



A Brief Look Back at the BC Rural Centre's 2019



2019 WAS AN important year in the BC Rural Centre's evolution.

Perhaps most significantly over the past 12 months, we've moved to a new governance structure, creating an Advisory Committee featuring outstanding British Columbians from all across our province. We now, through our structure as well as our actions, clearly represent an organization focussed on issues of importance to *all* rural and First Nations British Columbians, moving beyond our initial focus on the Southern Interior.

As we move into 2020, we'll continue to bring you timely information on matters of importance to rural and First Nations British Columbians. We're going to be particularly engaged in the coming year with an important project we hope will make a significant contribution to helping rural British Columbians understand important advances and changes to how health services are delivered in rural BC.

On the communications front, our regular newsletters have become a staple for rural decision makers and shapers, enjoyed by nearly 1,500 subscribers and shared with many others. We appreciate comments like this one we received from a rural economic development officer: *"I get more value from one of your newsletters than I do from the annual multi-day economic development conference in my region!"* Thousands more rural British Columbians access BC Rural Centre offerings on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

As has become our custom, we're delighted once again to take a moment to look back at some highlights from the past year's work and accomplishments, drawing on content from our website (<https://bcruralcentre.org>), visited over 6,000 times in 2019. We've chosen to organize this year's content by topic area, to make it easier for you to find information of particular interest.

We want to take this opportunity to wish you & yours a safe and happy holiday season, as well as good health and good fortune in the new year.

The BC Rural Centre Team

FORESTRY & FIRST NATION - MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION



THE MOST RECENT downturn in the forest sector is creating significant challenges once again for many rural communities and families. We produced what we hope is [a useful and thought-provoking submission](#) in response to the provincial government's call for submissions on interior forestry revitalization.



"I just wanted to say that I enjoyed the video you released last month on the Splitsin First Nation and Village of Lumby collaboration on the Monashee Community Forest. This is a great example of how community forests can help build relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations communities!"

[Splitsin First Nation](#) councillor **George William** and [Lumby](#) mayor **Kevin Acton** discuss how their respective communities came together to create the [Monashee Community Forest](#) — and in the process began to build a greater awareness of the similarities between the First Nation and village, and explore further opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation and collaboration — [in this BC Rural Centre video](#).



Powell River shares many similarities with other rural BC communities. It was established and grew next to a First Nations community. Its economic growth was primarily due to a heavy reliance on the forest industry. And Powell River has experienced, as have many other BC small towns, significant economic and employment transition issues related to its major forest sector employer. In [this](#)

[following BC Rural Centre report](#), we look at the unique partnership and collaboration that have emerged between Powell River and its First Nations neighbour, Tla'amin Nation.



Tla'amin Nation Hegus (Chief) **Clint Williams** and Tla'amin Chief Treat Negotiator **Roy Francis** are joined in conversation by City of Powell River Mayor **Dave Formosa** in [this BC Rural Centre webinar](#), hosted by the Centre's Director of Communications, **Randy Morse**.



Gordon Borgstrom and BC Rural Centre Associate **Peter Kenyon** were pleased to be able to work with the Qathet Regional District to deliver an asset-based community-driven development workshop in Powell River in the spring of 2019 (*Interested in asset-based community development?*— [click here to learn how we can help](#)).

People in the community of Cowichan Lake and [Pacheedaht First Nation](#) are benefiting from a [unique community forest agreement](#) for the Qala:yit [Kwah-LIE-it] Community Forest, reached in partnership with the provincial government in September 2018. [This video](#) provides an interesting overview.

Government-to-government partnerships are increasingly important for the well-being of rural British Columbians. [This brief overview](#) provides some examples of government-to-government agreements involving First Nations and adjacent municipalities, leading to positive benefits for all stakeholders.

CONFERENCES



KEEPING IT RURAL, our biennial conference focussing on issues of importance to rural and First Nations citizens was held on October 7th and 8th in Kelowna. An outstanding lineup of presenters tackled topics ranging from community forestry to innovative ways to attract young people to rural communities. [Here's a comprehensive overview](#) of the conference:

During the conference's two days, a number of highly informative, often inspirational presentations and workshops were featured.

Here are some examples of presentations made during the two-day conference:



Back by popular demand, Cape Breton's **Rankin MacSween** gave a [rousingly entertaining keynote](#). The leader of New Dawn Enterprises, MacSween is one of Canada's most knowledgeable community development leaders — and a terrific speaker!



BC Rural Centre Executive Director **Gordon Borgstrom** and BC Community Forest Association Executive Director **Jennifer Gunter** discussed trends, challenges, and opportunities of importance to forestry-dependent rural BC communities and First Nations in [this presentation](#).



Many rural BC communities find themselves growing every greyer. The need to attract young, urban, entrepreneurial newcomers to communities facing a demographic crisis looms as increasingly important. BC Rural Centre communications director **Randy Morse**, joined by Kaslo, BC mayor **Suzan Hewatt** and *Escape the City* contest winner **Rochelle Longval** [discussed what it takes](#) to entice young people away from big cities to small towns, and how *Escape the City* helped change lives and boost the fortunes of Kaslo.



Gordon Borgstrom, and **Randy Morse** were invited to speak at the first-ever Rural Islands Economic Forum, held on Pender Island. This gathering brought together key stakeholders from the southern Gulf Islands, tackling issues ranging from community investment to supporting entrepreneurial activities in the context of the unique geographical, cultural, and political contexts Islanders face.

TOURISM



BETWEEN WRENCHING STRUCTURAL changes in the forestry industry, the pine beetle epidemic, and other significant economic and social upheavals, countless rural BC communities are struggling to reinvent themselves. For many of these communities, [experiential tourism](#) seems a viable economic option.

Not every rural citizen is a fan of tourism as an economic driver. But most rural folks would agree that the sort of experiential tourism advocated by **Dana Blouin** and her husband, **François Blouin** [in this podcast](#) — tourism that respectfully celebrates local culture, talent, and nature.



Indigenous tourism can provide a culturally sensitive boost to First Nations' economies, as demonstrated [in this video](#).

RURAL HEALTH



BEGINNING IN LATE January, we started working with a coalition of virtually all of BC's health stakeholders, from the Ministry of Health to the Doctors of BC; from the First Nations Health Authority to the province's regional health authorities, exploring how to best transform the shaping and delivery of health & wellness services to rural British Columbians and First Nations members. As matters relating to health & wellness are of primary importance to so many rural citizens, we devoted a great deal of time and effort on health-related topics in 2019.



The BC Rural Centre invited Dr. **David Snadden**, [Doctors of BC](#)'s UBC Chair in Rural Health, to lead a conversation on issues and innovations on British Columbia's rural healthcare front. [Here's a video recording](#) of Dr. Snadden's webinar:

Providing adequate — let alone excellent — health care in rural and remote BC communities, regions, and First Nations presents a set of unique challenges, including vast distances, lack of transportation infrastructure, staffing difficulties, scattered populations, poor or no bandwidth, and a range of socio-economic conditions that impact on health and well-being. In [this BC Rural Centre report](#), we showcase a number of initiatives that attempt to tackle some of these challenges, in the process suggesting ways rural BC health care may improve going forward.



We sat down with five leading BC healthcare specialists, each with something to say of importance for rural British Columbians, featured in [these podcasts](#).



The community of Gabriola Island is a recipient of the [Rural Coordination Centre of BC](#)'s *BC Rural Community Award*. The community was honoured for its innovation and resiliency in recovering from a healthcare crisis in 2006, when one of the island's physicians – frustrated by a lack of medical facilities and services – nearly left. [Here's their story](#).

CONCLUSION



AS WE LOOK forward to 2020, our work in the area of rural and First Nations health & wellness looms large.

We're honoured to have been asked to work with a group of rural health partners in organizing and hosting some discussions on rural healthcare issues, and to make some recommendations on improving communications on rural healthcare issues.

Of course we'll continue to do our utmost to showcase rural successes and share pertinent information on a wide variety of topics important to rural and First Nations leaders and citizens.

In closing, we hope you've found this overview informative. Should you have questions regarding any of the above, or about our activities generally, we'd be delighted to hear from you!

