

## *Institution*

Vancouver Island University

## *Principal Researcher*

Shannon Bence

## *Research Field*

Rural Canada; Rural Revitalization; Economic Development; Community Development; Young Adults; Facebook

## *Student Involvement*

1 student researcher

## *Partners & Collaborators*

Vancouver Island University;  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council;  
Nicole Vaugeois - BC Rural Innovation Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development (Thesis Supervisor);  
Terri MacDonald - Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development - Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (Thesis Co-Supervisor)

## *Funding Sources*

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
- Joseph Bombardier Scholarship

## Young Adults needed for a Healthy Rural Canada

Young adults are the essential ingredient for successful rural revitalization. Attracting young adults to rural areas for employment and to establish families is a goal of many of Canada's rural communities. Yet, these communities often struggle due to limited knowledge on what motivates young adults' relocation decisions. The purpose of this study is to assess the attractiveness of living in rural areas from the perspectives of young adults.

This study will: 1.) Identify the factors that influence young adults' relocation decisions; 2.) Discover to what extent young adults are attracted to living in rural areas; 3.) Identify the most common attributes that young adults perceive to make rural communities attractive/unattractive; 4.) Determine the different perspectives that exists between the young adults who have stayed in, left and returned to rural areas, as well as the perspectives of young adults who grew up in an urban environment; and 5.) Produce recommendations to assist rural communities incorporate young adults' perspectives in policy development and in decision-making processes.

**What is the research about:** The out-migration of young people from rural areas has been a long existing challenge. Many scholars have attempted to gain insight into the phenomenon of out-migration by examining young adults migration patterns and behaviors, the negative impacts of out-migration on rural areas, and the effects that out-migration has on both young people and their communities. However, much of this literature has ignored the importance of gaining young adults' perspectives on out-migration. The purpose of this research is to enhance the understanding of young adults' relocation decision-making processes in order to get better insight into how to get young people relocating to or returning to rural Canadian communities.

To collect the data for this study, a Facebook page and an online survey are being used to reach a diverse group of individuals and organizations. The Facebook page is being used for two purposes - to advertise the online survey with organizations that have Facebook pages and are invested in rural development, helping young people return or remain in rural areas, or are located in a rural setting, and to host a virtual focus group. Every three to four days a new question is posted on the Facebook page. Participants can respond to these questions by stating their opinions and by commenting on posts written by other participants. This virtual focus group will help to tease out young adults' perspectives on living in rural Canadian communities.

# PACE Research Report



**Why is it important:** This research is important because it will assist rural communities, policy makers, and government officials to better address young adult out-migration. The research will provide key insights into how to help young people to relocate or return to rural areas. This is important because with the large quantities of young people leaving rural areas and few returning or relocating in, many rural communities are facing numerous challenges to sustain their economies and community.

**What did the researchers find:** The results of this study are yet to be determined as the data collection for this project ends early September 2013.

**How can the results be used:** The findings of this study will aid in the advancement of knowledge useful for academics, policy makers, governing bodies, and rural communities. The results of this study can be used by rural communities, policy makers, and governing bodies as they are limited in their potential to address the issue of young adult out-migration until they gain further insight into how young adults make their relocation decisions and what supports are needed in order to help young adults relocate to or remain in rural areas.

**How did students benefit:** In addition to gaining valuable research experience, Shannon entered a three minute video submission explaining her thesis research in the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) 'Research for a Better Life: the Storytellers Competition.' She was selected as one of the top 25 finalists and competed in a National Storytellers Competition held at 'The Congress' organized by the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Victoria, BC in June 2013. Shannon received \$3,000 and a spot in a featured presentation in the Storytellers Challenge held at The Congress. Shannon presented her 'research story' in a three minute speech explaining the importance of getting young adults back to rural Canadian communities. She learned how to effectively and concisely communicate the impacts of her research. The link to Shannon's video submission is

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_1qCRLUPdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_1qCRLUPdU) and the link to her presentation at The Congress is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vduCqkOsTAW>.



**Was this a student-led project, class project or faculty-led project:** This research is a student-led project that Shannon Bence is using for her thesis component for the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University.