

# Community Connections

The UNBC Community Development Institute Newsletter

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## Special Feature: Perspectives from Our Summer Research Assistants

In this issue of *Community Connections*, we are featuring articles by our summer research assistants. We hope you enjoy their perspectives on their time with the CDI. - Marleen Morris, Associate Director

### From Academia to Community Practice: An Opportunity to Put Knowledge to Work By Devon Roy, Research Assistant

Often, as students, we find ourselves heavily immersed in the academic world and everything that entails. This world is very structured with a long list of things to do such as papers and exams. It is most certainly something that is beneficial and enjoyable. However, too much of something is never good. Currently, I have received the opportunity to work on a project through the Community Development Institute (CDI) that allows me to take part in both the structured world of academia and the world of community practice.

The project is the Sustainability Plan for Tumbler Ridge. The CDI is working with the District of Tumbler Ridge to take advantage of the economic upswing to create long-lasting benefits for the community. What makes this so different from my previous UNBC experience is that I get to apply the knowledge from my education to real life situations. The results are not letter grades; instead you see your work become something tangible in the community you are working with.

Each day, work brings something new and challenging, something that has an endless number of solutions. As the individual working on it, I must piece together exactly how I am going to approach it. It is extremely rewarding watching something unique I've created become something meaningful within a community and making a difference.

### Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study By Erin MacQuarrie, Research Assistant

This year, I had the pleasure of assisting the Community Development Institute (CDI) and the City of Prince George in a Housing Need and Demand study. My work began in a UNBC experiential learning course called *Housing Issues in Prince George*. In this class, students completed independent research projects on a housing issue of their choice. Topics included accessible housing for seniors, Aboriginal housing, supportive housing, and student housing. We completed these studies under the guidance of our instructor Greg Halseth and with the support of skilled and knowledgeable course mentors. We heard from close to thirty community members representing non-profit groups, BC Housing, RCMP, the Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Prince George, to name a few. This active learning was extremely effective and I took much from this course.

In 2013, the CDI continued with a comprehensive Housing Needs and Demand study, and I am very pleased to be helping with this work. This research consists of interviews with key stakeholders, from non-profits to developers, workshops with community members, and a final research paper with recommendations for moving forward.

I have learned many valuable skills in my role as a research assistant. Most importantly, I appreciate the value of building partnerships between organizations in order to capitalize on the opportunities, efficiencies, and insight gained through collaboration. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this project and would like to thank the many individuals whose passion and dedication have made it possible.

Research having an impact. People making a difference.

## BC Housing Makes a Further Contribution to the CDI

In April, BC Housing announced further support for the CDI to continue our work on housing issues and opportunities in northern communities. This contribution of \$135,000 is in addition to the \$50,000 grant BC Housing provided in January 2012.

“In this period of economic growth and opportunity in northern British Columbia, it’s imperative that we work to ensure that everyone in the North has access to safe, stable housing,” said Shirley Bond, MLA for Prince George-Valemount. “Now, more than ever, we need to work with partners like the CDI to ensure a prosperous North in the future.”

“We are on the cusp on the most significant community and economic transformation since the 1950s,” said Greg Halseth, Director of the CDI. “Our work at the CDI helps communities get ready for these changes and take advantage of the opportunities that this growth and transformation will bring.”

“We would like to thank the Government of BC and BC Housing for their ongoing support,” said Marleen Morris, Associate Director of the CDI and responsible for the CDI’s renewal process. “Their contribution will help us expand our vision and capacity so that we can continue to contribute to building strong communities and regions.”

## Women North Network/Northern FIRE Presentation to U of T Students

Members from Women North Network/Northern FIRE – the Centre for Women’s Health Research at UNBC – recently presented a webinar examining issues related to health and wellness in rural, remote, and northern communities to Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology students at the University of Toronto. Students learned of the work via an “Ask the Expert” column available on the Women’s College Hospital website ([www.womenshealthmatters.ca](http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca)) authored by UNBC Social Work Professor Dawn Hemingway.

Having received their education and training to date in an urban environment, students wanted to learn more about health-related policy and practice in non-urban and northern geographies. Drawing on life, practice and research experience, presenters Dawn Hemingway, Indrani Margolin, and Lois Lochhead provided a glimpse of both the challenges and benefits of facilitating health and wellness in communities located far away from the Canadian population belt along the 49th parallel.

## CDI News Briefs

### **Ministry of Advanced Education, Policy Development**

Greg Halseth and Marleen Morris gave a presentation key staff in the Ministry of Advanced Education to provide context and background for the development of a strategic plan for northern BC. The presentation looked at opportunities for coordination and collaboration in workforce development.

### **BC Healthy Communities and Northern Health**

#### **Authority: Citizen’s Series**

Greg Halseth contributed to the dialogue on short-term construction work camps in BC. Greg was part of a webinar panel, along with Ron Poole, Chief Administrative Officer for the District of Kitimat and Connie Kaweesi, Social Service Worker Program at Northern Lights College, sponsored by BC Healthy Communities. The panel, ***Guess Who’s Coming to Town, Health Impacts of Work Camps in Close Proximity to Communities*** has been archived and can be viewed at: <http://bchealthycommunities.ca/event/3613/view>.

### **Federal Rural Secretariat**

The Government of Canada eliminated the Rural Secretariat on May 9, 2013. This department worked with key federal departments and agencies, including natural resource departments, the voluntary sector and non-government organizations, to develop initiatives that supported the development of innovative and competitive communities. It should be noted that almost one third of Canada’s population - approximately nine million people - live in rural regions.

### **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.

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