

# Rural and Northern Perspectives: The View from Here

Fall 2019 Volume 14, Issue 2

## Message From the Chair

Welcome to the Fall issue of *The View From Here*! This is my first column as Chair of the Rural and Northern Section, and I would like to send my heartfelt gratitude to Drs. AnnaMarie Carlson and Shelley Goodwin for their guidance. Our section has continued to grow under their leadership, and I have appreciated their suggestions, input, and experience as I take on the role of Chair. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Michelle Conan for putting together another excellent issue of our section's newsletter, and welcome Dr. Jolene Kinley as our Secretary/Treasurer! I look forward to being your chair over the next two years.



The CPA Convention in Halifax this year was a success for our section, and I would like to thank all of our presenters for their valuable contributions to our section's presence at the CPA convention! This year, our section sponsored Dr. Christy Simpson's talk on Rethinking Rural Ethics, which was well attended and thought provoking. If you are looking to add to your resource library, I would strongly recommend Dr. Simpson's recent book, "Rethinking Rural Ethics". Dr. Simpson also was part of a symposium for our section, along with Dr. Shelley Goodwin and myself on ethical rural psychological practice. Dr. AnnaMarie Carlson provided our section with a

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## Message from the Chair, continued...

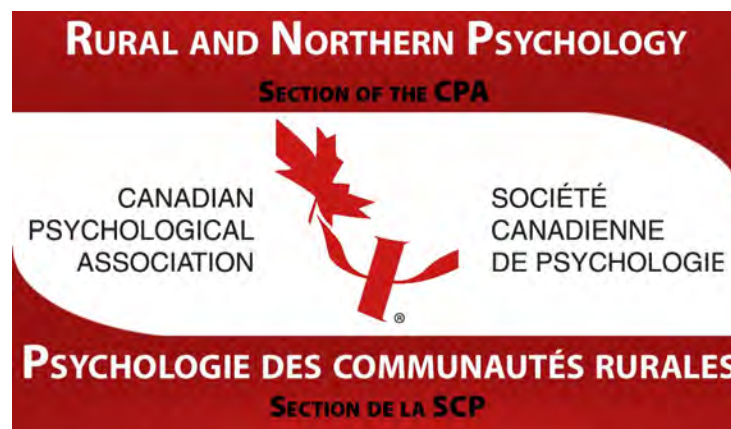
chair's address highlighting the impact of health psychology within a rural setting. We also featured a symposium on increasing access to psychology within rural settings, highlighting consultation and new practitioner considerations, presented by Drs. Jolene Kinley, Michelle Conan, and myself. The abstracts for these talks are reprinted within this newsletter, for your convenience. Although we did not quite reach quorum for our AGM, we were able to communicate updates and highlight challenges. The minutes the AGM are also included within this newsletter for your review, and I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Jette for providing us with a French translation. I'd also like to thank Dr. Shelley Goodwin for showing a number of us "prairie folk" how to properly eat a whole lobster while we were in Halifax!

I'm pleased to announce that Dr. Bob McIlwraith is the recipient of this year's Distinguished Contribution Career Award, highlighting his exceptional contributions to clinical psychology in rural and northern Canada. Information regarding Dr. McIlwraith's contributions is available within this newsletter.

Although it may seem early, planning for next year's convention is already underway. I would strongly encourage you to consider taking part in our section's activities at next year's CPA convention held in Montreal, May 28-30, 2020. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca) if you have any convention-related questions for our section.

I hope you enjoy the contents of the newsletter!

Amanda Lints-Martindale, Ph.D., C. Psych.  
Rural and Northern Section Chair



## Rural and Northern Events at CPA 2019

### Section Featured Speaker Address: Ethics in Context: Navigating Professional Boundaries in Rural and Northern Areas

by Dr. Christy Simpson

In rural and northern areas, dual and multiple relationships are both common and, to some extent, expected. For those providing mental health and psychological services, these overlapping relationships can raise a number of questions about how to best ensure that professional boundaries are appropriately maintained with clients. Drawing on recent work in rural health ethics, this talk will examine the nature of these relationships and 'boundaries', challenging commonly held assumptions about providing care in these settings. In particular, stereotypes – both positive (the rural idyll) and negative (the deficit perspective) - that influence how health care in rural and northern settings is broadly framed, and how this relates to traditional understandings of professional boundaries, will be discussed. Closely connected to this, the ways in which health care ethics has an urban bias will be highlighted. This bias needs to be redressed in order to more fully appreciate the values of place and community which are often held by those living in rural and northern communities, and are values which have relevance for professional boundaries. Further, the importance of addressing different standards and expectations regarding professional boundaries which may arise in interprofessional teams, something which may be more obvious and visible when providing care in rural and remote settings, will be addressed. The talk will conclude with some ideas and suggestions about navigating the complexities of professional boundaries in rural and northern areas.



## Rural and Northern Events at CPA 2019, Continued

### Section Chair Address: Exploration of Psychological Service and Training Models: Finding a Fit for Rural Practice

by Dr. AnnaMarie Carlson

Many parts of Canada have limited access to high quality evidenced based psychological care. This is especially so in Rural and Northern regions. The purpose of this session is to consider a variety of treatment models, all of which seek to improve access to psychological care, such as those outlined in Peachy et al. (2013; i.e., IAPT, Fee-for-service, Collaborative practice, eMental Health) with attention to the practical application of the model to rural regions, and in the context of the current models of training. This will be done by reviewing different models, the potential benefits and challenges of each in the context of rural practice, and discussion of what preparation a psychologist may need to work within the model. Audience participation will be encouraged.





## Rural and Northern Events at CPA 2019, Continued

### **Symposium: Increasing Access to Psychology within Rural Settings**

**Speakers:** Drs. Jolene Kinley, Michelle Conan, & Amanda Lints-Martindale

Clinical psychology services are in high demand with very limited resources. In rural areas the discrepancy between need and availability is even more pronounced. This symposium involves consulting clinical psychologists from three different health regions in Manitoba. Each community mental health program has unique challenges and a history that has affected the organization of the programs, but all have very limited psychology resources. The gap between need and available resources has led psychologists away from one-on-one therapy as a primary service to explore various alternatives. The psychologists within these rural regions have each found ways to spread the reach of their services through various consultation opportunities that will be discussed. The various forms of consultation include informal and formal, client-focused, consultee-focused, and system-focused, which all aim to benefit the individuals we serve.

### **Symposium: Teaching and Application of Ethical Standards: Perspectives from Rural Psychological Practice**

**Speakers:** Drs. Christy Simpson, Shelley Goodwin, & Amanda Lints-Martindale

Ethical practice is integral to the professional identity of psychologists in Canada. While all psychologists face an array of ethical challenges, it is arguable that rural practice may inherently increase the likelihood of encountering ethically tentative situations such as dual relationships. The purpose of the symposium is to explore ethical practice in rural areas, first, by a bioethics professor who will be considering graduate training in ethics and development of tools to evaluate ethical questions as they arise in practice; second, ethical issues will be explored through the lens of a generalist rural practitioner; and the final presenter will explore the ethical complexities in a rising field of interprofessional collaborative practice. Presenters will be referring to ethical principles, their own professional experience, and audience participation in this interactive symposium. Presenters provide insight into creating balance between the complex relationships psychologists face (from trainee through to practitioner), and provide tips on creating a satisfying professional and personal life without sacrificing ethical standards. Information from this session may be used to facilitate training and ethical practice, and will appeal to students, practitioners, and instructors; rural and urban alike.

## Rural and Northern Section Annual General Meeting: Minutes

Location: Nova Scotia Ballroom D

Date: May 31, 2019

Time: 16:45-17:45

### **Meeting called to order at 16:46 pm by AnnaMarie Carlson**

#### **Welcome and introductions**

In attendance:

Jolene Kinley, Karen Dyck, Shelley Goodwin, Michelle Conan, Amanda Lints-Martindale, AnnaMarie Carlson, Veronica Hutchings, Jonathan Jette (via Zoom), Julian Torres (via Zoom)

Quorum not established.

Approval of Minutes from 2018 meeting (AnnaMarie Carlson)

Approved by: Jolene Kinley; Seconded: Shelley Goodwin; Motion passed without opposition.

#### **Update from Chair (AnnaMarie Carlson)**

##### **Review section activity and membership for past year**

Our section currently has 86 members, which is slightly lower than last year. The breakdown of members/students is currently unavailable but has been requested from CPA.

The section published two newsletters this year, and 1 supplement specific to the CPA annual convention. The section was also active in publishing within the Canadian Psychology journal as well as the Psynopsis special edition on professional psychology training.

The R&N section sent delegates to the two CPA summits 1) related to training and 2) related to research and science. CPA was also able to provide some financial support to cover the considerable travel costs for some of our members to travel to Ottawa and Montreal. There was much valuable discussion at both summits and the section was pleased with our representation across discussions. Ongoing opportunities to advocate for R&N psychologists will be monitored by the section executive.

The R&N section sponsored a talk at CPA this year featuring Dr. Christy Simpson on ethics in rural practice. The talk which was well attended and received. The section is currently looking for opportunities to invite a speaker to the 2020 convention in Montreal at the Westin. Please submit suggestions

## Rural and Northern Section Annual General Meeting: Minutes, Continued

to either our outgoing or incoming chair. It was agreed to maintain the budget-friendly option of meeting for supper at a local restaurant following the AGM, at personal cost to attendees rather than the section.

### **Update from Incoming Chair (Amanda Lints-Martindale)**

The Chair of the Section Chairs who will sit on the CPA Board this year is Laurie Ford. Also, CPA is celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> year and looking to the sections for ideas on how to celebrate/highlight contributions psychology has made this year. If you have any ideas, please forward them to the current chair.

### **Secretary/Treasurer's Report (Amanda Lints-Martindale)**

From our perspective, the new CPA system of managing finances has been a positive change with no significant difficulties. Current balance in May 2019 is \$2053.79 (mostly due to savings from last year). Dues for CPA: \$500.00 for speaker, \$322.78 for awards and miscellaneous fees (professional career award and speaker gifts). After June 2019 expected balance is \$1231.01 for the remainder of the year. This is consistent with CPA's suggestion for keeping balances under \$5000 to maintain non-profit status.

We will continue to sponsor the North Star Awards as well as the Distinguished Practitioner Award. Amanda Lints-Martindale requested from the CPA webmaster that the student awards be advertised on the student section's webpage specific to awards, in addition to being advertised on our section's webpage.

Budget approved by Amanda Lints-Martindale, Seconded by Shelley

### **Presentation of Distinguished Practitioner Award (Shelley Goodwin)**

Awarded to: Dr. Bob McIlwraith, to be presented in-person in the Fall, 2019.

### **Executive nominations (AnnaMarie Carlson)**

Secretary/Treasurer

Nominee: Dr. Jolene Kinley

Approved by Amanda Lints-Martindale; Seconded Karen Dyck; motion passed without opposition

Student

Nominee: Nicole Faller

Approved by Jolene Kinley, Seconded Michelle Conan; motion passed without opposition

## **Rural and Northern Section Annual General Meeting: Minutes, Continued**

### **Review of provincial reps**

BC – Sandra Thompson

Saskatchewan – Lindsay Foster

NWT/NU - Merril Dean

Manitoba – Jolene Kinley

Nova Scotia – Shelley Goodwin

We still need to identify representatives from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and the Yukon.

Motion: place another call in the newsletter, along with a description of provincial representative duties. Approved by Karen Dyck, Seconded by Shelley Goodwin

### **No other new business**

**Meeting adjourned at 17:45pm by AnnaMarie Carlson.**

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Réunion de travail annuelle de la Section de psychologie rurale et du nord  
Lieu: Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse Ballroom D

Date: 31 mai 2019

Heure: 16: 45-17: 45

### **Réunion ouverte à 16h46 par AnnaMarie Carlson**

#### **Bienvenue et introductions**

Présent : Jolene Kinley, Karen Dyck, Shelley Goodwin, Michelle Conan, Amanda Lints-Martindale, AnnaMarie Carlson, Veronica Hutchings, Jonathan Jette (via Zoom), Julian Torres (via Zoom). Quorum non établi.

#### **Approbation du procès-verbal de la réunion de 2018 (AnnaMarie Carlson)**

Approuvé par : Jolene Kinley Appuyé par : Shelley Goodwin. Motion adoptée sans opposition.

#### **Mise à jour de la présidente (AnnaMarie Carlson)**

Revue des activités de la section et du nombre de membres pour l'année dernière. Notre section compte actuellement 86 membres, ce qui est légèrement inférieur au nombre de l'année dernière. La répartition des membres / étudiants



## Rural and Northern Section Annual General Meeting: Minutes, Continued

est actuellement indisponible mais a été demandée à la SCP.

La section a publié deux lettres d'information cette année et un supplément spécifique au congrès annuel de la SCP. La section était également active dans la publication au sein de la revue de psychologie canadienne ainsi que dans l'édition spéciale de Psynopsis sur la formation en psychologie professionnelle.

La section R & N a parrainé des personnes pour participer aux deux sommets de la SCP 1) liés à la formation et 2) liés à la recherche et à la science. La SCP a également été en mesure de fournir une aide financière pour couvrir les frais de déplacement considérables de certains de nos membres pour se rendre à Ottawa. Il y a eu beaucoup de discussions utiles aux deux sommets et la section s'est dite satisfaite de notre représentation dans toutes les discussions. L'exécutif de la section surveillera les opportunités en cours de plaider en faveur des psychologues R & N.

La section R & N a parrainé une conférence à la SCP cette année mettant en vedette la Dre Christy Simpson sur l'éthique dans la pratique rurale. Il y avait un bon nombre de personnes pour la présentation qui a été bien reçue. La section recherche actuellement un conférencier a invité pour la convention de 2020 à Montréal, au Westin. S'il vous plaît soumettre des suggestions à notre présidente sortant ou entrante. Il a été convenu de maintenir l'option économique de se réunir pour souper dans un restaurant local après l'AGA, aux frais des participants plutôt que de la section.

### **Mise à jour de la nouvelle présidente (Amanda Lints-Martindale)**

Laurie Ford est la présidente des présidents de section qui siègera au conseil d'administration de la CPA cette année. En outre, la SCP célèbre son 80e anniversaire et consulte les sections pour trouver des idées sur la manière de célébrer / souligner les contributions de la psychologie cette année. Si vous avez des idées, veuillez les transmettre à la présidente actuelle.

### **Rapport de la secrétaire / trésorière (Amanda Lints-Martindale)**

De notre point de vue, le nouveau système de gestion des finances de l'SCP est un changement positif sans difficultés majeures. Le solde actuel en mai 2019 est de 2053,79 (principalement en raison des économies réalisées l'an dernier). Frais lié au congrès de la SCP 2019 : 500,00 \$ pour le conférencier,

## **Rural and Northern Section Annual General Meeting: Minutes, Continued**

322,78 \$ pour les prix et les frais divers (récompense de carrière professionnelle et cadeaux pour conférencier). Après juin 2019, le solde prévu est de 1231,01 \$ pour le reste de l'année. Cela va dans le sens de la suggestion de la CPA de maintenir les soldes inférieurs à 5 000 dollars afin de conserver le statut à but non lucratif.

Nous continuerons à sponsoriser les prix pour North Star Awards ainsi que le Praticant Distingué. Amanda Lints-Martindale a demandé au gestionnaire du site de la SCP que les récompenses accordées aux étudiants soient publiées sur la page internet de la section réservée aux étudiants, qui traitent des récompenses, en plus d'être publiées sur la page de notre section.

Budget approuvé par Amanda Lints-Martindale, appuyé par Shelley

### **Remise du prix du pratiquant distingué (Shelley Goodwin)**

Remis à : Dr Bob McIlwraith, qui sera présenté en personne à l'automne 2019.

### **Nominations aux postes de direction (AnnaMarie Carlson)**

Secrétaire / trésorier

Candidate: Dr. Jolene Kinley

Approuvé par Amanda Lints-Martindale; Karen Dyck, détachée; motion adoptée sans opposition

Étudiant

Nominé: Nicole Faller

Approuvé par Jolene Kinley, appuyée par Michelle Conan; motion adoptée sans opposition

Examen des représentants provinciaux

C.-B. - Sandra Thompson

Saskatchewan - Lindsay Foster

TN-O. / NU - Merril Dean

Manitoba - Jolene Kinley

Nouvelle-Écosse - Shelley Goodwin

Nous devons encore identifier des représentants de Terre-Neuve, du Nouveau-Brunswick, du Québec, de l'Ontario, de l'Alberta et du Yukon. Motion : passez un autre appel dans le bulletin, accompagné d'une description des tâches des représentants provinciaux. Approuvé par Karen Dyck, appuyé par Shelley Goodwin

**Aucun autre objet à couvrir.**

**La séance est levée à 17h45 par AnnaMarie Carlson.**

## Dr. Christy Simpson, Invited Speaker, with Dr. AnnaMarie Carlson, Section Chair, at CPA 2019 in Halifax



## Volunteer Opportunity: Provincial Representatives



Would you like to be more involved in the Rural and Northern section of CPA? **The Rural and Northern section of CPA is currently looking for provincial representatives** from each province and territory across the country. **We are currently looking for representatives from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and the Yukon.** If you are interested in representing your province or territory, please contact our chair, Dr. Amanda Lints-Martindale at [Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca).

## Distinguished Contribution Career Award Presented to Dr. Robert McIlwraith

Dr. Bob McIlwraith was awarded the Distinguished Contribution to Rural and Northern Practice Award. This peer-nominated award acknowledges significant contributions made by a psychologist throughout their career. Dr. McIlwraith worked within the Department of Clinical Health Psychology at the University of Manitoba for many years, including as Training Director and then as Department Head. He was instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the department's rural and northern psychology program in 1996. Dr. McIlwraith has also published and presented extensively in the areas of rural psychology and psychology training. In 2004, he was awarded the Clifford J. Robson Award for distinguished contribution to psychology in Manitoba by the Manitoba Psychological Society; in 2014, he was awarded Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association; and, in 2017, he was made a Distinguished Life Member of the Manitoba Psychological Society. Below are excerpts from letters written in support of Dr. McIlwraith's nomination. Congratulations Dr. McIlwraith!

*"His tireless effort directly translates into the overall success of the rural and northern program [at the University of Manitoba] which has grown from 1 psychologist to 9 under his mentorships, as well as the residential training programme which continues to flourish today as the only accredited predoctoral training experience in Canada devoted specifically to rural psychology."*

*"As both a rural-based doctoral resident and young psychologist pre-registration, I had the good fortune of receiving his supervision and mentorship. Through his example, Dr. McIlwraith had taught me the value of professional integrity, advocacy, and confidence, while, at the same time, the importance of collaboration, humility and compassion. He further demonstrated how these qualities are extremely important when working in a rural context."*

*"In his varied roles, he not only brings his significant professional talents but also his thoughtful, supportive, humble, and caring style that has established him as a remarkable person and distinguished professional who was the go-to-person within his department and community."*

## Distinguished Contribution Career Award, Continued...

*"Bob has made significant contributions to Canadian rural and northern psychology in various roles as educator, mentor, supervisor, and consultant, while representing our profession to the public in a highly professional, informed, and mannerly fashion. He is a highly respected psychologist and I believe he would be an excellent candidate for the distinguished professional contributions to rural and northern practice award and as such I nominate him for this position."*



**Dr. AnnaMarie Carlson, Section Chair, presenting the Distinguished Contribution Career Award to Dr. Robert McIlwraith in Winnipeg, September 2019**



## Creative Practice in Rural School Psychology: A View from Southwest Saskatchewan

By Connor Barker, M.Ed., R.Psych.



City of Swift Current, 2019

I started my practice as a school psychologist in Swift Current, SK, 8 years ago. I often tell people who ask, I moved to Swift Current “for a good time, not a long time,” after having completed graduate studies in my hometown of Saskatoon at the University of Saskatchewan. I thought I would get my start here, and then move back. Since that time, I got married, built a house, and started a private practice. I’m getting pretty close to being a local. In fact, when I was awarded a SSHRC doctoral fellowship, the local newspaper read “Swift Current Man Awarded a Doctoral Fellowship.” I guess I have finally arrived, I am truly a “Swift Current Man.”

The job has changed a great deal since I arrived. When I started, I was assigned five schools, Pre-K to grade 8. My total student population was under 1,000. It was an enjoyable experience to begin my practice, with limited travel, and just a few schools. I was able to build relationships with my students, their families, the school staff, and administration. Over the past eight years, with cuts to the *supports for learning* grant to rural school divisions as well as declining student populations in rural schools, my caseload now includes ten schools and two alternative programs, with a total population of about 3,000, Pre-K to grade 12. With the austerity budget passed by the Saskatchewan government in 2017, our regional psychologists (including clinical, educational, and private practicing psychologists) went from eight down to four, serving an entire region of approximately 10,854 over a geographical area of 21,366 km<sup>2</sup>.



The role of the school psychologist in the southwest is an expansive one. A primary function continues to be psychoeducational assessment to identify the learning needs of students. We are also asked for intervention support through functional behavioural analysis (FBA) and behaviour intervention plans (BIP) for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. We further consult with our school teams to support diverse learners, and at times, provide professional development training in the areas of learning disabilities, classroom management, culturally diverse learners, as well as issues on inclusive practices for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) diversity. Our region is also unique as we serve 30 Hutterian schools, schools within communities of Anabaptist Christians (Hutterites) who have established communal agricultural colonies. Hutterian students are multilingual and represent approximately 10% of our student population. Due to the decreasing number of psychologists in the region, school psychologists are often being asked to complete tasks for local family doctors and pediatricians (e.g., differential diagnosis) as well as forensic work (e.g., adult guardianship affidavits, child custody recommendations).



Hutterite Women's Choir

The practice of school psychology is unique to other disciplines in psychology. One primary way is that school psychologists travel to their clients rather than the clients coming to the psychologist's office. Many times, as rural school psychologists, we may be the only mental health practitioners that travel to the community. Families often have preconceived notions of the work a psychologist does, and many times have concerns with mental health stigma. Rural communities often have many immediate and extended family members who are involved at the school, either as students and many times as school staff. The clients that are served by the school psychologist do not necessarily seek out services. Instead, they are referred by their teachers and schools. Rural schools are also community centres and a source of connection for families and the broader community. As such, the practice of rural school psychology involves individual, family, organizational, and community applications.

The view from here? Well, it is one where the scope of practice is broad, the number of practitioners is few, and the client population



Swift Current's First Pride March (City of Swift Current, 2017)

is diverse. Ethical considerations of responsible caring, confidentiality, multiple relationships, and clinical competency challenge the rural school psychologist every day. This practice requires reflection, intentionality, and courage. Most of all, it requires creativity. As a doctoral student at the University of Regina, I have been exploring how rural school psychologists in Saskatchewan have been addressing these challenges. In a sample of eight practicing rural school psychologists from Saskatchewan, participants

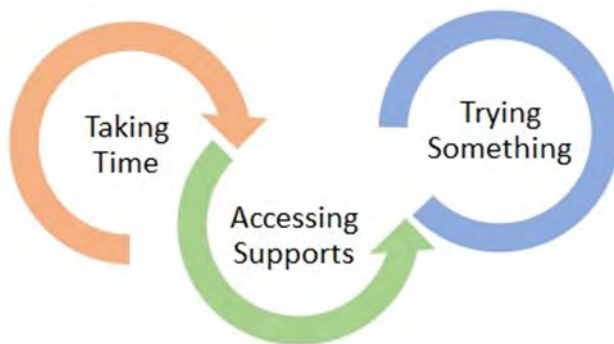


discussed the practice of rural school psychology and how they attain, maintain, and sustain competency across their careers while working in rural contexts. Through this study, and through my clinical practice, I believe that creative practice is an essential element of competent psychological practice in rural settings. Creative practice involves three parts: (1) Taking Time; (2) Accessing

Supports; and (3) Trying Something.

*Taking Time.* When faced with a challenge, rural school psychologists need to resist the urge to act on the spot. This step is often easier said than done, especially when teachers, parents, and students who have waited for your arrival expect instant solutions right away. School psychologists are many times placed in expert roles, holding the “secrets” to solving all manner of academic and behavioural issues. The truth is, as psychologists, we have knowledge and skills that can help, but often we do not have the magic solution to resolve the challenge that is before us. Our schools ask for a quick answer which may not be the most effective. A necessary element of creative practice in psychology is to reflect, take time, and consider: (1) the desired outcome (i.e., who is my client, what are their goals, what incremental steps might be possible); (2) the knowledge I have (i.e., drawing from my own knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours); (3) the knowledge that is out there

(i.e., what don’t I know and who or where can I find this information); and (4) ethical considerations (i.e., following the code, 10 step model for ethical decision making). This level of reflection takes time, but often saves time by not having to revisit the same problem again,





or potentially making a decision that makes things worse.

*Accessing Supports.* Following reflection, the psychologist needs to fill the gaps in their knowledge by accessing supports in two principle ways. First, they can access supports by accessing other people or a community of practitioners. Psychologists connect with one another in a multitude of ways, including in-person, phone, text, email, message boards, shared documents, and so on. Psychologists may also choose to access support through allied professionals such as physicians, teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, or other experienced individuals. A psychologist engaged in creative practice must have an extensive network of people to access, and even at the early stages in their career, be willing to give and share information within these networks. The second area of support is within psychological literature and research. Psychologists are critical readers of research and pride themselves on utilizing evidence-based practice. As these supports are accessed, the psychologist will notice that most often there is nuance between the published research and the presentation of the challenge. Things will not line up quite right. Ultimately, the individual psychologist will need to decide what action to take.

*Trying something.* After reflection and accessing supports, the psychologist will decide a course of action to meet the goal of the intervention. At times, this may involve a referral to another program, specialist, or another resource. More often, however, in a rural context, the logistics of travel can present a significant barrier to service and supports. Rural school psychologists may attempt an intervention that has a high likelihood to be beneficial and a low risk of causing harm. Practicing in this space moves the psychologist from working in their area of competency (what they can do) to their area of knowledgeability (what they know about). It is the creative practice in this space where innovation, translation of research into practice, new applications for research are born. The psychologist collects data to determine the success of the intervention and potentially has the opportunity to create new knowledge to inform the broader field of psychology.

My view is that creative practice exists within each of the disciplines of psychology, however, are exemplified within rural settings given the unique challenges of high needs, vast distances, and fewer specialists. I am grateful that I began my career in a rural area, as I have had the opportunity to grow my competencies by working with diverse populations, serving multiple client groups, confronting ethical dilemmas, increasing my professional network, and expanding my knowledge of various disciplines of psychology. Rural

psychologists are the general practitioners within the discipline of psychology. Working in rural settings allows us to have an expansive view as to what might be possible with our client work. As a teacher, clinician, and a scholar, I may just continue my work here for a long time too.



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**Conor Barker, M.Ed., R. Psych.** is a psychologist with Brunswick Creek Psychology Services and Chinook School Division. He is a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina, under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Carlson Berg & Dr. Joël Thibeault. Mr. Barker's research focuses on rural school psychology, intervention strategies in minority language contexts (i.e., EAL, French Immersion, Hutterian Education), and forensic school psychology.

## **Rurality as an Issue of Culture**

### **By Julian Torres, Psy.D., C.Psych. Candidate**

I became aware of the impact of culture in my everyday life only after a decade as an immigrant in Canada. Since then, I have learned to pay more attention to my own cultural perceptions and how they may be different from those of other people around me. So far, I found that culture is much more pervasive than I had expected. This brought me to consider cultural similarities and differences as my studies and training led me to visit several Canadian provinces and meet so many people from different cultural



backgrounds. Now I practice in a community setting in a rural area of Manitoba, and I am compelled to apply the same template to my developing experience as a rural practitioner. The questions are then raised in my mind: could rural populations be considered as a culturally defined group? Of course, a rural practitioner does not need to be very seasoned to note the informal existence of a “Rural Culture”, and any member of a small town would acknowledge that life in the country or in “the bush” is much different than in the city; but are these differences large enough to define two distinct cultures, and what would be the implications of this? In the following paragraphs I intend to briefly explore these propositions, but only as a thought experiment, for the moment. I would like to start by making two points:

The first is to establish the relationship between the clinical and the cultural. The DSM-5 defines culture as “systems of knowledge, concepts, rules, and practices that are learned and transmitted across generations” (APA, 2013). It recognizes that culture can very well have an impact on clinical treatment, guiding attitudes, interpretations, expectations, and ultimately mental health outcomes. The description of almost all disorders include a brief mention to culture-related considerations, reminding the reader that culture could be a factor in prevalence and presentation of the disorder. The DSM-5 also provides guidelines and procedural structures for cultural formulations, highlighting that working with individuals from a different culture requires dedicated, purposeful efforts to identify, understand, and address those differences.

The second is to establish the duty to cultural awareness as an important element in ethical practice in psychology. The CPA Code of Ethics addresses issues of culture in all four Ethical Principles it describes. The Code makes it the professional responsibility of psychologists to be aware, sensitive, and respectful of cultural differences. Psychologists are required to act proactively to address these differences. One of the steps recommended for ethical decision-making regarding issues of culture is to become actively aware of one’s own culture, to better understand what factors in the cultural differences are brought about by the clinician. This step is reportedly rather difficult to take effectively. In my experience, I can attest that this practice is indispensable, and as difficult as it sounds. Metaphorically, it is very difficult for a fish to become aware of water.

As mentioned before, and following the DSM-5 definition, there are many differences between the urban and rural cultures. So far, it appears to me that psychology as a discipline has relied on a particular set of values, beliefs, and practices that may be specific to urban settings. One clue supporting this theory is the fact that “Rural Psychology” or “Rural Practice” are recognizable terms, but “Urban Psychology” is not; this necessarily implies (purposefully or not) that the

urban setting is the default. It is understandable, as psychology has developed academically, and universities have traditionally been urban institutions (sometimes cities are built and grow around universities).

With this in mind, it is possible to theorize further that the development of psychological theories, methods, practices, and even ethical guidelines, are culturally based on urban ideologies, needs, and resources. A piece of evidence that may support this theory is the large number of articles that address the difficulties of applying these general guidelines in rural areas. Consistent problems with dual relationships, conflicts of interest, issues of confidentiality, lack of resources, and many others are extremely well documented in Rural Psychology journals, and I am confident that the rural reader will have significant experience in this regard. In my own experience, it sometimes seems that these barriers are what define Rural Practice. I wonder if the barriers would be the same if, for instance, ethical guidelines were developed in rural areas, with bases in rural culture.

To bring it all together, it is possible that perhaps the difficulties that are so intrinsic to rural practice are due to attempts at making the structure of one culture fit a different culture. If this is the case, it is the ethical responsibility of psychologists to find ways of bridging this divide in a way that is respectful and sensitive to the cultural needs of the “Rural Peoples”® (I’m calling the term before it catches on!). The one conceptually difficult step would be to properly identify and become aware of psychology’s “Urban Culture”. Here I do not mean the culture of the individual psychologist, but of the roots that define the discipline in general. Every theory, every procedure, every method, every piece of evidence. If this is difficult at an individual level, I expect it will be much more complex for a whole discipline. The risk of avoiding these steps is failing to see the actual needs of another culture, rural peoples® that might have been ignored for too long because we were unable to recognize the cultural difference for what it was.

Now I invite you to engage in a mental exercise and imagine you are practicing in another country, with people who are very different from you; would you expect to do things the same way? Do you think trying to apply the same methods, principles, and values would be ethically acceptable? What makes it acceptable to apply urban principles to rural communities? It might be interesting to hear your thoughts, so I encourage you to write your reflections to our wonderfully dedicated editor, perhaps for publication in the next edition of this newsletter.

Julian Torres, Psy.D, C.Psych. Candidate  
Portage La Prairie, Manitoba

## Employee Retention in Rural and Northern Canada: Service Providers and How to Keep Them

By Alex McGregor, Ph.D. Candidate, Western University

It's no surprise that there are unique challenges, experiences, and opportunities to rural and northern practice in Canada. Contributions to previous editions of *'The View From Here'* have highlighted some of the experiences psychologists face in a rural/northern context, including a broad scope of clients, the (in)ability to maintain work-life balance, an outdoors lifestyle, limited access to professional development, relationships with the community, and more. Further, rural and northern parts of Canada tend to have a much lower ratio of psychologists to population, meaning fewer psychologists are stretched to cover a greater client base. All of these issues were covered by Dr. Cindy Harding during CPA 2014's rural and northern section symposium: *'Engaging the Next Generation of Psychologists'*.

Perhaps also not surprisingly, psychologists are not the only professional service providers in short supply throughout Canada's rural areas (Barbopoulos, 2003; Cotton, Nadeau, & Kirkmayer, 2014). Shortages of skilled professionals is unfortunately something northern/rural Canadian communities are all too familiar with. The out-flow of young people, an aging population, and the challenges of attracting and retaining skilled labour contribute to significant economic and community health hardships in rural/northern Canada. The last few years however have seen a clear increase in government interest in developing rural and northern Canada's service sector. The appointment of Canada's first minister of rural development, and the federal and Ontario governments' announcement of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, and the Ontario Northern Immigration Pilot are all examples of this increasing interest in attracting and retaining skilled newcomers to outlying areas. *"The need to attract and retain talent including through skills development and immigration"* (Infrastructure Canada, pg 6) is a key issue in the Canadian government's objective of sustainable, economically successful rural communities, and the attraction and retention of employees is a core area of research in organizational psychology. Despite this, there is little to no organizational psychology research being done on the unique experiences and challenges of attracting and retaining skilled service providers in a rural/northern Canadian context. In a review of Canadian organizational psychology and behaviour research, Bonnacio and her colleagues state that:

*"Despite large development investments and clear government and organizational interest in attracting, retaining, and training a skilled labour force in outlying regions of Canada there is almost a complete lack of research on*

*workplace experiences in a Northern/Rural Canadian context. As of 2013, there are no university programs, consultancies, or industrial and organizational psychology personnel of large public or private organizations that cater specifically to the challenges of the work force in the rural and northern parts of Canada.”* (Bonnacio, Chiocchio, Forget, et al., 2013, pg. 216)

Six years later, this is still the case. Attraction and retention of new employees is a longstanding topic in organizational psychology, however in a rural/northern Canadian context what little research that does exist has largely been in specific occupations, such as healthcare (e.g. Henderson-Betkaus & MacLeod, 2004) or education (e.g. Kitchenham & Chateauneuf, 2010), with little comparison or consideration across industries. Although still in initial stages, I have recently put together a review paper looking at the unique experiences rural service providers have, and particularly how some of these experiences can influence an individual's decision to stay with or leave their rural practice. Below is a short summary of some of these factors identified by researchers in retaining professional service providers in rural/northern communities, many of which you've probably experienced yourself!

### **Employee Retention Factors in a Northern/Rural Context:**

#### **Compensation**

Financial compensations such as 'north pay' salary increases, tuition reimbursement, and housing assistance tend to be the go-to strategy for both business organizations and government institutions to attract and retain newcomers to rural and northern communities. Although this approach has been shown to be effective for attraction, its ability to promote retention beyond contracted periods is limited (Yang, 2003). Additional pay is not always salient to applicants (Devine, 2006) and generally has mixed success (Roots & Li, 2013) with the majority of service providers returning to urban centers following 'short stints away from home' (Cameron et al., 2010). As such compensation doesn't seem to be enough on its own to substantially impact retention in a rural context, leading to research into other, more attitudinal factors.

#### **Autonomy & Scope of Practice**

High autonomy is usually associated with higher job satisfaction, higher organizational commitment, and the intent to stay with an organization. In a rural context however high autonomy often comes hand in hand with being forced to provide service outside one's scope of expertise (Henderson-Betkis & MacLeod, 2004; Kitchenham & Chateauneuf, 2010). In Kitchenham and Chateauneuf's study on teachers in the far north, 27% of their respondents indicated they had to teach in a discipline far outside their training, and participating schoolboards indicated that they had to place teachers in subjects outside their expertise up to 50% of the

time. Many rural service providers have difficulty dealing with the increased variety and responsibility of rural practice (Pong & Russell, 2003). On the other hand, some indicate the necessity of working outside one's normal scope of practice is also a perk of rural practice. Specifically, the increased scope of responsibility many professionals face in a rural/northern context, while potentially a source of stress, also comes with increased opportunities for career advancement and greater professional autonomy and mastery. Across studies, professional growth opportunities and autonomy are linked with job satisfaction and are significant predictors of rural workforce retention (Henderson-Betkas, 2004; Ingersoll et al., 2002; Tallmann & Buchanan, 2005).

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

Although professional autonomy has been identified as a potential positive aspect of rural practice, the relative isolation of rural service providers it stems from may also hinder professional development opportunities, especially for those with limited internet access. The availability of professional development has been cited as one of the greatest challenges to professional work in rural and remote areas (Henderson-Betkaus & MacLeod, 2004; Kitchenham & Chateaufneuf, 2010; Roots & Li, 2013). For example, professionals across northern/rural Canada frequently must travel long distances and pay a great deal of money to participate in professional development (Roberge, 2009). Geographic isolation and limited availability of development resources (e.g. travel pay allowances, substitutes, time off, and access to the internet) are potential challenges to professional development, and recognition of these issues may deter early career service providers from accepting rural practice positions, or incentivize mid-career providers to leave for advancement opportunities.

### **Rural Background, Experience, & Lifestyle**

A large body of literature suggests a strong connection between a rural background/experience/lifestyle and being attracted to and staying in a rural practice (e.g. Bilodeau & LeDuc, 2002; Roots & Li, 2013). Whether obtained through lived experience or through placements, an understanding of the nature of practice in a rural setting prior to obtaining the position has a considerable impact on rural workforce retention. Several studies have suggested that healthcare practitioners entering a rural placement do so without a sufficient knowledge of the realities of rural practice, and that this lack of understanding contributes to poor retention (Bilodeau & LeDuc, 2002; Roots & Li, 2013). Sheppard (2008) suggests that clinical practitioner placements in rural areas do not increase rural recruitment, however, placements contribute to retention due to better informed decision-making regarding location of practice and the lifestyle that comes with it. In support of this Kulig and her co-authors (2009) found in their study of over 3000 registered nurses across Canada that while overall rural



nurses were significantly more dis-satisfied with their workplace, nurses that had a rural background and worked in a rural context were significantly more satisfied than their urban-origin coworkers, and were half as likely to be considering leaving their organization within the next five years.

### **Community Satisfaction & Embeddedness**

Community satisfaction refers to the positive or negative perceptions towards one's community. Rural nurses in Henderson-Betkus and MacLeod's (2004) study suggest the number of friends in the community, level of trust they feel toward the community, social/recreational opportunities, safety, and quality of schools all influenced their respondents' community satisfaction, and importantly their retention period. There is some indication that community satisfaction is more important for rural residents due to the types of relationships developed and maintained in these smaller communities. Henderson-Betkus and MacLeod (2004) also found that while community satisfaction had some relationship with staying/leaving intentions among rural nurses, it appeared this relationship was moderated by 'shock factors' (salient, tangible events) such as closure of local schools or lack of available spousal employment.

Organizational support have also been shown to be an important factor in rural service providers' successful integration into the community. Some studies have reported the appointment of a co-worker as a local sponsor as an effective strategy for facilitating newcomer integration into rural communities (Roberge et al., 2009). These sponsors play an important role in encouraging community interaction. For instance, Curry et al. (2001) reported on the sponsoring role of more established newcomers in one rural community, who helped recent newcomers become involved in local community projects and social events. This sponsorship role aligns with the 'easing in' community leadership strategies proposed by Taylor et al. (2008) and may be especially important in the case of introducing foreign newcomers into rural communities, for example through the northern immigration programs.

### **Kinship Networks & Spousal Employment**

The presence of local kinship networks (i.e. significant partners, starting families) in northern/rural communities has been cited as powerful predictors of service providers' staying intentions (Roberge, 2009; Roots & Li, 2013). Kinship networks refers to the existence of a network of obligations towards relatives. Depending on where these networks are embedded (i.e., in the community where the individual works, or elsewhere) they can either positively or negatively predict employee turnover intentions. Aside from individual satisfaction and embeddedness in the community, the personal needs and circumstances of other family members are likely to be influential in staying decisions as well (Cameron

et al., 2010). It has been argued that in rural settings it is often a whole family that is recruited to an area, not just an individual, and that the needs of other family members should be taken into account. Support in securing housing and spousal employment have been suggested as mechanisms which may help attract and retain service providers.

### **Anonymity & Privacy**

As many have experienced, rural/northern practice blurs the boundaries between personal and professional life. In general, professionals in small, rural communities are often challenged with limited barriers between their practice and daily life, however reactions to this issue vary. For example, one respondent in Henderson-Betkus and MacLeod's (2004) study stated: *"Lots of people know me, I like it. Or rather, I am not bothered by it."* Consistent with other studies, they found that lack of anonymity by itself was not an issue for most rural nurses, it only became a concern when combined with a high familiarity among the community. For example, being consulted about work-related concerns outside of the workplace, or feeling like their client's perception of their job-related competency was affected by their life outside of work. This combined effect however may only be substantial in smaller rural or remote communities (Henderson-Betkus & McLeod, 2004).

### **Job Satisfaction and Commitment**

Service providers in rural practices tend to be less satisfied with their jobs and less committed to their place of work than their urban counterparts (Henderson-Betkus & MacLeod, 2004; Ingersoll et al., 2002), which is an issue because job satisfaction and organizational commitment are the two factors with the largest effect on an employee's intentions to stay or leave a position. In many ways these two variables can be seen as a sort of hopper where all of the previous factors funnel through to ultimately inform service providers' intentions to either stay with a position or leave. Interestingly, Tallman and Bruning (2005) found that in their sample of rural nurses, job satisfaction had an abnormally high correlation with community satisfaction, and that community satisfaction predicted staying intentions even more so than either job satisfaction or commitment to their organization. Although just one study, this may suggest that in a rural context, the boundaries between personal and professional life are more obscured, something reflected in the many challenges our own members face in navigating privacy issues and dual roles within their communities.

### **Conclusion**

It's clear that as Bonnacio et al (2013) points out, research on rural and northern context effects on core workplace attitudes and behavior is nearly

non-existent in Canadian industrial-organisational psychology. That said, the topic is alive and well in other areas of research, particularly healthcare and education. From these different literature bases there seems to be a degree of similarity in the unique experiences of practice in rural and northern communities. However, to date only one study has compared these experiences across occupations (Montgomery, 2000). While still only in initial stages, this ongoing review highlights both theoretically and practically intriguing questions: How similar are these experiences across different communities and occupations? Do organizational behavior researchers have a role to play in assessing the effectiveness of attraction and retention strategies in this context? Can our current theories and models of employee retention account for factors outside the workplace?

Finding effective and sustainable solutions to the issue of retaining professional service providers in northern/rural areas of Canada will ultimately contribute to improving the quality of life, health, and happiness of people living in these communities. To this end, research is required to better identify, measure, and intervene in northern/rural context effects on employee attraction and retention. Psychology is, at its core, a helping profession. Organizational psychologists have a wealth of knowledge that could be used in promoting the economic and social health of rural/northern communities. However, our contributions are below what they could be, especially in remote locations. Many of the organizational and community retention factors identified in this ongoing review have the potential to encourage intentions to either stay or leave depending on how people experienced them. As argued by Malone and Hardy (2013) in the context of clinical and counselling psychology:

*“the challenges of the rural and northern contexts are balanced with distinct rewards for this area of practice and great potential for social advocacy”* (p. 11).

Converting the challenges of rural and northern practice into rewards through positive experiences is likely the most effective way rural organizations and communities can promote retaining service providers. Organizational psychologists may have a role to play in helping rural/northern employers and their wider community manage challenges while highlighting the unique rewards of practice in rural/northern Canada.

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## What's Your View Photo Challenge!

We encourage our readers to submit their photos from around the country! *What's Your View?* Send us your favourite picture of the geography outside your door, and we will post it in the newsletter!

**Below:**

**Photo submitted by Michael Kral, Associate Professor  
School of Social Work, Wayne State University  
In Igloolik, Nunavut**





## Editor's Comments

Submitted by Dr. Michelle Conan, C. Psych. Candidate



I hope that you have enjoyed this spring issue of *The View from Here*—our Rural and Northern Newsletter. I am pleased to have the role of newsletter editor for our section. I'd like to thank our previous editor, Dr. Amanda Lints-Martindale for her contributions over many years.

If you would like to make a contribution to *The View From Here*, please contact me or Dr. Amanda Lints-Martindale by email at [Michelle.Conan@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Michelle.Conan@umanitoba.ca) or [Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lints-Martindale@umanitoba.ca). Submissions can be made at any time, and can include:

- **an article for our regular feature “a week/day in the life of a rural and/or northern psychologist”**
- research findings and summaries
- information on upcoming conferences and training opportunities
- articles on the experience, challenges, and benefits of practicing in rural and/or northern locations
- photos
- ethical dilemmas
- book review(s)
- any other topic related to rural and northern psychology in Canada!

The Newsletter is produced by the Rural and Northern Section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and is distributed to members of the Section. The purpose of the Rural and Northern Section is to support and enhance the practice of rural and northern psychology. The goals of the section are: 1) Establish a network of professionals interested in the areas of rural and northern psychology (this may include individuals currently practicing in rural/northern areas of those with an interest in this area), 2) Enhance professional connectedness by facilitating linkages between rural and northern practitioners, 3) Distribute information relevant to the practice of rural and northern psychology, 4) Provide a forum to discuss practice issues unique to this specialty, and 5) Introduce students and new or interested psychologists to rural and northern practice.

*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Canadian Psychological Association, its officers, directors, or employees.*

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