



2023-2024 Annual Report

Reporting Months:

April 2023 to March 2024



BRANDON
UNIVERSITY



Message from the Director

I am very happy to provide an overview of the fiscal year 2023-2024, covering the time period from April 2023 to March 2024. [The Fall 2023 Report](#) covers the first six months of reporting, while the Year in Review provides an overview of highlights from the 2023 calendar year. Part of the reopening and evolution at RDI is the exploration and navigation of the reporting process and outcomes. Combined with the interim report and the Year in Review, this report provides key outcomes overviews of the projects, funding proposals, knowledge mobilization and outreach.

Perhaps the biggest news for the second half of 2023-2024 was the success of Dr. Wilder Robles' BCDI project grant. I was a co-applicant on the grant, and RDI will support both Dr. Robles and the participating students during the project's 4 year span. This project brings \$450,000 and 10 graduate students from Ghana through the BCDI program. We are very excited about the success and impact that this grant will have for the Masters of Arts, Rural Development (MARD) and Brandon University and look forward to our first three scholars arriving in fall 2024!

The interim report also identified 4 successful grant applications and the submission of three more grants. By March 2024, I am happy to report that we now have 7 projects underway, ranging from digital rural technologies to climate change, from community well-being to tourism. Two examples of the new projects include (i) working with ISOC MB to use podcasts to explore community broadband initiatives in underserved rural spaces across the province and (ii) collaborating with Eco-West to better understand municipal climate adaptation planning across rural and northern parts of the province. RDI is also expanding both its immigration and capacity-building research while also re-engaging with Endow MB from the Winnipeg Foundation to explore wellbeing at the local level. Details for these projects and links to overviews and partner highlights are in the project section below.

Other essential activities at RDI, including Knowledge Mobilization and Community Outreach, continued at a rapid pace over the second half of 2023-2024 with RDI hosting an open house, two Winter 101 info nights and two student receptions for MARD students. RDI also organized three public lectures on campus for visiting scholars from Japan and Brazil. The RDI team also contributed 10 more blog posts, 5 more presentations and 2 knowledge briefs. The Knowledge Mobilization and Outreach sections below provide more details and links to learn more about these parts of RDI's efforts in 2023-2024.

This first full fiscal year has been a very strong response to getting RDI back open for business, and sets up the institute with a full office and full work load of rural research projects! In the upcoming year, we look forward to reporting on the research findings, continuing to expand our research partnerships and community engagement and further enhancing our knowledge mobilization activities and successes!

Dr. Wayne Kelly,
Director

If there are any questions or concerns about the content within this report, please get in touch with Nicole Breedon (breedonn@brandonu.ca).



Introduction

This report adheres to the Brandon University Senate's guidelines on Research Centres Policy and Procedures. Covering the period from March 2023 to March 2024, it provides insights into our applied research endeavors, financial overview, and knowledge dissemination activities.

RDI has charted a clear path with five strategic research directions: rural immigration, rural economic development, rural infrastructure, governance and capacity building, and rural innovation. The projects undertaken this year align with these areas, delivering valuable insights pertinent to both individuals in Canada's rural areas and relevant policy-makers.

It's noteworthy that our research initiatives are generously supported by an array of organizations spanning the non-profit sector and governmental bodies. This funding not only aids our research but also fosters invaluable partnerships. Furthermore, RDI remains committed to its mission of knowledge dissemination, with our findings being presented and published both within Manitoba, across Canada, and on the international stage.

If there are any questions or concerns about the content within this report, please get in touch with Nicole Breedon (breedonn@brandonu.ca).



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 related to rural and remote communities. The Rural Development Institute 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. The conducted projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders, diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages. The dissemination of information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders makes research information accessible and results in widely available resources for the public. For more information, please visit www.brandonu.ca/rdi

Table of Contents

New and On-Going Projects.....1
Finance.....3
Outreach and Engagement4
Knowledge Mobilization.....6
2023 Year in Review Poster7

New and On-Going Projects



7 On-Going Projects

ConnectedMB: A project dedicated to exploring the digital landscapes of Manitoba

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement; Creativity, Ideas, and Imagination;
- Collaboration: Designed and implemented in collaboration with the [Internet Society, Manitoba Chapter](#)
- Hiring: Two undergraduate student Research Assistants

Co-Creating a Community of Well-Being Framework: A project designed to explore community understandings of the Canadian Index of Well-Being

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement; Health and Wellness; Creativity, Ideas and Imagination
- Collaboration: Designed and implemented in collaboration with [Endow Manitoba, a program of The Winnipeg Foundation](#)
- Hiring: One graduate student Research Assistant

The Climate Change Initiative: A project focusing efforts to explore rural community response to climate change

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement; Climate, Environment, and Natural Resources
- Collaboration: Designed and implemented in collaboration with the [Eco-West Canada](#)
- Hiring: Two graduate student Research Assistants, and one Highly Qualified Personnel

Accommodation in Manitoba: A project exploring the economic impact of hotels within communities across Manitoba

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement
- Collaboration: Designed and implemented in collaboration with the [Brandon University Tourism Research Center](#) and the [Manitoba Hotel Association](#)
- Hiring: One Highly Qualified Personnel



The Immigration Initiative

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Fundamental and Theoretical Research
- Collaboration: Currently there is work being done with the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership and the Westman Immigration Services
- Hiring: One Highly Qualified Personnel

Rural Capacity Building

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement; Fundamental and Theoretical Research
- Collaboration: The lens of project assessment through a Rural Capacity Building lens has become a foundational component embedded within all ongoing projects at RDI.
- Hiring: One Highly Qualified Personnel

BCDI 2030 Scholarship: A Global Affairs scholarship program to support international students in their education

- Project Overview
- Affiliated Research Themes: Social Justice, Cultures and Identities
- **Funding:** Secured through [BCDI 2030](#) in the amount of \$450, 000
- **Collaboration:** The scholarship application was submitted through collaborations between Dr. Wilder Robles of the Department of Rural Development, and RDI
- **Hiring:** This funding will be used to support 10 international students from Ghana to enroll in the Brandon University Master of Arts in Rural Development program, and will facilitate scholarship awarded students research opportunities through RDI

PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2023

The Myera Group Project: a Global Affairs scholarship program to support international students in their education

- [Project Overview](#)
- Affiliated Research Themes: Rural, Indigenous and Community Connected Engagement; Creativity, Ideas, Imagination
- Collaboration: The development of a community asset mapping framework was done with Myera Group Inc.
- Hiring: Throughout the duration of this project in 2022 and 2023, two graduate students and one post-master's graduate were hired as Research Assistants.

Through each project, an internal assessment of RDI researcher capacity was outlined, and a variety of deliverables were created. This includes the production of [9 Project Overviews](#), [20 blog posts](#), and [2 Knowledge Briefs](#).

Funding and Finances

There were 14 Funding and Grant Applications submitted throughout 2023 and 2024. While \$163, 999 in project funding dollars are still awaiting approval, eight proposals valued at 239, 475 were accepted and approved. All data can be found in Table 1 and Table 2. The majority of funds were granted through Mitacs, whereas the lowest quantity of funds was granted internally through Brandon University.



Funding Applications
Successful this year

These funding and grant applications were submitted through various partnerships. Three were submitted with internal, Brandon University partnerships; eight were submitted with external, institutional partnerships; and one was submitted with international partnerships.

Collectively, these funds have allowed for the hiring of two undergraduate students, two graduate students, and four highly qualified personnel. These projects have facilitated thorough training opportunities (such as the CBR Canada: Fundamentals and Excellence Training, and Leadership Training), as well as the application of academic knowledge within the field (such as the development and implementation of questionnaire surveys, and the moderation of focus groups).

Table 1: 2023-2024 Funding (Secured and Potential)

2023-2024 Funding (Secured and Potential)	
Funding Secured	\$239, 475.00
Pending Funds from Proposals in Review	\$163, 999.00
Total Funds	\$403, 474.00

Table 2: 2023-2024 Breakdown (Secured and Potential)

2023-2024 Breakdown (Secured and Potential)	
MITACS Funding	\$199,998.00
SSHRC Funding	\$60,000.00
BU Grants	\$9,225.00
Other Grants	\$24,500.00
Direct Contracts	\$33,750.00

Outreach and Engagement

Throughout 2023 and 2024, RDI has been working to further engage both students and faculty at BU. In September (2023), RDI supported the Brandon University Homecoming Week by hosting an RDI Open House, as well as an in-office event prior to the Robert Saik presentation. At the beginning of both semesters (i.e., in September and October of 2023, and January and February of 2024), RDI worked to build relationships with students involved in the Department of Rural Development. First, RDI supported the moderation of the Department of Rural Development Student Reception, hosted at Bailey’s. As well, RDI hosted and moderated a “Winter 101: Info Night” for students and visiting researchers who were navigating their first winter in Canada. These events allowed for researchers and staff at RDI to connect with students and discuss upcoming opportunities available through RDI.



Dr. Wayne Kelly (far right) speaking with three of the nine students at the RDI Open House



Dr. Wilder Robles and Glenice Deterville together at the Rural Development Reception, where 45 attending students and faculty shared dinner and their experiences



Five Master of Arts, Rural Development Students at the 2023 Student Reception, alongside a visiting researcher from Brazil (far right)

In addition to connecting deliberately with students and faculty, RDI worked to organize and facilitate 3 public talks. In October (2023) Dr. Junichiro Koji engaged Brandon University in a presentation about the community-based work he is currently engaged in in Japan. In December (2023) Alvaro Marques presented insights on the State University of Sao Paulo, and their extensive programs ran throughout institutions across Brazil. And finally, in January (2024) Bruna Costa presented some preliminary findings from her Master's thesis regarding the DataLuta Forest, which explored the realities of Indigenous social movements in Brazil, and their connection to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These public talks allowed for students and faculty from Brandon University to connect, and share their perspectives on the different topics of interest.



Students attending the 2024 Student Reception



Slide from the Winter 101: Info Night Presentation



Bruna Costa presenting her Master's thesis preliminary findings on the DataLuta Forest.



Felix Ntenhene, Glenice Deterville, Richard Adu, and Nicole Breedon in front of the Rural Development Institute Office in the Lower McMaster Hall.

Knowledge Mobilization

1. Enhancing the Brand of RDI:

In the spring of 2023, RDI worked to enhance the Rural Development Institute brand. By updating the RDI Logo; developing new, standardized documents (e.g., Formal Project Reports, Internal Project Updates, Highlighting Rural Researchers Series documents, and Event/ Information Posters) and presentation templates; the re-creation of our digital eNewsletter style and structure; the creation of new posters and content for the office; and the updating the workspaces available within the RDI office. These changes have enhanced our connectivity to those on the off the BU campus, as the consistent engagement through social media and digital platforms has worked to share the current projects and objectives of the research centre.

2. Webpage Management and Updating Social Media Platforms:

RDI has been working to update and maintain the digital and social media platforms for the research center. Since March (2023), RDI has created a new presence on Facebook and Linked In. This has allowed for networking and the sharing of project findings and events across disciplines, as well as with local peoples.

3. Knowledge Mobilization:

In September (2023), an outline for Knowledge Mobilization deliverables was created to demonstrate and standardize how knowledge mobilization efforts will be applied to each research project affiliated with the Rural Development Institute. These knowledge mobilization efforts are also tailored to the four phases of the project cycle (i.e., Project Conceptualization and Design, Funding Success, Project Underway, and Project Completion) to ensure that content is being produced and shared throughout the preliminary phases of a project. Since its development, consistent meetings to review the status of deliverable development have taken place with project leads. As stated in the New and On-Going Projects“ section, this has resulted in the production of 9 Project Overviews, 20 blog posts, and 2 Knowledge Briefs.

In May (2023), RDI worked to ensure the regular publication of eNewsletters, highlighting the production of these deliverables as well as any and all events relating to the research centre. Since this time, 15 eNewsletters have been shared with our digital network with over 2, 500 recipients. We have received positive feedback from recipients as well as academics. This feedback did indicate the appreciation of the content that was shared, as well as outreach to collaborate in related works and fields.

Alongside this new knowledge mobilization and dissemination strategy, RDI has been working to connect more deeply with project partners through the development of the Highlighting Rural Researchers Series. These highlights work to share the experience of students and researchers affiliated with the Rural Development Institute.

And finally, in having re-branded the RDI eNewsletters and other deliverables, RDI was asked to assist in the design and strategic development of the BU CARES research centre and the Migration in Rural and Remote Areas (MIRRA) Network. Through collaborative meetings and engagements, the network and capacity at RDI allowed for the further development the BU CARES eNewsletter, as well as the MIRRA Policy Brief and webpage - official publication expected in May 2024.



7 On-Going Projects

- ★ ConnectedMB
- ★ Co-Creating a Community of Well-Being Framework
- ★ BCDI: 2030 Scholarship Program
- ★ Climate Change Initiative
- ★ Accommodation in Manitoba
- ★ Myera Project
- ★ The Immigration Initiative



6 Funding Applications

Successful this year, bringing in

\$388,473

\$649,918 to RDI and Brandon University

- ★ **Adapting Rural Climate Cultures**
Dr. Wayne Kelly is a co-applicant on the SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Grant application in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Environment and Society Research Group
- ★ **Building Community Wealth Plan: Capacity Building**
Dr. Wayne Kelly is a co-applicant on the SSHRC Partnership Development Grant with the University of Alberta.
- ★ **Moving Forward: Determining the influence of Place on Public Transit in Rural Canada**
Dr. Wayne Kelly is a co-applicant on the SSHRC Insight Grant in collaboration with Selkirk College.
- ★ **Building Spaces of Democratic Governance: Movements dealing with conflictual relations in Brazil, Canada, the US and the UK (BSDG)**
Dr. Wayne Kelly is a co-applicant.

8

RDI Events



- ★ RDI Open House
- ★ 2 Department of Rural Development Student Reception
- ★ Winter 101: Student Info Night
- ★ 4 Public Talks

39 Publications



7 Presentations

- ★ 3 Conference Presentations
- ★ 1 Conference Posters
- ★ 2 Digital Pieces
- ★ 1 Interview



2 Articles

Journal Article
RDI Supported the University of Winnipeg Environment and Society Research Group in their development of a Core Report



4

Training Opportunities

- ★ Leadership Training
- ★ CBRCanada: Fundamentals and Excellence training
- ★ RDI Volunteer Researcher opportunities for two graduate students
- ★ Research Assistant opportunities to two undergraduate students and two graduate students



12 eNewsletters

- sent to 2970 contacts
- ★ 7 Partnership Highlights
 - ★ 5 Project Overviews and Shared Initiatives
 - ★ 6 Highlighting Rural Researchers



7

RDI Staff Members



5 Letters of Support

written by Dr. Wayne Kelly

- ★ BU CARES Government funding for Multicultural Project
- ★ CRRF 2024 Letter of Support
- ★ Oregon - Higher Education Grant
- ★ ESG at UW for the Partnership Development Grant
- ★ Creation Nation - donation of 3D printers



18
Blogs

18 On Campus Partnerships

19 Off Campus Partnerships

12 International Partnerships

RDI hosted 3 visiting researchers



CONTACT US

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

270-18th Street, McMaster Hall, Lower Level, Brandon, Manitoba R7A 6A9

Phone: 204-571-8515 | Email: rdi@brandonu.ca

www.brandonu.ca/rdi