



**Alberta Centre for
Sustainable Rural
Communities
Annual Report
July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013**



Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

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About

Established in 2008, the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC) is a partnership between the Augustana Faculty and the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences of the University of Alberta. The ACSRC fills the gap for research and policy in rural areas by fostering constructive dialogue, promoting interdisciplinary and collaborative research, and developing partnerships between the University of Alberta and rural communities in Alberta and beyond.

For more information, please visit the ACSRC's website

<http://www.augustana.ualberta.ca/centres/acsrc/>

Vision

The vision of the ACSRC is of resilient rural communities across Canada linked closely to the discovery, dissemination, and application of new knowledge at the University of Alberta through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community involvement, and partnerships. Such resilient rural communities will hinge on informed citizens actively participating in community governance and development in order to support and sustain the people, livelihoods, regional and local capital, economic development and long-term social viability of rural communities as a key element of the Canadian economy, the natural environment and as home to many Canadians.

Mission

The mission of the ACSRC is to link the research, outreach and educational capacity of the University of Alberta with students, researchers, rural communities, rural community organizations and policy makers at multiple levels across the province, nationally, and internationally in order to support the improved sustainability of rural communities and populations.

Values

- **Collaboration:** The ACSRC recognizes the contributions and capacity of individual citizens, private, public, community and other non-governmental organizations, faculty, staff and students of post-secondary institutions in Alberta, in collectively advancing the development and sustainability of rural communities.
- **Methodological and theoretical rigour and pluralism:** The ACSRC encourages both theoretical and methodological pluralism, and the critical reflection upon the suitability and implications of the theories and methods used;
- **Capacity building:** The ACSRC is committed to supporting the ability of rural communities via research, outreach and knowledge transfer; to not only govern themselves, but to participate in a meaningful and efficacious manner at and with all levels of government and administration.
- **Transparency:** The ACSRC seeks to adopt best practices in all of its activities in order to ensure fair and open operations, and to comply with the appropriate FOIPOP legislation, etc.

- **Local Knowledge:** The ACSRC recognizes that the sustainability of rural communities in Canada varies from region to region, from community to community, and that factors such as culture, geography, natural environment, socio-economic context and political history can all lead to varying outcomes. The ACSRC, therefore, recognizes that the knowledge, experience and expertise present within communities has equal value and standing to that generated within an institution (university or college) setting.
- **Evidence-informed decision-making:** While keeping to all other values listed here, the ACSRC supports the application of systematically gained knowledge to guide the decisions, policies and programs of (1) the Centre; (2) rural communities; (3) regional, provincial and national policy-makers.

Goals

The ACSRC has established 5 goals which, through their accomplishment, will move the Centre toward achieving its mission in a fashion consistent with its vision and values. Each goal is supported by key objectives (bulleted) which, in turn, will guide the day-to-day operations of the Centre:

1) Research

Stimulate, support and conduct research on the multiple elements of rural community sustainability.

2) Education

Stimulate and support innovative education in rural community development, sustainability and policy.

3) Outreach

Generate greater interaction and collaboration with rural community stakeholders.

4) Knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange

Stimulate, support and conduct KSTE to support evidence-informed decision-making and governance at multiple levels, from the local to the international.

5) Sustainable Operations

Challenges

The ACSRC has four challenges:

- 1) to provide research leadership, profile and coordination to the University's commitment to rural engagement;
- 2) to foster research of relevance to rural communities, including interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty collaborative research, that may be regional, national, or international in scope;
- 3) to think respectfully and reciprocally with, not just for, rural communities, and to facilitate knowledge transfer;
- 4) to develop collaborative relationships with other university-based rural centres in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

Message from the Director

As the waters recede in southern Alberta, only to spark additional flooding downstream in neighboring provinces, I am reminded once again of how vulnerable our technology and energy-dependent lives really are. Speaking with friends and colleagues in Calgary and High River, I am relieved to hear tales of recovery, of relatively minimal damage, and of the importance of community in the face of massive destruction, millions of dollars of insurance claims, and the possibility of years of infrastructural and economic work still to be done. At the same time, while much of the media attention has focused upon the scale of flooding and human impact in Calgary (which is, after all, Canada's energy capital), but what surprises me has been the relatively low media coverage of the numerous small towns and hamlets that have been affected by these floods.

While Calgary learned from the 2005 floods, and has able to implement an emergency plan with relative efficiency, how did the small communities fare? Did they have an emergency or flood plan in place? If they did, were they able to implement it? Was it sufficient for the scope of flooding experienced in towns like Black Diamond or Turner Valley? And, now that the waters fall back (although more rain is expected, and it is raining as I write this here in Camrose), how will these communities be able to recover? What will the implications be for agriculture, for education, for small businesses and for the social fabric of the community? How well equipped are their sustainability, economic development and infrastructure plans, and capacity, to recover, recoup, and re-build?

In the light of the tragic flooding in southern Alberta, the importance of planning, and anticipating a, if not the, worst case scenario, has been brought home. Planning extends beyond land use, or urban design, or social planning, to include multiple ways of thinking about, planning for, and trying to get to, a certain type of future. The work of the ACSRC has emphasized planning and implementation over the last year (and water management as well), and while our thoughts are with those in Calgary who lost everything, they are also with those in small communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba who will struggle to find life return to normal.

Lars K. Hallström

Director, Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

Projects

Ongoing

Water Policy Innovation Forum (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Public Outreach Grant)

On August 9-10, 2012, the ACSRC hosted the “Integrating Water Innovation Forum” at the Norsemen Inn, in Camrose, Alberta. This two day event brought together researchers, policy actors and representatives from watersheds across Canada to help bring greater clarity and collaborative capacity to those engaged in watershed management and policy in light of the ever increasingly challenges and complexities they face in their work. Over the course of the forum participants discussed multiple themes (integration, policy, scale, resilience, & intersectoral action) of water policy and watershed management.

The forum was structured around a series of consecutive plenary sessions modeled on “dialogue circles.” The purpose of these circles was to foster connectivity, sharing and form inter-personal, inter-organizational, and inter-regional integration itself. Each theme’s discussion began with two to three complementary presentations. The first was from the academic or research community. This was then followed by a presentation(s) from representatives speaking on behalf of a watershed organization. Following these presentations, facilitated dialogue circles encouraged participants to have open and deliberative engagement with the questions, issues and practices raised by the presentations.

This event was both provincial and national in scope as it brought together participants from across the province of Alberta (including representatives from seven of Alberta’s eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils) and from across Canada (including presenters from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia).

Augustana Faculty Miquelon Lake Sustainability Centre (University of Alberta’s Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Enhancement Fund)

Augustana’s Miquelon Lake Sustainability Centre (MLSC) is proposed as a significant resource for researchers and educators in the area of ‘sustainability science’. The MLSC will explore how environmental, social, health, and agricultural domains affect each other in increasingly industrialized, urbanized, and ecologically sensitive landscapes. This environmental research station will provide researchers and educators with computer technology and infrastructure for biological, social, policy, and applied health science research and teaching. Opportunities and outputs will provide valuable contributions to communities, researchers, and decision-makers across the province and country. The broad research plan to address this question includes biophysical inventories and monitoring, inter-sectoral public policy analyses, public opinion assessments, and policy impact assessments, all with a focus on environmental sustainability. The teaching opportunities provided by this facility for graduate and undergraduate students will include field trips, research assistantships, directed studies courses, and field studies courses. The MLSC will be unique in Alberta due to its ecology and location (at Miquelon Lake Provincial Park), facilities (Geographic Information System capabilities analyses, interview rooms, and wet/dry laboratory), integrative approach, and set of partners (Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Camrose County, Beaver Hills Initiative).

Top 20 Research Questions (Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation – Parks Division)

The ACSRC facilitated a research project during the Summer/Fall 2012 to create a list of relevant, feasible and implementable Parks priority research questions. The focus of this project is to explore how the department is able to adapt to change and better themselves in the areas of health, environmental, education, and many other factors.

In Phase 2 of this project, provincial and regional (East Central & Northeast) workshops were held in November 2012 and April 2013. During the course of the workshops, participants from research, policy, non-governmental and conservation communities engaged in an internationally recognized consensus-based exercise that will generate the top 20 research questions from an edited list of submission collected in Phase 1. Three more regional workshops are currently being planned for Fall 2013.

In Phase 1 of the project, an online submission form was set-up for a 6-week period this Fall. Representatives from research, policy, non-governmental and rural communities were invited to submit what they saw as the most pressing or important questions for researchers to inform research and public policy issues in Alberta parks. Participants were asked to ensure their question submission met the following criteria:

- (1) Be answerable through an implementable and realistic research design;
- (2) Be answerable on the basis of fact;
- (3) Be of a spatial and temporal scale that can be addressed realistically;
- (4) Not be answerable with a yes/no or “it depends”;
- (5) Contain a subject of intervention, an intervention and a measurable/evaluated effect related to that intervention or policy; and
- (6) Increase the efficacy, scope or efficiency of policy or practice related to Alberta Parks

The results will help researchers focus on projects operationalizing the science strategy of Alberta Parks. The responses will be compiled and presented in a report and we hope that they will also be published in academic journals. If so, every person participating in this workshop will be listed as a co-author, provided they contribute to the editorial process.

This project is in part a result of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2009 between the Augustana Faculty (University of Alberta) and Tourism, Parks, and Recreation. This Memorandum established a cooperative working relationship that seeks to assist student training, applied research, business and development.

Continuing Care Needs Reference Group with ICCER

The primary role of the Community Needs Driven Research Network for Continuing Care Needs Reference Group is the identification of issues, challenges, practices with insufficient formal evidence, and areas that need information to inform practice in continuing care.

The primary activities of the Needs Reference Group are to: establish working relationships with continuing care providers throughout Alberta, consult with provider organizations regarding needs at the front-line worker, clinician and management levels, provide a forum to identify issues facing continuing care, aggregate, characterize and prioritize input from consultations, recommend a prioritized set of issues judged to be appropriate for further investigation to the CNDRN Research Reference Group, evaluate and monitor outcomes and results, evaluate best practices in KT and the most appropriate methods for each of the target audiences (e.g. front line workers, management, clinicians, etc.), oversee Knowledge Translation from the Research Reference Group to the providers of the province, and act as an advocate and champion for providers in the Network.

Collaborator: Sandra Woodhead Lyons, ICCER

Open Door (Camrose) Youth Homelessness & Housing Needs Assessment

The purpose of this needs assessment is to establish the nature, scope and potential opportunities and challenges facing rural youth homeless in the Camrose region. Youths aged 16 to 24 who are unable to live with their parents/guardians are increasingly vulnerable to becoming homeless due to an insufficient supply of affordable rental housing in Camrose and surrounding areas. Furthermore, this youth population faces a number of additional challenges and service requirements due to mental health and addiction problems, exposure to abuse and family violence, lack of educational and employment opportunities and/or having been in conflict with the law.

This project is a first step toward a thorough analysis of the needs of homeless and at-risk youth in order to identify gaps in service and to develop a strategic action plan for the Open Door to create transitional housing and support services for this target population. To this end, the University of Alberta will undertake a short-term (5 month) needs assessment for the Open Door.

Collaborator: Randal Nickel, Open Door

Canadian Sustainability Plan Inventory (CSPI)

The University of Alberta's Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC) is proud to announce the launch of the Canadian Sustainability Plan Inventory (CSPI). This searchable online inventory is the most comprehensive collection of sustainability plans in Canada. The CSPI can be accessed via www.augustana.ualberta.ca/cspi/

Sustainability in rural communities of Canada has received increased attention at the local and national scales. Canada's Federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) made sustainability planning a key part of infrastructure and socio-economic development of communities across Canada. Slated to ultimately invest approximately \$13 billion in sustainable municipal infrastructure such as transit, waste management, water and green energy by 2015, the GTF also provided support to municipalities for the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs).

Many communities have now completed ICSPs or a provincial variant and these represent a wide range of approaches, toolkits, strategies and content within Alberta and from across the country. As such, there is no single solution or model for sustainability planning. Indeed, there is considerable variation in emphases among the targeted dimensions of sustainability and these emphases vary by region and by population size. This inventory provides a means for rural communities, researchers, and development practitioners to access how other communities from across Canada have approached sustainability planning in terms of process, content and areas of concentration.

With the launch of the CSPI, the ACSRC hopes to provide a valuable resource of previous ICSPs to rural communities, an up-to-date source of information and a mechanism that may support rural sustainability as communities shift from plans to implementation. We hope this inventory and sharing of ICSPs will foster collaboration and information exchange among the many and diverse rural communities in Canada, so that they may learn from and support each other in their quest for sustainability.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plans in Canada: An Analysis of Sustainability Emphases and Contributing Factors
(University of Alberta Killiam Research Fund – Cornerstones Grant Program) (collaborator)

Rural communities are facing significant challenges in the areas of investment, urbanization, health, education, environmental stressors, and governance, all of which relate to sustainability. Sustainability in rural communities has received increased attention recently with the introduction of Canada's Federal Gas Tax Fund making sustainability planning a key part of infrastructure and socio-economic development. Slated to ultimately invest approximately \$13 billion in sustainable municipal infrastructure, the GTF also provided support to municipalities for the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs). Many communities across Canada have now completed ICSPs or a provincial variant and these represent a wide range of approaches, toolkits, strategies, and content. These ICSPs represent the desired trajectory of rural communities toward sustainability, and there is considerable variation in emphases among the targeted dimensions of sustainability. This variation will have an effect on operationalizing, implementing, and assessing ICSPs. The goals of this project are to develop the largest database of ICSPs in Canada and to develop a model from community and plan variables that can predict influence sustainability emphases. The database of ICSPs will serve as a valuable resource to rural communities regarding examples of best practice for rural sustainability and will foster collaboration among the many, diverse rural communities. The predictive model will assist researchers, policy analysts, and municipal planners to analyze, understand, and support community attempts to operationalize and implement their sustainability plans. This project is unique in its examination of the spatial, community, and plan variables that influence the variability of sustainability emphases of ICSPs.

Collaborator: Glen Hvenegaard, University of Alberta (PI)

Athabasca Watershed Research Program (AWRP)
An Integrated, Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding the Basin
(Alberta Innovates-Energy and Environment Solutions (AI-EES)) (co-applicant)

The purpose of the study proposed here is to explore and understand the natural system and its dynamics, resolve the magnitude of human influence, and communicate findings in a way that facilitates sustainable decisions consistent with Provincial strategies and the desires of the basin residents. Our study represents the first step in providing the scientific basis for a world-class environmental monitoring network and approach which is envisaged for this watershed, with applications to other watersheds provincially, nationally, and internationally. This proposed new approach to the scientific investigation, in turn, will become the basis for identifying environmental, economic and social risks to inform decision making with respect to land use planning, natural resource extraction, and waste management. Studying the natural and human-related spatial-temporal characteristics of the watershed is an essential first step in optimizing the study design and allocating resources for any future monitoring program. Understanding the overall risk of basin assets to impacts from natural and anthropogenic activities is also a key aspect.

Collaborator: Bill Shoty, University of Alberta (PI)

Social Economy, Community Resilience and the Transition to Sustainability (SSHRC Partnership Development Grant) (co-applicant)

Launching in the Summer of 2012, the goal of this SSHRC-funded partnership development project is to develop a new community-university research partnership to study the scaling up and scaling out of innovations that strengthen the resilience and sustainability of communities and regions. The project would build upon the strong community-university research partnership model developed by the BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA - 2006-2012), but would engage significant new partners and participants.

While the primary focus of the partnership would be in Alberta and BC, there are also national and international partners. Key findings from BALTA's earlier research reveal the strategic importance of the social economy or third sector in advancing sustainability and meeting basic needs on a more local-regional basis. With sixty per cent of the planet's ecosystems at risk and continued reliance on fossil fuels making inevitable a future of severe and irreversible climate change, populations are rendered more vulnerable and the communities and regions they live in more subject to environmental, economic and social dislocation. BALTA's earlier research examined the potential contributions of the social economy to advancing sustainability and studied examples of current best practice in addressing sustainability objectives. This new research partnership would build upon that base to study how to adapt and scale up the essence of successful innovations in one context to a wider range of contexts. Such scaling of innovation is absolutely critical to addressing effectively the sustainability challenges facing the World and Canadian communities.

Collaborator: Athabasca University and BALTA

Rural Policy Learning Commons

Building Rural Policy through International Comparative Analysis (SSHRC Partnership Grant LOI) (co-applicant)

Designing and implementing policy for rural and northern regions has long been a contentious issue, particularly since the challenges are variable and complex. The remote locations, lower populations, and place-based identities of these regions create unique challenges when compared with urban centres. The Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC) is designed to meet this challenge by networking international scholars with policy-makers and citizens -- in a manner that will expand and nurture future generations of policy analysts and practitioners. We will add to existing research knowledge, increase the opportunity for partners to exchange insights, build a cohort of highly qualified policy analysts, mobilize this knowledge to the wider population, and increase our collective capacity to develop appropriate policy for rural and northern conditions.

Our proposal rests on 25 years of collaboration among researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and citizens within the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF), the Rural Development Institute (RDI), and the International Comparative Rural Policy Studies program (ICRPS). For 25 years, CRRF has been holding annual conferences and workshops, initiating research, and engaging with policy-makers regarding the conditions in rural and northern Canada (<http://crrf.ca>). In concert with CRRF, RDI has been conducting community-focused research, meeting with regional leaders, and publishing rural-relevant materials (<http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/>). For the last nine years ICRPS has organized a two-week Institute where about 30 graduate students and practitioners meet with about 20 faculty members from 12 trans-Atlantic partner institutions to study the challenges of rural policy and explore options for its improvement (<http://icrps.org>).

The RPLC builds on these activities by adding research, exchanges, institutes, policy form, distance learning activities, and social media such as webinars and blogs to generate new policy insights and strengthen comparative research collaboration among faculty, students, practitioners, and policy-makers. Research and policy activities within the RPLC will be guided by critically examining and advancing comparative policy analyses as applied to pressing rural and northern policy challenges and opportunities such as climate change, food security, immigration and labour, natural resource development, and telecommunications.

The RPLC incorporates an iterative and cumulative design where particular lessons learned regarding rural policy insights, methods, design and implementation are opened to further scrutiny. It integrates academic participants with rural policy practitioners and community stakeholders to exchange expertise and experiences that cross disciplinary, organizational, and sectoral lines. Adopting an "active policy entrepreneurship" approach (Stone 2001) we use this collaboration to critically evaluate policy alternatives, expand the tools available to policy-analysts, and prepare policy-makers for a world where rural-urban interdependence is the norm

Collaborator: William Reimer, Brandon University (PI)

Completed

Balancing Water Usage (Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) Request for Proposal)

As a result of a combination of climate variability, supply variability, anticipated increases in domestic, agricultural and industrial demand, it is increasingly important and relevant to communities across Canada (but perhaps particularly in Alberta) to increase their knowledge about the effects, costs and scope of different programs, policies, interventions and strategies that have been undertaken to manage water supply and demand.

How have rural communities balanced water usage with commercial and population growth? This Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) sponsored project identified a listing what water management strategies have or have not worked in the province through a combination of conventional academic methods (scoping review) combined with a more innovative approach to knowledge sharing and problem solving – crowdsourcing. Once complete, this knowledge was shared through a provincial workshop, held in Leduc in September 2012, with stakeholders representing watershed groups, water licensees, researchers and representatives from rural municipalities and counties to assess, validate, edit and contribute to the results of both the crowdsourcing and scoping review phases.

Watershed Toolkit (ARDN Research Requests < \$10,000)

The Alberta Watershed Toolkit Project is an initiative that included 3 levels of community engagement:

1. Regional Water Experts will be engaged in 5 watershed specific regions across Alberta in an initial exposure to an Inventory and Assessment of Water and Water Management Intervention Resources (resources) in a crowdsourcing engagement session with both interactive online tool exposure and in session feedback on the utility, scope, and accessibility of the resources (already supported via the ARDN scoping review)
2. Regional Workshops were hosted throughout the Fall of 2012 in these same 5 watershed specific regions to provide a broader range of community water leaders, stewards, decision makers and stakeholders an opportunity to engage with an online crowdsourcing tool, inventory of best management practices and knowledge resources, facilitated through interactive sessions that offer opportunities for providing further input into the project (identifying capacity needs, tools, and information needs).
3. A second series of Regional Workshops will deliver actual capacity building seminars along with an introduction to water leaders and stewards on how to access the Watershed Toolkit and the various resources provided by other organizations throughout Alberta.

Rural Capacity Internship Program (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (AARD))

To conclude this Pilot Program, the ACSRC and the Augustana Campus' Learning and Beyond office's hosted one Augustana undergraduate student intern in the Summer of 2012.

In-Development

Rural Palliative Care (CRIO Programs Grant) (co-applicant)

This study will contribute to the refinement of the Living with Hope Program that may improve quality of life of persons receiving palliative home care. The findings will also increase our understanding of the factors influencing hope, quality of life in a vulnerable, understudied population that is increasing in numbers with the aging of Canada's population. The outcome of this study will be an implementation kit for palliative home care services to use as a value added approach to their current services. Effective psychosocial supportive interventions, such as the LWHP are critical for their support and well-being of persons with advanced disease. The preliminary work of the research team in conjunction with clinicians and terminally ill patients and families has resulted in a promising, practical psychosocial supportive hope intervention that may improve the quality of life for thousands of Canadians.

Collaborator: Wendy Duggleby, University of Alberta (PI)

Living with Hope Evaluation of a Patient-Centered Hope Intervention for Persons Receiving Palliative Home Care (Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Operating Grant) (co-applicant)

This study will contribute to the refinement of the Living with Hope Program that may improve quality of life of persons receiving palliative home care. The findings will also increase our understanding of the factors influencing hope, quality of life in a vulnerable, understudied population that is increasing in numbers with the aging of Canada's population. The outcome of this study will be an implementation kit for palliative home care services to use as a value added approach to their current services. Effective psychosocial supportive interventions, such as the LWHP are critical for their support and well-being of persons with advanced disease. The preliminary work of the research team in conjunction with clinicians and terminally ill patients and families has resulted in a promising, practical psychosocial supportive hope intervention that may improve the quality of life for thousands of Canadians.

Collaborator: Wendy Duggleby, University of Alberta (PI)

Human Services and Integration (Jasper pilot) (CRIO Programs Grant) (co-applicant)

This project is an evaluation of the Jasper Collaborative Team (JCT) pilot. The JCT was created to improve and coordinate healthcare and social service delivery in Jasper town, and the rural/regional areas of their responsibility. One year after full functioning of the JCT, in 1998, the first limited evaluation was done. Four years later, in 2002, a second evaluation of the JCT recommended quality improvements for service delivery, collaboration and sustainability. Informed by these early evaluations, we propose a 15-year evaluation of the Jasper Collaborative Team Model, the most inclusive, comprehensive, and sustainable community intersectoral collaboration to date. Other communities have expressed interest in adopting the Jasper model, albeit modified to meet local needs, but require evidence from a long-term systematic evaluation. This is what we propose to do. A preliminary step has been taken from a participatory research perspective—a day-long consultation of the research team with JCT to explore their evaluation questions about structure, function, outcomes and cost/benefits of the model. This team is also pursuing further funding via a ACCFR Small Grant and from the Max Bell Foundation.

Collaborator: Jill Konkin, University of Alberta (PI)

Expanding community service learning partnerships in a rural setting Connecting rural development with community/college/university reciprocal partnering (SSHRC Partnership Grant LOI) (co-applicant)

Lead by the Rural Development Institute at Selkirk College in the interior of British Columbia, the proposed partnership will bring together faculty and students from rural colleges and urban universities in a process of engagement with rural communities which will address their unmet needs. In an attempt to address specific rural needs service-learning projects will be developed which will pair both undergraduate and graduate students with community groups in projects designed to foster rural sustainability. Further, the partnership will establish a model for service-learning partnership projects which can be applied across Canada. In the end, pilot projects of this kind will disseminate the knowledge gained through the partnership.

The objectives of the proposed four-year project include:

- building the capacity of post-secondary institutions to support rural community service-learning;
- providing students with the opportunity to engage in community service-learning in a rural setting;
- responding to sustainable development needs and opportunities in rural communities; and
- developing a Rural Community Service-Learning Partnership model that is replicable and scalable in other rural regions across Canada.

Collaborator: Terri MacDonald, Selkirk College (PI)

Emerging Initiatives

Rural Sustainability: Complexity, Informality and Partnerships in Planning, Policy and Governance

Rural communities are facing increasing pressures to achieve long term sustainability by improving the integration of social, environmental, economic and health systems. As a result of Canada's Federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) (2005 -- 2015) many communities have now completed an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) or a provincial variant. However, these plans are not uniform, some communities have not engaged, and a wide range of approaches, toolkits, content, and strategies have emerged. The intent of this proposed partnership grant is to focus on what sustainability means to rural communities, how plans have been created and implemented, the levels of engagement, and the relationship to policy making and governance.

This proposed project will use mixed methods to build upon existing regional and national collectives of stakeholders from the research sector, rural communities, community umbrella associations and relevant community organizations. It will form a national set of partnerships dedicated to furthering both our understanding and the actions stemming from the recent and emerging sustainability planning in rural Canada. Driven by a core of regional nodes linking the Atlantic provinces, Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia (with Quebec and a Northern alliance anticipated to join in years 1-2), this network will examine and share the results generated by exploring the following questions:

1. What do sustainability and sustainable development mean for rural communities in Canada?
2. How are sustainability plans being operationalized, implemented, and assessed?
3. How do we better understand the “real” world of sustainability in rural communities through a policy-making lens?
4. What are the drivers, implications and causal effects of sustainability policy, and are they consistent with the values and goals of rural communities?
5. Does a national collaborative of regional nodes of a wide range of collaborators emphasizing reciprocal knowledge acquisition and knowledge exchange, provide a positive contribution to the sustainability processes of rural communities in Canada?

Rural Sustainability Science Lab

This grant will provide the research infrastructure necessary to create and maintain a system of sustainability-relevant “decision-support” and adaptive, judicious learning based on research and rural community (broadly defined) partnerships that will contribute to local capacity as well as the broader goal of evidence-informed rural policymaking. Specifically, it will support the creation of the only rural sustainability lab at the University of Alberta, with a combination of social, applied and sustainability science technology and resources that will support research focused on adaptive rural policy-making and implementation, increase knowledge about sustainability planning and implementation (including the largest inventory of such plans in Canada), produce content for knowledge dissemination about, between and to rural communities in Canada and abroad, and support the research activities of the ACSRC.

This infrastructure will support a national-level initiative that explicitly seeks to both further develop the knowledge base about rural sustainability, as well as embed that knowledge base in a larger program of community-based collaboration and partnerships, knowledge exchange and capacity building at local, regional and national levels. As a result, this initiative is both anticipated, and intended, to become a major addition to both the practices and dynamics of rural sustainability, resilience and policymaking in the next decade.

Rural Governance and Governmental Failure A Policy Challenge for the 21st Century

This proposal will pursue the policy-based questions raised by the twin forces of complexity (wicked problems) and institutional failure (governance) for rural communities. Specifically, this proposal will both theoretically and empirically assess the viability of deliberative and adaptive policy-making as a mechanism to both mitigate, and potential facilitate the adaptation of rural communities to a changing political, ideological, economic, demographic and agricultural landscape.

Participatory and deliberative public policy asserts that the challenges of complexity and institutional capacity are best met through policymaking and governance strategies that are interpretive, deliberative and practical (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003). Drawing from this assertion, this project will examine the ways in which contemporary federal, multi-level, fiscal and devolutionary strategies (that are purported to support or increase rural community resilience, sustainability and survival) are contributing to, or reinforcing, the expansion of multiple and over-lapping inequities within those same rural communities. Not only is poverty increasingly “acquiring a rural postal code” but the combination of economic, cultural, demographic and environmental factors noted above points to not just increased economic disparities between rural and urban communities, but a corresponding collection of health, social and environmental inequities within, and between, rural communities. The challenge, therefore, is not simply to reduce inequities (no small feat alone) but rather to examine, from a comparative standpoint, the policies, programs and institutional practices (ie, policymaking) that (a) shape and reinforce inequities and the challenges faced by rural communities; and (b) present demonstrated opportunities and potential to reduce inequities, but also mitigate the institutional failure(s) noted above.

The potential of this project, therefore, lies not just in better informing the practices and decisions of rurally-based or targeted public policy, but in doing so in so a way so as to better suit policy-making to the collective complex of rural challenges. It seeks to do so by linking the regional and place-based expertise and the capacity of multiple rural and regional research centres from around the world (in, for example, Canada, the USA, Norway, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and India) in order to re-consider rural governance and the policies that result.

RCADNet (Rural Community Adaptation and Development Network)

The question of whether or not rural communities are, or can be, sustainable is significant and cuts across many policy domains. In 2005, when the Canadian federal government first presented the strategy behind integrated and sustainable development in Canada's cities and communities, the broader concept was to "accelerate the shift in local planning and decision-making toward a more long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieve sustainable communities" (PMO 2005; 4 – emphasis in original). The intention was to move beyond land use planning and development to consider and include the other dimensions of sustainability (defined therein as environmental, social, cultural and economic), and to do so in a way that both reflects and promotes the integration of these dimensions within planning, implementation and analyses of sustainability policy and programming (19). Drawing from the language of public health (inter-sectoral action) and the importance of horizontal integration (eg. impact assessment and decision-making across sectors or departments) as well as vertical (between and across different levels of formal authority (government) and decision-making (governance)), the process presented in 2005 identified implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback as core elements of the sustainability planning process. Similar efforts have been adopted in other countries, including sustainability planning, regional development and integrated assessment methods.

Alberta Parks Social Science Working Group

The Alberta Parks Social Science Working Group is a community of Parks staff and University of Alberta faculty representing the applied and social sciences. Established in 2013, the Working Group is well-positioned to help contribute to the fulfillment of the Science Strategy of the Parks division. The Strategy seeks to (1) increase the amount, quality, and availability of scientific information; (2) increase capacity to make informed decisions about Alberta's parks; and (3) and develop a culture of respect for the value of science in park management.

In addition, the group will also promote the goals of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and the Augustana Campus. The group will encourage research collaboration with park staff, and allow researchers to focus on topical areas identified in the Science Strategy and the MOU, which in turn can promote applications for research funding.

Capacity Assessment in Rural Canadian Communities

This project will assess rural community capacity across Canada, but is particularly focused on understanding the causal drivers or determinants of such capacity. Utilizing a combination of written surveys with community representatives (such as mayors or administrative officers), telephone interviews (with rural citizens) and case studies, this project is focused upon identifying and understanding the causal relationships between internal (and potentially modifiable) determinants of capacity, as well as the external (and potentially fixed) determinants. Doing so will provide insight into the variability and efficacy of capacity-building efforts across Canada, but will also shed light upon how and where capacity-building can be most effective. It is based upon the thesis that external factors are extremely important in determining levels of community capacity. While capacity-building is an important contribution to local autonomy, empowerment, decisionmaking and implementation, such attempts can easily be outweighed by factors beyond modification. This project has the potential to inform rural development practice, and in particular the ways in which capacity-building can become both targeted and potentially more effective.

Centre Operations

Staff

Director

Lars K. Hallström, PhD.

Administration and Research

Devin Keay – Executive Assistant
Naomi Finseth – Research Assistant
Amy Avdeeff - Research Assistant
Lucas Raso Mattos – Summer Intern

Training

The ACSRC supported the following student positions via external and internal funding and in-kind support:

- 1 Graduate level student
- 21 Undergraduate students
- 1 Community Service Learning Students

Visiting Scholar

Beginning in January 2013, the ACSRC is hosting a Chinese Scholar, Dr. Ying Hu, from Zhejiang Sci-Tech University for a period of six months. Dr. Hu will work with U of A faculty and collaborators on Rural Community Management and Land Use Planning and Policy in the Process of Urbanization research projects.

Funding

The ACSRC currently receives funding from:

- The University of Alberta – Augustana Faculty
- The University of Alberta – Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences
- The Province of Alberta – Tourism, Parks and Recreation
- The Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada
- The Camrose Open Door Society
- University of Alberta’s Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Enhancement Fund

Public Presentations and Workshops

“Alberta Parks Northeast Region Top 20 Research Questions Workshop” (facilitator) April 11, 2013. Lac La Biche, AB.

“Integrated Community Sustainability Plans in Alberta: an Analysis of Sustainability Emphases” AUMA Sustainability and Environment Committee, Edmonton, AB. March 1, 2013

“Writing a Research Grant” ARDN Research Bootcamp, Edmonton, AB. Feb 5, 2013

“Writing a Peer-reviewed Paper” ARDN Research Bootcamp, Edmonton, AB. Feb 5, 2013

“Water Policy and Practice” w/ Lisa Fox. poster presented at the 2012 “Growing the Bio-Economy Conference” October 2-5, 2012. Banff, AB.

“Partnerships and the Fourth Way: Integration, Collaboration and Capacity in Rural Canada” to be given as keynote speech, Rural Linkages: Intercolloborative Practice for Safe and Healthy Communities. Edmonton, AB. Sept. 28, 2012.

“Rural Water Success Stories Workshop” (convenor) September 14, 2012. Edmonton, AB.

“Integrating Water Innovation Forum” (convenor) August 9 & 10, 2012. University of Alberta, Camrose, AB.

“Integrating Water, Policy and Intersectoral Action” presented at the “Integrating Water Innovation Forum” August 9-10, 2012. Camrose, AB.

Sponsored Guest Lectures

CED Tools: A Prototype as Applied Research

Dr. Bill Ashton

Rural Development Institute - Brandon University

March 7, 2013 | University of Alberta North Campus

Community Resilience in a Turbulent World: Pathways to Innovation

Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon

University of Waterloo

November 28, 2012 | University of Alberta - Augustana Campus

Service

University Farm Initiative led by ALES

University of Alberta – Augustana Faculty Theme Committee (2011 – 13)

The Director sits on this Committee and provides planning, organization and implantation support for Theme events throughout the 2012-13 academic year.

University of Alberta Water Initiative (2011 – present)

The Director has provided feedback on a report by Dr. Debra Davidson (under review) and discussed the initiative with John Knapp, Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Rural Development.

Food Secure Canada Assembly – Edmonton. Steering Committee (2012)

In addition to the Director's role on this Committee, the ACSRC staff provided volunteer support at the event in Nov. 2012 and hosted a trade show booth.

Community Needs Driven Research Network for Continuing Care in Alberta (2012 – present)

The Director assists with the identification of issues, challenges, practices with insufficient formal evidence, and areas that need information to inform practice in continuing care.

University of Alberta – Watershed Management Major Advisory Committee

The Director sits on this Committee.

Canadian Rural Research Group and Workshop Committee (2010 – present)

The Director has assisted with the organization of the inaugural Rural Research Workshop in 2011 and the subsequent follow-up events in 2012 and 2013.

University of Alberta Office of Sustainability Academic Advisory Committee (Spring 2011 – present)

The Director sits on this Committee and as the only Augustana Faculty member.

Shaping Alberta's Landscape – Ecological Agriculture Summit 2012

The Centre co-sponsored this one-day event on the Augustana Campus in November 2012. The event explored ideas and built connections around deepening our understanding of the opportunities presented to Alberta by ecological agriculture.

Rural Futures Institute – University of Nebraska

The Director participated at the first Rural Futures Workshop held in July 2012. The event was designed largely to help the University of Nebraska think through the need, scope and purpose of the RFI.

2012 International Symposium on Society and Resource Management Conference

The ACSRC hosted a trade show booth at this event in Edmonton in June 2012.

2012 Canadian Political Science Association Conference

The ACSRC hosted a trade show booth at this event in Edmonton in June 2012.

Post-Baccalaureate in Public Policy and Social Innovation – Faculty of Extension

The Director is a policy content advisor for this imitative.

Collaborators

University of Alberta

Augustana Faculty

Glen Hvenegaard, Professor, Environmental Science and Geography

Karsten Mündel, Director, Learning and Beyond & Assistant Professor, Global and Development Studies

Glynnis Hood, Associate Professor, Environmental Science

Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences

John Parkins, Associate Professor, Dept. of Resource Economics & Environmental Sociology (REES)

Brenda Parlee, Assistant Professor, REES & Assistant & Assistant Professor, Native Studies Faculty

William Shotyck, Professor & Bock Chair, Dept. of Renewable Resources

Pushpanjali Dashora, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Human Ecology

Janet Fast, Professor, Dept. of Human Ecology

Extension

Mary Beckie, Assistant Professor, Government Studies

Kevin Jones, Research Associate (holds cross appointment with REES)

Medicine and Dentistry

Jill Konkin, Associate Professor, Family Medicine & Associate Dean, Community Engagement

Rehabilitation Medicine

Albert Cook, Professor, Speech Pathology & Audiology & Special Advisor to the Provost

Nursing

Wendy Duggleby, Professor, Endowed Nursing Research Chair in Aging and Quality of Life

Solina Richter, Associate Professor

Science

Robert Summers, Assistant Professor, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences & Acting Director, Planning Program

Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCER)

Sandra Woodhead Lyons, Executive Director

Individual (Provincial/National)

Name	Organization
<i>Alberta</i>	
Joyce Gould	Albert Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Bill Dolan	Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Melanie Percy	Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Rae Lett	Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Terry Krause	Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Ksenija Vujnovic	Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation
Rachel Bockock	Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)
Neil Chadda	Athabasca County
Randal Nickel	Camrose Open Door Association
Vern Hafso	Rural Outreach and Agricultural Renaissance Society (ROARS)
Brenda Barritt	Rural Outreach and Agricultural Renaissance Society (ROARS)
Don Ruzicka	Sunrise Farm
Lisa Fox	Sustainability Resource Ltd.
<i>National</i>	
Sean Connelly	Centre for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD) (Simon Fraser University)
William Reimer	Concordia University
Don Grant	Don Grant Consulting Inc.
Darren Swanson	International Institute for Sustainable Development
Douglas West	Lakehead University
Kathleen Kevany	Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Bill Ashton	Rural Development Institute (Brandon University)
Terri MacDonald	Selkirk College
Elizabeth Lange	St. Francis Xavier University
Tony Tremblay	St. Thomas University
Bruno Jean	Université du Québec à Rimouski
Jonathan Corbett	University of British Columbia
David Douglas	University of Guelph

Margot Parkes	University of Northern British Columbia
Greg Halseth	University of Northern British Columbia
Robert Patrick	University of Saskatchewan
Alison Blay-Palmer	Wilfrid Laurier University
Laura Taylor	York University
Martin Bunch	York University

Organizational (Provincial/National)

<i>Alberta</i>
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Alberta EcoTrust
Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN)
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)
Athabasca University
Battle River Alliance for Economic Development (BRAED)
Battle River Watershed Alliance (BRWA)
Camrose County
Camrose Open Door Association
Grassroots Enterprises
Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCER)
Learning and Beyond Office (LaB) (University of Alberta)
University of Alberta
University of Alberta – Augustana Campus
University of Alberta - Faculty of Agricultural, Life, and Environmental Sciences
University of Alberta Press
<i>National</i>
BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance
Canadian Rural Research Network
Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
Dalhousie University

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
Fraser Basin Council
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
Lakehead University
Municipality of the County of Cumberland
Network for Ecosystem Sustainability and Health (NESH)
Northeast Avlon Regional Economic Development Board
Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Otonabee Region Conservation Authority
Rural & Coastal Communities Network
Rural & Small Town Programme (Mount Allison University)
Rural Development Institute (Brandon University)
Rural Ontario Institute
Saskatchewan Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development
Selkirk College
South Central Ontario Region
St. Francis Xavier University
St. Thomas University
Sustainability Resources
The Monieson Centre (Queen's School of Business)
The Natural Step Canada
Town of Dalhousie
True North Community Cooperative
Wilfrid Laurier University

Appendix A. Unfunded Applications

FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged) Partnership: Transforming Canadian and international communities through food (co-applicant)

Integrated Action in Northern and Rural Canada

Enhancement of the Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research's Community Needs Driven Research Network for Continuing Care in Alberta LOI (co-applicant)