

# **Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Quesnel, BC**

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## Acknowledgements

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In September, our research team visited Quesnel to conduct key informant interviews as part of a larger project looking at the role of voluntarism in aging resource communities. Further interviews were conducted via telephone in November. We wish to thank the local leaders and members of voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as the seniors living in the community who took the time to answer our many questions.

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Prince George  
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## Availability

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Copies of all reports associated with this project have been deposited with the City of Quesnel and at the Quesnel branch of the Cariboo Regional District Library. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed on the Community Development Institute website: <http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/research.html>.

## Project Reports

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- Voluntarism, Ageing and Place: A Critical Review.
- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Quesnel, BC.
- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Tumbler Ridge, BC.

## Contact Information

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Many rural and small town places in northern British Columbia (BC) were established and designed to attract young families. Since the 1980s, however, the population of these communities has been aging. In 1981, the population composition of Quesnel reflected the typical pattern found in resource dependent regions where the majority of the workforce was concentrated between 15 and 39 years of age. The aging workforce aged 45 and over represented 11% in the 1981 Census; a total of 2.9% of the population were aged 65 and over. Since then, Quesnel's population has been aging, and the 2006 Census data shows that 44.6% of the population is now aged 45 and over, and the seniors' population aged 65 and over has grown to 15.1%, while decreasing numbers of children and young adults indicate out-migration of young families (Statistics Canada, Census 1981 and 2006).

These developments produce changing and evolving community interests, and new service and support needs in Quesnel. At the same time, the voluntary sector has taken on an increasingly important role in addressing local support needs.

This report is part of a larger project that examines the role of the voluntary sector in supporting older residents as well as the influence of seniors and volunteer organizations on community development in aging resource communities. Addressing service gaps is important, especially in the unique context of Canada's resource hinterland where the social dynamics of economic restructuring have created the relatively new phenomenon of resource frontier aging in communities that have never dealt with population aging before. The project looks at the potential of the voluntary sector as an individual and community response to the opportunities and challenges of population aging in resource communities. This report provides preliminary information about the dimensions of voluntarism in BC's aging resource towns to establish the empirical foundation for further phases of the project. The project is based out of the UNBC Community Development Institute in collaboration with Mark Skinner at Trent University and Alun Joseph at the University of Guelph.

**Table 1.1      Timeline**

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<b>August 2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project proposal completed</li><li>• UNBC Research Ethics Board process completed</li><li>• Project beginning</li><li>• Identification of potential key informants</li></ul>
<b>September 2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organization and scheduling of interviews</li><li>• Conducting local interviews</li></ul>
<b>October 2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summary notes reviewed by participants</li></ul>
<b>November 2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conducting telephone interviews</li><li>• Summary notes reviewed by participants</li><li>• Completion of analysis</li></ul>
<b>December 2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completion of preliminary scan report</li></ul>

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## **2.0 Methodology: Preliminary Scans**

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As part of the larger UNBC-Trent-Guelph project, Quesnel and Tumbler Ridge were selected as potential case studies in BC to examine the role of volunteer groups and older residents in supporting community development in aging resource communities. Preliminary scans, involving key informant interviews, were carried-out to establish the suitability of Quesnel and Tumbler Ridge as case study sites.

### **2.1 Research Ethics**

The key informant interviews involved interactions with local residents. Project information, consent forms, and interview guides were presented to UNBC's Research Ethics Board for review before commencement of the interview scheduling.

Prior to each interview, a consent form was reviewed and signed by each participant to ensure they understood the purposes of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were provided with their own copy of the consent form (Appendix 1). This form also outlined how their anonymity and confidentiality would be protected throughout the process and in the analysis to ensure that there are no linkages between the data and individuals.

### **2.2 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews with local leaders, representatives from voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as with older residents were conducted in Quesnel on September 19, 2011 and via telephone in November 2011. A copy of the interview guide is attached (Appendix 2). The purpose was to collect general information about the implications of recent demographic and socioeconomic changes in the community, and in the interviews, we examined the role that voluntary organizations, community groups, and volunteers play in supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities, as well as seniors' roles in community development. Questions were structured to address the following areas:

- community dimensions of aging,
- the role of voluntary groups in addressing seniors' needs,
- the role of voluntarism in community transformation in general, and
- best practices and key challenges to support the work of these groups.

Key informants were drawn from seniors' community groups, service providers, businesses, and local government in order to obtain views from people actively engaged in the voluntary sector and in seniors' issues. The key informants were selected from publicly available lists. A total of 14 interviews were conducted with 15 residents of Quesnel.

Potential interview participants were contacted by telephone to describe the project and to ask if they would be willing to participate. For those willing and available to participate in the in-person interviews, we arranged a meeting at a time and place convenient for the participant. Locations included public places, work places, and participants' homes according to their preference and availability. Telephone interviews were scheduled according to participants'

convenience. Prior to the interview, participants were again advised about the purpose of the research, the protection of their confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Signed consent forms were collected at the in-person interviews. For telephone interviews, consent forms were discussed prior to the interview, and participants faxed or emailed scanned files of the signed form to the CDI before the scheduled phone call. During the interview, the interviewer took handwritten notes and, with the consent of the participant, recorded the interview with a digital recording device. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes on average. Following the interviews, the researchers produced written files of the notes and provided each participant with a digital copy of the draft notes of their interview, allowing a two-week time period for feedback. This was to ensure that all responses were accurately captured in the notes. All participants received a copy of the final project report.

### **2.3 Analysis**

Notes from all interviews were compiled into one text file with codes protecting participant identities. Using qualitative analysis, patterns and themes were identified, coded, and categorized. Once categories were established, the responses were tallied and sorted to reflect the dominance of themes throughout the interviews. In the data tables, categories are underlined, and the number in parentheses next to each category indicates the total number of participant responses captured in that category. Under each category, the individual responses are listed, again with numbers in parentheses indicating the number of participants who identified each response. Tables from some questions are not included in the report but will inform the community contact database for later phases of this project. In the results discussion of this report, data tables and a detailed description of the issues and topics captured in the tables are provided.

### **2.4 The Participants**

General breakdowns of interview participants by age, employment status, and occupation are shown in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. Participants ranged in age from under 50 to over 70. The largest group was in their 60s, and one third of the participants were over 70. While retirement was the most prominent occupation among the participants, a number of other occupations were also featured.

**Table 2.1 Participant age**

<b>Years of age</b>	<b>Total # of participants</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under 50	2	13.3
50 to 59	1	6.7
60 to 69	7	46.7
70 or older	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0

**Table 2.2 Employment status**

	<b>Total # of participants</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Employed	4	26.7
Self-employed	1	6.7
Retired	10	66.7
Total	15	100.1

**Table 2.3 Participant occupation**

Retirement (10)  
 Public service (3)  
 Agriculture (1)  
 Culture and education (1)  
 Economic development (1)  
 Retail (1)  
 Tourism (1)

Note: Multiple occupations per person are possible.

The majority of participants were long-term residents (Table 2.4). This reflects population trends, which indicate that young working families of the 1980s have remained in Quesnel and are aging in place. Findings in Table 2.5 demonstrate that the most prominent reasons for moving to Quesnel were employment or spouses' employment, followed by family ties in the area. Finally, Table 2.6 indicates that participants are actively involved in local organizations.



**Table 2.4 Length of residency in Quesnel**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total # of participants</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 10	2	13.3
10 to 19	1	6.7
20 to 29	1	6.7
30 to 39	8	53.3
40 or more	3	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.5 Reasons for moving to Quesnel**

Employment (8)  
 Spouse's employment (4)  
 Family or spouse (3)  
 Affordable lifestyle (1)  
 Attractiveness of Quesnel (1)  
 Parent's employment (1)  
 Retirement (1)

**Table 2.6 Volunteer membership in local organizations**

<b># of organizations</b>	<b>Total # of participants</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0 to 3	7	46.7
4 to 6	5	33.3
7 +	3	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Not including past memberships.  
 Four of the participants received stipends for some of their roles in the community.

### 3.0 Preliminary Results

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This section outlines the most significant findings from the key informant interviews in Quesnel.

#### 3.1 Community Dimensions of Aging

Population aging has numerous implications for community development as seniors have specific service and support needs, interests, and contributions to the community. Therefore, participants were asked to elaborate on the importance of aging in community development. Participants generally agreed that aging is important in community development. Recognition of the need to incorporate the needs of the aging population in community planning and service provision was clearly reflected by the participants, including specific attention to mobility and accessibility. Many different aspects were identified that described the connections between aging and community participation. Participants noted the high level of seniors' active involvement in voluntary and community activities. While seniors are considered an asset to the community, the voluntary sector is facing recruitment challenges among younger generations. In terms of population dynamics, the growth of the seniors' population has been influenced by family ties, climate, real estate prices, and personal preferences.

**Table 3.1 Importance of aging in community development**

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Planning and services (15):

- Aging calls for planning for specific services and infrastructure (6)
- Seniors need appropriate transportation to access supports (2)
- Aging brings mobility challenges (1)
- Aging calls for accessibility standards (1)
- New housing is not geared towards seniors' needs (1)
- Seniors' care and related services create a common language (1)
- Seniors' supports and activities are to be promoted (1)
- Seniors often have to rely on family, friends, and neighbours (1)
- Services often target the whole community (1)

Community participation (11):

- Young seniors are caring for older seniors (2)
- Aging is connected to large scope of volunteering organizations (1)
- Aging leads to struggles in finding new volunteers; younger generation less involved (1)
- Baby boomers constitute large population group with political influence (1)
- Retired professionals are active and give input in development (1)
- Seniors are assets for the community (1)
- Seniors are driving forces (1)
- Seniors are part of our heritage (1)
- Seniors are part of the bigger picture of a community (1)
- Seniors make up a large part of local leadership (1)

Community dynamics (10):

- Seniors' population is growing (5)
- Seniors stay close to their families (2)
- Many seniors leave for the winter (1)
- Seniors cannot afford to sell their homes due to low real estate prices (1)
- Seniors prefer to stay in Quesnel (1)

General (7):

- Aging is important (7)

Other (1):

- Seniors are perceived to not spend much money (1)
- 

After having elaborated on the importance of aging in community development in general, participants were asked to describe the effects of aging on local community development (Table 3.2). Participants identified policy and planning initiatives that have improved accessibility. It was also mentioned that Quesnel has been marketed as an affordable retirement town, while participants noted a trend to download service and support responsibilities to community groups. In terms of service and infrastructure changes, it was noted that some care and support services currently fall short of meeting seniors' and their families' needs, especially in the realm of medical care and planning for the specific care needs of an aging population. Meanwhile, efforts have been undertaken, in part by seniors themselves, to respond to the situation by expanding care facilities and organizing seniors' service groups.

**Table 3.2 Population aging in local community development**

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Policy / planning changes (14):

- Accessibility standard improvements (8)
- Quesnel is marketed as an affordable retirement town (3)
- Downloading of responsibilities to community groups (2)
- Growing seniors' population addressed in Official Community Plan (1)

Lack of service / infrastructure changes (10):

- Nothing / not much has changed yet (2)
- Home support needs unmet (1)
- Lack of business interest in seniors' needs (1)
- Limited access to regular medical services; e.g. dialysis (1)
- Limited care facility capacity (1)
- Local development appears to focus on the younger population (1)
- Not prepared for aging and related diseases (1)
- Not prepared for social issues and housing needs (1)
- Limited evening / weekend transportation (1)

Service / infrastructure changes (5):

- Care facilities were expanded (3)
- Seniors providing seniors' services (1)
- Seniors' service organizations; OAPO and Quesnel and District Seniors' Society (1)

Other (1):

- Considerable senior involvement in local history work (1)
- 

In order to complement these community development considerations and to include the reciprocity component of aging in community development, the following two questions encouraged participants to name specific efforts targeting seniors in Quesnel and to elaborate on the nature and extent of seniors' involvement in the community. Table 3.3 summarizes and categorizes a wide range of past local efforts in response to seniors' needs and interests, while Table 3.4 is a listing of seniors' active involvement in broader community development initiatives.

**Table 3.3 Past local efforts targeted towards seniors**

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<p><u>Services and service organizations (33):</u>  Home support / care facilities / housing (7)  Palliative care unit (4)  Seniors' Centre provides venue for events and services; e.g. foot clinic (4)  Old Age Pensioners' Organization (3)  Seniors' Advocacy Service (3)  Meals on Wheels (2)  Quesnel and District Seniors' Society (2)  Age-friendly business workshops on provincial and federal levels (1)  CAT scan was obtained for hospital through volunteer fundraising (1)  Lions Club and Seniors' Advocacy Service addressed handicapped parking (1)  Measuring up the North (1)  Seniors' computer literacy with support from New Horizons (1)  Social Services workshops address seniors' topics (1)  UNBC distance education addresses mature students' needs (1)  Volunteer Citizen of the Year usually seniors; provides recognition (1)</p> <p><u>Recreation and socializing (15):</u>  Rotary Club outings (4)  Bouchie Lake Community Assoc. outing (1)  City and Seniors' Advocacy Service host seniors activities on Canada Day (1)  City and Seniors' Advocacy Service host seniors activities at Billy Barker Days (1)  Engagement between seniors and Museum (1)  Indoor walking track at the soccer complex (1)  Life Line outings (1)</p>	<p>Miss Quesnel and her ambassadors engage with seniors (1)  Outdoor exercise equipment donated by Noon Hour Rotary (1)  Red Hat Society outings (1)  Targeted exercise programs at Rec. Centre (1)  Try Out Sports Day and Winter Sports Day (1)</p> <p><u>Infrastructure (12):</u>  Accessibility improvements of downtown infrastructure (3)  Accessibility improvements of parks and trails for outdoor recreation (2)  HandyDART has been established (2)  Public transit improvements and assistance program for seniors (2)  Accessibility of Farmers' Market (1)  Development of affordable housing options for seniors (1)  City contributed to painting the Seniors' Centre parking lot (1)</p> <p><u>Gaps (8):</u>  Waiting lists for care facilities (3)  Business owner retirement creates pressures on younger generations (1)  Changing community demographics bring changes in interests / priorities (1)  Discontinuation of geriatric care unit at the hospital (1)  Families are pressured to fill care gaps and experience financial burdens (1)  Lacking dialysis (1)  Need to experience the system to understand gaps (1)</p>
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Table 3.3 shows an array of Quesnel community groups and service organizations whose efforts target seniors and their needs. The most prominent ones refer to housing and care facilities, but there are also numerous voluntary sector service providers and supports, many of them addressing medical issues, life skills, and seniors' needs advocacy.

Recreation and socializing opportunities targeting seniors are organized by a wide variety of service clubs and organizations. Infrastructure improvements, especially accessibility improvements to downtown streets, were mentioned by many participants. Infrastructure improvements have also encompassed outdoor recreation sites, transportation, venues and events, and housing. The City has, furthermore, provided support for community groups to

enhance their facilities. Future initiatives for the benefit of seniors should address gaps in care facilities and services, the need for support in business succession planning, and the need to further integrate seniors and their families' needs in community development.

With their accumulated knowledge, experiences, networks, and spare time, seniors can make substantial contributions to community development. Table 3.4 lists a wide variety of organizations in which seniors are involved for the benefit of the broader community. These organizations cover a range of community services and activities for all ages, including health, environmental, recreational, arts and culture, sports, community supports, social, and emergency services.

In the context of local capacity, participants commented on the importance of seniors for local clubs, organizations, and activities. Apart from the long list of organizations, there are a number of projects and initiatives that depend on seniors' involvement, including communication, fundraising, activities, and new facilities.

**Table 3.4 Local seniors' involvement in community development and social planning**

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<p><u>Service organizations and clubs with considerable senior membership (42):</u>          Rotary Clubs (6)          Billy Barker Days Society (4)          Quesnel and District Seniors' Society and Seniors' Centre (4)          Palliative Care Association (3)          Churches (2)          Volunteer Citizens of the Year often seniors (2)          Air Quality Roundtable (1)          Arts Council (1)          Choir (1)          Communities in Bloom (1)          Eastern Star (1)          Friends of the Museum (1)          Harvest and other agricultural clubs (1)          Heritage Commission (1)          Horse shoe pit (1)          Lawn and carpet bowling (1)          Lions Club (1)          Live Arts Group (1)          Local leadership (1)          Many volunteer groups (1)          Old Age Pensioners' Organization (1)          Quesnel / District Antique Machinery Park (1)          Quesnel Community Foundation (1)          Red Hat Society (1)          Royal Canadian Legion (1)          Salvation Army (1)          Seniors' Advocacy Service (1)</p> <p><u>Capacity (22):</u>          Most service clubs are run by seniors (4)</p>	<p>A lot of seniors are very active (3)          Many got involved as young people / remain active (3)          Recruitment pressures on seniors (2)          Seniors have more time to volunteer (2)          Seniors 'volunteer' a lot of their time for their families (2)          Churches have more involvement from young people through schools (1)          Clubs and churches slowing down with aging membership (1)          Seniors have lots of experience (1)          Seniors' volunteer efforts are often geared towards the entire community (1)          Seniors 'volunteer' their time in support of their families (1)          Whole community to step up for seniors (1)</p> <p><u>Projects and initiatives (15):</u>          Writing in newspaper, newsletter, books (3)          CAT scan fundraiser (2)          Theatre / Multicentre fundraising (2)          BC Day and Canada Day (1)          Dunrovin Lodge Care Facility originally promoted by Royal Canadian Legion (1)          Exercise programs (1)          Fundraiser for Japanese partner city Shiraoi (1)          Local history projects (1)          Seniors' luncheon (1)          Soccer Complex committee (1)          Volunteers at care facilities for entertainment or socializing (1)</p>
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Participants identified a number of voluntary sector service providers attuned to seniors' needs (Table 3.5). Health care providers are also featured. The breadth of available seniors' services and supports demonstrates an awareness of population aging among many organizations.

**Table 3.5 Local groups attuned to population aging**

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Quesnel and District Seniors' Society (7)	Kinsmen (1)
Royal Canadian Legion and Ladies' Auxiliary (7)	Knights of Columbus (1)
Seniors' Advocacy Service (7)	Local government (1)
Palliative Care Association (6)	Measuring up the North (1)
Rotary Clubs (6)	Native Friendship Centre (1)
Northern Health Authority (5)	North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Society (1)
Old Age Pensioners' Organization (4)	Quesnel Women's Resource Centre (1)
Lions Club (3)	Retired Nurses' Association (1)
Seniors residences and care facilities (2)	Retired Teachers' Association (1)
Some merchants (2)	Social Services (1)
Amata Transition House (1)	
Churches (1)	<u>Not responding to seniors' needs (1):</u>
Elks (1)	No awareness of local government or business initiatives (1)
Farmers' Market (1)	
Kidney Foundation (1)	

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The final question to participants in this section aimed to provide an overview of local perceptions of what was special about growing older in Quesnel. Table 3.6 portrays a positive picture of Quesnel as a place of residency for an aging population. While some participants felt there is a lack of medical services, the majority expressed their satisfaction with the services available in Quesnel, complemented by access to regional services. The availability of amenities and services in general, and the friendly and caring character of the community were also prominent responses. Furthermore, housing affordability; a breadth of recreational, cultural, and entertainment opportunities; a range of sports and outdoor oriented activities; and a diverse community profile were noted as assets for the aging population and the community as a whole. Local and regional transportation infrastructure was identified as an asset by some, while limitations of the transportation system were also pointed out. Winters were recognized as challenging for older residents, but the climate with four distinct seasons was also perceived as an attraction. The proximity to Prince George was often mentioned as an asset in terms of service accessibility. The out-migration of young families was noted to have changed the fabric of the community and should be an important consideration in community development.



**Table 3.6 Growing older in Quesnel**

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Positive comments (54):

Good range of medical services / accessibility of out-of-town specialists (8)  
A lot of amenities and services (6)  
Friendly and caring community with advocacy and supports (5)  
Affordable housing and living (4)  
Four seasons (3)  
Small town character (3)  
Arts and entertainment (2)  
Good place for those who are healthy (2)  
Outdoor sports-mindedness (2)  
Stable community, not transient like other resource towns (2)  
Walking trails (2)  
A lot of seniors seem to have moved here for retirement (1)  
Bus system available (1)  
Climate better than Prince George / Northern BC (1)  
Corporations invest in community (1)  
Family-ties keep many seniors in Quesnel (1)  
Good quality of life (1)  
Indoor recreation and exercise facilities and opportunities (1)  
Library (1)  
Museum (1)  
Northern Health Bus (1)  
People who move south often come back (1)  
Plenty of organized activities (1)  
Post-secondary education (1)  
There are many walks of life (1)  
Well connected through airport (1)

Negative comments (13):

Harsh winter challenges, including isolation and injury (4)  
Accessibility issues at grocery stores (1)  
Low real estate prices do not allow seniors to sell their homes and move away (1)  
Lack of doctors and specialists (1)  
Limited access to transportation (1)  
Many people leave for the winter (1)  
Many seniors of the Indo-Canadian community follow their children south (1)  
People do not get old here (1)  
Poor air quality (1)  
Quesnel is feared to become suburb of Prince George (1)

Neutral comments (1):

Not sure that it is different (1)

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### 3.2 Voluntarism and Community Transformation

In rural and small town communities, the voluntary sector takes on many roles to help residents respond to the opportunities and challenges associated with community change. As such, participants were asked about the role of the voluntary sector in the community and how this has influenced life in Quesnel.

**Table 3.7 Voluntary sector influence on community development**

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<p><u>Community supports (26):</u>          Filling support / community needs gaps (10)          Health care / safety (8)          Community needs advocacy (4)          Getting ‘gate keepers’ (1)          Service clubs / ad hoc fundraising (2)          Low-income supports (1)</p>	<p><u>Community economic development (17):</u>          Added attractions / enhanced reputation (5)          Availability of amenities (4)          Community progress / making things happen (3)          Attracting residents / professionals (2)          Beautification (2)          Project-based initiatives (1)</p>
<p><u>Social / recreation opportunities (19):</u>          Culture / arts / entertainment (7)          Activities (7)          Events (3)          Sports (2)</p>	<p><u>Infrastructure (10):</u>          Key structures / facilities (8)          Go-to bodies / information sharing (1)          Residential care expansion (1)</p>

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As Table 3.7 demonstrates, participants felt that the voluntary sector played an important role in supporting community development. The majority of participants reported that volunteer services fill gaps and respond to, and advocate, community needs. Health care and safety were further areas where the voluntary sector provides community supports. In the area of social and recreational opportunities, culture, arts, and entertainment as well as other activities were recognized as being largely carried by voluntary groups. The voluntary sector was also perceived as having considerable influence on community economic development by effectively creating an environment that enhances Quesnel’s reputation and attracts residents and professionals. Finally, key facilities in Quesnel have often been the results of volunteer work and have greatly enhanced the local infrastructure.

As Table 3.8 shows, local groups are perceived to have had a significant impact on what it is like to live in Quesnel. The most prominent impression is that voluntarism has improved the quality of life. Moreover, opportunities for socializing and community involvement, as well as the character of Quesnel are thought to be framed by, and based on, the voluntary sector, which has created a helpful, caring, proud, active, cohesive, inclusive, and interested community.

**Table 3.8 Achievements and benefits of local volunteer efforts**

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Better quality of life (7)	Volunteering is enjoyable experience (2)
Opportunities for socializing (5)	Active community (1)
Framework / mindset to help (3)	Inclusive of the whole family (1)
Giving / caring community (2)	Increased industry engagement (1)
Happiness / pride (2)	Increased interest /access to local politics (1)
Opportunities for active involvement (2)	Outdoor lifestyle (1)
Sense of community (2)	

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### 3.3 Knowledge Transfer and Best Practices

The final part of the interview was designed to discuss what makes certain voluntary groups and leaders successful and how challenges can impede the work of seniors and voluntary groups in Quesnel. Table 3.9 is a list of personal attitudinal assets, skill sets, and practices that make volunteers successful and effective. Beyond attitudes and skills, these success factors stress the importance of communication and coordination, mutual support, small town networking, health, organizational and personal finances, and management of realistic expectations.

**Table 3.9 Volunteer success factors**

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Motivation / looking for improvement (7)	Good health (1)
Education / experience / skills (5)	Gratefulness (1)
People / mix of people (4)	Inspiration in working with like-minded people (1)
Awareness of needs (3)	Interest (1)
Networking (3)	Involvement in multiple initiatives (1)
Spirit of helping (3)	Keeping community and government informed (1)
Tenacity (3)	Knowing each other in a small town (1)
Conviction (2)	Membership support (1)
Effective communication / interpersonal skills (2)	Multiple memberships provide insight (1)
Perseverance (2)	Organizational support (1)
Persistence (2)	Personal financial security (1)
Combination of approaches (1)	Positive and realistic presentation (1)
Community spirit (1)	Recognition of efforts (1)
Cooperation (1)	Realistic goals (1)
Coordination (1)	The few who stand up are successful (1)
Dedication (1)	Thick skin (1)
Generating community support (1)	

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**Table 3.10 Barriers**

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<p><u>Human resources (20):</u>          Memberships decreasing (4)          Burnout (3)          Challenge to find the right skills, esp. for grant applications (2)          Some seniors are tired / don't want to be involved all the time (2)          Community restructuring has led to loss of young families / pool of volunteers (1)          Computer illiteracy (1)          Hearing / visual impairments among seniors (1)          Lack of new generation of volunteers leads to discontinuation of events / programs (1)          Membership turnover interrupts momentum (1)          Need more specialized capacity (1)          Seniors' health issues (1)          Seniors move / travel south for the winter (1)          Summer travel interferes with meetings and continuity of activities (1)</p> <p><u>Organizational finances (12):</u>          Decreasing availability of public funds (8)          Cost of catering for fundraisers (1)          Financial management (1)          Fundraiser attendance decreasing (1)          Large organizational successes happen at the cost of smaller events and organizations (1)</p> <p><u>Attitudes (9):</u>          Less volunteers / volunteer spirit among younger generations (5)          Young people are more likely to commit short-term to skill-based tasks or projects (3)          Individuals striving for too much control (1)</p> <p><u>Operations (9):</u>          Internal / inter-agency coordination (3)          Competition and discord prevents sharing locations / attention / financial means (2)</p>	<p>Internal / inter-agency communication (2)          Communication with community (1)          Service duplication (1)</p> <p><u>Personal finances (8):</u>          Time constraints (3)          Income (2)          Cost of event admission (1)          Cost of transportation (1)          Membership fees (1)</p> <p><u>Policies / regulations (7):</u>          Frustration with bureaucracy / long timelines (2)          Complicated building maintenance and insurance policies (1)          Lack of planning on municipal levels (1)          Less volunteer involvement in health care due to provincial regulations (1)          Limitations due to union regulations (1)          Municipal interference with volunteer organizations / lack of confidence (1)          Struggles with Health Authority due to lack of community engagement mechanism (1)</p> <p><u>Infrastructure (4):</u>          Lack of evening transportation / senior transportation solutions (3)          Cost of venues (1)</p> <p><u>Other (4):</u>          Dependence on volunteers (1)          Food quality / portioning concerns related to seniors' health (1)          Invisibility of seniors / their needs in the community (1)          Need more recognition for all volunteers / volunteer tax credit (1)</p>
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Finally, participants discussed challenges to supporting the work of seniors and voluntary groups in the community (Table 3.10). The most prominent challenge concerned human resources. In terms of membership and recruitment struggles among voluntary organizations, burnout, shortage of certain skill sets, and a decreasing pool of volunteers among younger generations stand out. Organizational finances are a challenge, especially due to decreases in available public funds. Closely linked to the above mentioned volunteer shortage, attitudinal barriers are felt by many organizations as the volunteer spirit appears to be less developed in the younger

generations, and a trend from long-term commitment to project-based commitment is affecting and changing the operations of volunteer organizations. With regards to operations, improved inter-agency coordination and communication was said to have potential to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and reduce service duplication. Beyond, the organizational financial struggles, personal finances related to work schedules and income limitations are perceived to impact the voluntary capacity. Furthermore, participants noted that the bureaucratic burden of policies and regulations causes frustration, limitations, and inefficiencies. Limited transportation, cost of venues for events, and other concerns related to specific types of events were also mentioned as limiting factors. Finally, some participants saw the need for more awareness of seniors' needs and more recognition and support for volunteers to make the voluntary sector more attractive and more effective.

## 4.0 Summary

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This report summarizes preliminary findings about the role of the voluntary sector in responding to the needs of an aging population and about the role of seniors in supporting community development. Key informant interviews with local leaders, representatives from voluntary community groups, and individual volunteers and seniors have outlined a wide range of needs of the aging population. They have also demonstrated that extensive efforts are being undertaken in Quesnel to accommodate seniors' needs. The large number and breadth of voluntary organizations and their involvement and influence in the community show the importance of the voluntary sector in both responding to seniors' needs and community development initiatives.

An aging workforce and an older generation of seniors have several implications for local community development. The aging workforce combined with a decrease in young families calls for succession planning in local businesses and industries. At the same time, community needs for services, supports, and care are changing, and this especially relates to older seniors and their specific medical and home care needs.

Seniors play a crucial role in Quesnel's voluntary sector. They are acknowledged to be the driving forces in most voluntary organizations as they are able to invest time. Their generation has a deeply ingrained sense of the value of voluntarism, and they are aware of seniors' community needs and respond to them.

Community needs are evolving with population aging. Continued awareness of, and attention to, seniors' needs, including the distinct needs of each generation of seniors, will be an integral aspect of community development planning. Given the reported recruitment challenges of voluntary groups, incentives for volunteering and support for voluntary sector capacity building are crucial. It will also be important to invest support and funding into the voluntary sector to support its continued role in community development.

## References

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Statistics Canada. 1981. *Census*.

-----, 2006. *Census*.

## CDI Documents of Interest

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All Community Development Institute publications are available at <http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/>.

### New Rural Economy

Halseth, G. and L. Ryser. 2006. *Innovative Services and Voluntary Organizations: Project Report*. Montreal, QC: Initiative on the New Economy, project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, Concordia University.

<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg/publications/NewRuralEconomyProject/InnovServ2005FinalReport.pdf>

Halseth, G. and L. Ryser. 2006. *Innovative Services and Voluntary Organizations: Executive Summary Report*. Montreal, QC: Initiative on the New Economy, project of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, Concordia University.

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### Quesnel 2020 Project

The Quesnel 2020 Project was an initiative of the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation (QCEDC) designed to address the significant economic and social opportunities and challenges facing the community by envisioning a desirable economic future and mapping out a clear and practical strategy to get there. CDI Director Greg Halseth assisted the Quesnel 2020 Project Team. This project is being updated through an integrated community sustainability planning exercise.

<http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/research.html>

<http://www.quesnel.ca/Sustainability.html>

### Seniors' Needs Across Northern BC

The Community Development Institute has undertaken a number of projects examining seniors' needs across northern BC: <http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/seniorhtml.html>.

## **Service Industry Sector Project**

Manson, D. 2008. *Northern British Columbia Service Industry Sector Study: Solutions Report*. Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia.  
[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/research/service\\_canada\\_solutions\\_report\\_w\\_logos.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/research/service_canada_solutions_report_w_logos.pdf)

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[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/extracting\\_the\\_value\\_draft\\_1.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/extracting_the_value_draft_1.pdf)

Ryser, L., K. Kusch, G. Halseth, and D. Manson. 2008. *Northern British Columbia Service Industry Sector Study: Population Background and Trends Report*. Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia.  
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## **United Way**

Halseth, G., L. Ryser, and D. Manson. 2009. *Planning Future Strategic Directions: Addressing the Service Gap: Northern BC Summary Report*. United Way; Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia.  
[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/uw\\_northern\\_bc\\_summary\\_report.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/uw_northern_bc_summary_report.pdf)

## **Voluntarism and Ageing in Place**

Giesbrecht, K., M. Skinner, G. Halseth, N. Hanlon, and A. Joseph. 2010. *Voluntarism, Ageing and Place: A Critical Review*. University of Northern British Columbia; Trent University; University of Guelph.  
[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/research/giesbrecht\\_et\\_al\\_2010\\_voluntarism\\_ageing\\_place.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/research/giesbrecht_et_al_2010_voluntarism_ageing_place.pdf)

Schwamborn, J., L. Ryser, N. Hanlon, and G. Halseth. 2011. *The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities: Integrating People, Place, and Community - Final Report: Tumbler Ridge, BC*. Community Development Institute, UNBC.

## **Health Care**

Skinner, M., N. Hanlon, and G. Halseth. 2011. Health and Social Care Issues in Aging Resource Communities. In: J. Kulig and A. Williams (Eds.), *Health in Rural Canada*, pp. 462-480. Vancouver: UBC Press.

## **Appendix 1 Interview Consent Form**

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## Interview Consent Form

This research project examines the role that voluntary organizations, community groups and volunteers play in both supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities. The project involves interviews and focus groups with local leaders, representatives from voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as with individual volunteers and older people living in Quesnel. The primary source of information for this phase of the project is from interviews about the implications of recent population and socioeconomic change in the community, and the role of the voluntary sector in addressing the implications of these changes. **Please note that you are being asked to speak from your own personal perspective rather than on behalf of an organization.** We are asking permission to record the information so that we can transcribe your responses verbatim. The interview recording will be transcribed by a member of the research team based at UNBC. The project is based out of the UNBC Community Development Institute in collaboration with researchers at Trent University and University of Guelph in Ontario, and has been approved by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. Only members of the research team will have access to the transcribed interview.

**I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please insert your name) have read the attached Letter of Information and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in an interview under the following conditions:**

1. I understand that my involvement in the project consists of a one-on-one interview of between 45 and 60 minutes.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can refuse any question.
3. I understand that I can terminate my participation in the interview at anytime and any information provided by me to the research project will be destroyed.
4. I understand that my name and identifying information likely to identify me will not be used in any presentation or publication of the research.
5. I understand that all information from the interview will be kept in a secure location at UNBC restricted to Dr. Neil Hanlon and his research collaborators.
6. I agree that the interview can be recorded (please circle):                      Yes              No
7. I agree that my responses may be quoted verbatim (please circle):              Yes              No
8. I understand that I can contact Dr. Neil Hanlon (phone: 250-960-5881, email: hanlon@unbc.ca) or the UNBC Office of Research (phone 250-960-6735, email: reb@unbc.ca) with any questions or concerns about the research project.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2 Interview Guide**

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## Interview Guide

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### **Section 1 – Baseline information about population dynamics and socioeconomic change**

- 1.1 How old are you?
- 1.2 How long have you lived in Q?
- 1.3 What brought you here (e.g., work, retirement, family)?
- 1.4 Are you presently working? If so, in what capacity?
- 1.5 Do you belong to local clubs, committees, associations, etc.? If so, what is your role?

### **Section 2 – Community dimensions of aging**

- 2.1 In your opinion, is population aging an important consideration in social and community development?
- 2.2 How has population aging changed local approaches to community development?
- 2.3 Can you think of recent or past examples of local efforts targeted to local seniors?
- 2.4 Are local seniors active in community development and social planning initiatives? If so, please provide examples.
- 2.5 In your opinion, which local groups (business, government, health care, etc.) are most attuned to issues of population aging?
- 2.6 Is there anything different or special about growing older in Q? If so, please elaborate.

### **Section 3 – Role of voluntarism in personal and community transformation for seniors**

- 3.1 Thinking about the voluntary sector (e.g., non-profit organizations, local clubs), are there individuals and groups who stand out in your mind as actively engaged in support of local seniors?
- 3.2 Are there older individuals in town who strike you as particularly active in voluntary efforts to improve community and social development in general (i.e., not necessarily geared towards services for seniors only).

#### **Section 4 – Role of voluntarism in community transformation more generally**

4.1. From your perspective, how does the work of voluntary groups and voluntary sector leaders influence community development in Q?

4.2 In what ways, if any, have the efforts of local voluntary groups changed what it is like to live in Q?

#### **Section 5– Knowledge transfer and best practices**

5.1 Can you think of examples of voluntary sector leaders or innovators who are most effective in creating positive change, getting things done?

5.2 Can you think of examples of initiatives, events, committees, groups, etc. who have been particularly good at getting things done on behalf of seniors, and community development more generally?

5.3 Thinking of these examples of effective change-makers, what are some of the factors you think are responsible for these successes?

5.4 Are there any barriers / changes needed to more effectively support the role of seniors in community development?

5.5 Do you have any further comments regarding the role of volunteering in aging resource communities?