

# Who's ready for engagement with rural communities? Moving from stakeholders to partners in knowledge translation and exchange

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# Objectives

- (1) Examine the notion of stakeholder engagement in the context of community-based participatory research in rural and small town places
- (2) Recognize the diversity and heterogeneity of rural community settings, and the challenges and opportunities these present for knowledge creation
- (3) Consider the implications of participatory rural engagement for knowledge translation and exchange

# Overview

- Embracing KT&E through community-based participatory research
- Recognizing 'rural' diversity, complexity and uniqueness
- Being alert to opportunities and constraints
- Negotiating roles - stakeholder, advisor or partner?
- Relationship building and maintenance
- Concluding remarks - towards participatory rural engagement

# Embracing knowledge exchange

- Well established traditions of knowledge translation
  - Making research more “actionable” and relevant
  - Moving from passive (let it happen) to active (make it happen) knowledge mobilization (Lavis et al. 2003; Gagnon 2011)

# Embracing knowledge exchange

- Striving for a greater exchange between researchers and their publics
  - Co-production of knowledge
  - Co-learning

# Embracing knowledge exchange

- Community-based participatory research and the commitment to empower marginalized groups
- A means to enhance research quality and relevance (Minkler 2005)
  - Build trust with community groups
  - Help with recruitment, informed consent and ongoing commitment of participants
  - Improve cultural sensitivity
  - Uncover lay knowledge
  - Increase validity and relevance of research, improve the likelihood of producing “actionable” findings

# What is 'rural'?

- > 99% of Canada's land mass
- < 20% of Canada's population



Gaultois, NF

Source: Rannie Gillis,  
The Guardian, 2019,  
<https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/news/canada/report-looks-at-gaps-in-key-data-for-canadian-rural-areas-359450/>.



Rural Saskatchewan

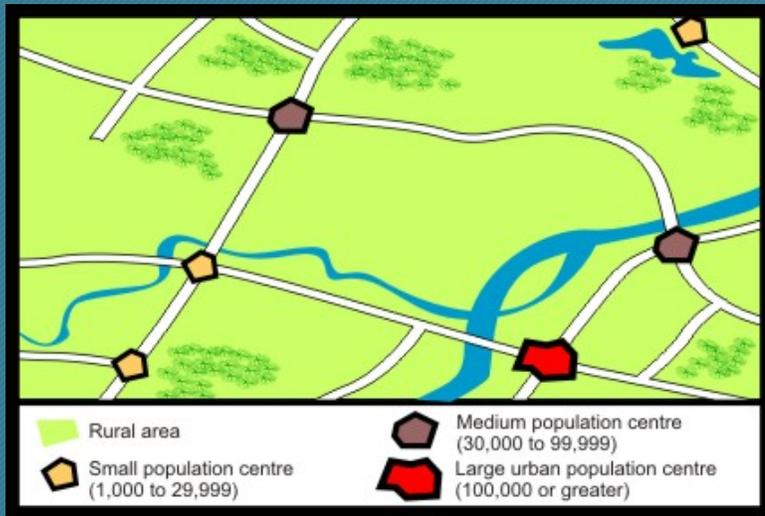
Source: Global News, 2015,  
<https://globalnews.ca/news/2080205/some-canadian-towns-giving-away-land-to-attract-new-residents/>.



Iqaluit, Nunavut

Source: Paul Chiasson, The  
Canadian Press, 2015,  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/nunavut-premier-warns-overcrowding-could-worsen-covid-19-outbreak-1.5191063>

# What is 'rural'?



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011,  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-195-x/2011001/geo/ra-rr/ra-rr-eng.htm>.

Area classification	Population	%
Rural area	6,575,373	18.7
Small population centre	4,458,766	12.7
Medium population centre	3,179,294	9.0
Large population centre	20,075,817	59.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 2017,  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo049a-eng.cfm>.

# What is 'rural'?

- Common dimensions
  - Small population base
  - Limited services and infrastructure
  - Resource-oriented economies (agriculture, mining, forestry, fishing)
  - Geographical remoteness from larger urban centres
  - Higher levels of informality, social support
  - Poorer health outcomes, higher risk of accidental and premature death

# What is 'rural'?

- Beyond static, stereotypical representations
- Embracing relational rather than binary thinking (Heley and Jones 2012)
- Recognizing diversity, complexity, connectivity (Woods 2007)

# Opportunities & challenges for knowledge creation

- Network visibility / Living in a fishbowl



Source: <https://passengershawn.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/publication1.jpg>

# Opportunities & challenges for knowledge creation

- Globalized countryside / Urban normativity



Source: <https://smartvillage.ca/2020/11/11/race-for-rural-smart-village-connectivity/>

# Opportunities & challenges for knowledge creation

- Problems in common / Community divides



Source: <https://khalidraza9.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/community-of-divide/>

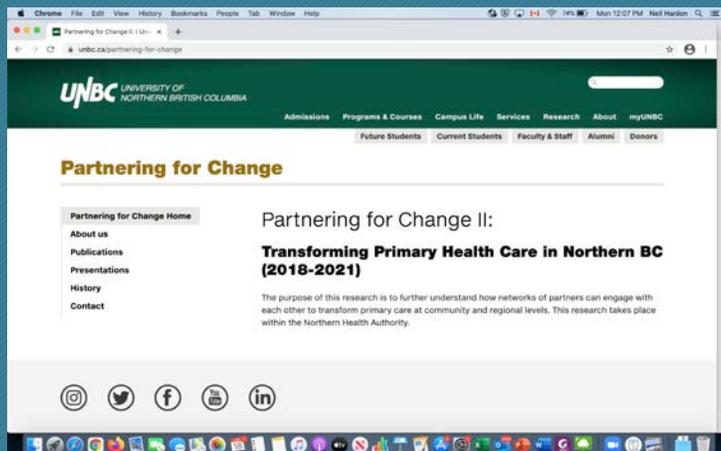
# Negotiating roles and responsibilities

- A typology of community engagement

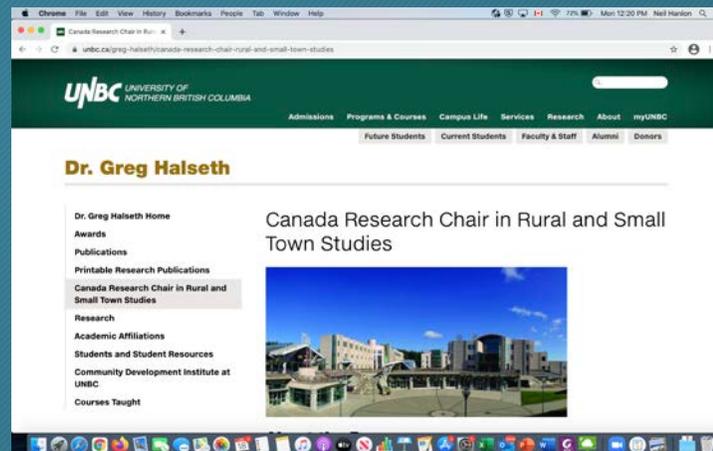
	RELATION TO THE RESEARCH		
	Stakeholders	Advisors	Partners
KEY ROLE	Representation	Validation	Brokering
CORE TASK	Provide data	Oversight	Produce knowledge
INVOLVEMENT	Passive	Active	Interactive
NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP	Volunteer	Counselor	Co-investigator

# Negotiating roles and responsibilities

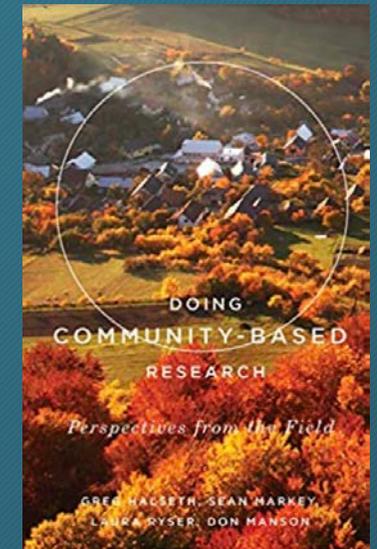
- Lines of communication (Halseth et al. 2016)
- Honesty and integrity
- Reciprocity



Source: <https://www.unbc.ca/partnering-for-change>



Source: <https://www.unbc.ca/greg-halseth/canada-research-chair-rural-and-small-town-studies>



# Negotiating roles and responsibilities

- Formalization of partnerships – e.g., MOUs
  - Terms of reference
  - Roles and obligations
  - Timelines and deliverables
  - Policies and procedures
  - Authorization

# Towards participatory rural engagement

- Potential benefits
  - Enable rural voice(s)
  - Ensure more ethical and inclusive research
  - Improve theory, research, policy and practice
- “Readiness”
  - Reciprocal relations
  - Reasonable expectations (timelines, deliverables, involvement)
  - Shared governance

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# Questions?

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