

The View From Here:

Perspectives on Northern and Rural Psychology

Volume 1, Issue 2

November 29, 2006

Message From the Chair

Welcome to our second edition of the Rural and Northern Psychology Section Newsletter. Over the past 6 months, the section has been involved in a variety of activities.

Name the Newsletter

Based on the input from our members, the Rural and Northern Psychology Section Newsletter has been named "The View From Here: Perspectives in Rural and Northern Psychology." Thanks for all of you who voted, it was a close vote.

Membership News

I'm very pleased to announce that since the time of our last newsletter, our membership has grown from 32 to 142 (81 student members, 61 non-student members)! Clearly there are many of us who are interested in and excited about rural and northern psychology. The growth in our membership will no doubt bring increased productivity to our section.

Annual CPA Conference in Calgary, June 2006

We organized our first section program for the annual CPA conference that was held in Calgary in June. Although it was a modest program, it was nonetheless well attended by 20 or so enthusiastic audience members. Our business meeting was less well attended, although I am reassured by the other section chairs that this is not uncommon. Despite our lack of quorum, those of us in attendance had a stimulating discussion regarding the possibility of setting up a listserv for members and the ways that we could improve our webpage (which at present is very modest indeed). One of the most creative suggestions for the webpage was to have a link to a weblog, (perhaps updated bi-weekly) outlining the activities of various individuals practicing in rural/northern/remote communities. It was suggested that it might be helpful to have a few weblogs including one from a student in training, a researcher/professor, and a psychologist in clinical practice. I hope to explore these ideas further over the next year, ideally under the leadership from one or more of our members with

more expertise in this area than I.

Section Bylaws & Executive Committee Nominations

As you may recall, the section has also been in the process of trying to finalize section bylaws and to establish a more complete executive committee. Through an email vote, the proposed section bylaws were accepted by the membership and have now been forwarded to CPA for final approval. In this process, however, a very good suggestion was made regarding the inclusion of a Student Representative. I understand from my communications with CPA and with other section chairs that some sections have included a Student Representative on their executive committee. The Clinical Section has kindly shared the role description for their Student Representative and it is my hope that we can utilize this information to develop a similar position within our own executive committee. Ideally, we would vote on modifying our bylaws to include a Student Representative position during our next business meeting, which will be held at the upcoming annual CPA conference in Ottawa in June 2007.

With respect to the executive committee, Dr. Cindy Hardy and Dr. Henry Harder have indicated their willingness to step into the positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Chair-Elect, respectively. My conversations with CPA suggest that under these circumstances it is acceptable to simply appoint these individuals to these positions, without a member vote. However, Drs. Hardy and Harder have indicated that they would feel more comfortable accepting these positions with membership input. As such, I would encourage you to get to know a bit more about Dr. Hardy and Dr. Harder by reading their submissions in the "It's a Small World" feature and to forward any objections to my attention no later than December 22nd. In the absence of any opposing votes, I will appoint these individuals to the positions of Secretary-Treasurer and Chair Elect, with their positions ending at the business meeting in 2008. As no one has come forth to occupy

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Message From the Chair Con't

the Chair position, I will be continuing on in my position as Chair (again, assuming there are no objections from members) until 2008. At that time we will, once again, be inviting nominations for these positions.

Looking Towards the Future

As you may recall the Goals of the Section are to:

- Establish a network of professionals interested in the area of rural and northern psychology.
- Enhance professional connectedness by facilitating linkages between rural and northern practitioners.
- Distribute information relevant to the practice of rural and northern psychology.
- Provide a forum to discuss practice issues unique to this specialty
- Introduce students and new or interested psychologists to rural and northern practice.

In keeping with our established goals, our primary tasks over the next few months will include:

- Obtaining CPA approval for our current section bylaws

- Reviewing submissions for our upcoming section program at the 2007 CPA conference in Ottawa.
- Finalizing members of the executive committee

Our longer term tasks will include:

- Identifying a section member or members willing to take the lead on developing and managing a section listserv. Please contact me if you are interested in this project.
- Identifying a section member or members willing to take the lead on developing and managing our section webpage. Please contact me if you are interested in this project.
- Developing a role description for a Student Representative position and voting on amending our existing bylaws to include this position on the executive committee.

As always, we look forward to your continued input into the section.

Karen Dyck, Rural and Northern Psychology Section Chair

It's a Small World

Submitted by Henry Harder, University of Northern British Columbia

Hi everyone. Karen Dyck has previously made some suggestions to you as to the ongoing governance of our section. I have been asked to continue serving in that regard and thought that you should get to know me a little better before you make your decision. What follows is a very short description of what I am currently involved in and what I foresee for our section. Should you wish to discuss this with me the best medium for this is email at harder@unbc.ca.



I am the former Chair of Psychology and current Chair of Health Sciences at the University of Northern British Columbia. My research interests lie in two general areas; disability and how people live and work with disabilities and aboriginal health in particular mental health and suicide prevention. I am currently focused on assessing the level of mental health services being provided in rural and aboriginal communities and am the Principal Investigator in a CIHR NET grant focused on the prevention of aboriginal youth suicide in partnership with Carrier Sekani Family Services.

Prior to coming to UNBC I was in private practice in Vancouver and had always had a desire to work outside of the lower

mainland but could not see a way to becoming a practitioner in a more rural or northern area. This difficulty, created largely by lack of knowledge, has fueled my passion in raising awareness of opportunities for clinicians to work outside of urban areas. My research into mental health provision and my role as Chair have further fueled my desire to provide training and mentorship opportunities in northern and rural settings. The non-urban areas of Canada are woefully under serviced by qualified mental health providers, particularly psychologists and I want to see this change.

Providing psychological services in northern and rural settings is a challenging and rewarding experience. When I compare my current clients to my former urban clients my current clients are much more appreciative of what I have to offer. Many of them have previously had to make do with poorly trained or under-skilled providers and are thrilled to have an appropriately trained person become available to them. Through them I have discovered the magnitude of the problem of unavailable or inappropriately provided psychological services, an issue which has been compounded by years of neglect by government, universities, and psychologists themselves. My hopes for this section are to raise the profile of rural and northern psychology in order to create opportunities for training and service provision in rural and northern communities in Canada. I hope that we can continue the dialogue we have embarked on with a view to addressing this issue to the benefit of those requiring our services.

It's a Small World Con't

Submitted by **Cindy Hardy**,
University of Northern British Columbia



Hello everyone. Karen Dyck suggested that I write this piece as a means of introducing myself to the members of the Rural and Northern Section. The section is in the position of having to appoint rather than elect the first executive. Please read on to determine whether you accept my appointment.

I have been at the University of Northern British Columbia since September 1994. My first day of work coincided with the first day of classes on the beautiful Prince George campus. UNBC emphasizes rural, northern and aboriginal health as one of its core areas for research and teaching. The Psychology program at UNBC offers basic training in the cognate areas of psychology at the undergraduate level. Our graduate programs focus on health, social, and cognitive psychology. Many of our graduates secure work in the local health and social services system as data analysts, researchers, counselors, or managers. Currently I am conducting applied research focused on development of community capacity for responding to the mental health needs of children, and basic research regarding access to mental health services in rural Canada. I also conduct a private practice of psychology, providing assessment and treatment services to children, adolescents and families.

When I first moved to Prince George I realized that the practice of psychology in this northern city is distinct from the practice of psychology in larger urban centres. I soon discovered the public system did not employ many psychologists and – much to my surprise - did not seem to miss us very much! With that realization came my understanding that I would be practicing in a system quite different from the larger urban systems in which I had trained, and thus my desire to promote the science and practice of rural and northern psychology was born. Other aspects of my personal experiences contribute to that desire. I grew up in rural Alberta and have

family members who live rurally. I feel a deep connection to wild places and to people who choose to live on the land.

A particularly memorable moment I would like to share with you regards a personal experience that has informed my work with anxious clients. One of my favourite recreational pursuits is to go hiking in remote wilderness areas. Wilderness experiences help me find my strengths, test my limits, and put the stresses of professional and academic life into perspective. I regularly experience fear and anxiety upon encountering a portion of the trail that challenges my skills. The particular event I want to share with you occurred in a remote area of Yoho National Park. We were hiking along the aptly-named Ice River and had to cross a vigorous creek flowing into the river. It was early summer and both the river and the creek were running high and fast. I was certain we would get washed into the Ice River while crossing the creek. A weak swimmer, I was quite frightened of that possibility. I attempted to cajole my partner into finding a different place to cross the creek. He was confident we would be able to cross and began throwing large rocks into the creek to step on as we crossed. In the 15 or 20 minutes it took him to place rocks, my anxiety totally evaporated. It was not just that he had reassured me to the point I was no longer scared – my anxiety actually disappeared even though I was still thinking we would be washed away. I use that story to teach my students and clients that acute feelings of anxiety will in fact pass, if only we permit ourselves to endure them.

I would like to see the Rural and Northern Section respond to the psychological health needs of people living in the rural and remote areas of our vast country. Some of the challenges we face include geographical distance, bridging cultural differences, healing the hurts and harms caused by colonialism, helping clients make the most of limited services, supporting healthy communities, and making psychological knowledge and practice relevant and accessible to rural dwellers. I will be pleased to serve on our section's executive over the coming two years. Please contact Karen Dyck (dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca) or me (hardy@unbc.ca) to express your concerns about my appointment to the executive, if any. Thank you.

Call For Reviewers

Dear Colleagues,

As the incoming editor for the Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, I would like to create a database of people willing to review manuscripts for CJBS. Anyone who is interested in contributing to the journal in this important manner can contact me at girving@wlu.ca and provide the following information:

- Name
- Highest degree awarded

- Affiliation
 - Email address
- Research interests and/or topics about which you feel competent to evaluate manuscripts

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Greg Irving, Ph.D.
Editor, Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science

Rural Experiences of Stress

Submitted by Cyndi Brannen & Debbie Johnson-Emberly, IWK Hospital, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The recent release of the Canadian Institutes of Health Information (CIHI, 2006) report highlighted the poor health of people in rural areas. This finding carries important implications for the rural population, but how do we get beyond population health data to reveal the underlying factors that contribute to higher rates of suicide (especially for young people) and shorter lifespan? Examining stress levels would appear to be a good place to start looking when investigating the sources of rural health problems. However, various population-based studies, such as the CIHI report, show either no significant differences between rural and urban stress or lower reported rural stress. This seems to be a paradox since countless studies have documented the connection between high stress and poor health. As part of the CIHR funded NET grant entitled Women's Health in Rural Communities (WHIRC), we are developing a measure of rural stressors that is designed to help reveal the common and unique sources of stress for rural residents.

Although the public health implications of mental health problems, such as high levels of stress, are significant, very little is known about mental health for rural populations (Patten, 2001). The available Canadian literature focuses on either qualitative reports (e.g., Dolan et al., 2005; Rural Communities Impacting Policies, 2003) or large population-based studies (e.g., Shields & Tremblay, 2002). The qualitative studies are invaluable in that they contribute a rich context for the impact and diversity of societal and ecological changes in rural life, but are difficult to apply to the development of specific treatment and policy recommendations. The large scale studies are useful tools for impacting policy, but fail to account for the influence of different cultural, social, and geographical factors on health (Philo, Parr, & Burns, 2003).

Our measure, based on an extensive review of the existing research, reports, and websites, has revealed several themes relevant to rural stress. The categories of rural stressors that we have identified include:

Relationships: lack of mates to choose from; lack of new people with whom to form new relationships; reliance on existing networks for support; aging of support networks; family health issues; caregiving responsibilities; parenting stress.

Individual: lack of anonymity/privacy; reliance on others; isolation; not feeling valued by society because of occupation, location or group.

Health: limited access to physical and mental health care services (Canadian perspective); lack of appropriate physical and mental health care services; distances required to travel for physical and mental health care; higher rates of certain precursors of physical and mental health problems (e.g., obesity, smoking, family violence, anxiety, depression, anger).

Work: seasonal work; limited job options; high risk occupations; ecological restructuring; government imposed policy regulations and changes; traveling long distances for work; being away from the family for work.

Education: need to leave area for training and/or education or limited training and/or education choices in area; diminished social capital for training and/or education as teachers and volunteers leave the area.

Recreation/leisure: lack of options; expensive; transportation.

Community: impact of decreasing community size; increasing urbanization; aging of community.

Transportation: require own transportation or that of others – no public transportation.

Finances: lack of continuous income; lower overall income; single-earner families; dependence on government programs.

There are other important factors that may influence the experience of stress for rural individuals. In particular, being a woman, belonging to an identifiable minority group, education, income and age may also be implicated in both the sources of stress and also in perceived stress levels. In addition, there are many aspects of rural life that may serve as a buffer against the themes we have identified, particularly social support. An individual's general satisfaction with their life may also play a role. Our measure will be applicable to all rural residents not only those involved in farming or other primary industry as is the case with existing measures of rural stress.

Our survey on rural stress includes the newly developed Rural Experiences of Stress Questionnaire based on the emerging themes as outlined previously, as well as perceived stress scales, life events checklist, a measure of depression, anxiety and stress, social support measures and an extensive section on employment, family health and other potential sources of influence on stress.

We are presently refining the Rural Experiences of Stress (RESQ) measure through consultations with experts on rural health. The next step will be to conduct community focus groups evaluating the content and format of the measure and the survey package. The RESQ survey will be administered via telephone interview with a rural sample in Nova Scotia in the Winter of 2007. If you would like to learn more about the project, please contact Cyndi Brannen, Cyndi.brannen@iwk.nshealth.ca (902-470-7521) or Octavia James, Octavia.james@iwk.nshealth.ca.

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Student Column

Submitted by Hannes Henzinger, Simon Fraser University

After my first year in graduate school for clinical psychology I was questioning my decision, and whether I was on the right way to where I wanted to get. I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to spend the summer doing a practicum. Being a country boy, I wanted to get experience in a setting that I could see myself practicing in after completing my studies, and therefore I applied to several rather rural settings. After a stressful year in a big city I was longing for a small town feeling again, and I decided to go to Nelson, a beautiful town of about 10000 in south-eastern B.C.'s mountainous Kootenay region. I was thrilled to have been offered a spot at Summit Psychology Group and I was hoping for an introduction to the kind of work that I was seeing for myself in the future, the work of a clinical psychologist in a rural setting. I thought that it would be good to gain experience with the range of clients typical for such a setting, the common assessment tools, and I was also eager to look behind the scenes of a privately operated practice. These were the official goals I set out with.

Now, looking back, I think I can say I achieved these goals, and many more. Besides experience with clients and tools (including handling all the little accidents that make the difference between theory and practice) there were things I learned that were not on the initial list.

It is an interesting feeling to run into one of your clients in your favourite café. How do you react? What are you supposed to do? It is not only a reminder that our clients are not just clients but also people living there, but also makes one think about ethical implications on an ongoing basis.

I met new people, and when they asked it was not always easy to explain to them what a psychologist is or does and what role I played in the picture. In a smaller community the easy and safe - "I'm a student" - explanation is not always sufficient, as people may have heard about you from other sources.

Due to the close cooperation with other health care providers in town I learned much more about the implications of certain diagnoses, and the following processes. It helped me to get a more complete understanding of the service provided and how it affects the clients.

One of the most important things I was reminded of was that we work to live, not the other way around, that interest, trial, and accomplishment drive learning, and that it helps to know yourself if you want to help others. After years of life in academia it was good to see that there are psychologists out there that built a life for themselves that I can aspire to.

Last, but certainly not least, I discovered new sides of the value of interpersonal appreciation. Welcomed warmly, I immediately felt comfortable at my workplace. I did not only gain supervisors, but also friends, and I saw what it can do to a working environment if co-workers are not just appreciated for their competence, but also for their individualities.

Hannes Henzinger is a 1st year student in the Clinical Psychology program at Simon Fraser University. He completed a three month practicum rotation at Summit Psychology Group in Nelson, www.summitpsychology.org.



“After a stressful year in a big city I was longing for a small town feeling again...”

Call For Nominations: CPA Fellows

Dear Colleagues

CPA Fellows are Members of the Association who have made a distinguished contribution to the advancement of the science or profession of psychology or who have given exceptional service to their national or provincial associations.

I wish to encourage you to submit nominations for CPA Fellows. Please note that the deadline for submission is November 30. The list of CPA Fellows as well as the “Process of Election to

Fellow Guidelines” are available on the CPA Web site at <http://www.cpa.ca/aboutcpa/cpafellowsandawards/fellows/>

Thank you,

Dr. Dan Perlman
Past-President and Chair
Committee on Fellows and Awards



Literary Notes

Schank, J.A. & Skovholt, T.M. (2006). *Ethical practice in small communities: Challenges and rewards for psychologists*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This 242 page book examines the unique challenges and rewards for psychologists practicing in a broad range of "small communities." Readers are provided with a general overview of the American Psychological Association Code of Ethics and the ways in which this code has been revised over the years to address some of the unique issues faced by small-community psychologists. Using the 2002 APA Ethics Code as a reference point, the authors explore various dilemmas that are common place for psychologists practicing in small communities. As one might expect, a considerable amount of the book is devoted to analyzing and presenting various issues associated with multiple/ overlapping relationships. Within this context, the authors offer readers a definition of "multiple relationships", followed by a discussion about such things as what makes them problematic, the prevalence of overlapping relationships, what constitutes unethical behavior, treatment boundaries, sexual and nonsexual dual relationships, and similarities and differences between urban and small community settings. While a considerable portion of the book is devoted to this particular topic, the authors do address the equally important issues of limited resources, limits of competence, interagency issues, professional isolation, burnout, accepting gifts from clients, bartering, and responding appropriately to community expectations and differences in values (included in this discussion are issues like community attitudes towards client confidentiality, com-

munity expectations about the role of a psychologist and community responses to new members of the community, the importance of establishing good working relationships). One chapter is devoted to providing readers with specific and "real life" examples of how the above mentioned issues can play out in rural communities. Some of the more memorable examples include situations where: 1) a therapist's husband jokingly described his wife's job as "talking to crazy people" while unknowingly sitting at the same table with one of his wife's clients 2) a therapist was confronted on the street by a community member who had heard something negative about the therapist's work, and 3) a therapist experienced fallout after publicly sharing a research finding about the temporary nature of post-abortion syndrome. Another chapter is devoted to providing examples of how the above mentioned issues can present themselves in other small community settings such as small colleges, communities of color and cultural-ethnic communities, etc. The final two chapters offer readers some strategies to minimize risk and also highlight the advantages of small community practice (e.g., lifestyle, variety, multi-faceted view, opportunity to build relationships and connections, the opportunity to have a positive impact). Although this book is written from an American perspective and, at times, appears repetitive it nonetheless offers psychologists in small community practice validation of their experience, suggestions to assist them with their decision making, and recognition of the true benefits of small community practice. This book is indeed a welcome addition to the bookshelf of any psychologist interested in or already practicing in a small community setting.

"...offers psychologists in small community practice validation of their experience, suggestions to assist them with their decision making, and recognition of the true benefits of small community practice."

Section Members Needed

We are currently looking for volunteers to assume the following positions:

Listserv Developer/Manager

We are seeking a member or members who would be willing to take the lead on developing and managing a section listserv.

Webpage Developer/Manager

We are seeking a member or members who would be willing to take the lead on developing and managing our section webpage.

Please contact Dr. Karen Dyck, Section Chair, at www.dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca if you are interested in volunteering for the above positions.

Useful Links

The Canadian Institute for Health Information has recently released various reports regarding differences in health for rural and urban Canadians and health determinants of rural Canadians. These reports are available through the reports link at www.cihi.ca.

Zur, O. (2006). Therapeutic boundaries and dual relationships in rural practice: Ethical, clinical, and standard of care considerations. *Journal of Rural Community Psychology*, E9(1). Available at www.marshall.edu/jrcp/9_1_Zur.htm

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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. An application for membership in the Rural and Northern Section can be obtained from Dr. Karen Dyck, Section Chair, 200-237 Manitoba Ave., Selkirk MB, R1A 0Y4, dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca.

This issue of the Newsletter was edited by Karen Dyck and Cindy Hardy. Many thanks are extended to Kari Harder for her invaluable contributions to design and layout.

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.

All submissions are reproduced as submitted by the author(s).

Call for Submissions

The Newsletter Editors invite submission of articles and items of general interest to rural and northern psychologists. Faculty and students are encouraged to send submissions for the next newsletter to Karen Dyck, dyckkg@ms.umanitoba.ca. We also welcome submissions of photos of rural life and settings.