



**ALBERTA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**  
**2012-13 REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS**



## VISION

A strong sustainable network that is the leading source of trusted rural development research and learning.

## MISSION

To create a model of rural community development through collaboration in research and learning.

## MANDATE

The Alberta Rural Development Network will use the combined expertise of Alberta's post-secondary institutions to support rural development in Alberta and help rural communities grow through research and learning.





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[www.radf.ca](http://www.radf.ca)



# About the Alberta Rural Development Network

**We Are...** The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN), a not-for-profit partnership of Alberta's 21 public universities, colleges, and technical institutes working together to enhance the quality of life in rural Alberta.

**We Believe...** That we can contribute to a thriving rural Alberta through comprehensive approaches to rural community development. Specifically, we believe:

- Rural communities are a significant part of Alberta's spirit
- Capacity building is an integral aspect of rural development
- Collaboration provides not only a means to assess issues, create solutions, reduce duplication and share best practices, but also the power to shape our collective future
- A single portal through which to access the combined expertise of our post-secondary system is a vital resource for rural Alberta

**We Aim...** To create a model of rural development by:

- Identifying rural issues and enabling their solutions
- Creating opportunities for networking, relationship building, and collaboration among rural stakeholders
- Connecting rural communities to the resources of the post-secondary system
- Providing strategic research on economic, cultural, environmental, and social issues
- Mobilizing knowledge so that the right information gets to the people who can use it

**We Strive...** To enhance the well-being of rural communities, individuals, organizations, and institutions. Specifically, we work to:

- Build inter-connected networks of people interested in sharing transformative ideas, collaborating, and becoming innovators and early adopters
- Support proponents during project development, implementation, reporting, dissemination, and adoption
- Facilitate community-driven, post-secondary-supported rural development research and events
- Provide and assist with obtaining the resources needed for rural development projects
- Offer a proactive source for up-to-date information, knowledge, and models of best practices in rural development
- Host events that bring together diverse stakeholders and create public awareness about rural development initiatives

**We Demonstrate...** Our value through multiple successes, including:

- Enabling a business retention and expansion project that impacts more than 14 rural Alberta communities and involves five post-secondary institutions
- Helping post-secondary institutions, especially colleges, increase their rural research capacity
- Connecting researchers and community organizations to create and implement a project to reduce the social isolation of rural deaf Albertans
- Administering the Rural and Remote Homelessness funding stream on behalf of the Government of Canada



## Message from the Chair



Transformation is a natural process for all people and things. The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) has certainly evolved in many surprising and rewarding ways during our four years of active operation, and has, in turn, fostered change and growth in many rural communities in Alberta.

During this period, we had the certainty of funding support from the Rural Alberta Development Fund; this funding has now ended, but we have already found some new resources to continue the Network's work. We are optimistic that more support will come as ARDN has proven its worth many times and is recognized as the leading province-wide, not-for-profit organization for rural development in Alberta.

The goals and outcomes identified in ARDN's charter plan have been achieved and surpassed. ARDN's success originates with its governance model and its grassroots engagement with innovative projects that address real world problems and impact vibrant rural communities. ARDN is the one pertinent example of all 21 Alberta public post-secondary institutions collaborating with each other and the communities they serve.

ARDN represents the best of what can be accomplished through collaboration and demonstrates how the Network can be a catalyst for innovation and creativity. Who would have thought four years ago that the Network would now be leading major projects on rural access to justice, homelessness and employment?

The idea of conducting research outside of urban centres has grown tremendously. Rural research is no longer conducted in isolation. Academics, researchers and government officials now share perspectives and results, and partner with each other and with rural communities. Under the ARDN model, entrepreneurs, municipal leaders and community organizations are fully engaged. The abstract notion of evidence-based decision-making and its connection to applied research grew legs in some very practical ways.

Under Executive Director Dee Ann Benard's stewardship, our ARDN team has facilitated a network of connectivity never before realized in rural Alberta. Systemic glass ceilings, silos and competitiveness over who should do what proved minor obstacles in light of our collective willingness to do things differently. ARDN empowered faculty and administration to interact as innovators who were rewarded by the synergies flowing from their shared work.

Each of the short years of ARDN's operational life has seen major shifts in direction. Once operating primarily as a facilitator of PSI led projects in specific communities, ARDN has now taken a leadership role in conceiving and coordinating major projects that will have significant impacts in many, if not all, rural Alberta regions. This new model has enabled ARDN to receive funds from a variety of sources and if continued, will likely ensure the Network's survival.

"Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating"

~ Karl Von Clausewitz



This transformational change has created the foundation from which ARDN can grow in 2013-14. Unlike other organizations that too often wait for an end, ARDN has been effectively identifying lines of business that will benefit rural Alberta, and assertively assuming responsibility to carry them through. Our work in shaping the future of rural Alberta is likely to cause us to revisit our original charter.

Though confirming our original purpose and charter remain a possibility, we must also be open to more radical changes if necessary. There is much work to be done, and you are invited to join us in defining what ARDN should or could be. As we conduct this self-examination, let's be mindful of what we have accomplished together, and what we, as educators committed to growing the connectivity between rural and urban Alberta, can still do.

Trent Keough  
Board Chair

The Alberta Rural Development Network thanks the Board of Directors for all their time and commitment over the past year.

## 2012-2013 Board of Directors

**Chair:** Trent Keough, Portage College

**Vice Chair:** Dietmar Kennepohl, Athabasca University

**Treasurer:** Robert Woodrow, University of Calgary

**Secretary:** Gerry Paradis, Red Deer College

**Director:** Mel Mathison, Lakeland College

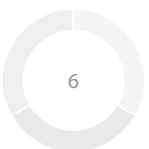
**Director:** Norma Schneider, NorQuest College

**Director:** Marg McCuaig-Boyd / Susan Bansgrove, Grande Prairie Regional College

**Director:** Peter Leclaire, Lethbridge College

**Director:** John Kennelly, University of Alberta

**Past Chair:** Rick Neidig, Northern Lakes College





Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada

## Message from Honourable Alison M. Redford, QC Premier of Alberta

*On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I am pleased to welcome you to the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) annual general meeting.*

*You have a lot to celebrate, and I applaud your tremendous efforts in helping create a sustainable rural Alberta. Our rural communities are essential to the future success of our province, and the ARDN helps them make the most of development opportunities and improve the quality of life for residents. As the administrator of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Rural and Remote Homelessness funding, you are also helping address important challenges facing all Albertans.*

*One of my priorities for our government is to strengthen our province's economy by enhancing access to new markets and ensuring our communities have the resources they need to grow and thrive. Innovation is pivotal to Alberta's success and we must continue to work together to create new learning, research and community development opportunities that will help build this province.*

*Strong partnerships are instrumental to a vibrant rural Alberta and I would like to thank the ARDN for its important work supporting the growth and sustainability of our rural communities.*

*Best wishes for a successful meeting!*

Alison M. Redford, Q.C.

*October 8, 2013*



ALBERTA  
ENTERPRISE AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

*Deputy Premier  
Office of the Minister*



## **Greetings from the Honourable Thomas A. Lukaszuk Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education**

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Alberta Rural Development Network's Annual General Meeting.

Rural communities are the backbone of Alberta, a vital part of both our history and our future. Identifying the unique challenges they face and developing practical solutions is critical to the growth and success of our province. The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) works to improve the quality of life in rural Alberta through collaboration on research, problem-solving and capacity building. By connecting with Alberta's universities, colleges and technical institutes, communities get access to some of our province's brightest minds and most progressive thinkers. This innovative network has become a crucial resource for growth and development. As members of the ARDN work to ensure the success of our rural communities, they are also ensuring the success of Alberta as a whole.

This general meeting is an opportunity to deepen connections and shape the future of the ARDN and our province. Thank you to the organizers of this event and all participants for your commitment to Alberta's rural communities.

Thomas A. Lukaszuk  
Deputy Premier  
Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education  
Ministerial Liaison to the Canadian Forces  
MLA, Edmonton – Castle Downs





# Message from the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development



ALBERTA  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*Office of the Minister  
MLA, Wetaskiwin-Camrose*

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, I am pleased to extend greetings to the members of the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) and to thank you for your continued support of Alberta's rural communities.

I commend your vision of encouraging rural development through collaboration in learning and innovation. A post-secondary institution is so much more than a campus. Thanks to the ARDN, your reach extends into Alberta's smaller communities, offering residents new opportunities for personal, professional and economic growth.

As you mark another successful year at your 2013 annual general meeting, you can take pride in having supported both the rural communities in our province and the sustainable growth of the largest renewable industry in this province – agriculture. The connection between rural development and agriculture is undeniably strong. Almost as, is the connection between today's agriculture industry, science, business and innovation.

Thank you again for your commitment to creating opportunities for Albertans and for supporting our rural communities and our agriculture industry as they continue to grow and develop together.

Verlyn Olson, Q.C.  
Minister

228 Legislature Building, 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada Telephone 780-427-2137 Fax 780-422-6035

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## Message from the Executive Director



Since our creation, the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) has undergone rapid transformation. This year, 2012/13, was both the most challenging and rewarding year, where everyone worked incredibly hard, resulting in tangible results for rural Alberta.

Transitioning to the new model of ARDN, we have grown through all the life stages of an organization; according to author Judith Sharken Simon, there are five. *Imagine and Inspire*. This was ARDN in 2008 while the steering committee was pulling together ideas and support to create ARDN. *Found and Frame*. That was 2009/10 when we brought in our first staff members and began supporting projects. *Ground and Grow*. With a full staff in 2010/11, we were able to forge ahead and began making an impact with our projects and networking events. *Produce and Sustain*. In 2011/12, we allocated funds for 81 projects, strengthened our relationships with our members, and stretched our reach into rural communities. *Review and Renew*. This year, with RADF funding ending, we looked at the way we approach projects and, instead of pursuing many, we delved deeper into fewer

initiatives. What this demonstrates is that our continual transformation was necessary. Now we enter the period of renewal, and will continue to transform as dictated by the needs of Alberta's rural communities.

Moving towards renewal meant we invested energy into taking projects from idea to implementation. Our goal was a small number of focused projects that explored key issues and resulted in meaningful change, ensuring ARDN remained relevant and important. For example, we started a new initiative with Avatar Media to develop the *Trades Warriors Network*, a project that will introduce Aboriginal Youth to potential career opportunities in the trades. ARDN plans to help grow the project and ensure the results make a difference for rural youth. We also moved forward projects from previous years such as *Reducing the Social Isolation of Rural Deaf Albertans* for which ARDN won an Award of Excellence in December 2012. The project is now in the pilot phase and will soon inform widespread adoption of technologies to help rural deaf Albertans better communicate.

This year we discovered ARDN's ability to steer ideas from concept to solution adoption in ways that strengthen Alberta's rural communities. A community or organization identifies the issue or problem, ARDN helps refine it and connects the stakeholder to a post-secondary institution that can conduct the research. Once the results are uncovered, ARDN translates academic language into understandable summaries and then ensures the information is shared with the groups that can turn the research into action, into success.

We could not have accomplished any of our successes without our Board of Directors, members, staff, and engaged rural Albertans. So thank you all – we are *your* organization. ARDN looks forward to working with you to continue to pursue projects that are relevant and important to Alberta's rural citizens. It is said that challenging times reveal true character; we found ARDN's niche - the connector and solution generator for rural Alberta.

Dee Ann Benard  
Executive Director





Furthering our commitment to networking, we grew ARDN's annual *Creating Rural Connections* conference into a national event by partnering with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and Olds College to explore the theme of Regional Realities and Approaches. The conference provided an opportunity for Directors' Meetings where executive directors, community-engagement professionals, and research directors could connect and share their opinions and ideas for rural development.



Also held during the conference, our Annual General Meeting resulted in the expansion of ARDN's Board of Directors to 10 members, with Trent Keough (Portage College) and Dietmar Kennepohl (Athabasca University) stepping into the chair and vice chair roles respectively. At the staff level, Dee Ann Benard's leadership continued to be complemented by Joy Vonk and Paul Watson, while staffing changes resulted in Melissa St. Dennis and Thomas Yee providing communications strategies and support.

This Winter, ARDN was honoured to receive an Award of Excellence in Community from the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities for our *Reducing the Social Isolation of Rural Deaf Albertans* project. Through three phases of research, the project, begun in 2012, will increase access to supports and services to facilitate enhanced communication for Alberta's rural deaf community.

Our focus continued to expand when ARDN was chosen by Service Canada to administer the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's (HPS) Rural and Remote Homelessness Funding Stream. ARDN is now responsible for administering nearly \$425,000 to seven organizations in rural communities to provide supports and services to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (page 13).

With the end of RADF funding, we have worked to ensure our sustainability. ARDN is regularly approached for its expertise and connections to rural communities, and we will continue to be involved in projects that benefit Alberta and build stronger rural communities. Our strengths lie in finding champions to carry the research forward through strategic partnerships and providing communities with the processes to implement solutions that will benefit and strengthen them.

Overall, 2012-2013 was a full and exciting year working with the people, organizations, and institutions that make rural communities places people choose to live. With the successes we've had — disseminating important project results to stakeholders, initiating new projects and initiatives, and administering the HPS Funding Stream for Alberta's rural and remote areas — we hope to continue developing meaningful, impactful solutions and opportunities for rural Alberta well into the future.

ARDN Staff: Dee Ann Benard, Executive Director; Joy Vonk, Operations Manager;  
Paul Watson, Research Director; Melissa St. Dennis, Communications Manager;  
Thomas Yee, Communications Associate; Judy Ferguson, Community Engagement



## Rural and Remote Homelessness Funding Stream

ARDN awarded financial support to seven rural and remote Alberta communities to help them provide increased access to the supports and services that prevent and reduce homelessness through the Rural and Remote Homelessness Funding Stream.

### Ashton's Place Youth Homelessness Project - \$102,324 to Ashton's Place Youth Centre

The Youth Homelessness Project will provide services in the areas of shelter, housing support, outreach, life skills training, employability, job searching, family reunification, financial support, and tutoring assistance.

### Outreach Housing and Aboriginal Support Program - \$70,284 to Camrose Women's Shelter Society

This program will provide support to women and families who are transitioning from the women's shelter back into safe community living. It includes guidance, support, nurturing, advocacy, childcare, life skills and transportation. Additionally, since approximately 60% of the clients are Aboriginal, the project will enable the shelter to provide more resources and supports specifically geared to First Nations women and families.

### Community Youth Homelessness Strategy and Youth Emergency Services - \$64,880 to Boys and Girls Club of Cochrane and Area

This project will meet the basic needs of homeless youth, increase access to employment readiness and career development programs, create a Youth Homelessness Coalition, produce a needs assessment outlining issues and solutions, and develop a strategic plan to provide stable housing options in Cochrane and Area.

### Fort Macleod Housing Support Program - \$58,740 to Town of Fort Macleod Family and Community Support

The program will help families and individuals secure more stable housing and foster the independence of families and individuals at risk of homelessness. It will help them access services, act as a liaison between landlords and tenants, build relationships with other service providers, develop and maintain a comprehensive area housing option list, link with translators, develop strategies to assist First Nations, and generally increase awareness.

### Chestermere Regional Resource Services - \$57,662 to Town of Chestermere

This funding will provide the Town of Chestermere with a full-time Community Resource Coordinator who will increase awareness of homelessness and poverty in the community, coordinate community planning, develop relationships with local service providers, and develop program materials that consider cultural diversity.

### The Drayton Valley Homelessness and Poverty Reduction Team - \$46,735 to Drayton Valley and District FCSS

This project will collect information about poverty and homelessness in Drayton Valley and Area. It will increase understanding of the causes of homelessness, the services needed, the capacity necessary to address homelessness, and guide the development of a community Homelessness and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

### Brooks Champion's Centre Life Skills Program- \$24,000 to The Champion's Centre Inc.

The Life Skills Program provides affordable housing and basic supports to men who struggle to live independently. The program will address some of the core issues that bring men to the Brooks Centre by working with them on nutrition and food preparation, health, interpersonal skills, and money management.

These projects are funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy.



## Diverse Partners Make a Difference for Persons with Disabilities in Rural Alberta

“Taking positive steps towards the full inclusion of persons with disabilities is no small task. But it is one more easily accomplished through the right partnerships,” said Dee Ann Benard, executive director of ARDN as she accepted an Award of Excellence in Community.

The award from the Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities was presented to the partners of the *Reducing the Social Isolation of Deaf Rural Albertans* project at the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

It was a day of recognition for ARDN and its partners, and a time of celebration for all Albertans. Nearly half of Canadians live with some form of disabilities and encounter challenges every day, and IDPD is a day to celebrate the accomplishments of those people and the ones working to support them. IDPD promotes an understanding of disability issues, mobilizes support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities, and increases the opportunities for the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life.



Edmonton’s IDPD event included a community information fair, art displays, videos, performances, and the presentation of the awards, which were distributed across the province at other IDPD locations.

The Award of Excellence in Community is awarded annually to person or group that has made a significant contribution to a barrier-free, inclusive environment within their community.

“Receiving this award **validates our conviction** that diverse collaborations, while taking significant time and effort, are worth the investment and can truly make a difference.”

“We appreciate this recognition from the Premier’s Council,” said Donald McCarthy, president of the Alberta Association of the Deaf (AAD), one of the project partners. “This is a fabulous research team and we feel privileged to be working with them on this project to limit isolation through a bilingual approach, looking at communication and conversation access through the use of technology.”

Along with ARDN and AAD, the partners include the University of Alberta (U of A) and the Ministry of Health. Together they are using their unique skills to create a three phase research project to increase access to supports and services for Alberta’s rural deaf community and facilitate enhanced communication among rural deaf Albertans.

“We are just finishing up phase one right now, which is looking at what people in other jurisdictions and other countries are doing about this kind of problem and then identifying a number of options that would



be possible solutions in Alberta,” Dee Ann said in a follow up interview with the Sherwood Park Gazette. Phase two will include a pilot project where the team will take the options they identified and interview a diverse sample of rural deaf Albertans to learn what they think would be the best technology. The final phase of the project will take the best technologies identified and implement them.

“As an example, it could be something like an iPad,” Dee Ann explained. “Hopefully, some portable electronic device that can get into the web that can be something they can use to see people doing sign language, do interpretation, and if needed, they could quickly type messages into it. We want them to be able to communicate more easily.”

One of the project’s most unique aspects is the broad partnership. “We are proud to be a team of diverse organizations, each providing a unique set of skills and filling a specialized role,” said Dee Ann. ADD first identified the issue, helped shaped the project, and will ensure adoption. The University of Alberta is contributing its research capacity and will disseminate the results. Funding and other support is being provided by the Ministry of Health, and ARDN, who brought together this diverse group, is helping create solutions, and is ensuring overall project management.

“Receiving this award validates our conviction that diverse collaborations, while taking significant time and effort, are worth the investment and can truly make a difference.”

*By Melissa St. Dennis*



“We are proud to be a **team of diverse organizations**, each providing a unique set of skills and filling a specialized role”



# ARDN Projects & Events

In 2012-13, ARDN supported four networking events and five ARDN-Led projects, a commitment totaling \$71,800. Though projects this past year were fewer in number, the nine approved projects represented ARDN's aim to bring greater focus, digging deeper into issues and taking tangible steps towards implementing change.

More information on these projects can be found at [www.ardn.ca](http://www.ardn.ca).

## “Social in the South”

### Social Media Conference \$10,000.00

This conference educated small business entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations and individuals in Southern Alberta on effective strategies to integrate social media into everyday business practices, allowed those using social media for professional purposes to connect with the business community to build a strong social media knowledge base, and provided practical advice, tools, and tactics that can be used immediately by businesses and organizations

ARDN Partner: Lethbridge College



## Exploring Collaboration

### Increasing Learner Access \$3,800.00

These events collectively brought together 30 Central Alberta cross sectorial community members from health, business, industry, government, learning and voluntary sectors for data gathering and to learn from one another the collective. They were also designed to increase local and regional awareness, as well as identify learner supports.

ARDN Partner: Olds College

## Town of Oyen

### Follow2Donate \$1,000.00

ARDN provided financial support to the Town Of Oyen, chosen by Twitter followers. The money has been put towards the Wired West Youth Career & Entrepreneurship Expo, an event that will connect youth in Alberta's Special Areas with career and entrepreneurship opportunities, highlighting options for returning to rural.

## Community Dialogue \$10,000.00

This event was designed to benefit rural Alberta by bringing together local stakeholders who work and are associated with newcomer cultures in the Taber area. It would educate them as to the needs of the cultural groups, their backgrounds, the changing demographics in our rural areas, and how to become welcoming communities.

ARDN Partner: Medicine Hat College







## Battle River Bus Pilot Project

Rural Transportation in Battle River County  
\$10,000.00

The Battle River Bus pilot project will provide transportation to Camrose for rural citizens living in the surrounding area and look into offering this service to other communities. Wheels first hit the ground on May 1, 2013, the route beginning in Bashaw, through Ferintosh, Edberg, New Norway, Duhamel, and Camrose and a return trip back. The Bus now runs every Thursday.

Collaborative Partners: Association for Life-Wide Living of Alberta, Camrose County, Bashaw Bus Society



## FASD Community of Practice

Evaluation Project \$10,000.00

In order to address the issue of rural isolation for distance learners in its Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) education program, Lethbridge College partnered with ARDN to create an evaluation framework for the FASD Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP). The VCOP is an online network for members of the FASD community (e.g. both current and future FASD service providers, Lethbridge College program students and instructors, individuals living with FASD, caregivers, at-risk populations, researchers, and individuals with an interest in FASD).

ARDN Partners: Lethbridge College, University of Alberta



## Trades Warriors Network

An Interactive Website Proposal \$10,000.00

ARDN, in partnership with Avatar Media, is developing a proposal for a project called Trades Warriors Network: an interactive website that will introduce Aboriginal youth to potential career opportunities in the trades. This project will improve the employment prospects of Aboriginal youth, increase the number of Aboriginal youth that complete high school and enter post-secondary education and training, and tap into this potential to address the current and future labour shortages in Alberta.

ARDN Partner: NAIT

Collaborative Partners: Avatar Media, Alberta Human Services

“We know that Alberta’s public universities, colleges, and technical institutes play an important role in supporting rural community development. That’s why we exist.  
~ Dee Ann Benard



## Building Collective Impact

### Closing the Rural Alberta Achievement Gap \$7,000.00

By leveraging collective resources, the ARDN and the Alberta Students' Executive Council (ASEC) are convening a community of post-secondary education stakeholders to formulate a collective impact action plan to increase participation among students in rural and northern Alberta communities.

**ARDN Partners:** Portage College, Northern Lakes College, Grande Prairie Regional College, University of Alberta

**Collaborative Partners:** Saddle Lake, Volunteer Alberta, Oil Sands Developers Group, Literacy Alberta, Educational Liaison Association of Alberta, Aboriginal Recruitment Network, Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education, Northern Alberta Development Council, Alberta School Boards Association, Alberta School Council Association, Education Leadership Consultants, Alberta Teachers Association, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

## Research Bootcamp 101

### Workshop in Edmonton \$10,000.00

This workshop was hosted in Edmonton for new and student researchers who were interested in networking with other researchers across the province. It was an informative one-day seminar where experienced researchers covered interesting topics and encouraged discussion and interaction. Topics were developing a research project, writing a funding proposal, managing a research project, writing a report and paper.

**ARDN Partners:** Medicine Hat College, MacEwan University, University of Alberta, Grande Prairie Regional College, University of Lethbridge

The screenshot shows the ARDN website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, News & Events, ARDN Initiatives (highlighted), Community Info, and Rural Project Library. Below this is a secondary menu with Publications and Programs. The main content area features a large banner for 'ARDN PROJECTS & EVENTS' with the subtitle 'CREATING RURAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH EDUCATION'. Below the banner, there are search filters on the left, including 'Search By Type' (highlighted), Search By Location, Search By Date, Search By Institution, Search By Subject, and Search By Status. A search box with a dropdown menu is also present. On the right, there are social media links for ARDN (Follow, Like) and a search bar with a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a section for 'EVENTS' with a sub-section for 'August 2013'.

*Every single project and event that ARDN has supported since our creation can be found in **ARDN Projects & Events**! You can search by location, institution, or even category. And every project includes an overview and links to a plain language summary, the full report, and other places you can find information. **It's all in one place.***

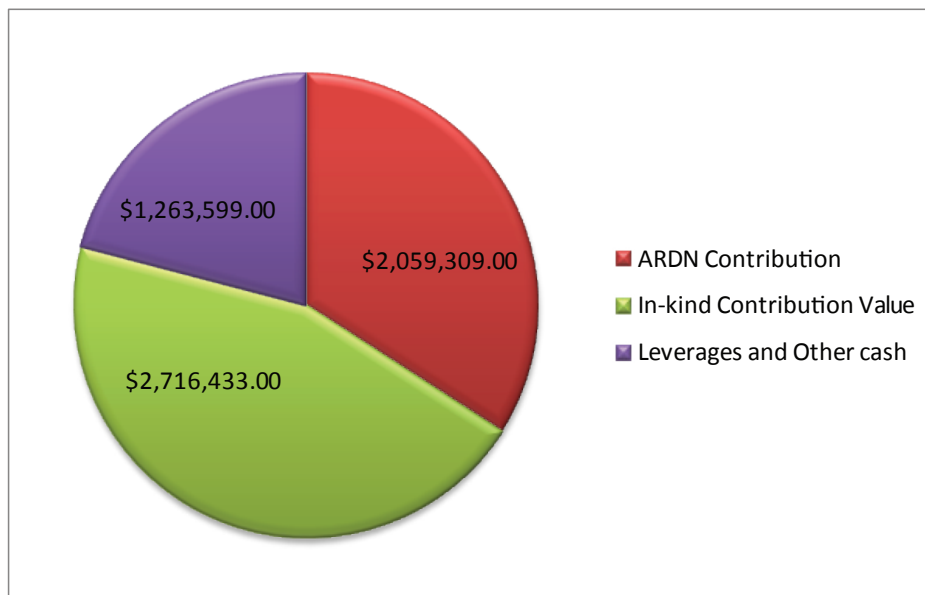
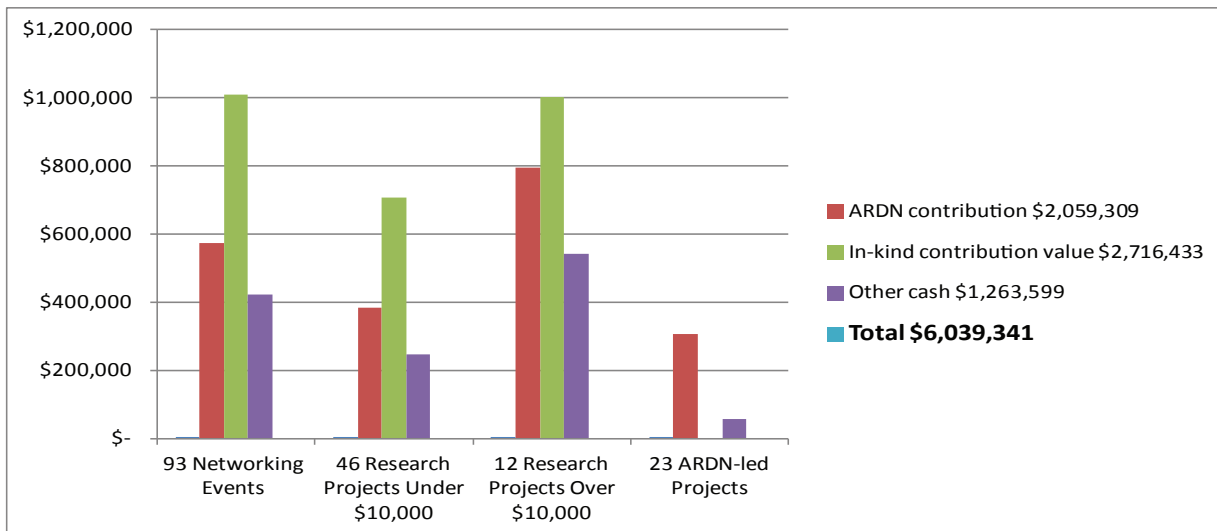


# ARND Initiatives Since 2009

ARND's over 170 networking events and research projects brought together hundreds of Albertans (and non-Albertans) from diverse sectors to explore ways to work together and to develop solutions.

These activities and ARND's support helped to connect those with similar interests find funding or other opportunities, and to complete projects identified as beneficial for rural Alberta.

ARND leveraged its RADF funds to create greater value and expand what it could provide. Organizations were able to use financial assistance from ARND to leverage other funding. ARND estimates that the simple return on investment ratio (total cost of projects/ARND contribution) for projects undertaken was 2.94 (for every \$1 invested, \$2.94 was returned).





## Creating Rural Connections 2012 Conference

# CREATING RURAL CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE AND TRADESHOW



Where would you find nearly 250 people descending on the town of Olds, Alberta? During the *Creating Rural Connections* conference, from October 11-13, 2012, of course. This year the annual Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) conference was held in partnership with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF). It included delegates from across Alberta and Canada, with five keynote presenters from Newfoundland, the United States, and Australia. With the theme “Regional Realities and Approaches” guiding the Conference, these and other questions were explored through keynote speakers, presentations and posters, workshops and discussions, and panel sessions.

The theme of the 2012 conference, Regional Realities & Approaches, was addressed by the five keynote speakers. From the attention grabbing opening plenary by Rob Greenwood (What the Hell is Going On?!) to the closing keynote by Cornelia Butler Flora (Using Your Regions Assets); from Network Weaving with June Holley to Peter Kenyon’s Lessons from Downunder; the conclusion that arose time and again was that taking regional approaches to rural development addresses limited community resources and creates a dynamic that brings positive outcomes for all.

“Our job is to find pathways from our grandfather’s economy to the new economy,” said keynote Dave Ivan from Michigan State University. “The reality is that rural vitality can be a continuous challenge, but research shows there are four key ingredients for success: a different leadership style, an understanding of current strengths, a global view, flexibility and a relationship that bonds a region together.”



Besides the ideas sparked by the five keynote speakers, concurrent sessions offered topics as diverse as the economic benefits of French, poverty reduction, and sexual assault services. Participants heard about specific community efforts and experiences such as the Boomtown Trail, the Association for Life-Wide Living of Alberta, and the Canadian Badlands. Academic researchers shared their findings on projects covering broad areas such as regional, community and economic development, to projects specific to the experiences of immigrants, indigenous communities, and youth.

Interwoven with the presentations were chances to relax, rejuvenate and network over wonderful meals and long refreshment breaks; an Olds College campus tour showcasing everything from the wetlands and botanic garden to the new brewery; musicians at the board reception; morning entertainment featuring cowboy poetry and live music; and theatrical monologues from the Boomtown Trail Desert Theatre at the Banquet.



A poster session on Friday evening enabled delegates to talk one-on-one with research and project leaders, and a workshop session on Saturday created a chance for small groups to roll up their sleeves and roll out new ideas for growth. There were also a number of networking receptions and meetings held for specific groups of people, such as the new researchers breakfast forum, which was an opportunity for new and potential researchers to mix and mingle with established researchers.

“Though the number of people attending was on a par with other years, the partnership with CRRF enabled people to meet with colleagues from across Canada at this year’s conference,” said Benard. “We expect this opportunity to lead to a new cluster of collaborations.”



Summaries of all conference presentations along with the names and contact information for presenters can be found on the ARDN Rural Project Library at [www.ardn.ca](http://www.ardn.ca).

By *Andrea Collins*

## Thank you to our valued conference partners and sponsors:

- \*Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC)
- \*Alberta Innovates Connector Service
- \*Athabasca County
- \*Athabasca University
- \*Canadian Heritage
- \*Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF)
- \*eCampus Alberta
- \*Economic Developers Alberta
- \*Francophone Secretariat
- \*Green Hectares
- \*Northern Lakes College
- \*Olds Agricultural Society
- \*Olds College
- \*Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development
- \*RR Donnelley
- \*SAIT Polytechnic
- \*Volunteer Alberta

*An all around great conference.  
Valuable sessions and great  
learning opportunities.  
Best conference I've attended in  
quite some time!*





## Social in the South

There's no denying it: social media is here to stay. And for those people, organizations and businesses not on "the Facebook," or "twittering those twitterings" (or tweets, as everyone else says), a channel of communication that connects millions of people—and is free—is being neglected.

"The use of social web tools allows business owners to help fuel the word-of-mouth fire and build fans who will do the most valuable type of marketing for them," said Rod Leland, social media specialist with Lethbridge College.

Rod was one of the speakers at *Social in the South 2012: Social Media Strategies for Business*, Oct. 24-25 at Lethbridge College. The conference, made possible with the support of the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN), brought together some of Alberta's most innovative social media experts including Darren Hailes, emerging media coordinator at WestJet. The speakers at the two-day event showed how social media can be used effectively to benefit business.



"For us here at WestJet, social media has given us another way to connect with our travellers and share our culture," Darren said. "One of the most important reasons for WestJet to be on social media is that our guests—both current and potential travellers—are already there. We should all be involved in those conversations."

Social in the South aimed to educate small business entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations and individuals in southern Alberta on effective strategies to integrate social media into their everyday business practices. The conference also provided practical advice, tools and tactics that can be used immediately by Alberta businesses and organizations.

"We're thrilled to be hosting this important conference with the Alberta Rural Development Network," said Lethbridge College Interim President and CEO Peter Leclaire. "Lethbridge College has been a leader among post-secondary institutions in the social media field. We continue to find new ways to use social media to engage students throughout their relationship with us from admissions to the classroom and beyond."

In keeping with themes of accessibility and new technology, the event was streamed live online to allow access to the conference for those in the surrounding rural areas.

"With the conference being delivered live online, we're ensuring everyone has access to the great content the speakers will be covering," Rod said. "There's never been anything of this scale offered to local business owners and entrepreneurs here."

*By Nick Conrad*



## Community Needs Assessments - Collaboration and Technology as a Solution

Alberta has 11 comprehensive community institutions (CCIs) responsible for enhancing post-secondary education, supporting job growth and economic development, and strengthening alignment between educational opportunities and community needs in rural Alberta. In order to fulfill that responsibility, the CCIs all conduct needs assessments.

But the issue with needs assessments is that everyone is doing them, and everyone is doing them differently. Many communities are surveyed by more than one institution multiple times for overlapping information, resulting in survey fatigue. Though this process can be inefficient, needs assessments have proven essential for informed community development, and so *The Campus Alberta Needs Assessment Challenge Solution Analysis* was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, Bow Valley College, NorQuest College, Lethbridge College, Red Deer College, Olds College, Campus Alberta, and ARDN. The project was designed to provide a standardized approach to conducting needs assessments and enable enhanced information sharing and knowledge transfer.

The three major components of the project included the following:

1. Identifying the best practices in assessing adult learning needs through a literature review, interviews with 19 key informants, and two roundtable discussions with representatives from 24 organizations in order to understand community learning needs assessments from multiple perspectives.
2. Developing the Community Learning Needs Assessment Tool Kit to be used by CCIs at the community level with the active support and involvement of the CALCs and other community providers.
3. Exploring the potential for an online Campus Alberta Needs Assessment System that will assist CCIs and partner organizations to administer adult education needs assessments, integrate data from other sources, share the collected data, and create reports.



“What’s most exciting about this project is that the CALCS became very involved,” said Shauna. “They want to use the toolkit for professional development and to inform their practices. Once we have the Needs Assessment system accompanied by the tool kit, this project can potentially provide a framework for needs assessment and data collection that can be rolled out across the province, not just in the post-secondary world.”

*By Melissa St. Dennis*

“We can **help communities work together** to collect community relevant data, map their learning assets, identify gaps, and prioritize needs”



## Collaboration is Better than Money?

So, you want to write your own environmental management plan. Where on earth do you start?

For Blayne West and Lacombe County, the solution was to start with the end goal and work backwards, discovering and creating the building blocks needed to get there. “Before the plan itself, we needed an environmental policy, and before that both a report on the state of the environment and a community perceptions survey.”

The first step was the survey to determine the environmental perceptions of the residents of Lacombe County. Since the concept of a county or rural community writing their own plan was quite innovative (Mountain View County is the only one currently with their own strategy), Blayne approached ARDN for help. “Truthfully, I went to ARDN because of the financial assistance they offered by connecting us to a post-secondary who could create and conduct the survey,” Blayne says. “It was a carrot to help ease the burden of funding for a survey that was an essential and manageable step.”



Unfortunately, the call for proposals released by ARDN for Lacombe County was unsuccessful. “But even though the money fell through, we got Irene, which has turned out to be better than the cash,” says Blayne.

Irene Herremans, a faculty member at the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary, had initially been considering a proposal to ARDN for the survey but she quickly realized that it wasn't quite the right fit for her faculty, her students, or herself, so she decided not to submit. ARDN, whose focus is to develop projects that have the potential to have positive impacts on all of Alberta, approached her a few weeks later to ask if she would be interested in working with Blayne to probe deeper into the survey data and ultimately create a set of principles that could be shared with all communities, with financial support from ARDN. “That's where we fit,” says Irene.

And so, the collaboration began. Blayne, Irene, and PhD student Jing Lu worked together to ensure that the questions were reliable and valid given the objectives of the study. “We do a lot of work with surveys and already know some of the pitfalls because we've experienced them ourselves,” explains Irene. Together they refined a survey that sought to understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of the residents to use as background information in the creation and implementation of the environmental management plan. From there followed many meetings: discussing and analyzing the results; reviewing the general principles; and creating a full report, and an easy-to-use checklist.

“We were able to help Blayne step back from the project, look at the data, and interpret it based on the information that's already out there,” says Irene. “Lacombe County is really trying to change behaviour with their environmental management plan, and before you can change behaviour you need to know peoples' stances and viewpoints in order to know where to begin.”





The U of C's main focus after helping Lacombe County analyze and understand the survey results was on pulling together the various research that has already been done on very narrow and specific environmental perceptions (such as what motivates males in the UK to recycle) and develop a general framework that can be used as a guideline to create any program, from deciding on the initial research needed, developing the program, implementing it, and then evaluating its effectiveness.

The project, overall, has been quite successful. But was the collaboration really better than cash?

“In ARDN’s eyes, this has been a great project,” says Paul Watson, research director at ARDN. “Aside from the actual research itself, what makes this project a model for others is that the need for the project came from the community. ARDN helped broaden the scope so it would be beneficial to all of Alberta. The learnings are also quite significant: the community learned about the value of research before undertaking a project; the post-secondary institution learned the value of plain language and addressing real-life problems; and both parties learned about the importance of relationships and collaborations.”

“For Lacombe County,” says Blayne, “this was a first, both the community survey and the environmental management plan. We wanted to involve the community, create understanding, and ensure support of the overall goal – putting the right programs out from the very beginning is so important. The collaboration with the U of C was crucial to making this successful. It was important for us to have open discussions and just be able to sit there and work through ideas. Our two worlds, that of the practitioner and that of the researcher, provided us with a unique opportunity to collaborate. As a practitioner, you don’t always remember how much more planning there is to developing a project compared to implementing it. Normally, people just jump into the “doing” side and don’t spend enough time and effort on the front end. And it really takes the right research in the beginning to be able to start with the right base.”

“The opportunities surrounding ARDN are more than just financial,” Blayne continues. “They connect the practitioners with research in a way that can expand your projects. This is an example of what you can do. These are the relationships you can have.”

*By Melissa St. Dennis*

“**The opportunities surrounding ARDN** are more than just financial; they connect the practitioners with research in a way that can expand your projects.”



The following financial Statements were prepared in accordance with an audit conducted by Barbara L Surry, CMA.

## ALBERTA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

JUNE 30, 2013

	June 30, 2013	June 30, 2012	July 1, 2011
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash	\$ 507,410	\$ 937,295	\$ 863,106
Accounts receivable	175	1,640	950
Goods and services tax receivable	3,907	5,286	6,651
Prepaid expense	<u>6,264</u>	<u>7,728</u>	<u>3,315</u>
	517,756	951,949	874,022
<b>Tangible capital assets</b> (Note 3)	<u>19,809</u>	<u>26,416</u>	<u>35,512</u>
	<u>\$ 537,565</u>	<u>\$ 978,365</u>	<u>\$ 909,534</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 23,944	\$ 37,714	28,244
Deferred revenue (Note 7)	<u>121,318</u>	<u>908,320</u>	<u>838,551</u>
	<u>145,262</u>	<u>946,034</u>	<u>866,795</u>
<b>Net assets</b>			
Unrestricted net assets	372,494	5,915	7,227
Net assets invested in tangible capital assets	<u>19,809</u>	<u>26,416</u>	<u>35,512</u>
	<u>392,303</u>	<u>32,331</u>	<u>42,739</u>
	<u>\$ 537,565</u>	<u>\$ 978,365</u>	<u>\$ 909,534</u>



**ALBERTA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**  
**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2013**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>		
Partner Contributions (Note 5)	\$ 1,963,339	\$ 670,558
Rural Alberta Development Fund Grant	1,784,320	1,430,231
Other Project Grants	66,149	28,200
Conference registration fees	59,209	-
Interest	9,825	10,894
Homeless partnering strategy grant	6,677	-
STEP Program	<u>3,136</u>	<u>3,248</u>
	<u><b>3,892,655</b></u>	<u><b>2,143,131</b></u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Administration</b>		
Salaries and Benefits	345,736	349,951
Rent	27,681	24,577
Administration	19,134	72,471
Professional fees	6,759	4,113
Telephone	6,797	7,888
Amortization	6,607	11,670
Staff training and conferences	4,443	6,092
Advertising and promotion	3,372	6,976
Office expense	3,423	6,980
Insurance	2,662	2,506
Memberships	835	2,058
Bank charges	<u>553</u>	<u>605</u>
	<u><b>428,002</b></u>	<u><b>495,887</b></u>
<b>Programming</b>		
Working Groups (Note 5)	1,963,339	670,558
Research projects	676,140	485,750
Networking events	228,816	225,832
Community engagement	78,423	103,785
Conference	75,071	-
Communications	46,109	84,194
ARDN led networking events	17,000	41,010
Contract costs	13,106	46,524
Homeless partnering strategy	<u>6,677</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u><b>3,104,681</b></u>	<u><b>1,657,653</b></u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u><b>3,532,683</b></u>	<u><b>2,153,540</b></u>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses</b>	<u><b>\$ 359,972</b></u>	<u><b>\$ (10,409)</b></u>



# ARND Teams

## *The Key Contacts are members of the Community & Institutional Engagement Team*

Alberta College of Art + Design, *Dianne Taylor-Gearing*

Athabasca University, *Mike Gismondi*

The Banff Centre, *Jim Frideres / Laura Lynes*

Bow Valley College, *Andy Cichos*

Grande Prairie Regional College, *Marg McCuaig-Boyd / Shirley Pasieka*

Grant MacEwan University, *Meghan Abbott*

Keyano College, *Cindy Amerongen / Sharon Shultz*

Lakeland College, *Diane Harms*

Lethbridge College, *Leah Wack*

Medicine Hat College, *Walter Garrison*

Mount Royal University, *Trevor Davis*

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, *Klay Dyer*

Northern Lakes College, *Ernie Shanahan / Brad Hestbak*

NorQuest College, *Phil Chatters*

Olds College, *Toby Williams*

Portage College, *Trent Keough / Mardere Birkill*

Red Deer College, *Eric Kokko*

SAIT Polytechnic, *Greg Michaud*

University of Alberta, *Lars Hallstrom*

University of Calgary, *Anne Katzenberg*

University of Lethbridge, *Lesley Brown*

### *Accountability & Reporting*

**Chair:** Trent Keough, *Portage College*

**Past Chair:** Wayne Shillington

**Member:** Greg Michaud, *SAIT Polytechnic*

**Ex Officio:** Dee Ann Benard, *ARND*

**ARND Staff:** All Staff

**Consultant:** Leslie Ayre-Jaschke

### *Research Advisory*

**Chair:** Tom Thompson / Bob Wilson, *Olds College*

**Members:** Trevor Davis, *Mount Royal University*; Rick Neidig, *Northern Lakes College*; John Kennelly, *University of Alberta*; Robert Woodrow, *University of Calgary*; Gerry Paradis, *Red Deer College*

**Ex Officio:** Dee Ann Benard, *ARND*

**ARND Staff Member:** Paul Watson

### *Community & Institutional Engagement*

**Chair:** Lesley Brown, *University of Lethbridge*

**Ex Officio:** Dee Ann Benard, *ARND*

**ARND Staff Member:** Judy Ferguson

### *Communications & Website*

**Chair:** Rick Neidig, *Northern Lakes College*

**Vice Chair:** Cathy Crockford, *Medicine Hat College*

**Member:** Diane Morrison, *Athabasca University*

**Ex Officio:** Dee Ann Benard, *ARND*

**ARND Staff Members:** Joy Vonk, Melissa St. Dennis, Nick Conrad

**Consultant:** Andrea Collins, *ROI Communications*



## ARDN Members

Alberta College of Art + Design

Athabasca University

The Banff Centre

Bow Valley College

Grande Prairie Regional College

Keyano College

Lakeland College

Lethbridge College

MacEwan University

Medicine Hat College

Mount Royal University

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

NorQuest College

Northern Lakes College

Olds College

Portage College

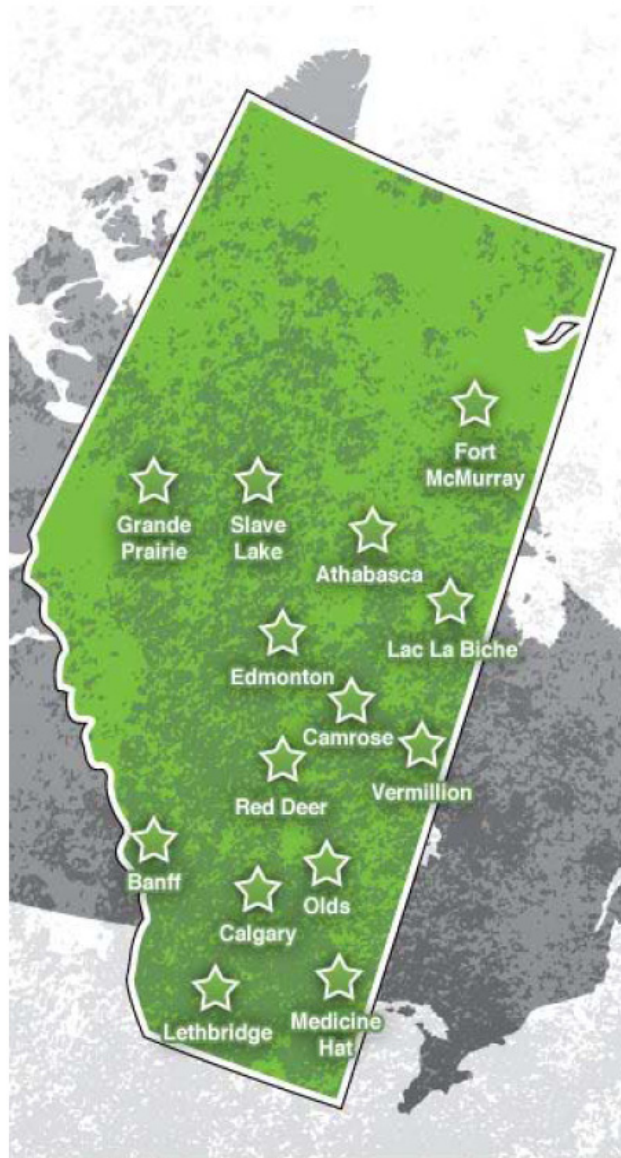
Red Deer College

SAIT Polytechnic

University of Alberta

University of Calgary

University of Lethbridge



[www.ardn.ca](http://www.ardn.ca)



## Alberta Rural Development Network

215 - 50 Brentwood Boulevard  
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 2H5

Tel: (780) 449-1006 / Toll Free: 1 (877) 987-1006  
Fax: (780) 449-0054 / Email: [info@ardn.ca](mailto:info@ardn.ca)