



Summary of Libro Professor News Stories July 2020 – June 2023

Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development

The Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development was established in 2016 through the generous donations from Libro Credit Union, the Klosler family, and the Roberts family. Together, a \$1 million gift was created to serve as a catalyst for enhancing regional economic development in Southwestern Ontario. Details of research activities, graduate student engagement, online resources emerging from the Libro Professorship can be found at www.ruraldev.ca.

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph

The School of Environmental Design and Rural Development brings together major academic fields concerned with creating strong communities in Canada and around the world. The four highly respected units that have come together to form the School share many common goals but approach them in different and complementary ways. This model reflects the imperatives in building authentic communities where planners, leaders, communicators, landscape architects, the citizens, and politicians all play important interdependent roles in strengthening communities. For more information, visit www.sedrd.uoguelph.ca.

Authors: Damilola Oyewale and Ryan Gibson

Introduction

This report presents a summary of news stories published on the RuralDev.ca website from July 2020 to June 2023. This is a multi-year report covering three consecutive reporting periods. Individual annual reports were not produced for these years due to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report is organized into three sections corresponding to each annual reporting period. All content has been sourced directly from the RuralDev.ca website at <https://ruraldev.ca/news/>

July 2020 – June 2021

Congratulations to Recent RPD Graduates!

July 11, 2020



COVID19 did not prevent a celebration of recent graduates from the Rural Planning and Development program! On July 10, an online gathering celebrated the achievements of recent graduates. It was wonderful to see Louis Helps, Koren Lam, Sarah Parish, Gursewak Singh, and Vinit Yadav recognized for their hard work over the past two years..

The gathering included comments from the graduates, Dean of the Ontario College of Agriculture, President of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, and the Executive Director of the Canadian Institute of Planners. A recording of the online celebration can be found below. Congratulations to Louis, Koren, Sarah, Gursewak, and Vinit!

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/congratulations-to-recent-rpd-graduates/>

Harnessing and Strengthening the Collective Regional Voice

July 20, 2020

Communities throughout the world are exploring opportunities to work together towards building regional prosperity. On July 2, 2020, Prof. Ryan Gibson joined local government representatives from the Irish Central Borderland Area Network (ICBAN) to share perspectives and lessons learned from Canadian experiences in cross-border collaboration. Building on research from the Community Collaboration Project, Prof. Gibson shared research on from the Hudson Bay Neighbours (Manitoba/Nunvuat) and the Yukon Regional Roundtable (Yukon/British Columbia). The presentation highlighted the history, the membership, their priorities, and their activities. The experiences in Canada emphasized the value of creating and implementing place-based development strategies, creating multiple 'avenues' for collaboration among communities in the cross-border region, and the need for capacity building among communities to build regional priorities and actions. CBAN was founded to promote cross-border co-operation and communication at a Local Government level on common regional development concerns. This provided a forum to respond to the unique economic and social needs of the Central Border Region. Prof. Gibson's presentation was part of a series of knowledge mobilization and capacity building sessions hosted by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development .

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/harnessing-and-strengthening-the-collective-regional-voice/>

Rethinking Infrastructure Investments

June 30, 2020

NEW CRRF RURAL INSIGHTS
ON COVID-19 PUBLICATION

Rethinking Infrastructure Investments

A new publication focused on infrastructure investments to support COVID19 recovery in rural communities was released by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) . As part of CRRF's Rural Insights on COVID-19 Series, the publication examines how rural communities can employ green infrastructure to address post-pandemic recovery and climate reliance. The report emerges from the Building the Future research initiative funded through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance and was written by Jay Maloney, Paul Kraehling, Kacia Tolsma, Ashleigh Weeden, Sean Markey, and Ryan Gibson. The publication can be accessed below:

Source:<https://ruraldev.ca/rethinking-infrastructure-investments-supporting-post-pandemic-rural-recovery-and-climate-resilience-through-green-infrastructure/>

Forests and Livelihoods Twitter Conference

October 29, 2020



On October 26, 2020, Postdoctoral Fellow Lissel Hernandez-Gongora participated in the Forest & Livelihoods: Assessment, Research and Engagement (FLARE) Twitter Conference. The mission of FLARE is to establish a Community of Practice that advances the state of knowledge of the intersection of forests and livelihoods. Lissel's presentation discussed REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) governance in Quintana Roo, Mexico.

The FLARE Network Twitter Conference presentations consisted of five tweets (280 characters per tweet). Each tweet was threaded together and included some supporting media.

As a first time Twitter Conference participant, Lissel thought it was a great experience as it allows reaching a broader audience and making concrete remarks on the research results and conclusion. In the Covid-19 era, Lissel believes academic conferences following this format will gain popularity and she looks forward to engaging in other Twitter conferences in the future.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/forests-and-livelihoods-twitter-conference/>

2019-2020 Libro Professor Annual Report

October 16, 2020

The 2019-2020 annual report of the Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development is now available! The past year has been exciting, with many activities, outputs, and achievements. The Libro Professorship engaged in teaching in regional planning and economic development, mentoring graduate students, connecting with communities and businesses, and conducting research. Through the Libro Professorship, a number of critical topics for the long-term prosperity of our communities are being examined, including local economic development, immigration, workforce development, place-based development, non-profit organizations and charities, and migrant agricultural workers.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/2019-2020-libro-professor-annual-report/>

Local Economic Development Trends and Implications

November 5, 2020



What are the key trends in local economic development and what are the implications for small communities? As rural and northern communities plan for COVID-19 recoveries they need to be aware of the broader trends in local economic development. On November 6, 2020, Prof. Ryan Gibson shared local economic development insights with the Community Futures Northeastern Ontario Conference. The presentation outlined key macro-level themes influence local development, highlights from recent research initiatives, and suggested considerations for moving forward. A copy of the presentation and the resource handout from the conference can be found below:

Where to from here? Local economic development trends, insights, and implications List of publications, resources, and other materials referenced in the presentation

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/ledtrends/>

Gateway Webinar on Rural Wealth and Prosperity

February 2, 2021



Rural communities and regions are home to considerable wealth. A key question is how can this wealth be mobilized to advance long-term rural prosperity? On February 2, the Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health organized an online discussion featuring research from Prof. Ryan Gibson, Glenn McNeil (Huron County), Tom Prout (Sunset Community Foundation), Marty Rops (Libro Credit Union), and Louise Wardrop (Oxford Community Foundation). The online discussion focused on understanding wealth in rural communities, how wealth moves, and how we can create strategic approaches to capturing wealth. Resources from the webinar can be found below:

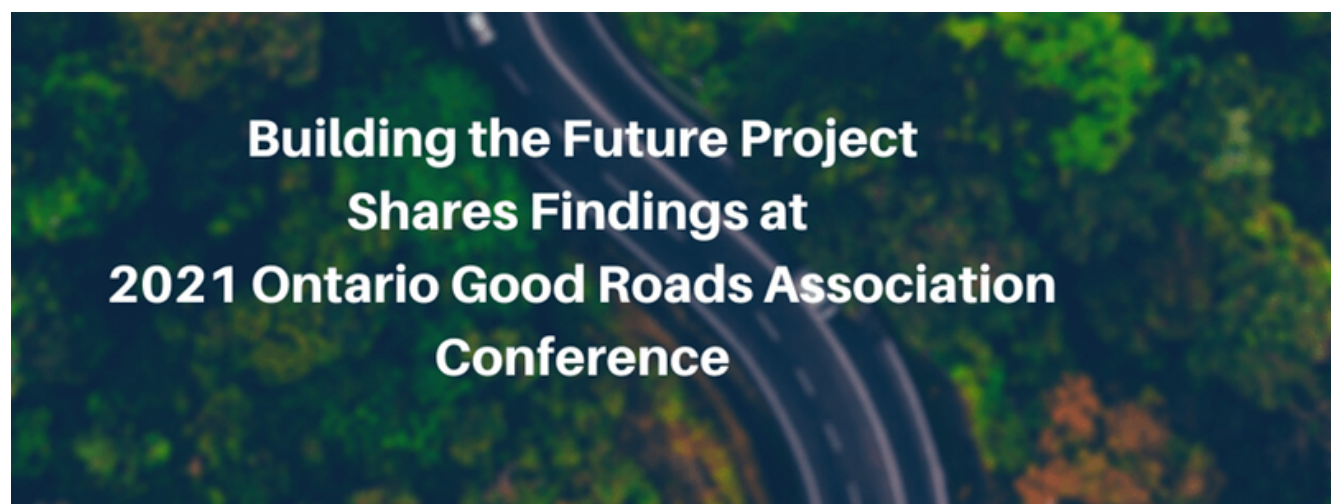
- Recording of the video (forthcoming)
- Presentation slides from webinar
- Rural Philanthropy in Canada: 21st Century Strategies Bloom in Canada's Hinterland (The Philanthropist)
- Place-Based Endowments in the Periphery (Research Project)

Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health is a not-for-profit corporation with charitable status committed to engaging health care professionals in rural settings and enabling rural citizens to take control of their health. Learn more about upcoming Gateway online webinars at www.gatewayruralhealth.ca/lecture-series.html.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/gateway-webinar-on-rural-wealth-and-prosperity>

Building the Future Project Featured at 2021 OGRA Conference

February 23, 2021



Dr. Ryan Gibson, Ashleigh Weeden (PhD candidate), and Melissa Visser (MSc Student) from the 'Building the Future: Rural Infrastructure & Regional Economic Development' project shared highlights from their research at the 2021 Ontario Good Roads Association Conference, held virtually this week. The presentation was featured as part of the morning plenary on February 23rd and highlighted findings from case studies about innovative approaches rural communities are taking to managing their infrastructure and its connections to economic development, as well as early analysis of a survey completed by more than 260 rural leaders. Slides from the presentation can be accessed here: [Connecting the Dots – 2021 OGRA Conference](#).

The Building the Future project is funded by the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance and includes researchers from the University of Guelph and Simon Fraser University, and has been undertaken in partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association, the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, and the Government of Ontario.

Learn more by visiting www.ruraldev.ca/infrastructure or clicking the 'Projects' tab above and selecting the 'Building the Future' item in the drop-down menu.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/building-the-future-project-featured-at-2021-ogra-conference/>

Highlights from the ICRPS Rural Policy Twitter Conference

June 2021



During Day 3 of the Rural Policy Twitter Conference three contributions were shared from researchers focused on the digital divide (Ashleigh Weeden and Wayne Kelly), barriers for newcomers to access recreation services for children (Niva Shrestha), and the role of rural community leaders (Norm Ragetlie and Lissel Hernandez Gongora). Check out the Twitter presentations below:

<https://twitter.com/ashleighweeden/status/1405510790996578312?s=20>

The Rural Policy Twitter conference continues until June 18. You can follow the presentations through the #icrps2021 hashtag. The Rural Policy Twitter conference is hosted by the International Comparative Rural Policy Consortium (ICRPS). Learn more about ICRPS at www.icrps.org.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/2894-2/>

Congratulations – Harvey Defends PhD

August 21, 2021



Congratulations to Tracey Harvey for successfully defended her PhD dissertation on August 19! Tracey's dissertation is titled "Weed, Greed, and the Need for Reconciliation: Cannabis Legalization and the Case of the Rural Kootenay, BC Region". Check back shortly for a link to Tracey's full PhD dissertation.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/congratulations-harvey-defends-phd/>

July 2021 – June 2022

New Publication: Embedding Rural Capital

2022

A new peer-reviewed article by Alex Petric and Prof. Ryan Gibson has been published in the Community Development Journal titled "Embedding Rural Capital? Community Investment Programs in Canada and Their Implications for Rural Communities." The research explores the role of Community Investment Funds in supporting rural economic development, community resilience, and local ownership.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2023/11/IACDRuralWealthBuilding-27NOV2023.pdf>

Hidden Treasures: Planning Around the Intergenerational Transfer of Wealth in Rural Communities

2021

A new article by Alex Petric and Prof. Ryan Gibson published in Y Magazine of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute explores the scale of intergenerational wealth transfers expected in rural Canada and their implications for rural planners and communities. The article calls on rural planners and policymakers to consider wealth retention as a core element of rural planning and economic development strategy.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/resources/>

New Funding: Rural Futures Initiative Launched

2022

The future of rural places, rural people, and rural environments is critical to the province of Ontario. The University of Guelph is internationally recognized for its commitment and advancement of research and knowledge to support rural communities. In partnership with rural partners, this initiative will amplify the knowledge mobilization of rural research conducted at the University of Guelph.

This initiative ensures rural knowledge and experiences within the university are translated and mobilized to rural partners in local government, community-based organizations, charities/nonprofits, Indigenous communities, all levels of government, businesses, and other researchers. The initiative will create an online portal to showcase and mobilize rural research conducted at the University of Guelph by graduate students and faculty. The portal will serve as a pathfinder to connect rural partners to rural researchers. Learn more information on this initiative at www.rural.uoguelph.ca.

Research Team

- Belinda Leach (University of Guelph)
- Blake Glassford (University of Guelph)
- Damilola Oyewale (University of Guelph)
- Katie Clow (University of Guelph)
- Ryan Gibson (University of Guelph)
- Sara Mann (University of Guelph)
- Wayne Caldwell (University of Guelph)

Resources

- Profiles of faculty researchers at the University of Guelph engaged in rural research
- Profiles of graduate students at the University of Guelph engaged in rural research
- 2023–2024 Rural Futures Annual Report (forthcoming)
- Impact of Social Media Promotion for Rural Researchers: Evaluation of Rural Futures Online Portal and Profiles (forthcoming)
- 2022–2023 Rural Futures Annual Report
- Project Evaluation Report” to “Influence of Social Media on Graduate Student Profiles (2023)
- Compilation of Rural Research at the University of Guelph (2021)
- Poster at 2023 Rural Symposium: Rural Futures – Mobilizing Knowledge and Sustaining Partnerships at the University of Guelph
- Poster at 2024 Rural Symposium: Rural Futures – Bridging Research and Community Solutions for Rural Ontario
- Rural Futures Project Overview Post Card

Acknowledgement

This research is funded by the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance , a collaboration between the Government of Ontario and the University of Guelph.

Source:<https://ruraldev.ca/rural-futures-mobilizing-knowledge-and-sustaining-partnerships/>

New Funding: Labour Shortages through Newcomer Attraction

2022

This research examines the current labour shortages being experienced in rural Ontario with an aim to identify potential solutions in the form of policy and practice. The research will use a mixed methods research approach to connect with rural business owners from a variety of economic sectors, newcomers (both new Canadians and new residents in rural), and rural economic development agencies. Specific research methods will include a content analysis and evaluation of rural workforce strategies, case studies of innovative practice selected through a positive deviance framework, and key informant interviews/focus groups. The research will focus on the three main sources of human capital: newcomers from urban, immigrant newcomers, and temporary migrants. The research will identify innovative solutions to attract, retain, and welcome newcomers to enable rural businesses to meet their employment requirements.

Project Team and Partners

- Dave Guyadeen, University of Guelph
- Heather Graham, University of Guelph
- John Dale, University of Guelph
- Louis Helps, University of Guelph
- Louis Helps, University of Guelph
- Niju Mathew, University of Guelph
- Paul Nichol, Community Futures Huron
- Kalind Patel, University of Guelph
- Paul Sitsofe, University of Guelph
- Ryan Gibson, University of Guelph
- Sarah-Patricia Breen, Selkirk College
- Silvia Sarapura, University of Guelph

Resources

- Bridging the Labour Gap: A Case Study of the West Kootenays Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (2025 | Heather Douglas, Ryan Gibson)
- Fostering Community Dialogue: A Case Study of Castlegar's Labour Mobility in a Rural Setting Project (2025 | Heather Douglas, Ryan Gibson)
- Empowering the Workforce: First Work's Pioneering Approach to Addressing Labour Shortages in Ontario's Rural Communities (2025 | Niju Mathew, Ryan Gibson)
- Case Study of Economic Development and Immigration – The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program in Sudbury, Ontario (2025 | Niju Mathew, Ryan Gibson)
- Building Economic Strength through Workforce Development: A Case Study of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Workforce Development Strategy (2025 | Paul Sitsofe, Ryan Gibson)
- A Business Response to Labour Shortages and Refugee Crisis: A Case Study of Titan Trailers' Response to the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis in Ontario (2025 | Niju Mathew, Ryan Gibson)
- Enhancing Early Childhood Education in Dufferin County: A Case Study on Collaborative Workforce Development and Diversity Initiatives (2025 | Niju Mathew, Ryan Gibson)
- Workforce Development Challenges and Opportunities: Findings from Business Walk Discussions in Seaforth, Ontario (2024 | Paul Sitsofe, Ryan Gibson)
- Help Wanted: Innovative Approaches to Workforce Development in Rural and Northern Ontario (2024 | Ryan Gibson, Heather Graham, Paul Sitsofe, Niju Mathew, Sarah-Patricia Breen)
- Work Force and Labour Force Development: An Overview of Concepts and Models (2024 | Kalind Patel, Ryan Gibson)
- Labour Force Dynamics in Rural Ontario – Perspectives from Ontario's Workforce Planning Boards (2024 | Heather Graham, Ryan Gibson)
- Addressing Rural Labour Shortages: Innovative Ontario Case Studies (2024 | Rural Ontario Institute Blog | Paul Sitsofe, Mathew Niju, Ryan Gibson)
- Labour Force Dynamics in Rural Ontario – Perspectives from Ontario Community Futures Development Corporations (2024 | Heather Graham, Ryan Gibson)
- Addressing Rural Labour Shortages: Innovative Ontario Case Studies (2024 | Sitsofe, Mathew, Gibson)
- Engaging Newcomers in Rural Ontario to Address Workforce Challenges (2024 | Graham, Gibson)

- Agri-Food Industry Discourses on Temporary Foreign Workers (2024 | Helps)
- From Policy to Practice: Housing for International Agricultural Workers in Ontario (2024 | Oyewale)

Funding

This research is funded by the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance , a collaboration between the Government of Ontario and the University of Guelph.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/lсна/>

July 2022 – June 2023

2022 CRRF Conference in North Bay: Rural Research on Display

November 2022

A new Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance Tier 1 initiative co-led by Sara Epp and Ryan Gibson has been funded to examine the significant population shifts to rural Ontario communities that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will investigate how rural communities experienced and responded to rapid population growth driven by urban-to-rural migration.

Source: <https://www.saraepp.com/urbanexodus>

2023 Rural Symposium

March 2, 2023

The 2023 Rural Symposium was held on March 2, 2023 in Guelph, Ontario. The annual event brought together graduate students, Ontario government staff, rural practitioners, and researchers to share emerging rural research on topics including the Urban Exodus, rural knowledge mobilization, smart village initiatives, rural housing, workforce development, and rural transit.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/>

Rural Futures: KTT in Action

April 26, 2023

The future of rural places, rural people, and rural environments is critical to the province of Ontario. The University of Guelph is internationally recognized for its commitment and advancement of research and knowledge to support rural communities. In partnership with rural partners, this initiative will amplify the knowledge mobilization of rural research conducted at the University of Guelph.

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Acknowledgement

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Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/rural-futures-mobilizing-knowledge-and-sustaining-partnerships/>

New Research Funding: Rural Housing and International Agricultural Workers

2023

This research initiative which will run from May 2023 until April 2026 explores innovative approaches to support International Agricultural Workers (IAWs) housing that can be transferred to rural Ontario and examines how local, provincial, and federal policies and guidelines influence IAW housing options in the agri-food sector. The methods will include systemic literature reviews on how other Canadian and international jurisdictions support IAWs; online surveys among land use planners and farmers to investigate policy impacts on IAW housing planning; and interviews among the agri-food sector in Ontario and IAWs in Mexico. This initiative will identify innovative practices, assess policy impacts, and gather insights from stakeholders to develop recommendations for enhancing IAW housing for the greater benefit of the agri-food sector and rural economies. The primary goal of this research initiative is to provide the agri-food sector and government departments with knowledge on how to enhance the health and welfare needs of IAWs.

Research Team

- Ajibola Agbejobi (MSc Candidate), University of Guelph)
- Damilola Oyewale (MSc Candidate, University of Guelph)
- Kelly Jackson (OMAFRA)
- Kimberley Niece (OMAFRA)
- Lidia Carvajal (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Mexico)
- Louis Helps (PhD Candidate, University of Guelph)
- Ray Silvius (University of Winnipeg)
- Ryan Gibson (University of Guelph)
- Sara Epp (University of Guelph)
- Wayne Caldwell (University of Guelph)

Resources

- Project Overview: International Agricultural Workers and Housing in Rural Ontario (2023)
- Agri-Food Industry Discourses on Temporary Foreign Workers (2024 | Rural Symposium Presentation | Louis Helps)
- From Policy to Practice: Housing for International Agricultural Workers in Ontario (2024 | Rural Symposium Presentation | Damilola Oyewale)
- Evaluation of the Impact of the Provincial Policy Statement on International Agricultural Workers' Housing in Ontario (2024 | MSc Thesis | Damilola Oyewale)
- Summary: Evaluation of the Impact of the Provincial Policy Statement on International Agricultural Workers' Housing in Ontario (2024 | MSc Thesis | Damilola Oyewale)
- Rural Health through the Lenses of Housing for International Agricultural Workers (2024 | Gateway Centre for Rural Health Excellence Newsletter Article | Damilola Oyewale, Ryan Gibson)

Funding Acknowledgement

This research is funded by the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance , a collaboration between the Government of Ontario and the University of Guelph.

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/iawhousing/>

New Research Funding: Knowledge Translation and Transfer

2023

Rural economic development practitioners are at the front line of facilitating prosperous rural economies, places, and environments across Ontario. The role of economic development practitioners has greatly evolved since the last comprehensive assessment in the early 2000s. The COVID 19 pandemic has changed how rural economies are organized and how economic development practitioners can support and facilitate rural economies. New information is required to understand the role of the rural economic development practitioners. This knowledge translation and transfer research initiative will examine the role of rural economic development practitioners, determine the key skills and capacities required to succeed in field, identify what knowledge is needed to support rural economic development practitioners and identify the key formats for receiving new knowledge. In achieving these objectives, the initiative will advance rural economic development and rural economies throughout Ontario.

- Scan of Economic Development Job Advertisements in Rural Ontario (2024 | Shayan Madani, Ryan Gibson)
- Plain Language Summary: Rural Economic Development Knowledge Translation and Transfer Project Overview (2023)

Source: <https://ruraldev.ca/ktt-red/>

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