Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

Annual Report

May 2015 – May 2016

Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

Annual Report 15/16

Contents

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: www.acsrc.ca

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 (KSTE)**

   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**

   The ACSRC strives to have internally sustainable operations through stable funding sources. To support the ACSRC please contact the Office of Advancement at the University of Alberta.

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

After an extremely mild winter and dry spring, the last few days have finally seen the much-needed rain fall over east-central Alberta, and hopefully it will alleviate the already growing concerns of the local agricultural communities, as well as those displaced by the fires in Northern Alberta. These events, and others of the past 12 months, give me continued reason to work on the resilience and sustainability of rural communities in Canada, but also provide renewed optimism and a sense of direction.

While rural communities of different sizes continue to face the on-going realities of changing populations, reduced financial resources and the effects of an economic down-turn, the reality for the ACSRC is that 2015-16 saw a number of successes, and a real sense of progress at both the national and provincial levels. In addition to hosting to very successful conferences (the RAIL-Commons and the Network Leadership Symposium) in the fall, we also saw real traction for 2 recent projects: the Regional Collaboration project funded by the Province of Alberta (to examine the nature, scope and needs for regional collaboration in rural Alberta) and the Alberta Parks Social Science Working Group, which successfully designed and has seen adopted a framework to support research, knowledge mobilization and evidence-informed decision making in Alberta Parks and Protected Areas. These successes are complemented by other great stories, such as the opening of the Augustana Miquelon Lake Research Station, the hosting of several webinars, workshops and learning events around the province, and what I see as an increased presence and awareness of the issues of rural sustainability within not just municipalities, but the organizations and service-providers located therein.

With the election of new governments at both the provincial and federal levels, changes are certainly taking place. While rural issues are low of the list of policy priorities for both, I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with a number of MLAs and MPs, and (in conjunction with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation) hope that we will see an individual-level interest in rural translate into some broader policy opportunities. Some of the biggest successes we have seen over the past year are directly related to these policy opportunities - the ACSRC is a core member of 3 very large research and knowledge mobilization initiatives funded by SSHRC and CIHR (2 SSHRC Partnership Grants and 1 CIHR Team Grant). These projects have real potential to inform and shift the decision-making and policy trajectories of watershed governance, rural development and rural health in Canada.

Finally, as I near completion of my 7th years as Director of the ACSRC, I would like to point out a few of the milestones reached in recent months: (1) The Centre has formally broken the "Million Dollar Mark" with over $1.2 million in directly awarded funding since 2009 (and over $6 million in affiliated grants); (2) the recent publication of one of the first ACSRC projects with the U of A Press, the edited volume "Sustainability Planning and Collaboration in Rural Canada"; and (3) on-going relationships with partners such as Beaver County, the Ministry for the Status of Women, Alberta Parks, the Faculty of Nursing, the Open Door in Camrose, the Faculty of Extension and the Planning program at the University as well as the Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCER).

Our success, reach and on-going operations would not be possible without these relationships, and those with our rural community partners! As we move into what is hopefully a productive, happy and healthy summer, I would like to thank all of our individual, community and organizational partners over the past 7 years, and the on-going support of the Augustana Faculty and the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences.

Warmest regards,

Lars K. Hallstrom, PhD
Director, Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

PROJECTS

Current

Alberta Parks Social Science Working Group, Social Science Framework (Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation – Parks Division $34,500)

Environment and Parks – Parks Division (Alberta Parks) has partnered with the ACSRC to determine more specific research needs - through a consultation process involving parks managers and members of the research community - across the province. As part of this process, the ACSRC conducted an email survey and workshops across the six parks regions, seeking the input of researchers, and managers involved in protected areas management. The resulting workshop summaries identified the top 20 research questions for each region, as well as the province as a whole. These questions now provide a starting point for developing a larger collaboration between researchers at post-secondary institutions across Alberta and Alberta Parks.   These larger collaborations bolster research, evidence-informed decision-making and park management, and long-term partnerships between the research community and Alberta Parks. The AB Parks Social Science Working Group (SSWG) is a key element of this process, and is intended to operationalize research initiatives and ensure knowledge mobilization of completed research to meet goals outlined in the Plan for Parks and the Alberta Parks' Science Strategy. The Alberta Parks' Science 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) develop a culture of respect for the value of science in park management.The SSWG shall provide strategic technical, methodological and policy advice and recommendations to Alberta Parks pertaining to Parks' management, policy, practice and programming. In addition, the SSWG will work to develop a Social Science Framework for Alberta Parks, which will provide a method for incorporating social science research and evidence-informed decision making into Parks management.

Village of Delburne: Strategies for a culture of belonging ($10,000)

The ACSRC is providing the academic contribution to a collaboration with the community of Delburne, Alberta. The project aims to link their Main Street economic development initiative with a "First Impressions" program. In addition the project aims to integrate a community engagement dimension based on the "spiraling up" community capitals framework.

Beaver County Youth Retention and Collaboration (Regional Collaborative Program – Beaver County $250,000) (2015-2017)

The ACSRC, Viking/Beaver Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), Tofield FCSS and a number of Beaver County municipalities are partnered to propose regional programming that explores youth engagement, youth infrastructure and youth economic development in Beaver County. The overall goal of our Youth Engagement Initiative is to retain and attract youth to pursue a future in Beaver County after they have completed their post-secondary education. Aside from its economic benefits, the project aims to build youth capacity in leadership, volunteerism and governance to make a social investment in the future. To achieve this, a series of engagement, planning and asset mapping events are conducted throughout the course of the project to identify youth oriented resources, venues and opportunities. The goal of this project is to produce a collaborative youth engagement strategy that will guide future planning and resources for youth across Beaver County.

Rural Capacity Survey: evaluating Alberta's resilience to change and to self-sustain (2015-2016)

Rural communities represent an important social, economic and cultural component of Alberta. Communities' resilience to change or ability to sustain themselves with their own policy making, their capacity to make improvements to infrastructure, education, environmental sustainability, citizen's health, and to generally improve quality of life and health of citizens are of particular importance to policy makers. This study will assess how communities in Alberta are able to self-motivate and create capacity to implement change to meet their goals. This study will help identify gaps thereby leading to improved public policy that promotes community autonomy and resiliency.

Continuing care needs reference group with Sandra Woodhead Lyons, ICCER (PI) (2012-current)

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 and 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 Knowledge Translation (KT) and the most appropriate methods for each of the target audiences (e.g. front line workers, management, clinicians, etc.), oversee KT from the Research Reference Group to the providers of the province, and act as an advocate and champion for providers in the Network.

Rural Alberta Regional Collaboration Workshops: Priorities and Scenarios for Long-Term Sustainability (Government of Alberta, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development $39, 275) (2015)

The ACSRC is conducting a series of regional collaboration workshops in 7 communities dispersed across Alberta between April 2015 and March 2016, with a project close of July 1, 2016. These workshops bring together representatives from rural municipalities, regional economic development alliances, rural associations (AUMA, AAMDC), Aboriginal communities, government departments (such as Agriculture and Rural Development, Innovation and Advanced Education, Municipal Affairs) and not-for-profit and private sector associations to engage in a 3-part collaboration and capacity-building exercise. The core goals of which are increased rural capacity to engage with, and support, the action items outlined in the 2014 Action Plan. The participants in these workshops ideally create a balance of inter-sectoral representation with geographic, political and social considerations.

Common Ground: Indigenous Peoples and Resource Development with Brenda Parlee (PI) (SSHRC Connections Grant $50,000)

Many Indigenous peoples globally are dealing with increasing pressures of resource development in their ancestral homelands and are similarly experiencing adverse effects on their capacity to achieve food security, realize economic opportunities and ensure the continued health of environmental landscapes and resources that underpin identity and well-being. This project brings together Indigenous communities from Canada, the

United States and Latin America in association with the International Association for the Study of the Commons to explore common grounds on the following:

> • What are the dynamics and implications of increasing resource development and the privatization of indigenous commons?
> • How can Indigenous communities collaborative in educating the public about Indigenous belief systems, practices, rights and responsibilities for respecting the commons?
> • What are best practices for reclamation, reconciliation and stewardship of the commons?

As part of this project, in May 2015, representatives from ten Indigenous organizations traveled to Edmonton, Alberta to participate in a forum that included: Day 1 - Traditional talking circles/round tables, Day 2 - semi-structured focus group discussions (on the above) and Day 3 - training workshops intended to impart how-to skills and expertise on key issues (e.g., land use and occupancy mapping, community-based monitoring, and the use of social media).

Intersections of Sustainability. Collaborative Research Network on Water Governance, Climate Change and Traditional Communities with M. Steward-Harawira (PI) (KIAS Cluster Grant $100,000)

This project establishes a collaborative transdisciplinary research network centered at the University of Alberta with a specific focus on the intersection of water governance, climate change, land development and the perspectives of rural and Indigenous communities. The research done by this network will be locally and regionally driven. The development of wider Indigenous, regional, national and global collaborations will be important in the pursuit of best possible research questions and outcomes. Specific objectives for the next three years are: 1) To identify new research questions that directly address societal challenges and opportunities; 2) To identify key applied/social/natural scientists to support the core social science research of the team; 3) To gain better understandings of the complex barriers, contradictions and tensions that confront communities in five overlapping areas: energy, land development, water quality and management, climate change, development models, and futures modeling; 4) To engage with community service learning agencies and the Faculty of Extension in developing programs for the training and mentoring of citizen scientists, and to train and mentor graduate students and new and emerging researchers; 5) To contribute to the development of new theories of change.

The parameters of this project during this period will be the Athabasca watershed, from the glacier to river, to the delta and to the Arctic. These parameters allow for interjurisdictional possibilities and takes into account overlapping geographical and civic boundaries in examining the processes and effects of change.

Identifying and Prioritizing Opportunities to Enhance Integrated Public Policy Pertaining to Protected Areas and Human Health and Well-being with C. Lemieux (PI) (Alberta Parks Research Enhancement Fund $27,000)

This project stems from a recent report examining the human health and well-being benefits of Alberta's protected areas by Lemieux et al. (2015). The report revealed that the perceived human health and well-being benefits visitors received from their protected areas experiences were substantial. The most frequently reported improvements were related to psychological and emotional (90.5%), social (85%), and physical well-being (77.6%).

These research findings, in addition to a burgeoning body of research on the health benefits of nature contact and ecosystem services more broadly, substantiate the need for park agencies to begin developing policies

and visitor experience programs in support of health and well-being related pursuits. Specifically, the report by Lemieux et al. (2015) recommended that Alberta Parks 1) develop a strategic mandate pertaining to conservation and human health and well-being and 2) work towards building partnerships in support of human health and well-being initiatives in support of its mandate. These recommendations were echoed in a recent report that identified Alberta's top 20 research needs, where some regions identified the need to establish partnerships with health providers/First Nations communities to improve services to visitors (Patriquin and Hallstrom 2014). It has been argued that there is a critical need to re-envision land-use planning in order to more effectively situate human well-being in the biodiversity conservation agenda (Sandifer et al., 2015). In order to achieve this, a new coalition of ecologists, health and social scientists and planners will be required to conduct research and develop policies that promote human interaction with nature and biodiversity.

An interactive Policy Delphi methodology will be used to identify and prioritize integrative propositions pertaining to human health, well-being and protected areas policy and management. In its broadest sense, a Policy Delphi is an iterative group-oriented Idea Generating Strategy (IGS) that seeks to generate the strongest possible opposing views on the potential resolutions of a major policy issue. The approach permits a diverse group of people, selected for their expertise, to interact anonymously on a defined policy issue and provides a constructive forum and a structured method for correlating views and information pertaining to a specific policy issue. By design, participants are afforded the freedom to present and challenge alternative viewpoints, and to think reflectively and independently between iterations. It also allows the respondents representing such views and information the opportunity to assess differing opinions. A Policy Delphi aims to uncover and explore both consensus and disagreement surrounding policy issues through quantitative ratings and the solicitation of qualitative information (i.e., rationale, justification).

Rural Policy Learning Commons Building Rural Policy through International Comparative Analysis with William Reimer, Brandon University (PI) (SSHRC Partnership Grant $2,493,435) (co-applicant) (2014-20)
Designing and implementing policy for rural and northern regions has long been a contentious issue, particularly since the challenges are variable and complex. Remote locations, lower populations, and place-based identities that characterize these regions create unique challenges compared with urban centres. The Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC) is designed to meet these challenges 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 knowledge to the wider population, and increase our collective capacity to develop appropriate policy for rural and northern conditions.

This project 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. In concert with CRRF, RDI has been conducting community-focused research,

meeting with regional leaders, and publishing rural-relevant materials. 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.

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.

Natural Resource Development and Governance: A Governance Approach to Tempering Boom/Bust Cycles in Resource Dependent Communities with K. Van Assche (PI) (Killam Cornerstone Grant $45,164) (2015)
This project aims to contribute to the understanding of cycles of boom, bust and decay in Canadian small towns and to the formulation of policy recommendations for tempering those cycles. We look at two provinces, Alberta and British Columbia, and compare the pathways and development trajectories of sets of small towns. The project especially focuses on the impact of policies and practices regarding extraction and management of natural resources on the evolution of these communities. We speak of governance paths, and will endeavor to map these paths as well as their context. Each path is unique, and will respond differently to intervention attempts; therefore, we look at previous attempts to deal with boom and bust in the context of these community evolutions. The project is a group effort, with 5 University of Alberta colleagues, and a graduate student. The significance in academia can be located in several disciplines: environmental studies, planning, public administration, policy studies and economics. The resulting theory may establish new linkages between these disciplines, useful in answering a set of common policy questions.

Boom and Bust in Alberta and British Columbia with K. Van Assche (KIAS Team Grant $7,500)
This project involved the development of a team to study boom, decaying and ghost towns in Alberta and British Columbia employing an evolutionary governance lens. The study sought to understand boom & bust cycles through a mapping and comparative analysis of governance paths and linkages with physical and policy landscapes. By understanding these cycles, the team discerns ways to temper boom & bust cycles and foster sustainable development. The grant supported the building of a research team of academics from different disciplines with both local and international experience and expertise in development issues to study and analyze change in boom, decaying and ghost towns in both provinces. The research will have implications for sustainable development of such communities. The team is currently writing a book which is due out this year.

The ECHO Network (Environment, Community, Health Observatory): Strengthening intersectoral capacity to understand and respond to health impacts of resource development with M. Parkes (CIHR Team Grant LOI 50,000)
Resource development influences determinants of health through interrelated socioeconomic, ecological, cultural, and political pathways that are particularly important for rural, remote, northern and aboriginal communities. These dynamics are especially important in Canada, where the economy remains tightly coupled

with the extraction and development of natural resources by mining, oil and gas, forestry, fisheries, and hydroelectricity industries and where the rate and scale of social and environmental change occurring in resource-rich regions is fueling a growing debate regarding the health impacts of resource development. Our team is proposing a project focused on the 'Resource Development' nexus areas and titled "The ECHO Network (Environment, Community, Health Observatory): Strengthening intersectoral capacity to understand and respond to health impacts of resource development". The team composition reflects an explicit focus on three place-based cases in jurisdictions experiencing resource extraction and development (BC, AB, NB), and targeted advisory groups based on existing collaborations and knowledge user priorities. The overall aims of the proposed research program are: i.) to make evidence-based recommendations on the form and function of a cross-jurisdictional ECHO that will foster integrative understanding about the complex dynamics of resource development and health, and ii.) to inform, enhance and evaluate intersectoral strategies to address the cumulative determinants of health that interact over time, targeting actions and responses that cannot be achieved by the health sector alone. These strategies will focus on reducing health inequities and fostering safe, healthy and sustainable environments. The program of research will involve a series of four interrelated phases and research objectives to be addressed over five years. The development of each research phase is informed by case priorities and experience across the research team.

Tracking Change: The Role of Local and Traditional Knowledge in Watershed Governance with B. Parlee (SSHRC PG $2, 480, 098) (2015-2022)

Freshwater river systems are the basis of many families' livelihoods and well-being around the world, but also present some of the greatest governance challenges. Questions about how social and ecological changes are interconnected at local to global scales are among these challenges. Multi-generational subsistence fishers (including Indigenous communities) in the Mackenzie-Amazon-Mekong River Basins, with generations of local and traditional knowledge (LTK), can tell us more about these interconnections and how they can be managed to ensure sustainability for current and future generations. How can knowledge generated at local scales be networked to provide insight at larger scales? Given that LTK is often based on oral traditions, relatively little has been documented. In Canada, Brazil and Thailand/Laos, sources of documented LTK come from very different kinds of research initiatives. Although more coordinated LTK work has been done in the Mekong, present understanding of all three Basins is patchy and uneven. This research seeks to address such gaps in understanding through a network of LTK research activities with a number of partners (Aboriginal organizations, co-management boards, governments, academics).

The Mackenzie River Basin Board Traditional Knowledge Steering Committee will lead the project with Parlee, (PI), and 15 partner organizations, and an interdisciplinary team of senior/junior scholars organized around sub-basin nodes and theoretical/advisory groups. A range of methods and tools will be used to learn more about patterns of change in fishing/fishing livelihoods as well as how-to perspectives on local processes of tracking change. Individual communities, Indigenous organizations and governments have primary ownership, control, access and possession of research activities/outcomes.

In-Development and Under Review

Through Two Eyed Seeing, Gaining an In-depth Understanding of Intersectoral Strategies and Approaches to Food Sovereignty and Food Security in Two Indigenous Communities in Alberta and Quebec with Fletcher and Letendre (1 year) (CIHR)

Food insecurity occurs when people are unable to properly access the food they need. It is related to their ability to make decisions about the production and use of their foods (Food Sovereignty). Food security and sovereignty are important for nutrition, health, and strong communities. Indigenous Canadians are more likely to be food insecure than other Canadians; therefore this study will investigate factors that affect food security and sovereignty in one Indigenous community in Alberta and one in Quebec.

Co-developing Intersectoral Prevention Strategies to Address Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing on Indigenous Communities with Makere Stewart-Harawira (co-applicant) (CIHR)

This project aims to use Intersectoral Action to study and remedy the interactive impacts of hydraulic fracturing and climate change on the environmental, physical, social, cultural and spiritual health of Indigenous communities. An international research team from Canada and Colombia will be brought together to work with current Indigenous partner groups and communities on developing Community Equity Assessment Boards, modelled on the PATH pilot project (1999). Several frameworks will direct this two-phase, five-year process using Two-Eyed Seeing to recognize indigenous and western knowledge as equally important. Phase One will focus on effective communication and different ways of knowing, while Phase Two would involve analyzing the distribution and intensity of fracturing operations and services and their geographical relationship to the communities. Considering broadly the intersecting impacts of climate change and industrial development on Indigenous health and wellbeing in a participatory manner that incorporates multiple ways of knowing, and the culturally, politically, and ecologically unique contexts within which responses must be generated, will create valuable new contributions to scientific knowledge.

Regional Workforce Development in Rural British Columbia with T. MacDonald, RDI Selkirk (SSHRC Community and College Social Innovation Fund)

This 3-year project will utilize British Columbia's Columbia Basin-Boundary region as a rural case study region to explore how community colleges can work alongside a network of learning and economic development partners to stimulate innovation and support collaborative learning. The research will contribute to a better understanding of the practical application of New Regionalism, which calls for further investigation of the processes of learning and innovation in a regional setting. In an effort to advance regional development in BC and contribute to the academic debate, overarching research objectives include:

- support evidence-based workforce development, decision-making, and planning and provide opportunities for innovation and collaborative learning;
- explore the emerging role of educational institutions in promoting and supporting the life cycle of knowledge, including co-creation and mobilization across sectors using a learning regions approach;
- explore the role of students, educators, companies and community partners as change agents in workforce innovation in rural regional socio-economic development through applied research projects; and

- contribute to the New Regionalism academic debate and its calls to better understand processes of learning and innovation in a rural regional setting.

Water and Equity: The Complexity of Western Canadian Water Policy, Regulation and Planning with A. Singh and R. Patrick (USaskatchewan Team Grant)

The implications of climate change and existing environmental policy on resource distribution is a significant issue in Canada. Arguably, an impending water crisis pertains to water distribution rights among Western provinces in Canada, where the scarcity of water in addition to existing licensing, regulatory frameworks and agreements. These agreements provide for the sharing of water from West to East to North, the monitoring of quality in select water bodies, transboundary management and inter-provincial/territorial co-operation in order to maintain and improve the sustainability of these waters. In turn, a key question that has emerged hinges on two factors: (a) the implications of increased variation of surface water supply due to changing levels of precipitation; and (b) the effects upon, and roles for, Aboriginal, rural and remote communities within not just these legal and inter-provincial/territorial agreements, but also the watersheds to which they apply.

This project will bring together an interdisciplinary team of scholars from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta to develop a program of participatory and multi-disciplinary research derived from these issues, identify a strategy for research, collaborative and knowledge mobilization funding, and lay out a preliminary work plan for collaboration, team development and project/funding implementation.

PROAQUA: PRecision Omics for AQUAtic contaminant effects assessment (Project Leader, Helbing) (Genome Canada 3.3m) (co-applicant) (2015-2019)

Regulators need more confidence in setting water quality benchmarks as they determine whether 1) an operating permit is granted for natural resource development or 2) pollution has occurred. Industry needs reliable information that reflects operator performance and informs decisions regarding extraction methods and pre-emptive mitigation strategies. Communities and First Nations want objective, reliable information regarding food and water safety, and ecosystem and human health. To address the unmet need, PROAQUA will apply PRecision Omics for AQUAtic contaminant effects assessment using native fish and amphibian models to determine complex organismal and population effects.

Demand-based strategies and interventions for water policy in Canadian municipalities (L. Hallstrom) (Canadian Water Network)

Canadian water policy has progressed through three phases of development: (1) pre-regulation; (2) public law; and (3) market-based, co-operative and comprehensive substance instruments (Brooks and Miljan, 2003). However, there are issues of highly variable precipitation (already an issue in Western Canada (Schindler 20??), changing upstream and downstream management practices and demand, as well as uncertainty about the regulatory regime and requirements for water (particularly for municipalities). All of these levels of variability and uncertainty present significant gaps in practitioner knowledge around management of water demand at the municipal level, best practices for balancing unpredictable supply and demand within water and waste-water operations and management (at the municipal level), and implications of variable infrastructural capacity across rural and urban municipalities.

As a result of these gaps, this project will build upon the already established structure and findings of the Alberta-specific scoping review (2012) and consultation process. It will expand both the scope and knowledge mobilization dimensions to collect, synthesize, assess and disseminate the results to a much broader audience of municipalities and similar geo-political units in Canada and the USA.

Completed Projects

Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning (RAIL) Commons ($73,595) (2015)

ACSRC and Battle River Alliance for Economic Development hosted the 1st annual Rural (RAIL Commons) to be October 2-4 2015 in Camrose, Alberta. The RAIL Commons was the first of its kind to be hosted in Alberta, developed upon recognizing a large gap in the educational training opportunities focused on rural economic development. Concentrating on subject matter such as rural policy and governance, social policy and services, tapping into natural resources, investment attraction, business succession strategies, infrastructure, transportation and logistics, youth retention and recruitment, and more. RAIL Commons offered a variety of opportunities to increase the knowledge capacity of councilors, mayors, CAOs, EDOs, economic and community development professionals and students from across the province.

Networks Leadership Symposium and Summit 2015 ($41,733) (ACSRC Director was the 2015 organizing committee chair)

The 2015 symposium explored if and/or how inter-organizational networks can help address critical policy issues and practice challenges. Specifically, can networks be used successfully as deliberate tools or interventions to create better public policy, services and practice; or are they simply so ubiquitous that they have become the universal remedy, effective or not, for any wicked problem? Networks and similar collaborative structures have been used by governments as interventions to deal with many of the most complex problems, often in uncertain environments, such as health services reform, climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster response, and terrorism. Networks are used for many purposes, including supporting learning, leveraging organizational growth, building community capacity, encouraging cross sector planning or service delivery, sustaining connections during times of change, and supporting quality improvement. Symposium participants will delve deeper into the dilemmas faced, and the quandaries and benefits arising, when networks are created as public sector policy tools (e.g. used by governments to support practice innovations or to solve difficult problems)

The International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) Conference (2015)

The 2015 conference focused on many kinds of common pool resources including fisheries, forests, and water resources as well as a host of emergent problems of social and environmental change. Participants in the conference were invited to share ideas, evidence and practical solutions on questions of poverty, food security, social-ecological resilience, effective governance, human rights, indigenous knowledge, sustainable natural resource development and climate change.

CENTRE OPERATIONS

Director: Lars K. Hallström, PhD.

Administration and Research

Summer 2015
Naomi Finseth – Executive Assistant
Jennifer Stonechild - Undergraduate Research Assistant
Wilissa Reist - Undergraduate Research Assistant
Emily Merklinger - Undergraduate Research Assistant
Corbin Emslie - Undergraduate Research Assistant
Arun Sama - Graduate Research Assistant
Patricia Macklin – Researcher

Fall 2015/Winter 2016
Carole Preston- Executive Assistant
Aubrie Duncan- Administrative Assistant
Patricia Macklin- Researcher
Mahsa Pakravan-Researcher Assistant
Erin Specht- Research Assistant
Nathanael Skagen- Research Assistant
Wilissa Reist- Undergraduate Research Assistant
Corbin Emslie-Undergraduate Research Assistant
Mari Contreras- Undergraduate Research Assistant

The ACSRC supported and/or employed the following student positions via external and internal funding:

- 1 Graduate level student
- 11 Undergraduate students
- 9 Community Service Learning Students with 210 hours contributed to various projects.

Funding

The ACSRC is currently receiving 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
- Alberta Parks Research Enhancement Fund
- SSHRC Connections Grant
- SSHRC Partnership Grant
- KIAS Cluster Grant
- Beaver County (Regional Collaboration Program)
- Killam Cornerstone Grant
- KIAS Team Grant
- Killick Leadership Group LTD
- Government of Alberta – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Communications/Marketing

Website:

The ACSRC website was restructured in March 2016. In this past year the website had had 7,929 unique visitors to the site.

Newsletter:

Since October 2015, the ACSRC has replaced its bi-annual paper newsletter with a monthly online newsletter. The newsletter currently has 572 subscribers.

Subscribers: 572

Open rate: 42%

Marketing:

The ACSRC supports a select number of events and organizations that have a related mission and vision through monetary and/or in-kind sponsorship for marketing purposes.

In 2015, the ACSRC provided support to:

Connecting our Waters: A United Nations World Water Day Panel Discussion, March 22, 2016 Edmonton, Alberta. (Value $200)

Rose City Roots, Camrose, Alberta (Value $500)

ACSRC RELATED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentations

1. "Complex problems, complex policies, complex partnerships: Re-evaluating the collaborative imperative for sustainability" paper to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the CPSA. Calgary, AB. May 28-31, 2016

2. "Grant writing and funding workshop" Champions of Tourism in the Canadian Badlands. Drumhellar, AB. April 20, 2016

3. "Pathways to Implementation: Sustainability Planning in Rural Canada" paper to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the MPSA. Chicago, Illinois. April 7-10, 2016

4. "The Alberta Parks Social Science Working Group and Framework" paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SSSA. Las Vegas, NV. March 23-26, 2016

5. "Rural Internships for Small Communities: Structure, Experience and Practice" w/B. Sjoquist. RAIL Commons Concurrent Session 4, Camrose, AB. Oct 3, 2015

6. "Rural Alberta Innovation Learning Commons Grant Writing Workshop" pre-Commons Workshop. Camrose, AB-. Oct. 2, 2015

7. "Third Sector Perspectives on Networks and Collaboration" Panelist at the 2015 Network Leadership Symposium and Summit. Edmonton, AB. Sept. 22-25, 2015

8. "Scenario Planning as a Method of Imagining Rural Municipal Futures" w/N. Finseth. Presentation at the 2015 Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation Conference. Summerside, PEI. Sept. 16-19, 2015

9. "Rural Homelessness: Assessing needs, designing tools and implementing interventions" w/ S.Richter and P. Dashore presented at Creating Rural Connections 2015 "Rural Homelessness is Real: what can we do about it?" Leduc, AB: May 26, 2015.

Publications

1. "Alberta" w/ J. Stonechild and W. Reist in G. Markey et al. (ed.) <u>State of Rural Canada 2015</u>. Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. 109pp. 2015.

2. "Convergence and Diversity: Integrating Encounters with Health, Ecological and Social Concerns." w/M. Parkes & N. Guehlstorf . Introductory Chapter to <u>Ecosystems, Society and Health </u> w/ N. Guehlstorf and M. Parkes (Ed.) (*in print - McGill-Queen's University Press 2015*). (Lars Hallstrom co-author)

3. <u>Ecosystems, Society and Health: Pathways through Diversity, Convergence and Integration</u> (2015) w/M. Parkes & N. Guehlstorf *(McGill-Queens University Press)* (lead editor) 352pp.

4. "Partnerships and the Fourth Way: Integration, Collaboration and Capacity in Rural Canada" in J. Malone (Ed.) Rural Linkages: Intercollaborative Human Services in Alberta (*under review* – University of Calgary Press).

5. "Policy Design in Rural Manitoba: Alternatives and Opportunities in the Midst of Change" *in print* in the <u>Manitoba Law Journal (Policy Edition): Under the Golden Boy</u>. 2016

6. "Public Health at the Watershed Scale" w/ M. Bunch & K. Morrison in Water Policy (*under review* 2016).

7. "Public Policy and the Welfare State" In D. Raphael (ed.) <u>The Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives</u> (3rd ed.) *forthcoming* 2016.

8. <u>Taking the Next Steps: Sustainability Planning and Collaboration in Rural Canada</u> (2016) w/ M. Beckie, G. Hvenegaard & K. Mundel (*University of Alberta Press)* (lead editor) 408pp.

9. "Which Way from Here? Navigation for the Care of Older Rural Adults with Terminal Illness" *in print* in Canadian Journal of Aging with W. Duggleby et al (co-author) Fall 2015.

Awards
CAFA – CAFA Distinguished Academic Award (Summer Spring 2015).

SERVICE

Rural Policy Learning Commons Executive Committee April 2014-present
The Director sits on this board.

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.

Rural Alberta Business Centre (Camrose) Advisory Committee (2012 – present)
The Director sits on this Committee.

Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) Board of Directors (2013 – present)
The Director sits on this board.

Network Leadership Symposium & Summit, Edmonton, Alberta (September 22-25, 2015)
The Director was the 2015 organizing committee chair.

Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning Commons (Oct 2-4, 2015)
The director is the organizing chair, Camrose, Alberta

PARTNERSHIPS

University of Alberta Partnerships

Augustana Faculty

Glen Hvenegaard, Professor, Environmental Science and Geography

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

Bill Foster, Associate Professor, Management

Jane Yardley, Assistant Professor, Physical Education

Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences

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

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

William Shotyk, Professor & Bocock Chair, Dept. of Renewable Resources

Pushpanjali Dashora, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Human Ecology

Debra Davidson, Professor, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology

Brent Swallow, Professor, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology

Extension

Mary Beckie, Associate Professor, Government Studies

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

Kristof Van Assche, Associate Professor, Planning, Governance and Development

Monica Gruezmacher, Natural Resources and Development

Nursing

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

Solina Richter, Associate Professor

Physical Education and Recreation

Elizabeth Halpenny, Associate Professor, Physical Education and Recreation

Howie Harshaw, Professor, Physical Education and Recreation

Science

Robert Summers, Assistant Professor, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences

Leith Deacon, Environmental Planner, Development of Remote Communities

Sandeep Agrawal, Professor and Inaugural Director Planning Program, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCER)
Sandra Woodhead Lyons, Executive Director

Arts
Andie Palmer, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Sourayan Mookerjea, Associate Professor, Sociology

Law
Cameron Jefferies, Bowker Fellow, Law Faculty

Engineering
Evan Davies, Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

Education
Dr Makere Stewart-Harawira, Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies

School of Public Health
Nick Ashbolt, professor, School of Public Health

Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
Sandeep Agrawal, Professor & Inaugural Director, Planning Program, EAS

Non-University of Alberta Individual Partners (Provincial/National)

Name	Organization
Name	**Organization**
Alberta	
Ann Casebeer	University of Calgary
Arnold Hanson	Beaver County
Barbara McNicol	Mount Royal University
Bob Beck	Beaver County
Cory Habulin	Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Dianne Draper	University of Calgary
Don Carruthers Den Hoed	Alberta Parks
Janice Popp	University of Calgary
Joanne Stuart	FCSS Viking
Joyce Gould	Alberta Parks
Mark Storie	Alberta Parks
Michael Quinn	Mount Royal University
Nora Smith	Delburne FCSS
Peter Swain	Alberta Parks
Reg Arbuckle	Alberta Parks
Ruth Gill	FCSS Tofield
Shay Barker	Battle River Alliance for Economic Development
Tracey Radley	FCSS Viking/Beaver
Rae Boisvert	Alberta Parks
Brian Joubert	Alberta Parks
National	
Bev Holmes	Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research
Bill Ashton	Rural Development Institute (Brandon University)
Christopher Lemieux	Wilfrid Laurier University
Greg Halseth	University of Northern British Columbia

John Devlin	University of Guelph
Kathleen Kevany	Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Kelly Vodden	Memorial University of Newfoundland
Margot Parkes	University of Northern British Columbia
Rob Greenwood	Memorial University of Newfoundland
Ron Lindstrom	Royal Roads University
Ryan Gibson	Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
Terri MacDonald	Selkirk College
William Reimer	Concordia University

International

Brint Milward	University of Arizona
Judith Stallmann	University of Missouri
Philip Loring	University of Alaska
Sean Connelly	University of Otago

Organizational Partners (Provincial/National)

Organizations

Alberta

Environment and Parks, Government of Alberta
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)
Battle River Alliance for Economic Development (BRAED)
Beaver County
Camrose County
Camrose Open Door Association
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
Village of Delburne, Alberta

National

Canadian Rural Research Network
Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation