

# Liminal Spaces: Two Days of Rural Canada

*Seeing Canada through a rural lens; the places in-between*

34th Annual Two Days of Canada Conference  
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



March 21 and 22, 2024 | Brock University  
St. Catharines

**Brock**  
University



## **Traditional Territory Acknowledgement:**

Brock University is located on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today.

This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement.

Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

## **Recognition of support:**

We are happy to have received the support of Brock University's:

Humanities Research Institute  
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## **Conference committees:**

### **Organizing committee**

Dan Malleck (Chair), Director, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University  
Elaine Aldridge-Low, Administrative Assistant, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University  
Jeff Reichheld, Instructor, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University

### **Program committee**

Dan Malleck (Chair), Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University  
Jeff Boggs, Geography and Tourism Studies, Brock University  
Anthony Kinik, Communication, Popular Culture, and Film, Brock University  
Jeff Reichheld, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University  
Kyle Rich, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University

### ***Information about the on-line conference***

*Please note: All sessions will be streamed using Lifesize and available to people who have registered for the conference. On-line participants will be able to ask questions via the chat function. These questions will be read if time permits at the discretion of the session chair.*

***Lifesize, by default, records all sessions.*** *We hope to make these recordings available on the Centre's website. If you do not wish for your presentation to be made available, let us know and we will remove it from the recording. We will also try to remove any questions asked of you after your presentation. It is your choice and we respect it.*

## **Message from the Director of Brock's Centre for Canadian Studies**

Welcome to Liminal Spaces: Two Days of Rural Canada. We are thrilled to have you join us!

The Two Days of Canada series of conferences have been a staple of our Centre for decades, bringing together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to hone in on a topic of current interest. When I received a proposal from the Centre's Jeff Reichheld to do a conference on "rural Canada" I was especially eager to see this happen. As someone raised in a Southwestern Ontario town of 400 people, living with someone from a small, shrinking former lumber town deep in the heart of New Brunswick, I know that a conference that explores the issues germane to those spaces between the places that get much of the attention—the cities and urban districts—would generate interesting and compelling discussions. The idea of "the rural" as a place often ignored in popular discussion and political discourse is something that deserves attention. And what better place for this to happen than a Centre that purports to be for the study of all of Canada?!

The submissions we have received (your proposals) are compelling, and I am eager to see the outcome, to learn from you, and to participate in what will no doubt be an important opportunity to share perspectives. I hope you have a wonderful experience as we explore those liminal spaces.

Dan Malleck  
Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies

### ***Housekeeping and wayfinding:***

*The sessions on Thursday are held in RFP 216 (also known as the Research Impact Hub) on the ground floor of the Rankin Pavilion, and RFP302, which is upstairs. You can access RFP 302 by the stairs in the middle of the foyer, or by the elevator across from the stairs.*

*The sessions on Friday are held in the two rooms on the ground floor, RFP 214/215 (the large glass enclosed room) and RFP 216.*

*Refreshments will be located between room 214/215 (the big glass enclosed room) and RFP 216. Lunch will be available at the refreshment area, and you can take your lunches anywhere.*

*If you are looking for more food, you can access either the Tim Hortons (look for the very long line past 214/215) or the Guernsey Market. Take the main elevators (not the ones that take you to RFP 302) down one floor, and follow the signs. There is also a large area with tables past the Market.*

*Washrooms are located in that large red block in the centre of the foyer area with "Brock" painted on it.*

**Thursday March 21, 2024**

**Rankin Family Pavilion (RFP), Brock University Main Campus**

**12:30 Conference registration**

Location: RFP Lobby

**1:00-1:15 Welcome and orientation**

Location: RFP 216

## **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

*(R) – Remote presentation*

**1:15-2:45 SESSION 1**

**Session 1A Defining and redefining “rural”**

Location: RFP 216

Chair: Anthony Kinik, Brock University

Mark Currie, Carleton University

*“...they were well accepted...”. Qualifying Indigenous presence in a small, Southern Ontario farming town*

Gabriel Bergeron-Poulin, Université du Québec à Montréal

*“Le nésos brisé”*

Danika Skye Hammond, University of Guelph (R)

*Defining rural: Advancing a place-based rural criteria matrix*

**Session 1B Being and staying healthy and safe in Rural Canada**

Location: RFP 302

Chair: Sara McEwen, Selkirk College

William Pickett, Brock University

*Social norms, risk-taking and pediatric injury on Canadian farms*

Shannon King, Independent Scholar (R)

*Aging and injury: Rural Canadian landscapes in theatre*

Steffannie Hancharyk, Brock University

*Supporting accessible karate in rural regions across Canada*

**2:45-3:15 Refreshment break**

Location: RFP Lobby

**3:15-4:45 SESSION 2**

**Session 2A Culture, identity, and rural spaces**

Location: RFP 216

Chair: Marian Bredin, Brock University

Russell Johnston and Michael Ripmeester, Brock University  
*Evoking the past: Wineries, wine marketing, and agricultural heritage*

Brontë Slote, Brock University  
*The survival of Fransaskois identity*

Rowan Dobson, University at Buffalo  
*The edge of two worlds: Scottish Gaelic in Nova Scotia*

**Session 2B Listening and hearing the rural**

Location: RFP 302

Chair: Neta Gordon, Brock University

Anne F. MacLennan and Christine Cooling, York University  
*Liminal audio spaces from radio to podcasting: Rural Canadian voices*

Troy David Ouellette, Brock University  
*Ear to the ground – recording the rural through acoustic ecology*

Nicholas Baxter-Moore, Brock University  
*"The Field Behind the Plow": Imagining rural Canada through the music of Stan Rogers*

**Friday MARCH 22, 2024**

**Rankin Family Pavilion (RFP), Brock University Main Campus**

**8:30–9:00 Conference registration and continental breakfast**

Location: RFP Lobby

## **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

*(R) – Remote presentation*

### **9:00–10:30 SESSION 3**

#### **Session 3A Social infrastructure in rural communities**

Location: RFP 214/215

Moderator: Kyle Rich, Brock University

Panelists: Grace Nelson (Brock University), Vivien Ugwu (Brock University), and John Dale (University of Guelph)

#### **Session 3B Place, space, and memory in rural communities**

Location: RFP 216

Chair: Daniel Samson, Brock University

Peter Bush, Presbyterian Minister, Fergus (R)

*The rural church: A sign of resilience in a liminal space*

Jacqueline L. Scott, University of Toronto

*Speakers for the dead: Thanatourism and Black cemeteries in rural Canada*

Ben Bradley, University of Guelph

*Stages of the past: Stagecoach preservation and frontier nostalgia in Western Canada, 1910-1960*

#### **10:30-10:45 Refreshment break**

Location: RFP Lobby

**10:45-12:15**

**SESSION 4**

**Session 4A Creative work in rural and liminal spaces**

Location: RFP 214/215

Chair: Jeff Boggs, Brock University

Jill Yuzwa, University of Waterloo (R)

*The Liminality of everyday life – Creatives in the context of the Islands Trust*

Anthony Kinik, Brock University

*Triangle of islands: Pour la suite du monde (1962), new Quebec cinema, and the urban/rural dialectic*

Marian Bredin, Brock University

*Loss, longing, healing: Liminal representations of the land in Indigenous TV drama*

**Session 4B History and understanding in rural Canada**

Location: RFP 216

Chair: Ben Bradley, University of Guelph

Giulia Rovelli, University of Bergamo (R)

*"The longest and hardest winter I can remember": Early Settlers' perceptions of rural Canada (1822-1919)*

Daniel Samson, Brock University

*Writing and the emotional body: A modern life in rural 19<sup>th</sup>-century Nova Scotia*

Andrew Holman, Bridgewater State University

*An American tour, 1914: S.B. Sinclair and Canada's first "rural school problem"*

**12:15-1:15 Lunch break**

Location: Boxed lunch pick up in RFP Lobby



**1:15-2:45**

**SESSION 5**

**Session 5A Addressing the challenges of healthcare in rural settings**

Location: RFP 214/215

Chair: Dan Malleck, Brock University

Sara McEwen, Takaia Larsen (R), and Johnathan Vanderhoek (R), Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC *The rural pre-medicine program at Selkirk College: An innovative pathway for future rural health professionals*

Ken Milne, Al Lauzon, and Sage Milne, Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health, Goderich, Ontario  
*Skilled Healthcare Attraction and Retention Program (SHARP)*

Shelby Bell and Sara McEwen, Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC  
*Do different characteristics of rural impact social media interactions? A report on two recruitment strategies for a rural health preparatory program*

**Session 5B Considering immigration in rural communities**

Location: RFP 216

Chair: William Pickett, Brock University

Manal Alzghoul, Brock University/Lakehead University  
*Immigrant parents' experiences and priorities of unintentional injury prevention in children*

Damilola Oyewale, University of Guelph  
*Assessing the interplay of immigration and housing in Ontario's agricultural landscape for economic development*

Rana Telfah, University of Guelph (R)  
*The early settlement experiences of Syrian families in Southwestern Ontario*

**2:45-3:00 Refreshment break**

Location: RFP Lobby

**3:00-5:00      SESSION 6**

**Session 6 Government policy in rural settings**

Location:      RFP 214/215

Chair: Sara Epp, University of Guelph

Firoze Alam, University of Guelph (R)

*Indigenous communities' mis(trust) in Western techno-scientific practices and its implications for Indigenous seed sovereignty in rural Canada*

Paul G. Murphy, Fellow, Centre for Excellence at The Digital Economist (R)

*Regional development in Canada and China: A connected ecological civilization?*

John Dale, University of Guelph

*Optimizing local governance: How municipalities navigate the impacts of austerity in rural Ontario*

Jeff Reichheld, University of Guelph/Brock University

*(Dis)incentives in Canadian agri-environmental policy – missed opportunities from mis-fits*

**5:00-5:15      Refreshment break**

Location:      RFP Lobby

**5:15-6:30      KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Location:      RFP 214/215

Introduction: Dan Malleck, Brock University

Sara Epp, University of Guelph

Title: Reconceptualizing, reframing or restructuring rural: Understanding rurality and why rural research matters

This talk will explore the meaning of rural and why, in a rapidly urbanizing world, rural research is important. With connections to current research projects, Sara will discuss the economic, social, environmental and political aspects of rurality and the impacts these places have on the future of Ontario.

**6:30-6:40      Closing remarks**

Location:      RFP 214/215

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Sara Epp



Sara Epp is an Assistant Professor of Rural Planning and Development at the University of Guelph. She received her BA and MA in Geography from Brock University and completed her PhD in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph. Sara has worked extensively with rural communities in southern and northern Ontario, examining issues related to farmland loss, agricultural viability, land use conflicts and social aspects of rural life. Sara has previously worked in municipal land use planning and as a private consultant for a variety of rural and agricultural planning projects. Her current research interests are related to rural land use planning for agri-food systems, migration, and food security.

# ABSTRACTS

## Session 1A: Defining and redefining “rural”

**Mark Currie, Carleton University**

**Title: “...they were well accepted...”. *Qualifying Indigenous presence in a small, Southern Ontario farming town***

**Abstract:** This paper examines the relationship between social memory and community-member qualifiers put upon Indigenous presence and belonging in a small, southern Ontario farming town predominantly populated by people identified as white. Using a theoretical framework connecting *social memory* and *white possessive logic*, combined with an *antiracist discourse analysis* methodology, I conducted 18 semi-structured one-on-one interviews with community members. Participants were 18 or older and self-identified as community members. Criteria to participate did not include particular racialized identity. I invited people who self-identified as community members, rather than just people whose residence was in the town, because some participants lived within official town boundaries while others lived in rural/farm homes outside the town but worked and did their shopping, schooling, socializing, etc. in town. As such, there are more community members than the official population of 7500 town residents. In discussion of traditional Indigenous territory and memories of racism and antiracism in the community, many participants identified the few Indigenous people and families they remembered from their youth. They offered comments qualifying why and how those Indigenous people and families were *accepted* by non-Indigenous community members. Even if well-intentioned, such qualified acceptance becomes a form of racist gatekeeping under the guise of friendly, ambassadorial welcoming. I argue that in any community, especially one with a (pre)dominantly white population and surrounded by open, seemingly un-historic farmland, community education projects are necessary to disrupt the banality of Whiteness by helping people recall social memories of space and belonging through decolonizing and antiracist lenses.

**Gabriel Bergeron-Poulin, Université du Québec à Montréal**

**Title: “*Le nésos brisé*”**

**Abstract:** In these immense colonial continents of America, so much space to build on, yet so much space to destroy as well... So much space to play in, to imagine and to dwell on, but how? Rural Canada embodies these new spaces, but it also embodies the vicious rhizome of the mining industry and capital that monopolizes these so-called unoccupied territories (except by the First Occupants...) And what about the average Canadian who works in these holes and factories? Does the regional man know how to dwell?

This text does indeed address the question of human habitation, but through the concept of play. Play is defined by Jacques Henriot as a “measured space (*espace mesuré*)”, and this is where lies the starting point for an original reflection on territory, ground (*le sol*) and space. Throughout play, we find poetry and imagination, building and measuring, and if the sublime landscapes of

Canada are often transformed into lunar landscapes, it's undoubtedly because the vulgar measurement of the engineer is no longer sufficient, and that the poet is perhaps in a better position to measure the Earth.

Is play as a way of thinking about dwelling a vector of emancipation for rural Canada? Is it the vehicle that could lead us to the bioregion? The author of this work, born and raised in the small mining town of Sept-Îles in Quebec, seeks to rethink man's place in the cosmos, that is, on this earth.

**Danika Skye Hammond, University of Guelph**

**Title: *Defining rural: Advancing a place-based rural criteria matrix***

**Abstract:** What is rural? This question can be answered in many ways. Through quantitative measures such as population, density or remoteness thresholds and through concepts of socio-cultural understandings regarding lifestyle and identity. Given the vast diversity amongst rural areas and the concept of rural, it begs the question of whether a standard definition is even appropriate. However, the literature argues that for policy makers to address the clear distinction between rural and urban areas, to effectively serve rural communities and to define program eligibility, a definition is required. Comparing existing definitions and best practices highlights a need to push the conversation on a rural definition further and to create a place-based definition that captures the diversity of rural communities and incorporates multiple measures. Using British Columbia as a case study, a Rural Criteria Matrix is proposed as a new method for defining rural communities. The Matrix aims to meet the needs of policy makers and rural constituents, while moving beyond the binary, advancing reconciliation, and recognizing the great heterogeneity amongst what is defined as "rural."

## **Session 1B: Being and staying healthy and safe in rural Canada**

**William Pickett, Brock University**

**Title: *Social norms, risk-taking and pediatric injury on Canadian farms***

**Abstract:** Over the past 30 years, an estimated 450 children have been killed with several thousand more seriously injured on family farms in Canada. While we know a great deal about how these injuries happen through historical data, less is known about the deeper social norms that underlie this epidemic. These norms are important to understand. Farm communities typically value traditional approaches to child rearing that are resilience building. However, these very approaches sometimes involve activities and behaviours that place children of all ages at risk. In addition, history has shown that there is resistance within the farm community to accept outside rules and advice that are provided by regulatory, clinical and health promotion professionals. Injury prevention approaches that are common in these disciplines have been attempted over decades yet have failed. Researchers have failed to establish approaches to prevention that are

likely to be adopted by farm families. Hence, farm children remain at risk. In this brief presentation, I will describe a longstanding program of research that focuses on the child injury problem on Canadian farms and factors that contribute to this quiet epidemic. Discussion will focus on the need for evidence-based approaches to prevention that are also shaped by values and priorities inherent to farm culture.

**Shannon King, Independent Scholar**

**Title: *Aging and injury: Rural Canadian landscapes in theatre***

**Abstract:** My research is focused on the 1923 Canadian play by Merrill Denison, *The Weather Breeder*. I will be taking a disability-studies lens while analyzing the inter-generational dynamics between the elderly and youth. The Canadian experience of aging in a rural agricultural community with limited medical care nearby and/or lacking the mobility to travel to a doctor is an ever-present issue, on the theatre stage and throughout Canada today. The psychological effects of losing one's strength and health as a farmer, as someone who used their body as their income, will be analyzed through the elderly/injured character John. John, his daughter, and farmhands all live together in a small shack; it is implied that they travel and move according to their seasonal obligations and work opportunities therefore lacking a permanent residence. As the patriarch John sustains an injury leaving him immobile and reliant upon his farmhands and daughter, the complications of having knowledge of the land without the mobility to work that land is brought to the viewer's attention. Throughout the play, John asserts that he can tell a storm is coming that will ruin all their crops; he knows this because of the years he spent working the land. The ending of the play reveals that John does not have these weather predicting abilities despite his devotion to the land. It is because John's predictions are wrong that the farm is saved yet he is not relieved by this. John's injury/age affects his sense of self amid the nuclear family and in his farming community.

**Steffannie Hancharyk, Brock University**

**Title: *Supporting accessible karate in rural regions across Canada***

**Abstract:** Karate is a relatively popular activity and improves self-esteem, self-discipline, cognitive and mental functioning. It also serves as an outlet for aggression, improves social relatedness, coping skills, and emotional regulation. It has significant health benefits and fosters community, spiritual growth and acceptance of others. Studies indicate a gap in accessible, adaptive physical activity programs across rural regions, thus, a conclusion can be made that finding ways to make karate services accessible is a sustainable approach to elevating the gaps in services reported.

The Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF) presently has seventy registered businesses operating across Canada serving communities across rural Ontario. Using a qualitative methodology through the lens of a human systems theoretical framework, guided by Critical disability studies, thirteen karate business / instructors were interviewed in order to better understand the barriers and facilitators to accessibility in their own communities. The results suggest seven recommendations which include: 1) Training about accessibility laws 2) Training

about funding opportunities and relevant partnerships 3) Understanding business strategy 4) Training about Universal Design for Learning 5) Adapted karate training 6) Becoming an ally.

## **Session 2A: Culture, identity, and rural spaces**

**Russell Johnston and Michael Ripmeester, Brock University**

**Title: *Evoking the past: Wineries, wine marketing, and agricultural heritage***

**Abstract:** How do residents of any community think about their hometown? Does the community's past play any part in their community's contemporary identity? An exploration of Niagara residents' perceptions of the region offers potential answers to these questions.

Scholars across disciplines have examined the mechanics of "collective memory." This scholarship largely focuses on the memorialization of specific narratives. Surprisingly few scholars consider how audiences respond to such memorials. Yet the audience is crucial. Jeffrey Olick (2016) describes "collective memory" as the intersection of mnemonic products (the things that hold knowledge) and mnemonic practice (the ways in which audiences engage them). Audience engagement is crucial if a narrative is to remain relevant and sustainable through time.

Our surveys of Niagara residents revealed that few identified with the pantheon of great people, significant events, and important places marked by the region's monuments and historic sites. Instead, many of them identified the wine industry as a significant mnemonic product and identity marker. More, they viewed it as an authentic element of local heritage: the wine industry had reanimated an awareness of the region's agricultural past even while visible aspects of that past – such as fall fairs and tender fruit orchards – were disappearing. Their responses suggest that residents were actively constructing useable pasts and, thereby, identities for themselves.

The proposed presentation links the history of Niagara's historic "fruit belt" to the marketing efforts of today's wineries.

**Brontë Slote, Brock University**

**Title: *The survival of Fransaskois identity***

**Abstract:** The term Fransaskois refers to French Canadians living in the province of Saskatchewan. The Fransaskois are a small, declining minority and are therefore very much absent from public consciousness. Nevertheless, those who share this identity hold great pride in their belonging and persist in subscribing to this cultural community despite the lack of French culture in the wider society. It is important to study the Fransaskois cultural community to bring awareness to this widely unknown facet of Saskatchewanian and French-Canadian history.

This paper argues that despite being dispersed across a vast, rural area and being surrounded by Anglo-Canadian culture, Fransaskois identity has been preserved through strong community connections and organizations. The Fransaskois community has fought for cultural survival as well as control over their affairs, through individual political action and uniting under organizations and governance structures. First, this paper will analyze the changes in Saskatchewan's language laws over time to understand how legislation in turn impacts individuals. Next, it will examine the creation of unified Fransaskois groups to serve as democratic governing bodies and political negotiators. An examination of how organization was driven by Catholicism and the provincialization of French-Canadian identity, will be discussed. Finally, this paper will focus on the example of education as one policy area that Fransaskois have devoted considerable focus to and prioritized as an element of cultural preservation.

**Rowan Dobson, University at Buffalo**

**Title: *The edge of two worlds: Scottish Gaelic in Nova Scotia***

**Abstract:** Scottish Gaelic is considered to be under threat by the Endangered Languages Project and has seen decline in Scotland to such an extent that generational transmission may completely break down in the next twenty years. Scotland, however, is not the only home to Scottish Gaelic. Nova Scotia is the only other place on earth with a community of native Scottish Gaelic speakers, however their tiny community is also teetering on the edge as the last native speakers are trying to pass on the language and ensure its survival in Nova Scotia past their generation. This community of around 700 speakers may seem insignificant, but it is one of the rare cases of settler colonial minority language still in use. The focus of this paper is on political and linguistic issues for the community, how they fit within the Nova Scotian culture, how Nova Scotian Gaelic relates to the Gaelic spoken in Scotland, and what pressures, both social and economic, are driving the language toward extinction. Most importantly, a light must be shed on some of the solutions to combat the decline of the language in Nova Scotia, most of which are not difficult to implement, but which have been ignored, as so many issues outside of Canadian cities are. Scottish Gaelic in Nova Scotia may exist in a tiny edge of Canada, however it occupies a unique place in not just the Canadian community, but also represents one of the very last living bridges between the old world and the new.

## **Session 2B: Listening and hearing the rural**

**Anne F. MacLennan and Christine Cooling, York University**

**Title: *Liminal audio spaces from radio to podcasting: Rural Canadian voices***

**Abstract:** Canada's tenuous national connections have been sustained in part for the last century through radio. Independent, rural broadcasters established themselves early alongside the radio stations in the cities owned by radio manufacturers, railways, newspapers, and other large interests (MacLennan 2018). Their independent rural spirit sustained interests and served community interests. These audio communities have survived in rural Canada, extended their reach, variety,



and longevity with the help of new technologies, the internet, and the accessible technological requirements for podcasting. Liminal audio spaces are expanding alongside the emergence of new media technologies, with podcasting most recently providing a low-barrier space for rural Canadians to share their stories, experiences, and opinions. Rural podcasts continue to serve many of the same communities as radio, but with a variety of voices including: *Rural Routes*, *The Headwaters*, *Canadian History Ehx*, *Historia Canadiana: A Cultural History of Canada*, *The Rural Woman Podcast*, *Kuper Island*, *RealAg on the Weekend*, *Wheat Pete's Word*, *Really Rural Surgery and Obstetrics*, *GrainTALK*, and *Ask a Farmer*. Residents in rural Canada actively engage with liminality by negotiating with hegemonic gender, class, age, and spatial norms (Sweeney, 2009). With social media and digital technology becoming increasingly central to people's everyday lives, they afford the opportunity for rural residents to create political spaces where diverse identities and cultures can negotiate their relationship to place (Malenfant, 2018). Rural's radio and podcasting's pushback against mainstream media dominance will be examined using sonic and thematic analysis.

**Troy David Ouellette, Brock University**

**Title: *Ear to the ground – recording the rural through acoustic ecology***

**Abstract:** As a practice, sound art started within cities. Within the Western context, the disquiet of the early 20th Century began with a raucous noise. Gradually, as science, technology and the field of sound art developed, Acoustic Ecology grew to be a branch extending from the tree of various acoustic practices. From recording micro-sounds to atmospheres, watersheds and forests, artists have long understood the connection of sound recording to demonstrate the interplay of species, spaces and materials. Acoustic Ecologists claim to reinforce political and environmental urgency by drawing attention to biodiversity, often in opposition to urban expansion. Canadian Sound Artists, in particular, have used deep listening to highlight our engagement with the environment, often drawing our attention to sounds beyond human perception.

"Ear to the Ground" proposes to examine the various ecological practices of sound artists (mainly within the Canadian context) and challenge us to rethink our complex relations beyond the binary of urban and rural. By foregrounding dwindling diversity and echoing ecological distress, they remind us that we share our world by showing that our perceived ownership of it (as a resource) is an imposed power relation.

**Nicolas Baxter Moore, Brock University**

**Title: *"The Field Behind the Plow": Imagining rural Canada through the music of Stan Rogers***

The late Canadian singer-songwriter Stan Rogers (1949-1983) is perhaps best remembered for his epic tale of traveling across Canada in "North West Passage" (chosen by CBC listeners as "Canada's alternative national anthem"), for his songs of seafaring life ("Barrett's Privateers," "The Bluenose," "The Mary Ellen Carter," "White Squall") and his documentation in song of the increasingly precarious existence of Canada's fishing industry ("Make and Break Harbour," "The Jeannie C," "Tiny Fish for Japan," among many others). But particularly on his 1981 album *Northwest Passage*, a "regional concept" album inspired by his travels in western Canada, he also addressed the lives

of other primary producers and workers who (now) live far from the sea: the grain farmer in “The Field Behind the Plow”; the rancher protecting his herd against rustlers in “Night Guard”; the farm wife contemplating her rural existence in “Lies”; and the transplanted Maritimers working in the Alberta oilfields (“The Idiot” and “Free in the Harbour”). In this paper, a close reading of “The Field Behind the Plow,” and briefer explorations of other songs from the same album, examined within the context of Rogers’ songwriting method, provide a basis for questioning the mythologization of rurality, both within the Canadian imagination and in the folk music tradition in which Stan Rogers located himself.

## **Session 3A: Social infrastructure in rural communities**

**Moderator:** Kyle Rich, Brock University

**Panelists:** Grace Nelson, Brock University; Vivien Ugwu, Brock University; and John Dale, University of Guelph

**Title:** *Social infrastructure in rural communities*

**Panel Abstract:** In this panel discussion, speakers will explore the nuances and complexity of issues related to social infrastructure in rural communities in Canada. Many rural areas are contextualized by volatile economic conditions due to often globalized primary resource industries that position markets further away from rural sites of production. Many scholars have therefore described the resiliency of rural communities as they are often experiencing times of change and recovery. Within these processes, social infrastructure such as networks, organizations, institutions, a sense of community, leadership, and human capital play an important role in shaping the resilience of rural communities. In this panel of student researchers, speakers will discuss their research into rural social infrastructure. Specifically, topics will include social inclusion in rural sport and recreation organizations, acculturation processes in rural communities that have sought to address healthcare labour shortages through migrant workers, and the role of mutual aid and third spaces in rural Atlantic Canadian communities during COVID-19 disruptions. Each presenter will provide insight into their work and discuss how rural contexts shaped the experiences they examined. Collectively, discussants will explore the role of social infrastructure in rural communities, highlight implications for policy makers at local, regional, and national levels, and suggest avenues for future research to inform scholarship, policy, and practice.

## **Session 3B: Place, space, and memory in rural communities**

**Peter Bush, Presbyterian Minister, Fergus**

**Title:** *The rural church: A sign of resilience in a liminal space*

**Abstract:** Church buildings dot the rural landscape of Canada. Simple wood frame structures topped by a steeple or a dome, declaring the religious life had and, in many cases, still has a place in the community’s life in the liminal space between city and the wilderness. Rural congregations

and their buildings are at times the only remaining community space, as the school, the country store, even the curling rink have closed.

Churches in rural Canada have lived under almost constant threat for more than a century. As the move to the cities became entrenched in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, significant studies were done on the future of the church significant among them being John MacDougall's *Rural Life in Canada* (1913) and the Rural Social Surveys (1912-1914). Between the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century studies of the rural church and its place in rural communities have been done by a number of denominations and academic institutes. This concern frequently arising from the belief that it was time to write the obituary for the rural church. But rural congregations have continued.

This paper, by exploring the various reports and studies written over the last 100 years, will draw our themes and practices that have allowed the rural church to survive despite its anticipated demise. In the process, some of the keys to the resilience of rural communities will become evident.

**Jacqueline L. Scott, University of Toronto**

**Title: *Speakers for the dead: Thanatourism and Black cemeteries in rural Canada***

**Abstract:** Scores of Black cemeteries are scattered across rural Canada. Some are officially recognized as such, some are abandoned, and most are contested spaces. The fate of rural Black cemeteries is captured in *Speakers for the Dead*, a documentary film by David Sutherland and Jennifer Holness (2000). Using the film and visits to rural Black cemeteries in Ontario, the presentation explores the politics of memory, slavery and rural tourism. Canada is the land of the Great White North in the nationalist mythology of the country; and in tourism marketing the 'real' Canada is outside of the cities and in rural and wilderness areas. Black people are noticeable by their absence in both the mythology and tourism marketing.

Yet, Black travellers are an increasing segment of the tourism sector. In Ontario, tourism marketing to African Americans is an important feature of the Niagara border region. Much of this marketing is focused on the Underground Railroad including suggested driving or bus tours to rural churches and their cemeteries. The Black cemeteries are material reminders of the long Black presence in rural Canada. Sometimes they are the only indicator that a Black community was once there. The presence of the Black cemeteries unsettles notions of who belongs in rural Canada, and is a counter-story to the erasure of Black history from the Canadian rural idyll.

**Ben Bradley, University of Guelph**

**Title: *Stages of the past: Stagecoach preservation and frontier nostalgia in Western Canada, 1910-1960***

**Abstract:** BC's northern Interior was widely regarded as one of North America's last frontiers around the turn of the last century, but its economy and social geography were rapidly transformed during the 1910s and 1920s by new railways and improved roads. Their proliferation, and the commensurate decline of horse-drawn conveyances, generated new ways of thinking

about community, progress, and the past. This paper explores how the modernization of overland mobility in Canada's far west drove a popular nostalgia for the transportation technologies of yesteryear, particularly in the form of old stagecoaches.

During the mid-twentieth century, surplus and disused stagecoaches were salvaged, preserved, restored, and displayed in multiple BC communities. Built of wood and leather, these horse-drawn vehicles came to symbolize the region's (relatively recent) frontier and pioneer days as distinct stages in its development. For promoters, these antiques were effective because they were regionally distinctive yet recognizable within North America's broader enthusiasm for 'Wild West' themes. For popular historians and many ordinary residents of rural and small-town BC, they illustrated the region's material progress as manifested in good roads and reliable travel. Drawing on written, material, and visual sources, this paper traces the emergence, proliferation, and persistence of popular interest in old wooden vehicles in BC, demonstrating close linkages between technological nostalgia, rural modernity, and a mid-century tendency to perceive history as occurring in stages.

## **Session 4A: Creative work in rural and liminal spaces**

**Jill Yuzwa, University of Waterloo**

**Title: *The Liminality of everyday life – Creatives in the context of the Islands Trust***

**Abstract:** This research investigates the social, cultural and environmental context of a successful rural creative community in coastal British Columbia, with special attention to the Islands Trust regional governance system and specifically the planning framework. The co-methodologies involved three years of ethnographic embeddedness relying on phenomenological hermeneutics. The overall findings were captured in three analysis discussions. This presentation will focus on how the methodologies illuminate findings quite different than those previously published and forgo misleading conclusions.

Creative communities excite and invigorate individuals and may also provide opportunity for some local economies. Although desired, this creative community profile may not be the right pursuit for all settlement areas.

Soon after the millennium urban theorists describing the shift of western economies from industrial to knowledge based, prescribed the use of culture-led initiatives focusing on artistic presence as an economic development strategy to attract knowledge-based workers. But such a strategy, using artists as an economic development tool, has proven to be more suitable to large urban regions than smaller, remote communities. In smaller settlements artists have a substantive role, making significant community contributions as opposed to just being part of an attraction strategy.

In summary, the embedded and interpretive methodologies contributed to the research by facilitating relationships with creatives in the community and allowing personal observation to experience the liminal nature of the community and concerns with its governance system and planning framework.

**Anthony Kinik, Brock University**

**Title: *Triangle of islands: Pour la suite du monde (1962), new Quebec cinema, and the urban/rural dialectic***

**Abstract:** While the New Quebec Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s was primarily an urban cinema, driven in large part by the relocation of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) to the island of Montreal in 1956, one of its defining tensions was that between the country and the city. Over and over again, this dialectic manifests itself in films that capture the massive demographic shift from rural to urban that had rocked Quebec society since the early 20th century and increased dramatically after World War II, as well as in films where Montrealers idealize, mythologize, and escape to the country.

One of the most celebrated documentaries to emerge from Quebec during this period was Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault's *cinéma direct* classic *Pour la suite du monde* (1962). This intimate portrait of life on Isle-aux-Coudres, an island in Eastern Quebec that sits in the Saint Lawrence River (not unlike Montreal), is generally understood as a work of salvage ethnography, where the filmmakers encouraged the island's inhabitants to take up traditional practices that had long fallen by the wayside and had to be learned from the community's elders: namely, the hunt of the beluga whale, which the settlers had originally learned from Indigenous peoples who lived in the region.

I'd like to reconsider *Pour la suite du monde* as a work that is not only based on a dialectical tension between the city and the country, but also on tensions between three islands, one rural and two urban: Isle-aux-Coudres, Montreal, and New York City. Montreal, of course, was the island city that the filmmakers hailed from and where the film's production studio was based, but it also figures in the film as the urban Other to life on Isle-aux-Coudres. New York, on the other hand, comes into play late in the film, after the beluga hunt has proven successful and the transfer of the whale to the New York Aquarium at Coney Island prompts a road trip to Manhattan and Long Island. Among other concerns, the foundational myths of all three islands are based on stories of First Contact between European settlers and Indigenous peoples, and, thus, this aspect of *Pour la suite du monde* is intensified if we take this approach.

**Marian Bredin, Brock University**

**Title: *Loss, longing, healing: Liminal representations of the land in Indigenous TV drama***

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to explore television narratives and representations of rural spaces related to the colonial rupture of Indigenous communities during the era of residential schools and the 'Sixties Scoop' in Canada. The paper presents a close reading of two recent Indigenous-made television dramas, *Bones of Crows* (2023) and *Little Bird* (2023), that tell the story of the removal of Indigenous children from their parents, families and communities and their incarceration and attempted assimilation within state and church-run schools and non-Indigenous families. With reference to these two series, the paper argues that contemporary Indigenous storytellers and visual creators are constructing narratives of colonial violence as stories of rupture and loss, when children were torn from their rural homes on ancestral lands and gradually lost within alienating and racist urban spaces. As these programs make clear, removal of Indigenous children from their families was part of a larger settler strategy of removing Indigenous people from the land. The narrative arcs of these recent TV dramas ultimately return Indigenous characters to their original rural homes as a means of reinscribing the trauma of settler cruelty toward children and as a source of potential healing and freedom. The televisual narrative and aesthetic focus on rural landscapes in flashbacks, dream sequences and historical re-enactments serve as powerful truths and essential corrections to accounts of how rural Canada was 'settled.' As liminal spaces, rural landscapes are represented as between wilderness and metropolis, but also as between dispossession and reclamation of Indigenous family, community and identity.

## **Session 4B: History and understanding in rural Canada**

**Giulia Rovelli, University of Bergamo**

**Title: "*The longest and hardest winter I can remember*": Early Settlers' perceptions of rural Canada (1822-1919)**

**Abstract:** Up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Canada's anglophone population was predominantly rural (Statistics Canada 2018) and recently immigrated from either the former American colonies or the British Isles (Dollinger 2019). Although prospective immigrants had access to a number of emigrant guides, like Reverend G.W. Warr's *Canada as it is: Or, The Emigrant's Friend and Guide to Upper Canada* (1847), and real-life testimonies, including Susanna Moodie's very popular *Roughing it in the Bush: or, Forest Life in Canada* (1852), most immigrants were probably little prepared for the vastly different environment that awaited them. The present paper aims to investigate early settlers' impressions of rural Canada, by interrogating the diaries section of the *Corpus of Canadian English Letters and Diaries* (CCanDL, Rovelli forthcoming 2023), a second-generation corpus of manuscript ego-documents written between 1822 and 1919 in rural Ontario, Canada, which is being developed at the University of Bergamo (Italy) in collaboration with the *Rural Diary Archive* and with the *McLaughlin Library* of the University of Guelph (Canada). To do so, it analyzes the use of evaluative language in the diarists' descriptions of the environment and climate and in their narratives of life in the colony. The study, which follows a mixed-method

approach that combines quantitative (i.e. *LanCSBox*, Brezina *et al.* 2020) and qualitative methods (i.e. historical discourse analysis, Brinton 2001), is expected to offer an interesting insight into early settlers' perceptions of rural Canada, thus shedding light on the immigrant experience in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Daniel Samson, Brock University**

**Title: *Writing and the emotional body: A modern life in rural 19<sup>th</sup>-century Nova Scotia***

**Abstract:** James Barry (1822-1906) was a miller, fiddler, printer, and avid reader on Six Mile Brook, Pictou County, Nova Scotia. Among his daily diary entries on "weather and other commonplace items", comments on local politics and his own domestic strife, he often wrote about bodies: his own ailing, pain-wracked body, the aging and misshapen bodies that entered his mill, and the mysteries of women's bodies. Barry's fifty-six-year-long diary represents a life in text, a disciplined daily act of self-fashioning that offers insights into innumerable dimensions of not only rural, 19th-century life, but also of modernity and one man's struggle to understand his place in it. His reading, though dominated by religious and political texts, demonstrates an engagement with anatomy and medicine. Going beyond one man's simple concerns for his poor health, the diary takes us to how he understood human existence; beyond, as he often noted, the sufferings of Job, it takes us to how he separated feeling (both his physical and emotional sufferings), and appearance (what the sick/imperfect body looks like), of what science and religion told him ought to be and what he saw and experienced.

**Andrew Holman, Bridgewater State University**

**Title: *An American tour, 1914: S.B. Sinclair and Canada's first "rural school problem"***

**Abstract:** In early 1914, renowned Canadian educator, author, and Head of the McGill University's Macdonald School for Teachers, Samuel B. Sinclair, embarked on a four-month tour of the United States to examine what he and other reformers called the "Rural School Problem." He was seeking solutions to a crisis that gripped the countryside: inadequately trained and poorly paid teachers, inappropriate curriculum for would-be farmers, and improper buildings and school organization. In the wake of rapid urbanization and industrialization, rural schools in Canada had since the late nineteenth century suffered marked neglect. Philanthropists such as tobacco magnate William Macdonald and government officials such as James Robertson had succeeded in calling attention to (and throwing money at) the problem: older institutions such as the Ontario Agricultural College (established in 1874 in Guelph) and newer ones like the Macdonald College (established in 1905 at Ste Anne de Bellevue, Quebec) had begun to focus their efforts on training rural schoolteachers in the science of pedagogy. Sinclair was at the heart of this effort: at Macdonald from 1909 to 1913, he had managed the school, lectured to students, and in his final year there constructed a model curriculum for rural teachers that balanced traditional book learning with hands-on, practical work. Still not satisfied, Sinclair took leave from Macdonald in 1913 to study *American* practices. In January 1914, he started in Boston before making his way to the American South and Southwest: Gulfport, Mississippi; Lafayette, Louisiana; Austin, Texas; Williams, Arizona; then to Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Fresno, California before heading northward through Portland and back across the border by April. This paper examines Sinclair's American tour, his

intellectual ties in the U.S., and the centrality of transborder connections to progressive education reform in Canada before 1920.

## **Session 5A: Addressing the challenges of healthcare in rural settings**

**Sara McEwen, Takaia Larsen, and Jonathan Vanderhoek, Selkirk College**

**Title: *The rural pre-medicine program at Selkirk College: An innovative pathway for future rural health professionals***

**Abstract:** Rural Canadians have less access to health services and poorer health outcomes compared to those living in cities. Health professionals with rural backgrounds are more likely to practice rurally but are underrepresented in training programs. The Rural Pre-Medicine (RPM) Program began in 2014 to prepare more students with a rural affinity to apply competitively to health profession programs. It aims to teach skills to enable success in future training, build an understanding of rural healthcare, and encourage rural careers. Students in the program receive substantial support to enable success, such as regular check-in meetings with faculty, interview training, assistance with applications, and standardized testing preparation.

We conducted a program evaluation to understand the status of program aims and mechanisms of outcomes, and to make recommendations to strengthen the program. We integrated data from the program, exit surveys, and from semi-structured interviews with current and former students, faculty and high school partners.

The findings suggest program aims are met, including a primary aim that most who complete apply competitively to health professional programs. Additionally, we learned the support component is unique, highly valued, and felt to be an important active ingredient in the program's success. Despite the program's success, recruitment and retention remain a challenge.

As outcomes seem positive, it is important to optimize the number of students who enter and complete the program. We have initiated adaptations to improve recruitment and retention, such as more program flexibility, improved transfer agreements, and refinement of recruitment strategies.

**Ken Milne, Al Lauzon, and Sage Milne, Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health**

**Title: *Skilled Healthcare Attraction and Retention Program (SHARP)***

**Information:** Gateway CERH was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit corporation with charitable status governed by a volunteer Board of Directors committed to its continued success. Since its inception, Gateway CERH has been committed to engaging health care professionals in rural settings and enabling rural citizens to take control of their health.



Mission – To improve the health and quality of life of rural residents through research, education and communication.

Motive – Compared to urban residents, rural residents can have higher rates of diabetes, obesity, chronic lung disease, heart disease and depression. Healthy rural residents will actively contribute to both local and national economies.

Action – Gateway CERH has collaborated with community health centres, rural health professionals, academic institutions and rural residents to conduct informed community based research. Gateway CERH invests locally in future generations to advance rural healthcare.

**Sara McEwen and Shelby Bell, Selkirk College**

**Title: *Do different characterizations of rural impact social media interactions? A report on two recruitment strategies for a rural health professional preparatory program***

**Abstract:** Rural Canadians face a lack of health professionals resulting in reduced access to health services and poorer health outcomes compared to nonrural counterparts. The Rural Pre-Medicine (RPM) Program at Selkirk College is successful with its aim to prepare more students with a rural affinity to apply competitively to health professional programs, but it faces challenges with recruitment.

Anecdotal information from potential RPM students suggests some people from small communities do not identify as rural. Internal program data suggests RPM students have a wide range of personalized definitions of rurality based on metrics such as population and distance to larger centres, and qualities such as tight-knit communities, interconnectedness, and a slower pace of life. Evidence from other researchers suggests definitions of rural used in program materials that overlap with potential applicants' personal definitions increases interest in rural programs.

We used two different descriptions of RPM in an Instagram A/B test with 18–24-year-olds in the RPM catchment region and an adjacent region. We analyzed click-through-rates (CTR) with the same photograph and two different messages, one rural-focused and one community-focused, using chi-squared tests.

Overall, the adjacent region had a higher CTR than the RPM-catchment region. In larger RPM-catchment communities, the community-centered post had a significantly higher CTR ( $p=0.05$ ). In smaller adjacent communities, the community-centered post was preferred ( $p=0.05$ ). Men tended to prefer the community-centred post.

When there was a preference, it was for the community-focused definition. Further investigation is warranted to understand how this may impact recruitment messaging.

## Session 5B: Considering immigration in rural communities

**Manal Alzghoul, Brock University/Lakehead University**

**Title: *Immigrant parents' experiences and priorities of unintentional injury prevention in children***

**Abstract:** In Canada, preventable injuries are the primary reason for the mortality and disability of individuals ages 1 to 44 years. Children are at risk of different types of unintentional injury (e.g., falls, burns, poisoning, suffocation, drowning, etc.). Most of these injuries happen in and around the house and it is related to different social and environmental risk factors. Parental knowledge and understanding of safety measures can reduce the risk of injury. However, information about immigrant parents' knowledge and perceptions of unintentional injury in Northwestern Ontario remains scant.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 parents. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis.

The majority of parents believe injuries are preventable, understood their roles in keeping their children safe from injury, and were aware of the strategies that they should use to minimize the risk. They believed that they would benefit from obtaining information about the risk of injury in Canada that might have been different from the risk in their home countries (e.g., adapting to the cold weather and being safe around water); injury prevention legislation (e.g., use of fire alarms, bike helmets, etc.); and knowing when to seek medical help.

The study highlighted the importance of supporting the efforts of immigrant parents to access resources to enhance their knowledge of strategies to prevent unintentional injury to their children and to respond to the new challenges (environmental and sociocultural) in Canada.

**Damilola Oyewale, University of Guelph**

**Title: *Assessing the interplay of immigration and housing in Ontario's agricultural landscape for economic development***

**Abstract:** This study evaluates the impact of the Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) on housing for International Agricultural Workers (IAWs). Focusing on the agri-food economy, the PPS outlines land use planning policies to guide development and promote sustainable communities. The research aims to assess the impact of the PPS in shaping living conditions and welfare for IAWs, examining unique challenges faced by them identified through extensive literature reviews.

Objectives include evaluating the PPS's impact on IAW housing, gathering perspectives from local government planners on policy implementation, and identifying opportunities for improvement. A mixed-methods approach was utilized starting with document reviews of the 2020 and 2023 revised draft PPS, with thematic analysis identifying key themes. Key informant interviews with planners also provided qualitative insights which were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed using NVivo.

The study contributes valuable insights for policymakers and planners, informing improvements in living conditions and the overall well-being of IAWs for the overall agri-food economy of Ontario.

**Rana Telfah, University of Guelph**

**Title: *The early settlement experiences of Syrian families in Southwestern Ontario***

**Abstract:** After the Syrian conflict, thousands of refugees fled to neighbouring countries, while fewer travelled to different regions worldwide. Within Canada, 54,560 Syrian refugees were resettled by 2019 (Bose, 2020, P.14), with Southwestern Ontario welcoming many of these refugees. Various researchers have highlighted different aspects of the experiences of Syrian refugee families in the Canadian context. However, my research explores the experiences of Syrian refugee families during early settlement: employment, education, housing, building relationships, and health. Moreover, it aims to explore their early experiences in learning the English language, as well as the presence or absence of interpretation services in various-size communities and whether there are differences in the experiences of different sponsorship types. It investigates their relationship with local settlement services and the presence or absence of Arabic schools. Finally, it explores Syrian families' perception of their safety and stability in their communities relative to any harmful incident, discrimination, feeling accepted, and whether they prefer to stay or leave their respective communities. Using NVivo analysis of 38 interviews on early settlement experiences in ten Southwestern different-sized communities provided insight into the lived experience of these families in general and Syrian women in particular. This research highlights the marginalized voices regarding settlement, helping us to understand the Syrian refugee families' early experiences while helping to identify policy options that would help alleviate challenges and hasten their full integration into their respective communities.

## **Session 6: Government policy in rural settings**

**Firoze Alam, University of Guelph**

**Title: *Indigenous communities' mis(trust) in western techno-scientific practices and its implications for Indigenous seed sovereignty in rural Canada***

**Abstract:** Public trust in science and institutional expertise has plummeted in recent years (Kennedy et al., 2022). Indigenous communities' distrust is intensified by Western science's historical and current involvement in colonial violence (Wong et al., 2020). Settler-colonial technoscience simultaneously appropriate and undermine Indigenous cultural practices and knowledge sovereignty, reinforcing its exploitative nature (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018). This mistrust is also grounded in past misuses like non-consensual research, inappropriate health data use, and wildlife manipulation (Kovach 2009).

Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS), which is inseparable from Indigenous Seed Sovereignty (ISS), is imperiled by climate change (Adhikari, 2014; Kloppenburg 2005, 2017). Multinational agricultural corporations, with their monopolistic approach in a colonial-capitalist context, threaten indigenous seed systems (Bratspeis, 2017; Elmore, 2021). While crop biotechnology rooted in Western science can contribute to developing climate-resilient seeds (Karavolias et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2022), Indigenous communities often view it skeptically.

This paper will explore the relationship between Indigenous communities and settler-colonial technoscience within global agricultural trends favoring profit-driven industrial agriculture and seed monopolies over traditional farming (Friedmann, 2005; Shiva, 2016). This paper emphasizes 'seed sovereignty,' denoting Indigenous Peoples' rights to save, breed, and exchange seeds, essential for their food sovereignty, cultural, and spiritual well-being (Hernandez, 2022; Hill, 2017; Kloppenburg, 2008; 2017). Finally, this paper investigates the historical and contemporary factors influencing Indigenous Peoples' trust in Western science concerning seed systems and its impact on Indigenous Seed Sovereignty in rural Canada.

**Paul G. Murphy, Fellow, Centre of Excellence at The Digital Economist**

**Title: *Regional development in Canada and China: A connected ecological civilization?***

**Abstract:** In January 2019, Canada's establishment of the Minister of Rural Economic Development showcased a potential move towards an "ecological civilization." Yet, its emphasis on broadband internet as the sole innovation strategy seems restrictive. A holistic rural development approach, shifting from productivism to multifunctionality, is crucial, mirroring China's ambitious vision of balanced rural-urban sustainability.

Krawchenko et al. (2023) spotlight Canada's "Rural Innovation Models," showing a preference for resource-driven innovations. The missing federal Rural Secretariat, essential for inter-provincial collaboration, is notably absent. Provinces like Alberta and Manitoba lack a rural-focused strategy, whereas Quebec, with its regional lens, neglects rural concerns.

Conversely, China's progress in rural development is evident. The 2018 Strategic Plan of Rural Development emphasizes rural areas, bolstered by the 2021 Rural Development Promotion Law. This policy evolution has piqued scholarly interest, with its driving factors remaining largely uncharted. Xu et al. (2021) define China's approach through key pillars including food security, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

For international bodies, the challenge lies in tailoring broadband-centric innovation to prioritize knowledge-based territorial growth. As we transform from a post-carbon to an information-driven era, participation in rural modernization becomes paramount. Both countries should evaluate if their plans might inadvertently lead to digital authoritarianism, stifling social innovation needed to move away from non-renewable resources.

In summation, rural development transcends mere global leadership tactics. It represents a practical answer to urbanization, underscoring digital territorial planning. By adopting a bioregional stance, Canada can derive lessons from China's policy objectives. As Evanoff (2010)

posits, such collaboration could reinvigorate global ethics, propelling us towards an authentic ecological civilization.

**John Dale, University of Guelph**

**Title: *Optimizing local governance: How municipalities navigate the impacts of austerity in rural Ontario***

**Abstract:** Over the past 30 years, the responsibilities, mandates, and activities of local governments in Ontario have undergone substantial transformations. Influenced by New Public Management, policy changes are characterized by marketization and managerialism resulting in downloading of responsibilities to local governments. This research examines the ebbs and flows of policy changes among different provincial governments since 1990 and the impacts of these policies on rural local governments in Ontario. Interviews were conducted with elected officials and senior staff in eight local governments to understand their realities. The findings demonstrate the continual policy changes led to the “do more, with less” approach currently faced by rural local governments— increased regulatory requirements, limited human and financial capacities, and small tax bases to support their activities. This experience, combined with limited fiscal levers, hinders the ability of rural local governments to address both new demands for infrastructure and existing infrastructure deficits, housing stock and affordability, and economic and workforce development strategies. The reality has necessitated local governments to seek alternative strategies to deliver programs and services through partnerships and collaboration.

**Jeff Reichheld, University of Guelph/Brock University**

**Title: *(Dis)incentives in Canadian agri-environmental policy – missed opportunities from mis-fits***

**Abstract:** Canadian agriculture is a major source of biodiversity loss, transforming much of Canada’s rural landscape while contributing to global climate change. As Canada’s most significant rural land use, agriculture produces a large proportion of Canada’s environmental change while at the same time that it stands to be a positive force in addressing many of our crucial environmental issues. However, because of the critical importance of the agriculture industry, restoring these altered lands by simply reducing output is not a viable solution and other sustainability oriented mitigations must be found. Canadian agri-environmental policy creates schemes intended to assist farmers in addressing negative environmental externalities, focusing primarily on the negative environmental impacts of farming, but not necessarily addressing economic or social impacts upon sustainability. Many of the available programs are under- or un-utilised, leading to ongoing environmental degradation. As part of my dissertation research, the current discussion focuses on the Canadian dairy industry as a potential driver for environmental mitigations, while recognizing that agri-environmental policy needs to be focused on the overall sustainability of Canadian agriculture. The essential miscommunication between policy makers and farmers on the ground all but ensures that programs arising from these policies will remain unused, and opportunities for environmental mitigations missed.

















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