

Looking Back on 2018

A Month-by-Month Journey Through the BCRC Website



January

We started off 2018 with a report noting that small farmers in BC were holding their own, in spite of unpredictable weather and other challenges.

Community – pulling together collectively to affect real change – is often the key in small town turnarounds. In an informative article written by Spotify’s Dayna Winter, we’re introduced to Almonte, Ontario , a town of 5,000 that has managed to revitalize itself through developing a collaborative consensus around development.

We announced a series of information sessions in January intended to inform communities throughout the Kootenays about “community impact investment,” and to gauge the level of interest in those communities to form one or more local or regional community investment vehicles (as it turned out, interest was high).

We published an interactive look at how tiny (pop. 90) Rosebud, Alberta, became an arts mecca, in the process transforming its economy.

Finally, in addition to a number of additional news stories published throughout January, we released a document that provides a summary discussion of five recommendations we put to the provincial government, focused on suggested actions designed to accelerate rural development in the province.

February

Early in the month, we hosted an informative webinar featuring Heather Pritchard, a founding member of FarmFolk CityFolk, the Vancouver Food Policy Council, and the BC Food Systems Network, and the current Chair of Slow Food in Canada on BC food-related issues.

We published a blogpost on the formation of a new land trust cooperative, described by Heather in our webinar, founded by FarmFolk CityFolk Society, Vancity Community

Foundation, Fraser Common Farm Cooperative, and the BC Farmer's Market Association, called the Foodlands Cooperative of BC .

Farmers have a future — at least according to Lindsey Lusher Shute, Executive Director and co-founder of the National Young Farmers' Coalition, (NYFC) a membership-based organization dedicated to the success of the next generation of sustainable farmers in the United States.

NYFC's supporter network includes thousands of farmers and consumers from all fifty states, who work together to advocate for change in Federal policy, develop new farm technology through the Farm Hack project and solve local issues through regional NYFC chapters. We showcased a video featuring Lindsey discussing the decades-long migration away from the family farm, and how bringing young people back to farming is critical for the future of food, agriculture, and rural places.

Then, after publishing blogposts on the BC government's invitation to the public for ideas on a new rural strategy for the province, and an intriguing post about a small Cape Breton business offering free land to attract workers, we launched an ambitious initiative called *Escape the City* .

We wanted to discover whether there was any interest among creative, entrepreneurial urban Millennials in pulling up their city stakes and moving to rural BC. So we launched an online contest, inviting young urbanites to tell us why they might be interested in moving to the small West Kootenay town of Kaslo .

The response was overwhelming! Out of hundreds of entrants, we selected two winners — the Stober family , from Victoria , and the Longvals , from Calgary . The contest served to shine a spotlight on the challenges — and opportunities — facing rural BC communities wanting to retain and attract bright young people. As a footnote, the Longvals promptly returned to Calgary, sold their home, and have now moved to Kaslo!

March

Accessing affordable housing continues to challenge many rural communities. We published a report in March, completed with the support of the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, on the experiences of community land trusts on Washington State's San Juan Islands, providing useful background and detail for BC communities wishing to tackle this vexing problem.

We also released our recommendations regarding possible rural development actions to the provincial government. In addition we published a number of news blogs, on topics ranging from an explanation of community land trusts, to a new fibre optic bandwidth rollout on Haida Gwaii.

April

In April, we published a number of rural education-themed items, including a Featured Report titled Rural Schools, Why They Close & How They Can Be Saved, a look at rural Saskatchewan's Sun West Distance Learning Centre, a podcast with Kootenay school principal Dan Rude who argues for the importance of rural schools, and a Rural Success Story chronicling how Wells-Barkerville managed to save their school .

May

Asset-based community development — known as *ABCD* — is an effective, grassroots approach to rural community revitalization. We shared information this month about global ABCD leader, Australia's Bank of I.D.E.A.S., and published a useful community asset mapping toolkit, developed by DePaul University's ABCD Institute.

We went on to host a series of asset-based community development workshops beginning in late May and extending into June, featuring Bank of I.D.E.A.S. founder, Peter Kenyon.

Also in May, we released news of a new provincial broadband funding program, and published a blogpost and accompanying video on the spread of the *Small Town Love* campaign in northern BC.

June

In June, we published a thoughtful article by Rupert Downing, titled *Rural Innovation – Communities As Engines Of Change*, in which Downing suggests we look to Scotland's Highland and Islands Enterprise as a model for place-based community development in rural BC.

The same month saw us publish an extensive report (including videos and several audio interviews), on the experiences of three Interior towns – Salmon Arm, Revelstoke, and Trail – in using new and emerging technologies to drive innovation and positive change in their respective communities.

Also in June, we announced the winners of our *Escape the City* contest.

July

July saw the rollout of *Escape the City* in Kaslo which we covered extensively, an event that galvanized the community and led one of the winning families, the Longvals from Calgary, to move to Kaslo with the intention of starting a new outdoor recreation business.

We released a report on the healthcare situation in the Village of New Denver, chronicling one small town's struggles to retain a decent level of healthcare services.

We followed a summer-long CBC series on how Canada's small towns are trying to survive and thrive in changing times.

We also re-published a sobering article that appeared originally in *Truck Logger BC* magazine, by Graham Lasure, the final owner of a family business founded in Winter Harbour in 1927. Lasure's suggested future changes to the current regulatory environment is must reading for anyone interested in the sustainability of BC's logging contractors.

August

In August, we provided a detailed look back at the *Escape the City* contest, in words, photos, and videos.

September

In September, we released a report on Community Land Trusts, land leases, and shared equity approaches to creating affordable rural housing, written by BCRC's Gordon Borgstrom. The report was based on research completed by Borgstrom, as well as consultants retained by the BC Rural Centre to work on the project. This report is one of several documents created as part of the Community Land Trusts & Rural Development Project created and managed by the BC Rural Centre. Other reports and documents created as part of this project were (and remain) available on our website's Housing & CLTs page. BCRC gratefully acknowledges the Real Estate Foundation of BC as a funding partner on this project.

In an effort to make what for some may seem a complex approach to affordable home ownership based on the land lease + shared equity model understandable, we created an animated video that explains, step by step, how this method works.

October

With municipal elections looming in October, the subject of public participation was timely. In two podcasts, we reached out to Cowichan Valley Regional District Chief Administrative Officer Brian Carruthers, who offered insights on his regional district's UBCM award-winning efforts to boost and support civic engagement, and for another perspective, chatted with Natasha Horsman, North Cowichan's Manager of Communications & Strategic Initiatives, and Tammy Isaachsen, the municipality's Community Liaison Officer, who shared their views on public participation.

We covered a new provincial/federal program to assist Indigenous communities in BC interested in expanding their agricultural businesses and supporting local food security.

We published a piece announcing the launch of a new provincial government website that expands access to information and public engagement on applications for Crown land use in B.C.

The future of rural life was the subject of an extensive *Maclean's* article that provocatively stated that crime, opioid abuse, boarded-up businesses, and fleeing populations are destroying Canada's heartland, and posed the question: can small-town life be saved?

We also published blogposts in October on the BC government's clarification of new cannabis regulations, and the results of the 2018 municipal elections across the province.

The decline of Greyhound service in October, and its implications for rural BC didn't escape our attention, either.

November-December

We began a busy November with an intriguing story on the launch of a new initiative in Kimberley, BC — the Kimberley Outdoor Alliance, and its goal of attracting outdoor-related businesses and entrepreneurs to this mountainous East Kootenay community.

The post was accompanied by a podcast featuring an interview with the Alliance's chairman, Matt Mosteller.

We reported on the Government of BC's release of its action plan in response to the government-commissioned, independent Abbott/Chapman report on the unprecedented 2017 wildfire and flood seasons in British Columbia.

We published a report on the challenges rural communities face in retaining and attracting creative, entrepreneurial Millennials.

On the same topic, we hosted a webinar in late November featuring Kootenay-based tech entrepreneur and visionary Jean-Marc La Flamme, and one of America's leading exponents and practitioners of rural revival, Iowa's Zachary Mannheimer, then published a podcast of their lively and informative discussion.

We finished off with an interview on civic engagement with the outgoing president of the BC chapter of the International Association of Public Participation, Regional District of Nanaimo's Communications Consultant, Lisa Moinanen.

Conclusion

2018 saw us greatly expand the extent and breadth of our online — and live — efforts to help inform and inspire rural British Columbians and First Nations. We look forward to building on this solid base as we move into 2019 and beyond.