

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Getting to know the Rural Development Institute

By Wayne Kelly, PhD, & Nicole Breedon, MA



Why this research is important

Rural communities often face unique challenges and barriers that require specialized attention and tailored strategies for solutions. However, these regions are largely overlooked, with resources designated for urban hubs. Therefore, the primary and fundamental goal for RDI is to work with rural communities to identify what these challenges and barriers are. By understanding the underlying issues causing these discrepancies, it may be possible to support further development for these communities. This work is important not only for these communities but also for Canada as a whole. Rural communities play a significant role in the socio-economics of the country. Sustainable development in rural regions is not only vital for the prosperity of rural residents but also contributes to broader national development.

What you need to know

The [Rural Development Institute](#) (RDI) is a research centre based at Brandon University. First opening in 1989, the work of RDI has been focused on engaging in community-based projects with rural researchers and partners. RDI is focused on supporting the sustainable development of rural communities, addressing key issues such as economic development, social equity, and community capacity building. Through collaborative partnerships, RDI aims to generate knowledge and share evidence-based findings to inform policymakers on the realities of rural and remote living.

Alongside the research and projects conducted through RDI, the research centre is focused on sharing project findings and enhancing how knowledge is mobilized. By disseminating research findings, engaging in research and academic activities, and fostering collaborations with international partners, RDI is working to contribute to the advancement of rural development on a global scale. It is of the utmost importance that the engaged projects are actionable and result in applied research and knowledge translation. The institute collaborates closely with policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders to ensure that research findings are accessible, relevant, and actionable. RDI's research outputs, such as reports, policy briefs, workshops, and training programs, are designed to

facilitate informed decision-making and drive positive change in rural communities.

How the research is conducted

RDI aims to conduct work using multidisciplinary, community-based, and participatory-action approaches. Through these various approaches, the research team engages with local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to identify research priorities and co-create research projects.

While multiple projects are ongoing at any given time of year, the methodologies employed are completely project-dependent. This means that depending on the project design, qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research methods can be employed. The research centre has produced work based on written and verbal questionnaire surveys, interviews, focus groups, round tables, and so much more to provide insights into rural and remote community realities.

How this research can be used

Currently, our research team is conducting work concerning six major themes. This includes [immigration](#) in rural and remote areas, [capacity](#) building within communities, rural responses to [climate change](#) initiatives, assessing [community wellness and well-being](#), exploring the rural realities of [digital connectivity](#) throughout Manitoba, and [tourism](#) in rural and remote areas. Each of these projects aims to identify strategies for further community development and addresses challenges and barriers in rural and remote areas. While there are many gaps in understanding the rural realities in Canada, we work to ensure these findings are shared with the public, other academics, and policymakers. It is the hope that the knowledge mobilization efforts will facilitate opportunities to address the challenges unique to rural and remote communities.

About the researchers at RDI

Dr. Wayne Kelly is the director of RDI and leads the research team. In addition to conducting research in rural Manitoba, Wayne has lived experience in rural areas, having lived and worked in rural and northern places across the province. Wayne leads a diverse team of researchers, students and interns who are dedicated to researching and supporting rural spaces. Currently, the goal is to enhance community outreach and engagement through RDI, with a focus on fostering relationships with communities across Manitoba.

RDI is proud to offer a multitude of research opportunities for undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students. Its diverse research team currently has expertise in various fields. The research opportunities available through RDI are meant to enhance the applicable research skills of students, professional academics, and researchers.

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Research publications

To learn more about some of the work done through the Rural Development Institute, make sure to visit the [2023 Year in Review Poster](#).

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