



WHAT'S MORE

- *Joel Templeman served as an officer within the Canadian Armed Forces, retiring as a Major in 2018*
- *Joel is the founder and Executive Director of the Manitoba Chapter of the Internet Society*
- *Alongside the various ongoing projects, Joel is the owner and CIO of Leadthrough, an Independent Consulting organization offering training and programing to support small business and non-profit organizations*

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Highlighting Rural Researchers

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Joel Templeman

Faculty of Education

GETTING TO KNOW JOEL TEMPLEMAN

Joel Templeman was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. With interests and experiences in the fields of education and digital connectivity, he is now focusing his efforts to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion are priorities guiding digital infrastructure policy design within the province. Joel's experiences with community-based work began through a Community Network project based in the North End of Winnipeg. Since this time, Joel has been working to bring together experts and community members with the goal of increasing and improving connectivity to everyone, everywhere across the province.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND INTERESTS

Joel's early experience within the field of education began through his work as a Teaching Assistant in Winnipeg. Primarily working with students who had special needs within the classroom, Joel soon wanted to further his education to continue this work more directly. Through the University of Manitoba, Joel pursued his bachelor's degree in education while maintaining his position within the school district. Following the completion of his bachelor's degree, Joel continued his journey in education through the completion of a master's degree in public administration through the Royal Military College of Canada. With the hopes to continue building a foundation of research experience, he began a second master's program, this time within the faculty of education through the University of Calgary. This program was uniquely set up in a way to ensure student success and facilitated growth in line with Joel's interests.

Enrolment in an Ethical Community Engagement course in his second year at the University of Calgary resulted in a unique pivoting of work and research focus, where he began to explore digital equity and community engagement. During this time, Joel made serendipitous connections with researchers and community-based organizations from both Winnipeg and Calgary. The knowledge gained and networks built throughout the duration of this program paved the way for the development of a vast variety of community-based projects. This includes Joel's dedication to founding the Internet Society Manitoba Chapter (ISOC Manitoba), as well as onsetting a community-based participatory-action connectivity project in the North End of Winnipeg called "North End Connect".

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We're trying to work in these gap areas where no one else is going to come, and that's what brings us to rural.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:



North End Connect



ONGOING RESEARCH AND CURRENT PROJECTS

The research conducted throughout Joel's Master's program focused on exploring the specific obstacles that low-income Indigenous and Newcomer families living within the North End of Winnipeg face, with the goal to identify potential solutions for the future. Though it is an incredibly multifaceted topic of interest, the findings of this work exemplified that education and income were the two most significant factors influencing Internet accessibility. More specifically, inconsistent income and transient housing reduces the ability of those living within Manitoba to access and sustain meaningful Internet access. These obstacles represent a paradox, whereby those who would benefit most from connectivity are not in positions to access this resource. As well, through this work and other experiences, Joel found that there are three overarching considerations that must be made when working to address the inadequacies of connectivity accessibility. First, to support those within the province, the Internet infrastructure must be owned and controlled by the public. By utilizing community-owned and operated networks, a less-commercialized approach may be implemented where the public good outweighs private profits. Second, physical resources (such as computers) should be made readily accessible, and allocated for public use to ensure these physical resources are accessible and avoid becoming landfill. And finally, digital readiness must be addressed through means such as digital skills training programs, and consistent access to technical supports. It is not enough to provide digital tools, there must be supports in place to ensure they can be utilized to their full potential. These project findings were shared with the University of Winnipeg's Urban and Inner-City Studies program with the hopes to inform decisions being made for community support. Since the completion of this project, Joel is seeking to engage the Community Network in a community-based, participatory-action research project to determine how these resources have been received and utilized within community.

Though Joel's work is primarily focused on connectivity in the North End of Winnipeg, Joel believes that the barriers faced by those within the cities are similar to those within rural and remote settings. With specific consideration to rural and remote settings, the lack of resources for educators and students alike place communities in a uniquely dis-served position. To better understand these realities, a new project entitled ConnectedMB is currently underway where Joel will work with Brandon University's Rural Development Institute through ISOC Manitoba to explore the digital landscapes of Manitoba as a whole.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on Joel's various experiences, he believes that there is a significant gap in understanding the realities and barriers that many individuals face regarding connectivity in Manitoba. Through the privatization of Internet services beginning in the 1990s and 2000s, and the lacking efforts to enhance digital infrastructure, Manitoba has fallen short in terms of adequate resources for its residents. Additionally, the positionality of those living within Manitoba significantly impacts their connectivity, as digital infrastructure is not equitable. Without a strategy to guide decision making, it may not be possible to begin addressing these many issues. Therefore, Joel believes that all work being done to explore Manitoba connectivity must be action-based, with a priority in advocating for provincial policy recommendations leading to positive government action, funding, and support.

The Rural Development Institute is grateful to be affiliated with a variety of communities, agencies, academics and students across Canada and beyond. These relationships have facilitated the development of unique networks allowing for collaborative projects to take form, and RDI wants to extend its appreciation to all rural researchers.

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