

North First Initiative:
Building Toward a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster

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This report is based on the interviews conducted during the course of the North First Initiative Project. The content of the report is the sole responsibility of the authors.

Don Manson and Greg Halseth
September 2008

Availability

Copies of the North First Initiative Project are available in a number of locations. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Geoffrey R. Weller Library or can be accessed on the Community Development Institute website: <http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/research.html>

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North First Initiative Project: Final Report

Project Description

To begin addressing the very real needs of our northern communities, there are a number of steps which UNBC can take in the short and long terms towards building a “Northern BC Research and Development Cluster”. Based upon our experience, the cluster would need to be a collaborative exercise involving UNBC as well as the northern colleges. The breadth of facilities, staff, and expertise each could bring to bear in everything from trades training to small business development to research capacity can help address the breadth of needs in northern communities.

A Northern BC Research and Development Cluster would need to address a number of functions:

- The first component involves research work.
- The second component is information sharing (or knowledge mobilization in current funding agency lingo). Many of our northern communities are interested in ‘doing’ rather than ‘studying’. Thus, information sharing can effectively translate existing knowledge into useable material for northern communities.
- The third component is capacity building, including a yet to be determined range of training and educational courses in targeted locales around emerging issues.

To begin moving towards a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster, the CDI extended its the fall, winter, and spring community consultations in order to probe critical needs in our northern communities around ‘what they need to know’ and ‘what they would like the University to do’ with respect to supporting community development action. The resulting report provides a framework for aligning UNBC’s strengths and capacities with community needs.

Background

The purpose of this project was to conduct community-based interviews in UNBC's service region. Across community landscapes that are experiencing increasing pressures from social, demographic, economic, and political change, part of UNBC's mandate has been to provide needed education and research services. This project was undertaken at the request of UNBC's Vice-President and Provost as part of an initiative to better connect UNBC's activities with the needs of its service region. Two basic questions drive the interviews: "what do our communities need to know?" and "what would they like the university to do?"

The project interviewed people with experience in local government, regional district government, First Nations, chambers of commerce, local educational offices, social service agencies, community futures development corporations, and local economic development sectors.

Introduction

The creation of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is unique in that it was in response to a grassroots movement to create a university “in the north, for the north”. The relationship between UNBC and the communities of northern BC reflects the university’s creation. In meeting with participants, they reflected very strongly their sense of pride in, and feeling of ‘ownership’ of, UNBC.

With increasing choices, especially with the creation of “new” universities, communities continue to look to their university, UNBC, for leadership and guidance. To the participants we interviewed, a university “in the north for the north”, is a statement of fact. Not just a motto or a slogan.

This strong commitment to UNBC by its communities is a double-edged sword. The support from our communities is unmatched in Canada. However, UNBC is faced with unique challenges. Our service area encompasses approximately 60% of the province. Beyond the enormity of the geography, there is a diverse and complex mix of communities who are struggling to understand and react to an ever increasing pace of change. For UNBC this creates opportunities, challenges, expectations, and responsibilities.

As UNBC enters its 14th year of full operation it is an appropriate time to review, reflect, and revitalize our relationship with our communities.

In his report, “The Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead”, Geoff Plant identifies UNBC as one of the four “research intensive universities” (Plant, 75). Plant further states that “Our research-intensive institutions must continue to be the key incubators of the innovation needed to address our most pressing social and environmental challenges and to develop a strong economy” (Plant, 78). This creates a provincial policy platform that the communities of northern British Columbia identified long ago as the motivation for creating UNBC.

To fulfill its mandate as a research intensive university, and its responsibilities as a university in the north for the north, UNBC must create a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster. This undertaking can only be fruitful if it is done in partnership with our communities and in collaboration with the northern colleges.

To accomplish this goal, UNBC must be prepared to commit appropriate human and fiscal resources, and develop appropriate policies to match the commitment and resolve that the people of northern BC devoted to the creation of this university. The people of northern BC are already waiting down that road for us to get there.

Methodology

Selection of Key Informant Interview Participants

The data for this project was collected through key informant interviews, which were conducted between November 2007 and May 2008 (Appendix A). The purpose of the interviews was to provide information relevant for understanding the pressures facing northern BC communities, as well as the research and support needs that are required to assist these places with restructuring processes. A total of 61 key informant interviews were completed.

A breakdown of key informant participants by community is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Distribution of key informant interviews, by community

Community	# of Key Informant Interviews
McBride	6
Mackenzie	4
Prince George	8
Quesnel	4
Williams Lake	4
Vanderhoof	3
Burns Lake	4
Houston	3
Chetwynd	3
Hudson's Hope	2
Fort St. John	3
Dawson Creek	3
Clearwater	3
Prince Rupert	2
Kitimat	1
Terrace	3
Laxgalts'ap (Greenville)	5
Total	61

Source: North First Initiative Project, 2007-2008.

A breakdown of 'key informant' participants by their role within the community is shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Distribution of key informant interviews, by community role

Community	# of Key Informant Interviews
Mayors	5
Municipal Council	3
Municipal Administrators	5
Economic Development Officers	7
Regional District Representatives	4
First Nations Groups	7
Chamber of Commerce	6
Regional Development Agencies	5
Community Futures	3
Innovation Resource Centre	1
Small Business	3
Resource Industry Sector	2
Community Forest	2
Tourism	4
Social Services	6
Total	61

Source: North First Initiative Project, 2007-2008.

Research Ethics

The research conducted by the Community Development Institute is bound by research protocols established by the University of Northern British Columbia. This requires all survey materials be submitted to UNBC’s Research Ethics Board for review and approval. A key component to this protocol is to provide key informant participants with a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) that outlines the purpose of the study; how the research process will protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and that their participation is voluntary.

Key Informant Interview Guide

The purpose of the North First Initiative Project was to understand the research and support needs of northern BC communities. This report assembles key findings from these interviews (Appendix C). Questions that were put forth to research participants covered various issues, including:

- Key social and economic pressures facing northern BC communities;
- What communities need to know to address these challenges; and
- What communities want UNBC to do to assist with their research and support needs.

Interviews were voice recorded and transcribed to ensure the completeness and accuracy of participants' comments.

Key social and economic pressures facing northern BC communities

Forces Leading Change

Mountain Pine Beetle

It should come as no surprise that participants identified the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation as a significant issue leading change in northern BC. Beyond its impact on the forest industry and forest dependant communities people were also concerned about the potential long term impact on the environment. There was concern expressed about the ‘forgotten’ impact of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation on the long term social and mental health of communities.

Global economic forces

While the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation is seen as a leading force for change, participants said that global economic forces, and the rapid pace of change in the resource industries sector brought about by these forces, had the potential to ‘significantly’ change the region and their communities forever. The push for local economic diversification was seen as a result of these forces. Many, however, felt that there was a need for a better understanding about local economic diversification opportunities, and that pressure to diversify was in itself a force for change.

Demographic change

Participants saw the aging of northern BC’s population as a significant force for change. Future workforce issues, as a consequence of the aging population, were seen as a significant concern. Participants saw the aging population as a force for change beyond economics; how these changes would impact on the educational, social and health infrastructure of communities were issues that communities struggled to come to terms with. Several participants voiced concern that focusing too much on the aging population leaves little room to address youth issues. The potential impact of the significant number of young people in First Nation communities was seen as a force for change not only in their home communities but also across the entire region.

Energy issues

Rising fuel costs were seen as a major force for change on everything from recruitment and retention of workers, the potential impact on tourism, the competitiveness of local industries, and the ability of communities to compete for new industries. However, for participants the issue of energy went well beyond the price at the pump. There was concern over access to power, especially industrial power, in the near and long term. Several participants felt that access to power was a ‘sleeper’ issue that could hamper a community’s ability to address the need for economic diversification.

Climate change

As noted above, people are concerned with the potential impact of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation on the environment. Climate change and its potential environmental, economic and social impact on northern communities was another force for change. Many felt the issue of climate change was poorly understood, and how it would impact northern BC communities in the context of how society and governments respond to it.

Infrastructure

The need to invest in the infrastructure of northern BC, whether it be roads, energy grids, community infrastructure (schools, pools, etc), or infrastructure for the ‘digital age’ was seen as a major force for change. Participants often referred to what they saw as a lack of investment as a force hampering a community’s ability to address the forces for change noted above. In cases where infrastructure exists, it is aging and in need of replacement or renovation. While most talked about infrastructure in terms of “bricks and mortar,” several participants talked about the need to renew the social infrastructure in northern BC.

What communities need to know to address the challenges they face

Participants were asked about what communities need to know to help them address the challenges they faced. While individual responses were varied, they can be grouped into several theme areas.

Economy

Building Sustainable Communities

Many participants talked about the need to create more sustainable communities. Several referred to the need to develop a ‘sustainable’ economy for their community. There was very little consensus on what a sustainable community entails. Some focused on sustaining the economy, others talked in terms of the environment, and others referred to it as the survival of their communities. Many argued that there is a need for communities to better understand how to build a sustainable community from an economic, social, and environmental perspective.

Recruitment and retention

Communities are very concerned with issues surrounding recruitment and retention. Many talked about the need for information about what keeps workers and businesses in a community, while others wanted to know about attracting workers and businesses to their community. There was a good understanding that the old approaches to recruitment and retention were ineffective. Participants wanted to know: What new approaches should be taken? How do we know what will really work? Participants saw a need to better understand how to attract immigrant workers and their families, as well as how to best help these new immigrants once they arrived in northern BC.

Sustainable Resource Extraction

Many participants were worried about the future of the forest industry in northern BC. While some were interested in moving beyond forestry, more were interested in how to ‘do’ forestry differently. There was interest in knowing more about value added forest products, including non-timber forest products. Others wanted more information on deriving more value from the natural environment. Mining, its impact on the economy, communities and the environment was suggested as an area where more information is needed, especially from a northern BC perspective. Participants told us that they would like to know about how to engage in resource extraction while avoiding the traditional ‘rollercoaster’ of an economy based on resource extraction.

Energy

Several participants questioned why UNBC did not have a role providing communities with information on the proposed Site C dam. Participants wanted help in understanding and assessing the potential for the use and development of biofuels and alternative energy production. Many participants felt that there needs to be more ‘unbiased’ information

about the potential long term social and environmental implications on northern BC communities of energy development in all its forms.

Transportation

Participants noted that transportation has played an important role in the economic, social, and cultural development of northern BC. They understood that transportation was a ‘pan northern BC’ issue and needed to be addressed in a regional context. However, participants wanted to know how small communities could benefit from these regional rail, port, and pipeline developments. As with energy, participants felt the need for more ‘unbiased’ information about the potential long term social and environmental implications of these developments on northern BC.

Environment

Climate change and Communities

Many participants identified climate change as a force for change in their community. Participants were most interested in understanding how climate change would impact their community at the local level. Interest went beyond just the environmental and economic impacts. Some First Nations participants talked about the need to understand the potential social and psychological impacts of climate change on their people. Especially in terms of the dramatic changes to the landscape of their traditional territories. Participants in small and rural communities wanted information on strategies for dealing with climate change that recognized the differences between their communities and larger metropolitan centres. As one participant put it, “many of the strategies for dealing with greenhouse gases are of little use to our people living in rural communities”.

Environmental stewardship

Issues surrounding environmental stewardship were of great interest to participants. Food safety, the safety of drinking water, and air quality were mentioned most often. Participants also mentioned the need to know more about the potential impact of potential economic development in areas ranging from resource extraction to tourism would have on their community and the region.

Social

Social Issues

There is a long list of social issues that participants identified as needing more information on. An issue on the minds of many participants was the issue of substance abuse in their communities, especially among the youth and young adults. Participants were interested in learning about successful substance abuse strategies used in other similar communities. Another knowledge gap identified by participants, concerned issues surrounding homelessness, especially the need to understand who is homeless, and what is the economic, and social impact on a community. Communities that are experiencing rapid growth are very interested in knowing more about this issue. Poverty is the issue that binds all of this together. Whether it is a First nation community, a boom town, or a

community facing decline, understanding poverty and strategies to alleviate it are of high priority

Housing

Participants were interested in the role that the lack of access to affordable housing had to play in economic development. With aging populations in northern communities several participants identified housing for seniors as an issue that they need to know more about. As with social issues the relationship between poverty and housing was another area of great interest. For participants living in communities experiencing rapid growth, housing and its potential impact on the social and economic well-being of their community was identified as an important information need.

Health

Health care continues to be a dominant issue in northern BC. However, from what participants told us the issue of health and health care has become a very broad topic. Service delivery, availability, and accessibility continue to be key information needs. Participants told us that understanding the relationship between health, health care, and economic development needs to be explored.

Services

Participants were very concerned about decreasing access to services during times of increasing needs. They felt that UNBC could provide information about innovative service delivery options in other jurisdictions. There was a desire to better understand, and a need to communicate to policy makers, the critical role of services in economic diversification and the quality of life of people and communities.

What communities want UNBC to do to assist with their research and support needs.

“We don’t need, or want, UNBC to do everything for us. We do however need the university’s assistance to make sure that whatever we undertake is seen as credible and of the highest standards.”

The discussions on this question were wide ranging and full of positive and helpful suggestions. Through these discussions five key roles for UNBC emerged:

UNBC as an Honest Broker

Knowledge Mobilization

Helping Communities Develop a Vision for Future

Capacity Building

A Voice for Northern BC Issues

“When we are faced with difficult issues we need UNBC to backstop us.”

UNBC as an Honest Broker

The development of the Northern Medical program was most often cited as an example of UNBC’s role as a broker for bringing issues and groups together. Participants felt that UNBC needs to play a leadership role in helping to coordinate resources and to communicate issues facing northern BC today. Helping to resolve the issues so the communities can better work together, and to work with other levels of government, was seen as an area where UNBC could help by being an honest broker.

Knowledge Mobilization

Participants spoke with some frustration about difficulties in accessing research expertise at UNBC. This went beyond the need to talk with faculty. Several social organizations expressed a desire to be able to communicate research and volunteer opportunities to students. These opportunities were seen as having another benefit: helping with undergraduate and graduate student skills development.

Participants identified that it is often difficult to acquire the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions on important issues facing their communities. Participants expressed frustration that there is a vast storehouse of knowledge about northern BC that already exists which is undervalued and often inaccessible. They identified the need to collect, collate, and make this knowledge available to communities, policy makers, and decision

makers. Finally, participants showed a great interest in what other jurisdictions have undertaken to address challenges similar to those faced by northern BC. A key role for a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster would be to provide a critical “northern BC lens”.

Helping Northern BC Develop a Vision for the Future

“Good people are working all over the north to make our lives better.”

Participants felt that UNBC should be playing a role in bringing knowledge and groups together so that the people of northern BC could develop a common vision and articulate goals. Participants did not want UNBC to create the vision and goals but instead to help with coordination and communication. By being a ‘window on the world’ the University could help connect northern BC to people and ideas at the provincial, national, and international level.

Capacity Building

“It’s not just about PhDs”

When participants talked about capacity building, they made the point that they were talking about collective capacity raising. They felt it was very important to help build the capacity of communities, as well as individuals.

Several participants told us that the goal should be continuous capacity renewal for the north’s economic, government, and community needs. Just as they understood the need to train doctors and nurses in the north, there was recognition that there is a need to address a broad spectrum of capacity issues. Participants talked about this not only in terms of recruitment and retention, but also in the broader sense of renewing communities.

Participants spoke of the need to bring experts into communities to meet with community members, give public lectures and visit local schools. It was felt that this would not only raise community interest in important topics, but could also inspire students to continue their education. It was also felt that it would raise the capacity of the community to understand and address important issues.

Municipal councils and other organizations often spoke of the need to build their capacity as purchasers and users of research. They felt that one of the benefits that they receive from participating in UNBC research projects was that they become better ‘consumers’ of information.

Participants expressed a desire for more course offerings in their communities. There was a strong desire for courses that better fit with a community’s capacity needs. Participants argued that courses need to be offered in a more flexible and accessible manner. When asked about what types of courses they would like to see offered in their community, participants identified continuing studies style courses. Participants also liked the idea of

being able to work toward university credit in their community. When asked about potential course delivery models, most participants cited the need for flexibility. While welcoming opportunities to use technology for their learning opportunities, most felt that there was a need for ‘in-classroom’ opportunities. In the Cariboo, participants spoke very highly of the UNBC Weekend University model. Several participants referred to the delivery model used by the Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Sustainable Community Development. It is important to note that while the delivery of these programs may be innovative, they all operate on a cost recovery basis.

Whatever the mode of delivery, participants felt that the system needed to reflect the need for life long learning and reflect the learning needs of communities and people. Participants felt that UNBC needed to use a variety of capacity building tools that incorporate technology and opportunities in the region.

A Voice for Northern BC Issues

Many participants spoke of the need for UNBC to help to communicate the challenges faced by northern BC to a wider audience. UNBC was seen as a legitimate voice to bring emergent issues to a larger stage. Participants argued that there was a real need to bridge the rural/urban divide and that they look to UNBC to help give northern BC the tools to bridge that divide. Participants would like UNBC to be more proactive in discussions that lead to the development of policy that impacts northern BC.

External Relations

“Don’t come just because you want us to give you something.”

Participants were very clear that given the size of northern BC, it is vitally important that communities are contacted on a regular basis. Regular contact was most often described as needing to be in-person and face-to-face. While participants that received information such as Update magazine appreciated it, most participants expressed a preference for regular contact with a “real human being”. Participants told us that regular contact provides them with a sense of commitment from the University.

The single most often given piece of advice offered by participants was that faculty, researchers, and students need to get out of the university and into the communities. They felt that a regular, coordinated, and supported outreach program would be of great benefit to communities and to the University. Participants warned that UNBC should avoid large showcase outreach programs that failed to include a plan for follow up. “No junkets” was an often used phrase.

Participants noted that UNBC needs to allocate more resources to relationship building. It was felt that this could be best achieved by showing professional community engagement that is well organized and coordinated. Participants told us that outreach needs to be respectful and value what people and communities have to say.

One municipal council expressed a desire for UNBC to provide greater opportunities to showcase undergraduates and graduate students, from their community. Not just to share research, but to show pride and celebrate – not just at graduation via newspaper advertising (which communities appreciated). It was noted that this type of outreach could help with the University’s student recruitment goals.

Participants felt that there is a need to better equip researchers and graduate students for community engagement and research work. Most participants who had participated in a UNBC research program expressed a willingness to participate again. However, several felt that there was not sufficient value placed on their time and contribution. Some expressed frustration at participating in a research studies never to hear from the researcher again. One piece of advice given was that UNBC needed to look beyond method and to understand that this is about human processes of engagement, and relationships, for a university that is in the north for the long term.

Collaboration with Other Northern BC Educational institutions

Communities that have college campus are justifiably proud of their local institutions. Participants made it abundantly clear that they did not view UNBC and the colleges as an either/or proposition. Rather, they viewed UNBC and the colleges as a “value added” to their educational and information needs. Several participants expressed frustration at what they saw (fairly or not) as an ‘unhelpful’ competitiveness between the institutions. One participant noted that just as communities need to band together, so too must the northern educational institutions.

We think that the Continuing Education staff at the northern Colleges will be an important point of contact for the Northern BC Research and Development Cluster. They are in a position to deliver training and educational courses in targeted locales around emerging issues. They are typically able to do this with a relatively short response time.

Build Toward a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster

If UNBC is to successfully help address the research and support needs of our northern communities it is important that we start now by taking steps necessary towards building a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster. We must take the concept of the ‘Georgia Strait Research Cluster’ as articulated in the Campus 2020 Report and adapt it to meet the specific economic and social development needs of northern BC.

Based upon what participants told us, the cluster would need to be a collaborative exercise involving UNBC, its communities, economic and social organizations, as well as the three northern Colleges (the College of New Caledonia, Northwest Community College and Northern Lights College). The range of facilities, staff, and expertise each would bring to the table in the area of community research and development, including trades training, small business development, community outreach and continuing studies to research expertise and capacity-building, would help to address the breadth of needs

identified by communities during this critical period in the social and economic development of our region. A Northern BC Research and Development Cluster, actively supported by the respective institutional administrations, would need an organizational unit at UNBC to help coordinate with identified individuals at the northern Colleges who would play a similar internal role at their institutions but coordinated under one umbrella.

Principles

Participants and organizations across the region suggested a wide range of principles to help guide the development of a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster. These include:

- A **Northern BC Research and Development Cluster** should take “in the north, for the north” as its guiding principle. Linking northern BC issues to, and draw lessons from, wider national and international literature and debates.
- Long term **Institutional Stability** that will allow for the building of relationships, and trust, between the communities and their university.
- **Capacity building** that is inclusive and will involve participation not just from university interests, but also from communities, governments, First Nations, and the private sector.
- **Communication** that is timely, relevant, and accessible. Communication strategies should include opportunities for community to university communication.
- A clear statement of the **Roles and Responsibilities** of all research participants; researchers, students, and communities.
- A Northern BC Research and Development Cluster should be a **Northern voice** so that northern views and concerns are incorporated into federal and provincial policy development and program implementation. It should make sure that research and lessons from northern BC should contribute to national and international research and literature.

In addition, participants were very clear that a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster should be networked to existing educational, economic, social and cultural organizations active across UNBC’s service region.

The Next Steps

Using the institution of the Northern Post Secondary Council (NPSC), a series of meetings should be convened that include municipal leaders, aboriginal leaders, social, economic, and cultural representatives. At these meetings, the same questions posed to participants of the North First initiative could form the bases for discussion: “what do communities need to know” and “what do communities want their educational institutions to do with respect to community development”. These meetings would not only generate publicity and momentum unto themselves, but would generate a report to frame requests to federal and provincial governments for additional targeted investments.

Internally UNBC needs to create a mechanism to help address community research and support needs. Part of this should include an internal gap analysis focusing specifically on the mechanics and options for the development of a Northern BC Research and Development Cluster. This will need to include a plan to coordinate and harness the considerable strength of UNBC's research capacity. It is hoped that this report will be seen as a helpful starting point for addressing many of these issues.

Conclusion

Time and again participants told us that they felt it was important for communities and UNBC to take ownership of the issues and challenges that face northern BC. The communities of northern BC do not look to, or want, UNBC to solve their problems. They do believe however that in partnership with UNBC they will be better equipped to resolve these problems and to face the future on their own terms.

Northern BC continues to have a great deal of faith in UNBC. We believe that by embracing our role as a vehicle for Knowledge Mobilization we repay back their faith. A commitment to relationship building and engagement will build a strong foundation for the future. Enhancing the education and research capacity of the north creates a stronger foundation. All of which can support a living working engagement between UNBC and its service region into the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide some input to deliberations about a UNBC response to the research and information needs of northern communities. UNBC's motto is "A University in the North for the North". The timing is good to initiate a number of activities in support of our communities, but if we are to initiate something larger than the ad-hoc approach, we must be prepared to follow through with a significant moral and financial investment.

In the meantime, the Community Development Institute will continue to connect with northern communities and assist with their research and information needs. We feel that this outreach work, and 'showing the flag' for the university in northern communities, is a significant contribution to UNBC's mandate and mission.

Appendix A: Consultation Schedule

November

- McBride

December

- Prince George
- Quesnel
- Williams Lake

January

- Mackenzie
- Burns Lake
- Houston
- Vanderhoof

February

- Chetwynd
- Ft. St. John
- Dawson Creek

March

- 100 Mile House

April

- Laxgalts'ap (Greenville)
- Terrace
- Kitimat
- Prince Rupert

May

- Clearwater

Appendix B: Consent Form **UNBC Community Liaison Interviews**

Interview Consent Form

Purpose – Part of UNBC’s mandate is to provide needed education and research services to communities across its service region. The purpose of this project is to conduct community-based interviews to identify emerging issues and themes which communities would like to have addressed. In the face of increasing pressures from social, demographic, economic, and political change, the project is organized around two basic questions; “what do communities need to know?” and “what would they like UNBC to do?”

How Respondents Were Chosen – Potential participants were selected from the publicly available lists. These individuals were selected based on their personal experiences with community development and educational issues. Participants will be asked to reflect on those personal experiences; they will not be asked to speak as representatives or spokespersons for a group or organization.

Anonymity And Confidentiality - The names of participants will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information be published which may be used to identify individuals. All information shared in this interview will be held within strict confidence by the research team. All records will be kept in a locked room at UNBC and will be accessible only to the research team. The information will be kept until the final project report is complete. After this time, all information and materials related to the interview will be destroyed.

Potential Risks And Benefits - This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. The project team does not consider there to be any risks to participation. We hope that by participating you will have a chance to provide input into issues relevant to the research, information, education, and training needs of northern BC communities.

Voluntary Participation - Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may chose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end the interview at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study.

Research Results - In case of any questions that may arise from this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Greg Halseth (250-960-5826; halseth@unbc.ca) in the Geography Program at UNBC. The final project report will be distributed to all participants.

Complaints - Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC (250) 960-5820; email is reb@unbc.ca.

I have read the above description of the study and I understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

(Name -please print)

(Signature)

(Date)

**Appendix C:
Key Informant Interview Guide**

**UNBC Community Liaison Interviews
INTERVIEW SCRIPT**

Interviewee Name: _____

Interviewee Contact Information: _____

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interview Time: Start _____
 Finish _____

Reviewed study purpose with interviewee:

Reviewed consent form with interviewee: Copy of signed consent form left
with interviewee:

Provided contact information to interviewee:

Background:

- 1) How long have you lived in northern BC; this community?
- 2) What is your area of work / expertise in the community?
- 3) What would you say are the most pressing community development issues?
- 4) What would you say are the most pressing local economic development issues?

Q. 3&4 Prompts: social change
 economic change / workforce / skills needs
 demographic change / population aging
 community needs / infrastructure / housing /
 services

What do communities need to know?

- 5) What do you think the community needs to know with respect to addressing its most pressing community development issues?
- 6) What do you think the community needs to know with respect to addressing its most pressing local economic development issues?

Q. 5&6 Prompts: information / research training / education
 symptoms vs. causes

What would communities like UNBC to do?

- 7) In terms of community development issues, do you have any suggestions as to how UNBC can be most effective in assisting the local community?
- 8) In terms of local economic development issues, do you have any suggestions as to how UNBC can be most effective in assisting the local community?

Q. 7&8 Prompts: information sharing / mechanisms
 training or education mechanisms / formats
 research topics / local support – facilities

Closing

- 9) Are there any other issues around the role that UNBC plays in the community that you would like to add?

**Appendix D:
Linking University and community capacities in a transitioning rural and small town economy**

Linking university and community capacities in a transitioning rural and small town economy

Marc von der Gonna, McBride Community Forest
Laura Ryser, Community Development Institute, UNBC
Greg Halseh, Geography, UNBC

BC's Inland Rainforest Conservation and Community Conference
May 21 – 23, 2008

Outline

- ◆ Introduction
 - The Challenge of Community-University Partnerships
- ◆ Pressures facing Small Communities
- ◆ University-Community Research Partnerships
 - Executing Research Projects
 - Communicating Research
- ◆ Research, Information, & Expertise for McBride
- ◆ Discussion

Community-University Partnerships
'The Challenge'

- ◆ Northern BC's rural and small town places face many changes
- ◆ They seek research to meet changes and challenges
 - Relevant and useful
- ◆ Academics enter research task seeking to improve questions
- ◆ "Mismatch" of expectations
 - Communities want answers
 - Academics want questions

Pressures facing Small Communities I

- ◆ Northern BC
 - Rural and small town places
 - Staples focused, hinterland economies
 - Significant impacts of social, political, economic restructuring
 - Large distances, small populations, lagging infrastructure
 - Population aging
- ◆ Local Decision Makers
 - Small municipal offices – few staff
 - Turnover and capacity "leakage"
 - Limited local technical and support capacity

Pressures facing Small Communities II

- ◆ **Human Resource Challenges**
 - Labour shortage; lack of employment opportunities
 - ◆ skill base has left the community
 - People look to the CF for job stability
 - Lack of time / resources to execute needed research
- ◆ **Economic Challenges**
 - Rising Canadian dollar
 - Lack of funding to implement plans
- ◆ **Infrastructure**
 - Power upgrades are needed – expand with other infrastructure needs
 - Aging infrastructure

Pressures facing Small Communities III

- ◆ **Industry**
 - Transition from commodity to value-added
 - Competing in the global economy
 - Wood / beetle wood supply issues
 - Developing / marketing niche forest products
- ◆ **Policy**
 - Policy – downloading / fit for 'Community' Forests
 - Pressure of managing multiple forest land uses
 - Village boundaries limits tax base
- ◆ **Compete for workers / (re)Attract youth**
 - Q of L services are not frills
 - Compete for industry AND compete for workers

University-Community Research “Partnership Issues”

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

University-Community Research “Executing Research Projects”

- ◆ Time and money
- ◆ Management, ownership
- ◆ Sharing mechanisms / communications
 - Support local institutional memory
- ◆ Logistics
 - MoF building
 - Local expertise / labour / equipment
 - Local records
- ◆ Project design
 - Build local capacity
- ◆ Project budgets

University-Community Research “Communicating Research”

- ◆ Knowledge mobilization:
 - Copies of research products
 - ◆ Technical reports
 - ◆ Public reports in understandable language
 - Presentations to council, community, envir, ec dev orgs *with open question period*
 - Just posting ‘on a UNBC website’ does not work
- ◆ Ensure fit with partnership goals
 - Communication support continues long after research project
- ◆ Respect, Patience, Flexibility

Needed Research, Information, Expertise “McBride Community Forest”

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

Needed Research, Information, Expertise I

- ◆ **Energy** (Waste wood bio-energy)
 - Business cases / models
 - Technology options
 - Environmental impacts / monitoring
 - ◆ Waste, transport, emissions, ash, etc
 - Feasibility studies for new power lines
 - Creative spinoffs
 - ◆ Bio-fuel for other industrial plants (i.e. mushroom plant).
- ◆ **Forestry**
 - International market ‘surveillance’
 - Environmental impacts of alternative practices
 - Maximizing wood values
 - Possibilities of non-timber forest products
 - ◆ i.e. devil’s club, mushrooms, medicinal plants / herbs
 - ◆ economics, environmental tolerances

Needed Research, Information, Expertise II

- ◆ **Tourism**
 - How to compliment with forest operations
 - ‘Wilderness rec’ business case
 - Impact studies (land, wildlife, etc.)
 - Growing
 - ◆ Access to capital
 - ◆ Mapping and managing
 - ◆ Good service vs bad service impacts on revenues
- ◆ **Transportation**
 - Alternatives for moving wood / forest products
 - Traffic studies
 - ◆ Impacts of changing traffic mix
 - ◆ Highway and ‘off-highway’ safety
 - ◆ Truck and traffic impacts on highway maintenance
 - Rest stops / access to rec-tourism sites
 - ◆ Safety issues
 - ◆ Environmental issues

Needed Research, Information, Expertise III

- ◆ **Business-Related**
 - Key trends for small and medium-sized businesses
 - HR needs
 - Infrastructure needs
- ◆ **Marketing and Exporting Products**
 - Market options / product options
 - ◆ Case studies of successful small places/exporters
 - Marketing / distribution models for local products
 - Use / access to e-commerce
 - Links with transport infrastructure
 - ◆ Road / rail / air

Needed Research, Information, Expertise IV

- ◆ **Municipal Management**
 - Feasibility of municipal boundary expansion
 - Service efficiency
- ◆ **Community Transition**
 - Assessing changes in community needs
 - Develop a community vision
 - ◆ Learning about success stories from other communities who reinvented themselves
 - Community capacity (assets and resources)
 - What would attract professionals (who can locate anywhere) to McBride

Needed Research, Information, Expertise V

- ◆ **Quality of Life**
 - Role of a healthy, diversified economy in attracting residents / businesses
 - Industrial impacts on enviro quality / health and safety
 - Services to improve quality of life
- ◆ **Seniors' Needs Assessment**
 - Housing, health care, support services
 - Transportation needs, physical barriers to mobility
 - Community design, social environment, formal and informal networks

Discussion

- ◆ Started with paradox
 - "Mismatch" of expectations
 - ◆ Communities want answers
 - ◆ Academics want questions
- ◆ Rural and small town places are experiencing rapid change
 - MCF and community have wide ranging information needs
- ◆ Collaborative research partnerships are critical
 - Fundamentally rewarding!