



Presentation Session: Rural Population Retention (Welcoming)

DATE:

Wednesday, November 16th, 2022

TIME:

3:00-4:30 PM

FORMAT:

Four 15-minute oral presentations followed by a 30-minute discussion

SESSION DESCRIPTION:

This session presents different research, case studies, and stories on rural population retention (welcoming) in Northern Ontario or other rural, remote, northern, and island communities. It touches on themes such as creating communities where residents feel welcome, social capital building, outmigration, rural population decline, and others. It also provides participants with the opportunity to join the discussion, give their input, and share their knowledge, best practices, or stories with the other participants.



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Presentations:

Presentation 1

Time: 3:00–3:15 PM

Title: The housing crisis on Prince Edward Island and its effects on international students

Author: Kelly Rivera (Student at the University of Prince Edward Island in the Master of Arts in Island Studies)

Abstract: Atlantic provinces accounted for about 6% of all new Canadian study permits approved between 2016 and 2021 and that number keeps increasing year by year on Prince Edward Island. Therefore, international students are an increasing number of our island resident population which could represent economic growth for our island. However, P.E.I. has the country's lowest immigrant-retention rate. To find out the cause for these numbers, focusing on our housing crisis is a must. Affordable housing is a right and the lack of it can have a big influence on these statistics. In fact, our island's, low vacancy rates have made it hard for tenants to find affordable housing, and soaring housing prices, and the increase in short-term rentals, have only increased pressure on the rental market. Our housing crisis may not only one cause but many harmful effects for islanders and newcomers, especially international students. When we look at the average international student's status, we look at young adults struggling to pay the continuously increasing tuition costs while being limited to working only 20 hours per week with a constricted school schedule. We'll look at how we can possibly improve our retention rates by reinvesting in affordable housing projects.

Presentation 2

Time: 3:15–3:30 PM

Title: Addressing Rural Labour Shortages through Newcomer Attraction and Retention: A Scoping Review with Impacts for Communities

Authors: Louis Helps (University of Guelph), Sarah Breen (Selkirk College), Ryan Gibson (University of Guelph), Dave Guyadeen (University of Guelph), Paul Nichol (Community Futures Huron), and Silvia Sarapura (University of Guelph).

Abstract: With many rural and northern Ontario communities facing severe labour shortages, population aging, and even decline, newcomer attraction and retention has emerged as a key area for rural growth and revitalization. Despite considerable interest from rural policy makers, researchers, and employers in the potential of rural immigration, existing knowledge of rural newcomer attraction and retention as a workforce development strategy continues to be disorganized and underdeveloped. This presentation will discuss an ongoing initiative to correct this through a scoping review of the existing literature on rural newcomer attraction and retention in Canada. This project has systematically assembled a comprehensive overview of this body of literature covering the years 1980-2022 and analyzed it for themes using established coding methods. The presentation will focus on what implications the literature has for rural and northern communities that are considering newcomer attraction and retention as a strategy to combat labour shortages, as well as themes such as welcoming communities, integration, and barriers to rural newcomer settlement. There will be recommendations for policy makers, immigrant settlement service providers, industry groups, and academic researchers.



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Presentation 3

Time: 3:30–3:45 PM

Title: Immigration Attitudes and Experience with Racism in Northern Ontario – Survey Findings

Authors: Rachel Rizzuto (Research Manager, Northern Policy Institute)

Abstract: In June 2021 and February 2022, Northern Policy Institute engaged Environics Research to gather opinions from residents in the Big Five Northern Ontario communities – North Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Greater Sudbury, and Thunder Bay. As well, NPI hosted a supplemental online survey to gather opinions from residents in rural Northern Ontario communities. Residents were asked for their attitudes towards immigration and experience with racism in their communities. By measuring racism, discrimination, and attitudes in Northern Ontario, decision-makers and others can have a baseline, if one does not already exist, to understand the extent of these issues and to utilize for assessment of initiatives and programs going forward. This presentation explores the survey findings, key takeaways, and next steps for this work..

Presentation 4

Time: 3:45–4:00 PM

Title: Case for Sport as an Intervention for Mental Health Promotion in Youth

Authors: Mark Bruner (Professor and Canada Research Chair, Nipissing University), Kendra McIsaac (Vice President of Health and Wellness, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario), Brenda Bruner (Professor, Nipissing University), Bruno da Costa (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Nipissing University), Bryan Heal (MLSE Launch Pad), Barbi Law (Professor, Nipissing University), Jay Mater (YMCA Northeastern Ontario), Jackie Robinson (Manager, Research & Evaluation, MLSE Launch Pad), Marika Warner (Director, Research & Evaluation, MLSE Launch Pad), Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos (Associate Professor, University of Toronto), and Colin McLaren (Assistant Professor, Cape Breton University)

Abstract: The purpose of this research is to understand the role that community sport programming plays in enhancing northern and urban youth physical and mental health as society reopens from the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the research will longitudinally track changes to social identity over the course of two years, and test subsequent changes in mental health and physical activity levels. As part of the research, we will collect survey and objective Fitbit data from 300 children and youth participants (6-18 years old) who are currently enrolled in sport-based programs at MLSE LaunchPad in Toronto and YMCA Northeastern Ontario (North Bay and Sudbury). Youth participants will complete a survey assessing social identity, mental health, and self-reported physical activity at baseline, 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-months. Given the negative implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on activity levels and mental health of children and youth, innovative strategies are urgently needed to monitor and understand how the return of sport participation can be vital for the promotion of mental health and physical activity. Further, enhanced social identity can help foster a sense of 'us' within a community sport organization, which can be a key driver of greater mental health and physical activity.



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