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**Educational Institutions:
Their essential role in 21st
Century rural regions**

“The university did not spring from a government bureaucratic initiative, or an academic master-plan, or form part of some political agenda. It did, indeed, come from the determination of people – most of whom had never enjoyed the benefits of university life – to ensure that their children and future northern generations would have access to their own university, in their own territory”.

Outline

- Introduction
- 21st Century Economies and Rural Communities
- Roles:
 - Capacity building
 - Economic drivers
 - Community success / pride / confidence
 - Critical facilities
 - 'Honest broker'
 - Access to information / research
- Discussion

21st Century Economy

Core Characteristics

- Fast paced
- Flexible
- Defined by change
- Connected
- Services focused
- Knowledge economies
- Property rights gone global

Pressures Facing Small Communities I

- **Northern BC**

- Rural and small town places
- Staples focused, hinterland economies
- Significant impacts of social, political, economic restructuring
- Large distances, small populations, lagging infrastructure
- Population aging

- **Local Decision Makers**

- Small municipal offices
- Turnover and capacity “leakage”
- Limited local technical and support capacity

Pressures Facing Small Communities II

- Human resources
- Economics
- Infrastructure
- Industry restructuring
- Policy
- Competition for workers, youth, and immigrants

Task

- How to equip RST places to exercise place-based advantages and meet development opportunities / challenges on own terms

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Capacity Building

- Teaching and skill development are the core business of educational institutions
 - Traditional streams of diplomas and degrees
 - Niche training
 - Post-graduate training
 - Life-long learning
- Critical role in 21st Century economy
- Part of “continuous capacity building”

Capacity Building - UNBC

Flexibility and Responsiveness

- Degree programs
- Certificates
- 'Cohort' programs
- Northern Advancement Program
- Weekend University
- Continuing Studies
- Distance delivery
- Regional face-to-face delivery
- 'Short' courses

Capacity Building – Regional Delivery

- **UNBC – Terrace**

- ‘Cohort’ programs
- Fully connected to all degree programs
 - i.e.: distance learning support via technology

- **CNC – Burns Lake**

- Local needs
- Wide network
- Very quick to respond
- College and university cooperation

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Economic Driver I

- Economic contributor
 - Jobs
 - Procure supplies / services locally
 - Student spending across economy
 - Significant 'basic sector' addition
 - Stability during commodity downturns
- Key motivation for the Interior University Society

Economic Driver II

Recruitment and retention

- Skilled people (employees, spouses)
 - Add to our community / voluntary sector
 - Bring professional training / experience
 - Generate new economic activities
- Can hold families who otherwise might have left
- Can attract families and new businesses and industries

Economic Driver III

- Key player in times of economic challenge
- Mackenzie
 - UNBC's Community Development Institute
 - Economic emergency framework
 - Facilitated support structure
 - CNC's Mackenzie Campus
 - Worker adjustment services / supports
 - Space for incoming services / assistance

Economic Driver IV

In the 21st Century economy:

- Supports stability and change
- Supports skills and families
- Supports economic diversification

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Success / Pride / Confidence

- Build a track record of success
 - UNBC, Northern Medical Program, Northern Sports Centre
 - CNC's Burns Lake Campus
 - 'Can do' begets more success
- Success becomes part of community pride, optimism, and marketing
 - Many associated benefits

'Story' of UNBC

- Grassroots
 - Idea developed in the north
 - Opposed by provincial government / other BC universities
- Legend
 - \$5 petition drive
 - Financed 'own' study
- Its about the people of northern BC
 - Their ownership
 - 'Their' university

UNBC – An Engaged Campus

Mandate of a:

“university in the north, for the north”

Strategic Research Plan:

“sustainability of communities”

- Research, teaching, and service set within context of northern BC
- Wide range of disciplines addressing wide range of topics

UNBC - FOCUS

- BC Rural and Remote Health Research Institute
- Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs
- Women North Network / Northern FIRE
- Institute for Social Research and Evaluation
- High Performance Computing
- Natural Resources and Environmental Studies Institute
- National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
- Community Development Institute

UNBC - Tools

- Research Forests
 - Aleza Lake
 - John Prince
- Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA
- Regional campuses
- Northern BC Archives
- Quesnel River Research Centre

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Critical Facilities

- Significant physical investments and infrastructure
 - Local assets
 - Libraries
 - Meeting rooms
 - Fields, gyms
 - Computer access
 - Compliment other civic facilities
- Need greater access and flexibility as economy and society changes

Charles Jago Northern Sports Centre



Photo credit: Office of Communications, UNBC

Schools

- Vital piece of educational continuum
- Vital to 'holding' families in community
- 'Heart' of many communities
 - Tumbler Ridge / Mackenzie
- Space for recreation and community groups
- Need to get past barriers to support greater use, re-use, and flexibility

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'Honest Broker'

- Legitimate voice in the north
 - Able to talk with wide range of interests
- Example: Health care
 - Community protest meeting, lots of interest(s)
 - UNBC formalized a northern BC response
 - Negotiations led to Northern Medical Program

'Honest Broker' II

- Brokering voice in the north
 - Able to coordinate dialogue among northern communities
 - Mediating role
- Source of credible information in debates
 - Northern BC Economic Development Strategy projects
 - Seniors' needs studies

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Community-University Research

- Identifying information needs
- Conducting research
- Communicating research
- Building community capacity
- Being better consumers of research

University-Community Research “Partnership Issues”

- It's a people process
- Capacity building
- Relationship development
 - Who to talk to / know who to call
- Listening
 - What communities need
 - What universities can do
- ‘Getting to know you’ protocol
- Mutual commitment

First Steps

- Field trips
- 'Service Learning'
 - Engaged classroom
- Capacity building

- Understand
 - Local limits

Towards a Working Model a

- Relationships
 - From initial visits to ongoing contact
- Joint project design to ongoing contact
- Shared decision-making and responsibility to increase 'ownership'
- Build local capacity
 - Do it for yourselves next time

Towards a Working Model b

- Communicating results
 - Flexibility, availability
- Monitoring progress
 - Keep eye on local needs
- Continue to build / bridge relationships
 - Mackenzie, BC

Needed Research, Information, Expertise “McBride Community Forest”

- Possibilities for research collaboration
- Build on needs of MCF and the community
- Purpose is to highlight need AND opportunity

MCF Research Needs

- Energy
- Forestry
- Tourism
- Transportation
- Municipal management
- Community transition
- Quality of Life
- Seniors' / youth needs

Community-University Research a

Value:

- ‘Hash-out’ what really needs to be studied
 - How to study – local ‘fit’
- Work with communities
- Cautions around uncritical adoption of imported solutions
- Commitments to local capacity building

Community-University Research b

Value:

- Researchers privy to emerging issues
- Connect with global research literatures
- Institutional memory
- Part of ongoing relationship building / trust
- Next step tools available through teaching roles

Community-University Research c

Value:

- Cost effective
- Takes time
- Right research at right time
 - Stages of decision making and funding
 - Concepts, policy supports, implementation data

Closing

- 21st Century economy is different
- Rural communities have bright futures (mobilizing 'place-based' assets), but face challenging adjustments
- Educational institutions at all levels – working in concert – play many roles critical to successfully navigating the new century

Community Development Institute at UNBC

Introduction

Institute Description

What's New

Mountain Pine Beetle Links

Community Visits

Institute Director

Staff

Research

Information Sharing

Links

Contact Information

Community Development Institute - UNBC

The Community Development Institute at UNBC is interested in two fundamental issues for communities in northern BC: community capacity and community development. By undertaking research, sharing information, and supporting education outreach, the Institute is becoming a vital partner to communities interesting in making informed decisions about their own futures.



The town of Smithers, BC

The Institute emphasizes the importance of capacity-building, collaboration, learning, and complementarity between UNBC research centres. Research that is undertaken balances academic credibility with practical relevance. Beyond research, the Institute is involved in outreach activities and serves as a conduit to expand and enhance local educational opportunities related to community development.

The three foundations of the Community Development Institute at UNBC are:

- Research
- Education
- Outreach



www.unbc.ca/cdi