



# 2017 Year in Review

## To BC Rural Centre/ SIBAC Member Organizations:

It has been another successful and eventful year for our organization, led by the launch of our new web platform, <https://www.bcruralcentre.org>, bringing important, inspirational information to First Nations, rural British Columbians, and rural decision makers in an engaging, timely fashion. We published 126 articles, case studies, reports, rural & First Nations success stories, videos, and podcasts. We covered topics as diverse as mobilizing local capital, community land trusts, the arts & culture as rural economic drivers, community forestry, and the challenges of attracting young people to rural communities.

We also published over 250 discrete items on social media platforms, complementing and extending the range of our web content. On Facebook alone our postings encouraged lively community conversations among the 24,044 people we reached, in some cases leading to concrete action on subjects such as affordable housing and using high speed internet to attract creative professionals to rural communities and First Nations. We will continue to produce high quality content of real importance to rural British Columbians in 2018.

In June we hosted the highly successful *Keeping It Rural 2017* conference in Kelowna, bringing First Nations and rural leaders and decision makers together with outstanding presenters from across Canada, the USA, and from as far afield as Australia. With coverage by CBC television and radio, and Global TV, our message of the importance of focusing on rural strengths and successes reached a wide audience. Attendees gave the conference overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Autumn was busy, as we hosted our first-ever webinar featuring two outstanding U.S.-based presenters. We succeeded in attracting Rural Dividend funding in partnership with Kootenay Employment Services to extend our Mobilizing Rural Capital work to several rural communities over the next 12 months. We also carried out our *First Impressions* pilot project, that saw residents of Kaslo, New Denver, and Silverton visit one another's communities and share their impressions and insights, triggering actions on affordable housing, creating co-working spaces, and inter-community regional collaboration.

In December, we were pleased to partner with the provincial government to host a BC government-led rural consultation workshop in Vernon. We look forward to continuing to work with the provincial government to identify ways to accelerate rural development in the province.

I am proud of all we accomplished in 2017. I'm confident the BC Rural Centre, which has emerged as the premier source of important, inspirational information for First Nations and rural British Columbians, will play an increasingly important role in helping inform and shape our collective future in 2018. On behalf of the entire SIBAC board, I thank you for your continued support.

*Rhona Martin*

**Chair**

BC Rural Centre/ SIBAC