

New Paper Released in CDI Publications Series

Learning circles: what is their potential in Aboriginal community development?

The CDI's Publications Series is dedicated to sharing knowledge and information on a range of topics important to northern British Columbia and relevant to the CDI's community, economic, and regional development mandate. The peer review aspect of the Series ensures that only high quality research is published.

Through this Series, the CDI is pleased to announce the publication of a new paper entitled, "*Learning circles: what is their potential in Aboriginal community development?*" co-authored by John McBride and Julia Good.

The paper explores learning circles and their potential as effective community economic development (CED) tools. Special emphasis is placed on learning circles as an Aboriginal methodology, and on opportunities to use these as an appropriate approach in Aboriginal contexts.

Drawing upon the experiences of the Urban Aboriginal Economic Development Network and its learning circles, the paper examines important lessons and challenges in the wider context of learning circle methodologies, knowledge mobilization theory, and an effective CED framework.

The authors show that learning circles can be integrated very well into the community economic development process, and that they have a high potential for effectiveness in Aboriginal CED. The study concludes that this approach, based on empowering all participants, fostering partnerships and networking, building capacity, striving for financial sustainability, and supporting the internalization of stakeholders' values, is a valuable CED tool.

[Learn more and download the full report on the CDI website](#)

2015 Spring Speaker Series Announced

Building a Revitalized Future: The Role of Community Leadership and Vision

The CDI is proud to announce the **Spring 2015 Community Speaker Series** will feature **Lori Ackerman, Mayor of Fort St. John.**

Mayor Ackerman will present a free public lecture on the importance of community leadership, and the power of a community vision, in building and sustaining vibrant and livable communities. Drawing on her experience working to revitalize Fort St. John's downtown core, and the development of the community's Downtown Action Plan, Mayor Ackerman will speak to effective ways to engage a variety of stakeholders, including community residents, business owners, local government employees, and elected officials. Her talk will address ways to draw on community strengths and maintain interest and participation in the process of revitalization over time. Mayor Ackerman will also discuss the different components of an effective revitalization plan, and how to manage challenges and opportunities encountered.

The free Speaker Series event is open to the public:

- **Wednesday, April 15, 2015: Prince George Public Library (Bob Harkins Branch), 7-8.30pm**

Highlighting the CDI's commitment to knowledge exchange, Marleen Morris, Co-Director of the CDI, said, "Communities throughout the north are engaging in community planning and revitalization. We are pleased to host this event to encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices to the benefit of communities across the region."

Mayor Ackerman has lived in the Peace Region for over 30 years and has been Mayor of Fort St. John since 2011. She has been appointed to a number of boards, and from 2002-2013 was the Executive Director of Sci-Tech North, a non-profit organization that supported entrepreneurs and innovators in the Northeast. She serves as the Vice Chair of the BC Regional Science and Technology network, and as a member of the Economic Development Association of BC.

For more information about the Speaker Series, please contact Jennifer Hall at the CDI: jennifer.hall@unbc.ca

CDI Co-Directors Make Presentation to BC Government Caucus

At the invitation of Mike Morris, MLA for Prince George-Mackenzie, Marleen Morris and Greg Halseth, Co-Directors of the CDI, had the opportunity in January to address the BC Government Caucus. Highlighting lessons from BC's past, data about the current state of the BC economy, and information about northern communities, the presentation, "*Towards BC's New Economy: The Vital Role of Northern BC in Realizing a New Generation of Prosperity*," spoke to the future of the province and the important role that the north will play.

Key messages in the presentation highlighted the need for strategic action in northern BC to realize and sustain prosperity in the province through a focus on three main areas: 1) growing and transforming the Northern BC economy, through infrastructure development, economic magnification and diversification, and small and medium-size enterprise support; 2) growing jobs and the workforce, through education and training, workforce deployment and community attraction and retention; and, 3) growing communities, by focusing on quality of life, community amenities, municipal infrastructure, and property tax structure.

The CDI's messages included specific recommendations to develop a small airport strategy, expand broadband Internet coverage, enhance the electrical and natural gas grid, and upgrade key highways in the north. The presentation stressed the need to increase high school graduation rates and post-secondary enrolment to prepare for a labour market where 78% of all jobs (source: 2011-2022 Labour Market Outlook study) will require post-secondary training. Developing career pathways that are flexible, adaptive, and cross-industry, as well as integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum, were also suggested as strategies to help grow jobs and the workforce. In the area of community development, the CDI's recommendations included attention to renewing housing stock through renovation and redevelopment, building accessible housing with supports for seniors, and developing "smart service" approaches that enhance access, effectiveness, and efficiency through co-location, the use of technology, and shared services.

The presentation demonstrated that a variety of actions to grow and diversify Northern BC communities will help ensure that these communities are more self-reliant and sustainable.

Clearwater Shares Award-Winning Bylaw

The CDI has been working with the District of Clearwater on a seniors mobility study. As part of this work, the District developed a bylaw for road networks that facilitates mobility in the community. UBCM presented the District with a 2014 Community Excellence Award for the bylaw. Leslie Groulx, District of Clearwater Chief Administrative Officer, has offered to share the bylaw as a resource for other local governments. She can be reached via email at: lgroulx@docbc.ca

Upcoming Events, News and Information

Northern BC Citizen Series Webinars: Call for Host Sites

BC Healthy Communities and Northern Health are inviting northern communities to become a "host site" for their upcoming spring 2015 webinars.

[Learn more: 'Citizens Series' webinars](#)

[Learn more: Becoming a host site](#)

2015 Council of Forest Industries (COFI) Annual

Convention: April 8-9, 2015, Prince George.

[Learn more and register](#)

BC Healthy Communities Citizens Series Webinar:

The Best is Yet to Be: Engaging Seniors' Wisdom and Voices in Building Healthy Age-Friendly Communities:

Thursday, April 16, 2015 from 1:30-3:30 pm PDT.

[Learn more and register](#)

The Community Development Institute at UNBC

The Community Development Institute at UNBC is dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, preparing students and practitioners for leadership roles in economic and community development, and creating a body of knowledge, information, and research that enhances our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation.

In keeping with the vision of the University of Northern British Columbia, the Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their community and regional development aspirations.

For more information contact:

Marleen Morris, Co-Director by phone at 250 960-9806 or email at marleen.morris@unbc.ca, or visit our website at www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute