics theory as its foundation for the need of telling a balanced story about the municipality. In addition, narratives of several other cities around the world have been examined for similar issues. A content analysis of a few of these highlighted stories, and qualitative interviews with selected leaders round out the exploratory study. Furthermore, questions of ethical and moral responsibilities for journalists when telling a community's account as well as how a community can help tell its story to external media outlets were also explored. In light of the in-depth research, this thesis serves to be a de facto call for journalists for accountability and ethical/moral responsibility when relaying a community's comprehensive narrative. It also provides these journalists with key sources – leaders who are able to provide balanced and reliable accounts of the region.