

UNBC Press Release:

The University of Northern British Columbia is launching a unique program next semester that will provide students with skills and knowledge related to community development. The new major in Public Administration and Community Development is part of UNBC's **Geography** program. The first course in the new degree – a Political Science course on Community Development (POLS 332) – will be offered in January 2008.

The program has been designed by Greg Halseth, a Canada Research Chair in Rural and Small-town Studies at UNBC and a national expert on the challenges confronting rural communities. "From the mountain pine beetle epidemic to changing local populations, non-metropolitan communities are facing tough challenges, but having people skilled in community development will help these communities to realize opportunities," says Dr. Halseth. "This program will provide courses on issues around social geography, public administration, governance, First Nations, the environment and sustainability, the economy – areas that converge whenever we talk of community development."

The degree will have three specializations: local public administration, Aboriginal community development, and planning.

The program will be offered primarily in Prince George but the program may be of particular interest to students from various rural and northern colleges who are interested in applying their credits towards a degree focused on community development. "For example, the new major was designed to accommodate students who have completed a two-year diploma in 'Aboriginal Community Economic Development' or 'First Nations Public Administration' at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt," says Dr. Halseth. "To date, there really has been nowhere for these students to go if they wanted to complete a degree focused on community development. The program is a perfect fit for UNBC and for the region."