



BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY



# Rural Development Institute

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT





## Rural Development Institute

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

For more information, please visit [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi)

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Finance .....	4
Applied Research .....	5
Experiences of Integration of Newcomers Across the Canadian Prairies .....	5
Impact Assessment of Extreme Moisture on Crop Yield and Farm Income .....	6
Non-Profit Helping Immigrants Launch their Business Start-ups .....	7
Enhancing Impacts of Community Foundations in Rural Manitoba .....	8
Brandon and Westman Immigration Research Repository Project .....	9
Investability – Researching Capacity For Rural Regional Investment .....	9
Knowledge Mobilization .....	10
Rural Policy Learning Commons .....	10
Blog Posts .....	12
Webinars .....	13
Publications .....	15
Book Chapter .....	15
Peer-Reviewed Articles .....	15
Teaching and Learning .....	17
Teaching Research Methods .....	17
Student Service Learning .....	19
Rural Policy Summer Institute – Enhancing Rural Prosperity .....	20
A Doctoral Dissertation .....	21
The RDI Team .....	22

# Introduction

This annual report complies to the Brandon University Senate policy on Research Centres Policy and Procedures. We report on our applied research projects, financial information, publications, community outreach, and teaching and learning activities for the 2020-2021 year.

It has been a year like no other I have experienced. A perfect storm was mounting. The COVID-19 pandemic closed our campus offices in mid-March 2020 and they remain closed to date, March 31, 2021. While we worked on our own projects, the shift to working at home was in some ways a small change. The big change was trying to figure out how to stay connected. Another shift came in July 2020 as I started my six-month sabbatical. That is a story in-itself that I will leave for another day. And many students were quickly out of work as owners closed businesses and partially reopened from one wave of COVID to the next. Somehow, RDI pulled through both as an institute and a team. Our research assistance adapted to the swift move online without sacrificing our research output. Continually experimenting with novel ways to communicate and collaborate, we met project objectives and deadlines, maintained local and internal partnerships, and ensured the availability of webinar topics relevant to existing research and current events. These accomplishments largely happened under the leadership of Wayne Kelly, who stepped up and made lemonade out of lemons during my sabbatical. In addition, he also found time to complete his doctoral dissertation and successfully defend it. Hats off to Dr. Wayne Kelly.

As other annual reports from RDI clearly present our accomplishments, I especially want to thank each one of our students and researchers in their efforts to “carry on” through the pandemic. Collectively they made this seemingly impossible situation possible. I also acknowledge the resilience and adaptation efforts for our research and data collection to continue despite multiple public health orders for isolation.

Early on, we initiated a strategy to ensure continuity of employment and extensions for current students hired more where possible. Working closely with our project clients, we found ways to divert unused travel funds to wages and at times expanded the scope of projects to accommodate the extra efforts. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Steve Robinson, Vice-president of Academics and Provost, and Dr. Lisa Robson, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, for their efforts in finding ways to continue RDI's project during my sabbatical. Equally important I acknowledge efforts of Dr. Alex Koiter and Cora Dupuis who stepped up to take lead roles on projects. Well done to all.

Despite COVID-19 our research persists and continues in its relevance for people who live and work in rural Manitoba, Canada, and to rural policy makers. RDI's research is funded by a wide variety of organizations from both the non-profit sector and government. Such funding ensures we continue to strive to build new partnerships. Undeterred by a year of uncertainty, RDI continues to demonstrate its capacity to share knowledge and research findings with publications and presentations both in Manitoba and other parts of Canada, as well as internationally.

RDI continues to add important knowledge to five strategic research directions, including rural immigration, rural economic development, rural infrastructure, governance and capacity building, and rural innovation. Given the efforts over the last 12 years, Brandon University nominated me (and all of RDI) for a national Social Science and Humanities Council (SSHRC) award for impact and partnership building. What an fantastic honour. We hope to submit the application in early 2022 based on the efforts and outcomes from the Rural Policy Learning Commons.

Again thanks to all and hello COVID-19 vaccinations.

Wm. (Bill) Ashton, MCIP, PhD  
Director, Rural Development Institute  
Brandon University  
April, 2021

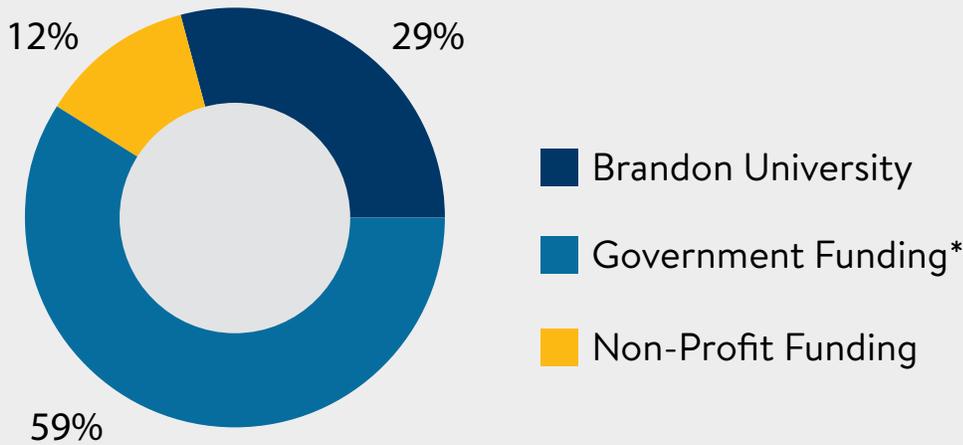
# Finance

## April 2020 to March 2021 Funding Sources

	2020 - 2021	
Brandon University	\$215,124.83	29%
Government Funding*	\$441,942.65	59%
Non-Profit Funding	\$86,795.00	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$743,862.48*</b>	<b>100%</b>

RDI is leveraging Brandon University financial support 3.45 times, which means for every dollar Brandon University ‘spends’ on RDI, we generate another \$3.45.

## 2020-2021 Funding Sources



\*In addition to this funding, RDI contributes to Brandon University via the Research Support Fund paid by SSHRC because of the Partnership grant.

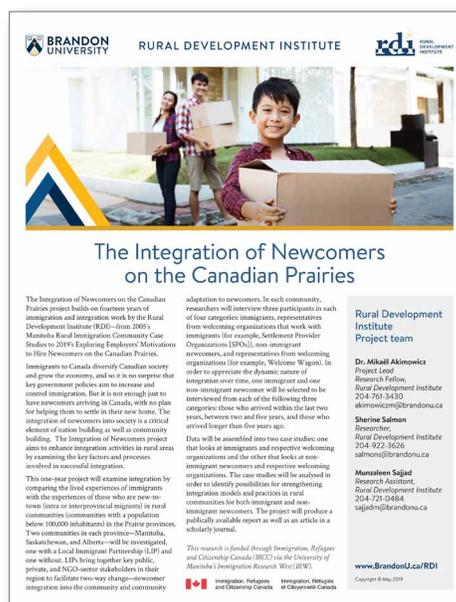
This means for every year of the seven year project (ending in 2021) Brandon University receives funding directly.

*Another busy year with significant achievements and new knowledge to add to discussions and advancing policy.*

# Experiences of Integration of Newcomers Across the Canadian Prairies

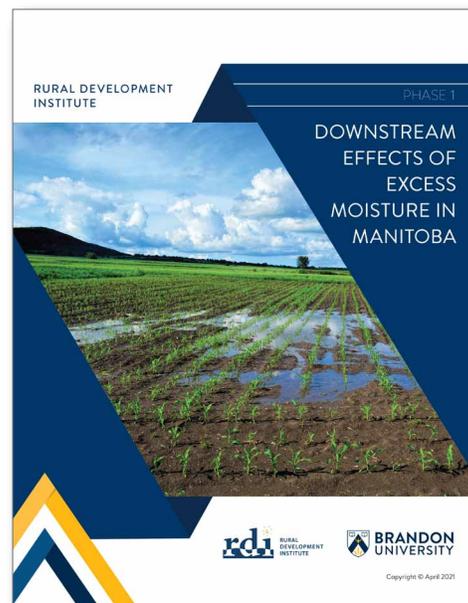
Building on the now 15 years of immigration research conducted by RDI, the integration project examines the intricacies of newcomer integration on the prairies. Immigrants play a key role in diversifying Canadian society and growing the economy, the successful settlement of newcomers is an important, the integration project seeks to help understand how newcomers find their place in their new home. Despite the lack of a shared definition of integration, this concept word addresses the physical, psychological, and social progress of newcomers, and more. In our study, newcomers are both immigrants and new-to-town individuals, meaning those who have relocated within Canada from other provinces or regions. The study explores literature and lived experiences to examine how accurately models of integration reflect and represent the views and experiences of newcomers in order to address the contextually appropriate use of the word integration as it applies to immigrants and settlement agencies. Our qualitative case study uses thematic coding of in-depth interviews with newcomers and settlement organizations. Results suggest that models and factors of integration do not fully or effectively reflect the process and desires of newcomers. Though new-to-town individuals possess advantages in their relocation process (e.g., not having to learn a new language or build a cultural foundation in their new location), they do not meet nor do they aspire to meet all the various factors and considerations of integration included in the models. Newcomers seek first to meet their own core needs followed by

self-directed needs. In this article, an acculturation model is put forward that encompasses dynamics of individual newcomers' peculiarities of circumstances. The research finds that integration is needs driven, and factors identified in literature come into play as core and self-directed needs that are met to create a sense of belonging. These needs are met through different avenues although there are similarities between newcomers though integration is best defined through individual circumstances as well as idiosyncratic values and priorities.



# Impact Assessment of Extreme Moisture on Crop Yield and Farm Income

Manitoba's changing climate conditions are characterized by increased frequency and intensity of extreme moisture events. To avoid these negative effects on crop yield, quality, and farm income, it is necessary for Manitoba producers to use yield forecast tools in order to understand the crop-specific ramifications of excess moisture. Timely and accurate estimates of crop yield are critical for economic forecasting and risk assessment of agricultural production. Farm simulation models use climate state analysis to forecast crop yields and offer several benefits over traditional methods, including precision, reduced costs, and the elimination of subjective errors. To analyze the impacts of projected climate scenarios on crop yield variability in the southern Manitoba, RDI calibrated the AquaCrop farm model using Manitoba's 30-year historical climatic data and simulated local crop characteristics in the model interface in Phase 1 of this project. This farm model makes it possible to simulate excess moisture management scenarios for use by producers, farm production consultants, planners, and economists to make informed decisions. In Phase 2, the objectives were to identify current yield forecasting tools and to evaluate the willingness of producers and other stakeholders in crop yield forecasting models (specifically AquaCrop). To achieve this objective, RDI organized a series of surveys to receive feedback from



targeted stakeholders involved in this study in terms of what they currently use and how these models are being used in their decision making process. Driven by the effects of increasingly frequent extreme moisture events on crop yields, and the increasing demand for food security planning, it becomes important to develop crop monitoring and yield forecasting systems to provide regional, national, and global production outlooks for major field crops.

# Non-Profit Helping Immigrants Launch their Business Start-Ups

Immigrants and small and medium enterprises are critical to our economy and communities today and well into our future. This research examines how agencies support business start-ups led by immigrant entrepreneurs. The Aurora Project, established in Brandon Manitoba, is an agency assisting immigrants in the early stages of their start-up. Our qualitative approach uses triangulation from a literature scan and interviews with seven support agencies to compare with the Aurora Project. Three concepts frame the comparison in terms of process or activities over time of the Business Service Agency (BSA), content or materials provided to entrepreneur clients to advance their business idea to a launch, and practices of the business support advisors when interacting with clients. Across all sources, while heuristic models with multiple stages exist, we found the only common stage is at the beginning when advisors met with their client. The most significant difference related to content is the Aurora Project uses the Business Model Canvas to clarify the business idea with the client, while others agencies well-established business plan with financial aspects. Two important practice all agencies shared: they asked clients for a commitment of time and energy to move an idea to launch; and as their business idea takes shape, it was being assessed and in cases where it was not feasible the advisors let the client know. One agency with only immigrant clients, ensured they are

aware of basic business laws and practices, local cultural customs and more. Clients also were challenged with discrimination. None of the agencies helped equip their clients with ways to respond and there was no mention of the agencies being proactive in the community on this matter.



# Enhancing Impacts of Community Foundations in Rural Manitoba

Manitoba's community foundations (CF) play a critical role in community development in all regions of the province. Many CFs are stretched as they address challenges related to advancing their organizational and operational capacities to plan for and achieve specific social and economic goals. This project's main goal is to enhance the social and economic impact of CFs in Manitoba over the short-, medium- and long-term. This project is an Endow Manitoba (MB) and MITAC's funded project that engages Masters students and research assistants at Brandon University. The RDI research team is working with Endow MB on this community-based research project to conduct a scoping literature review and providing analysis and insights into tools and opportunities for CF growth in Manitoba. The project is also focused on identifying critical issues impacting the role of CFs in community development and research. The Endow MB partner representative provided this overview of the project with RDI:

*The project with RDI at Brandon University will support community foundations in intentional and inclusive community consultation that supports community foundation operations, specifically impactful grant making practices. The principles and tools identified in this project will produce authentic convening and meaningful generation of community knowledge that will build bona fide grant awarding aligned with community priorities. Community foundations will utilize these research findings in building trust with their communities through increased transparency, accountability, and meaningful engagement. Embraced by community foundation leaders and supported by Endow Manitoba, this work will advance the sustainability and growth of the Manitoba community foundation network.*

The project started in July 2020 and final activities will wrap up in early fall 2021. Project findings and recommendations will be reviewed and revised with Endow MB and CF representatives as part of the community research process.

# Brandon and Westman Immigration Research Repository Project

The Brandon and Westman Immigration Research Repository Project is designed to identify and gather existing published research and resource materials from different organizations working for newcomer's well-being in Brandon and the Westman region. The repository research project is a collaboration between the Rural Development Institute (RDI) with the Brandon local Immigration Partnership (BLIP) and the Interdisciplinary Immigration Research Network (IIRN). The project's primary focus is to create a list of research and resource materials from RDI, IIRN, BU, and other publicly available resources. The project lists available research and resource materials and associated information or links. The project team arranges, organizes, categorizes materials, and generate keywords to search for it. This project facilitates the organization of immigration materials and knowledge for the region's academic and non-academic organizations. This repository will provide an organized source of materials and serve as a means of communication between the different organizations with the updated literature. The repository project will also identify research and resource gaps related to immigration issues in the region. The partners collaborating on this project intend to use the repository as a foundation to inform current knowledge and guide future research.

## Investability- Researching Capacity For Rural Regional Investment

The RDI Research team is co-developing an infrastructure investment readiness tool and identifying the knowledge needed to assist the Economic Development team in The Dennis County Development Planning (DCDP) to attract development and respond to local infrastructure inquiries for business and decision makers. The RDI research team will work with the DCDP Economic Development team to define the expertise and materials required and available to direct DCDP infrastructure investment readiness efforts, emphasizing telecommunications, energy, and water infrastructures. This will be accomplished through three virtual design sessions involving the RDI research team and the DCDP team, including a) defining model criteria, ii) reviewing a shortlist of possible infrastructure readiness models, and iii) testing a model tailored to the local investment needs of DCDP. This project will make recommendations for an infrastructure investment readiness tool and assist DCDP in identifying readiness data and information needed to enhance infrastructure investment readiness in the region. The RDI Research team is currently reviewing DCDP characteristics, community reports, strategic plans and data resources to identify current municipal infrastructure data availability.

## Rural Policy Learning Commons

*The Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC) is a \$2.5M partnership grant funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) with the Rural Development Institute (RDI) and Brandon University.*

*The Rural Policy Learning Commons is a network of academics, NGOs, and government agencies who specialize in rural policy and research. We partner to share information with the goal of enhancing rural prosperity for all. Our project has partners in the following locations:*



Two major objectives of the RPLC are to build rural capacity and strengthen relationships to inform rural research and policy. Some members focus on provincial and regional research while others concentrate on international comparative analysis through working relationships among institutions and other organizational partners.

Like many organizations, RPLC was impacted by COVID-19 over the last year. This past year was RPLC's seventh year of the project, and the network

had originally planned several events to wrap up and showcase the project outcomes and achievements. However, like others, RPLC pivoted in the face of COVID-19. This adjustment meant budgeted travel expenses were reallocated to students, and that in-person events went online. Despite the changes, by the end of this fiscal year (March 2021) RPLC generated over \$6 million dollars of direct value with \$2.5 M from SSHRC and another \$3.5 M from cash and in-kind from our partners.

To provide context for the shift from COVID pandemic, the table below provides comparison for year 6 and year 7 budget allocations. While it is unfortunate that RPLC was not able to continue its successful support for students to attend and present at rural policy events, in year 7, the table illustrates that those resources were still directed at students. In an year full of layoffs, unemployment and uncertainty, RPLC increased its employment support and stipends by for students \$51,000 (33%) reallocating student travel resources to employment and stipends and allocating nearly all of the project’s budget (87%) in year 7 to student wages and funds.

RPLC Budget Allocations Year 6	RPLC Budget Allocations Year 7
74% of project’s yearly budget allocated to student travel/ employment/ stipend support.	87% of project’s yearly budget allocated to student employment/ stipend support.
\$56,000 in support for 27 students to travel to, attend and present at 21 rural policy/research conferences.	\$0 in support for student travel.
\$155,000 in employment/ stipends for 19 students.	\$206,000 in employment/ stipends for 17 students.

Below is a list of highlight activities that RPLC supported students contributed to:

- Hiring a student to facilitate the transfer of communication and materials from RPLC to project partner Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF);
- Providing resources to CRRF for student support which was used in the creation of the COVID-19 Rural Insight Series;
- Increased emphasis and resources for hosting webinars with RDI and creating videos to showcase partner research centres;
- Providing student support and resources to help host virtual events including the CRRF 2020 virtual conference;
- Contributing resources and Knowledge Mobilization support for ICRPS 2021 which has transitioned to a virtual summer Institute for this year.

RPLC was originally intended as a seven-year project, but with the impact of COVID-19, the finalization of project activities, wrap up and reporting has been extended for several months into the 2021-2022 fiscal year. RDI is looking forward to sharing the final project evaluation reporting on impacts later in 2021.

## Blog Posts

*With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic rural communities have had to adjust to countless obstacles, and it is crucial to reflect on how small towns adapt to move forward with efficient policy design for the future. The Imagining Rural Futures webpage highlights key news stories and studies relating to rural policy and development. Throughout 2020 and 2021 there have been seven blog posts by RDI members, Michael Asante, Nicole Breedon, and Bill Ashton. These are uploaded to the Imagining Rural Futures Blog, each commenting on rural adaptations. Additionally, the Future Resources page promotes news reports, podcasts, and so much more content from producers beyond our Brandon University team which have contributed to our understanding of the every-changing world of rural.*



**Nicole Breedon**  
A online webinar coordinator at RDI

Breedon, N. (2020, June 4) The Globe and Mail: Virtual Learning [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/the-globe-and-mail-virtual-learning/>

Breedon, N. (2020, June 1) The Globe and Mail: Postsecondary Education – Online [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/the-globe-mail-postsecondary-education-online/>



**Michael Asante**  
Research Assistant at RDI

Asante, M. (2020, June 12) The COVID-19 Pandemic and World Food: The Big Picture [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-world-food-the-big-picture/>



**Dr. Bill Ashton**  
Director at RDI

Ashton, W. (2020, May 7) Rural Futures: Agriculture [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/rural-futures-agriculture/>

Ashton, W. (2020, May 7) Rural Futures: Data and Decisions [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/rural-futures-data-decisions/>

Ashton, W. (2020, May 7) Rural Futures: Innovation [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/rural-futures-innovation/>

Ashton, W. (2020, May 7) Rural Futures: Looking Down the Road [Blog Post]. In *Imagining Rural Futures: Blog*. Available at <https://imaginingruralfutures.org/rural-futures-looking-down-the-road/>

# Webinars

*This year the RDI webinar team facilitated the development of 13 webinars with a total of 35 presenters. Throughout the 2020-2021 year we had the pleasure of reaching out to 1,502 registrants not only within Canada but throughout Bangladesh, Ghana, Germany, Iceland, India, Jamaica, Japan, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. We had 898 confirmed attendees and countless live stream viewers, sparking interest in rural policy and development. While we may continue to pursue the incorporation of live stream technology our webinar recordings have been viewed on the RPLC YouTube channel 802 times collectively. The webinars are wide ranging:*

- Baxter, C. (2021, February 23) Filipino Nurses Experiences Living & Working in Rural Manitoba: The Key Role of Policy in Supporting Integration [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Pending Webinar upload to the YouTube Platform.
- Wilson, A. (2020, December 11) One House Many Nations: Policy, Practice, & Practicalities [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niQOwgE59Gc&feature=youtu.be>
- Robinson, D. (2020, December 1) Gastronomy a Tourism Lure: Exploring the Considerations for a Policy Decision & the Impacts on Cross-Sector Interactions [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLH8suEi3ec&feature=youtu.be>
- Karabanow, J., Williston, K., Doll, K., Hall, P., Simpson, L., Thompson, S., Oni, J. (2020, November 26) Policy for Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) with Marginalized Youth [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lYGr490ZDU&feature=youtu.be>
- White, K. (2020, November 25) Small Towns Need a New Approach [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnaM2tQQeEk&feature=youtu.be>
- Bobiwash, K. (2020, November 19) Indigenous Knowledge Interrupted [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0S-kS\\_l6II&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0S-kS_l6II&feature=youtu.be)
- Foster, K., Sousa E. C., Epp, S., Helps, L., Silvius, R., Agyepong, V., Bollman, R. (2020, October 2). Changing Patterns in People and Products [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://youtu.be/KGCo0AdtMQo>
- Minnes, S., Rich, K. (2020, October 2). AGM & Social Hour [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://youtu.be/PthxDXtLHMA>

# KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

- Weeden, A., Kelly, W., Walsh, D., Hudson, A., Maloney, J., Kraehling, P. (2020, October 2). Panel: Innovating Through Infrastructure [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://youtu.be/SAGN4IdnqME>
- Brinklow, L., Hall, H., Gibson, R., Markey, S. (2020, October 1). Plenary Panel: Rural and Island Resilience [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0YcWq3MEaE>
- Kevany, K., Allen, K. (2020, October 1). Panel: Care and Community [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://youtu.be/7z8O-xrqABw>
- Monsef, M. (2020, October 1). Keynote: The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdfYMO1ufp8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdfYMO1ufp8&feature=emb_logo)
- Rich, K., Weeden, A., Minnes, S. (2020, October 1). New Researchers Forum [Webinar]. *In Rural Policy Learning Commons Webinar Series*. Available at <https://youtu.be/a8JydQzZyDk>

# Publications

## Book Chapter

Sousa, E., Epp, S., Caldwell, W., Ashton, Wm., and Kevany, K. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Agriculture in Manitoba: Recovering from COVID-19, Chapter 8. 85-93. In COVID-19 in Manitoba: policy responses to the first wave, Eds.: Rounce, A. and Levasseur, K., University of Manitoba Press. See: <https://uofmpress.ca/books/detail/covid-19-in-manitoba>

## Peer-Reviewed Articles

Mackay-Brown, Alexandra, and Ashton, Bill. 2021. Integration experiences of newcomers across the prairies: Untangling perceived dichotomy between immigrants and new-to-towns. *Canadian Journal of Ethnic Studies*. 53.1: 89-110.

Martin, C., Ashton, Wm., and Galatsanou, E. (2020). Factors influencing the price of fluid milk in Northern Manitoba. *Canadian Public Policy*. (Under review)

Ashton, Wm., and Breen, T. (2020). Research method courses: Ingredients in making a researcher. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*. (Under review)

## Teaching Research Methods

Graduate students the world over are challenged when required to conduct their own research project. I wanted to see if there was a way make this challenge more understandable, right from the beginning. As one of my projects within my sabbatical, I explored ways to assist students to envision their thesis or dissertation research by starting with the end in mind – a major research report – the whole. And their dissertation is a composition of ‘pieces’ including an issue, literature review, methods, data collection and analyses, and findings. In addition, among all the courses they take, one course brings the pieces of their thesis into a whole, and most often is a research methods course. By the end of my sabbatical, this project generated four information pieces:

- A logic map of the ‘pieces’ of a thesis or dissertation, presented as a Template,
- Cases from successful graduate students where their theses are presented with completed templates. Some learners can take the logic map and fill it in, while others benefit from seeing what others have done to spark ideas about their own topic of research,
- A Narrative with a dozen illustrations in PPT slides serving to introduce and at the same time acknowledge that many students see research as a confusing ‘mess’ of pieces as they begin their research efforts to prepare a solid proposal. The slides take students on a short journey to highlight the ‘logic map’ is not that logical in the beginning, but needs to be structured for a proposal. Such structure also forms the core for a dissertation, and



- A paper offering a closer examination of teaching graduate level research methods courses (under review as noted in the Publication section).

Based on the literature and from discussions with students who have completed an earlier version of this template, this 2.0 version emerged as a template for thinking about the major pieces of a research proposal.

*Written by Wm. (Bill) Ashton, MCIP, PhD  
Director, Rural Development Institute, Brandon University*

**Research Proposal Framework** Version 2 January 2021

Name ..... Date .....

Title .....

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>
LITERATURE REVIEW/ENVIRONMENT SCAN	
<b>METHODS</b>	<b>ASSUMPTIONS</b>
<b>GATHER</b>	<b>ANALYZE</b>
	<b>INTERPRET</b>



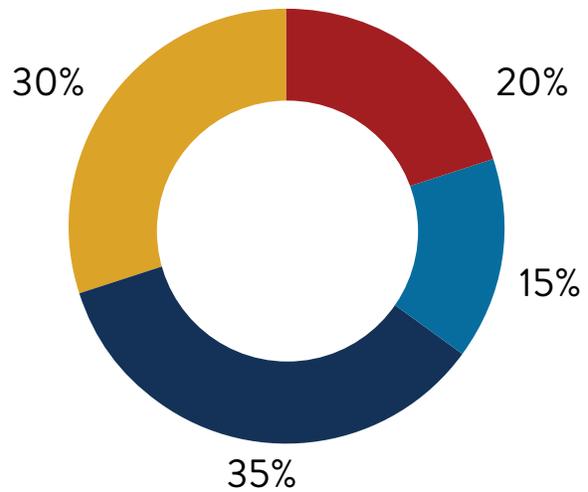
# Student Service Learning

RDI has the responsibility for administering and submitting completed applications for the Student Service Learning Program to the Brandon University Registrar.

The Student Service Learning Program, which started in 2005, encourages students to volunteer by recognizing their contributions to the community on their Brandon University transcripts. Upon receiving approval from the Service Learning committee and completing a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service, Brandon University students can receive a Service Learning Annotation (recognition statement) on their transcript. Students may volunteer for a government agency, non-profit organization, or school, and their service should meet the needs of the community organization and the education goals set by the student.

COVID-19 restrictions during this fiscal year (April 2020-March 2021) have caused a decrease in SSL applications from prior years as students have not been on campus and numerous volunteer and recruiting programs have been cancelled due to the pandemic.

Twenty (20) students participated in the Student Service Learning Program.



Faculties	Number of Students
Arts	4
Education	3
Science	7
Health Science	6

These 20 students volunteered for a total of over 400 hours. Students' volunteer roles included Brandon University Student Leader Program, Brandon University Health Studies Student Association (BUHSSA) Executive Team Member-Vice President and Brandon Regional Health Centre Covid-19 Screener. Students volunteered for Brandon Regional Health Centre Volunteer Services, Brandon University Health Studies Association (BUHSSA) and Brandon University, Student Services, Recruitment and Retention.

# Rural Policy Summer Institute – Enhancing Rural Prosperity

For over 17 years RDI has been a leader among leaders in summer institutes held by the collaborative, International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS). Moving between North America and Europe, faculty volunteer their time to design and develop a two-week intensive experiential learning experience for graduate students, from 10 to 15 different OECD<sup>1</sup> countries.

Due to COVID 19, ICRPS 2020 was cancelled and the event which was supposed to take place at Brandon University and be hosted by RDI never took place in June 2020. ICRPS 2021 will mark the first virtual summer institute, consisting of six live online sessions between June 15 to 25, 2021. The live sessions will be open to graduate students and researchers from ICRPS member institutions, including Brandon University.

In addition, it will feature public webinars on June 15th and a virtual networking session for nearly 500 ICRPS alumni on June 18th! We will also host an open twitter conference as well with 16 different twitter sessions before and after the live sessions between June 15-25th. Finally, a video contest for ICRPS students with the winning rural policy and research videos to be showcased during the summer institute. RDI is helping organize the event and will present at the live sessions and Twitter conference. Additionally, RDI and the Rural Policy Learning Commons are providing resources and expertise in knowledge mobilization to host the event website and live sessions.

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD Formed by the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, involves nearly three dozen country members that are most like Canada. OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. See: <https://www.oecd.org/>

# A Doctoral Dissertation

## Digital Youth Building Digital Capacity:

The experience of rural communities in Manitoba, Canada.

Dr. WAYNE KELLY | 2020 PhD Thesis, National University of Ireland Galway

### METHODS

Multiple qualitative methods used in two data collection stages.

**PURPOSE**  
Ph.D. research that explored how communities can build digital capacity & foster a digital environment for rural youth.

**APPROACH**  
This research developed a 'digital lens' that compares digital technology progression against the community capitals framework to explore the current realities of digital technologies for rural youth.

## 1 SETTING THE STAGE

Explored youth and digital technology in rural communities through focus groups with primarily high-school aged youth and through Key Informant (KI) interviews with rural leaders and experts in digital technology, and youth.

**METHODS**

- Focus Groups
  - ✓ 4 rural communities
  - ✓ 5 focus groups
  - ✓ 35 youth
- KI Interviews
  - ✓ 10 KI participants

**KEY FINDING**  
The digital infrastructure and digital skills gap between urban and rural communities limits youth and other residents in rural communities.

“like emails, permissions forms or anything like that get sent out (from school), I have to be told about it so I can tell my mum and am like ‘there is going to be an email coming in – turn the Internet on for a bit’”

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

**PRIORITY TAKEAWAYS**

**FOR ACADEMIA**  
The 'digital lens' aligning community capitals with digital progression provided a deeper context and understanding of the issues related to rural youth and digital capacity.

**FOR COMMUNITIES**  
This research demonstrated that it is possible to build digital capacity for youth in rural communities with supports and partnerships.

**FOR POLICY MAKERS**  
The research confirmed that a dual divide of digital infrastructure and digital capacity are the main barriers preventing many rural communities from participating fully in the digital world.

## 2 TAKING ACTION

This stage used a Community-Based Research (CBR) approach. The researcher worked with Brandon, Glenboro and Neepawa Public Libraries for 14 months to design and deliver regional coding clubs.

**METHODS**

- 14-month CBR
  - ✓ 3 coding clubs in 3 communities
  - ✓ 39 of 45 sessions led by researcher in coding mentor role
  - ✓ 53 youth engage

**KEY FINDING**  
With community partnerships and digital capacity support, libraries can successfully build digital skills and digital culture for youth in rural communities.

**53 YOUTH AGED 7-14** LEARNED TO CODE ON **SCRATCH**

<b>22 YOUTH</b> learned <b>BASIC</b> Scratch	<b>4 YOUTH</b> learned <b>INTERMEDIATE</b> Scratch	<b>2 YOUTH</b> learned <b>ADVANCED</b> Scratch
--	--	--

**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FOR ACADEMIA**  
Apply the 'digital lens' in other studies to explore other digital rural issues. This will test the approach and provide more comprehensive understanding of those issues.

**FOR COMMUNITIES**  
Communities need to be building digital skills and culture now, don't wait for connectivity issues to be addressed.

**FOR POLICY MAKERS**  
The dual digital divide needs to be addressed jointly and digital culture needs to be fostered and supported in rural communities.



NUI Galway is the awarding school for Wayne Kelly's PhD research and Thesis. The full document can be found here: <https://aran.library.nuigalway.ie/handle/10379/16454>



Wayne Kelly is a Project Coordinator and Research Lead at RDI at Brandon University. RDI conducted the youth focus groups in this research as part of a project that Wayne co-led.



WMRL was the host partner for the coding clubs in western Manitoba. The WMRL incorporated the CoderDojo coding model and tools.

# The RDI Team



This year the RDI team has accomplished a multitude of academic, career, and personal feats. Farheen Sajjad received a degree in Master in Educational Administration and welcomed a baby girl. Munzaleen Sajjad completed her Master's of Rural Development and welcomed a baby boy. Nicole Breedon and Alexandra Mackay both spent the year balancing their work at RDI with working through their Master's in Anthropology. Wayne Kelly completed his PhD in Rural Development. A previous team member, Adams Abdul-Salam recently won constituency in the Ghana national parliamentary elections. RDI is proud of their current and previous team members achievements within the workplace and beyond. RDI is all about growing rural researchers.

For the current folks at RDI see: <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/about-rdi/team/>

Contact:

Wm. (Bill) Ashton, MCIP, PhD  
Director, Rural Development Institute  
Brandon University  
207-18 Street, Brandon MB R7A 6A9

(204) 571-8513 Cell 204 570-0136  
Ashtonw@Brandonu.Ca



Lower Concourse, McMaster Hall Complex  
270-18th Street, Brandon, MB R7A 6A9

Prepared for Rural Development Institute, Brandon University, 2021

