

# L'Année PhiLanthropique The PhiLanthropic Year

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**THE CIRCLE LE CERCLE**

ON PHILANTHROPY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA  
SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE ET LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA



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# À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé “Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes”. Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom “Evaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l’enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux”. Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d’information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d’acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called “Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations”. From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations’ knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.



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# ÉTUDES DE CAS | CASE STUDIES

Deux études de cas vous sont présentés:  
Une étude portant sur le Bâtiment 7 à  
Montréal et une autre sur un modèle de  
recherche collaborative appliquée basée  
sur un stage.

Two Case studies are presented here: One  
on the Bâtiment 7 initiative in Montreal and  
another on an internship-based  
collaborative applied research model.

**Image:** Racial Equity & Justice in  
Philanthropy Funders'  
Summit, Colouring Pages  
**Artists:** Yaimel López Zaldívar &  
katia hernández velasco



Figure 1: Slocan Lake

# ÉTUDES DE CAS | CASE STUDIES

Internship-based  
Collaborative Applied  
Research Model: Linking  
academic research projects,  
rural NGOs, sustainability,  
philanthropy, and funding



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The primary goal of this paper is to describe an emerging Internship-based Collaborative Applied Research Model (ICAR) built around local project partnerships, internships at an academic research centre, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and various funders in the rural Columbia Basin-Boundary region of British Columbia (BC) [1]. Philanthropy is tied to the model in two ways: 1) funding for projects is partially obtained from philanthropic grant-making foundations, and; 2) rural NGOs address specific community needs and the research team directly supports those efforts by contributing to fill identified research gaps. Projects are typically community-led and community-identified. Applied community participatory approaches are used to build relationships with NGOs and community-based methods are used to design and complete

projects. In this case, NGOs that all have philanthropic underpinnings reached out to the research team to request support to fulfill their research needs. As a result of these partnerships, community benefits were informally realized through a substantial increase in demand for internship-based projects, heightened media attention and community requests for final research reports, presentations and data sharing. The collaborative model exemplifies community-based research partnerships within the context of philanthropy and provides project examples of applied research projects that address needs in rural communities. The model brings together the role of philanthropy, applied research and community sustainability. Preceding the conclusion, we share three examples of current projects and their nuanced funding structures. One project in particular highlights the connection to a grant-making foundation.

## Defining sustainability

The Internship-based Collaborative Applied Research (ICAR) model is couched in projects that advance sustainability as well as transdisciplinary research partnerships. Transdisciplinarity focuses on a particular problem rather than on a particular discipline and transcends disciplinary boundaries through a process of mutual learning (Nicolescu, 2008). Transdisciplinary research can also be influenced by input from partners who are not academic (Poh, 2005). The ICAR supports equitable project partnerships that are community driven and that address local needs.

Furthermore, as a result of these transdisciplinary, equitable and dynamic partnerships the model is aligned with a definition of sustainability that is multifaceted. Generally, sustainability is a complex and dynamic concept that “requires multilevel, integrative, and interdisciplinary research and action, with attention to both the ecological and social subsystems” (Berkes, 2017, pg. 4).

The ICAR conceptually connects sustainability to philanthropy if philanthropy is understood as a mechanism by which rural Canadian communities can “use existing local resources to facilitate sustainability” (Gibson et al., 2014, pg. 1), and within the context of rural Canada, community sustainability can be practiced by applying a holistic and encompassing definition (see **Table 1** for examples of project partnerships). Sustainability can include pillars of well-being such as the economy, society, culture, and environment, while also incorporating humanitarianism, “community development, and

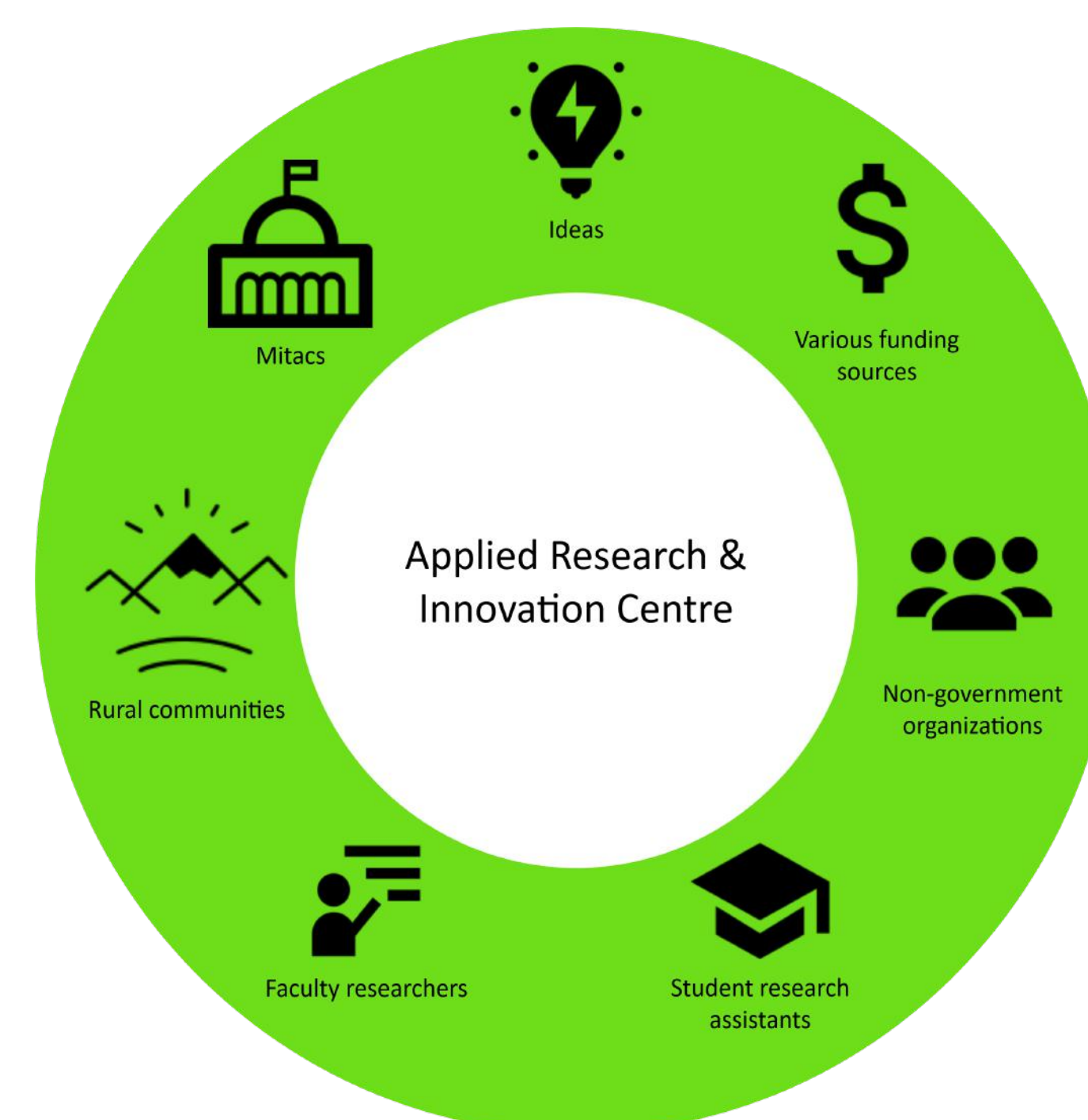


Figure 2: ARIC Research Connections

capacity building” (Gibson et al., 2014, pg. 2; Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, n.d.1). Project partnerships between the internship-based research team and local NGOs focus on aspects of community development and capacity building as well as one or more of the sustainability pillars.

## Place-based, community-led, and evidence-informed philanthropy

Place-based philanthropy addresses the “social, health, and economic needs of a neighbourhood, city, or region” (Fehler-Cabral et al., 2016, p. 84), community-based philanthropy recognizes and incorporates local wisdom and authority to support “community-based analysis and planning” (Easterling & Main, 2016, p. 83), and evidence-based initiatives allow for efficient allocation of resources (Easterling & Main, 2016). Place-based and community-based philanthropy are similar, in that they both address the needs of a specific community or region; however, community-based philanthropy includes a strong emphasis on community-led projects over other methods of determining community needs (Easterling & Main, 2016). When successful, community-led philanthropy promotes local innovation, builds skill sets at both the individual and local organization level, and results in programs and services that align with the local context (Easterling & Main, 2016). Evidence-informed philanthropy promotes programs and initiatives that have demonstrated some level of success elsewhere (Easterling & Main, 2016). However, without local context, these programs may not address local issues in a way that people will accept, or may require resources that are not available in the community (Easterling & Main, 2016).

Despite the fact that community-based initiatives are often better aligned with local needs and thus better able to address local issues, outsiders tend to wield the decision-making power in rural development (Chambers, 2013). Without accurate local context, solutions provided or promoted by outsiders can result in wasted resources and limited community buy-in (Easterling & Main, 2016). In addition, small local governments often face the challenge of limited resources, and thus may not have the capacity to tackle aspects of community development on their own - particularly in rural areas, where capacity is low (Martin et. al., 2012).

While the non-profit sector cannot be expected to address all gaps in public services, there is a role for partnerships where “local communities [can] increasingly look to share responsibility for meeting local public needs with community partners” (Paarlberg & Yoshioka, 2016, p. 347). In the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, projects in collaboration with NGOs often support, inform and work alongside local community governments. By triangulating evidence-informed, community-led and place-based philanthropy, the internship-based research team at the Selkirk College Applied Research and Innovation Centre has been able to build a robust research model well-suited to partnerships with local NGOs.

From an applied perspective the projects benefited local communities in various ways. Some projects started with the research team assessing community strengths and needs by surveying, meeting and interviewing related segments of the population. In partnership with NGOs, the results of the needs assessments were then used to scope and focus the projects according to identified areas of community need. Project outcomes informed services, policies, supported community-led work and helped identify areas of focus. Specific examples of benefits to communities included:

- The research team supporting focus groups in 8 rural communities that resulted in collaborative economic resiliency plans;
- The research team contributing to local food security by mapping a number of variables, including soil quality and assessed value of farm land;
- The research team identifying local food supply chains and transportation needs for locally produced food and produce in the region;
- The research team collecting and publishing data (in the form of a final report) to help inform housing needs for 13 rural communities.

Communities have access to all project results and dissemination took place through presentations, project briefs, webinars, published reports and meetings.

## Local philanthropy, NGOs & research partnerships

In response to local public needs and resource gaps in the rural Columbia Basin-Boundary region, the Selkirk College Applied Research and Innovation Centre developed the ICAR model. Participatory approaches were used to address community research and community development needs. This model recruits the participation of NGOs, which can encompass “not-for-profit organizations, associations, and groups” (Department of Justice Canada, 2016, p. 1). Non-profit NGOs “provide a range of local services, relying almost entirely on philanthropic and volunteer contributions” (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 6) and the ICAR model presented here forms and strengthens partnerships between local NGOs, academia, and the community. In the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, where Selkirk College is located, there appears to be a great deal of work conducted by small, local NGOs, which are likely supported by philanthropic foundations (Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, 2018). While Selkirk College generally benefits from learning and partnerships as a result of the work, further research is needed to help build understanding around the direct ties to philanthropy and the evolving funding structures specific to this unique geographic region. The Applied Research and Innovation Centre, and specifically the internship-based research team, has developed strong relationships with local NGOs in the region while ensuring that those relationships are the foundation of collaborative community research that supports sustainable change (Figure 1). Local NGOs and the Applied Research and Innovation Centre are embedded in their respective communities and are thereby likely to “possess a better understanding of the socio-cultural factors that influence community interaction and thinking” (Wood, 2016, p. 3).

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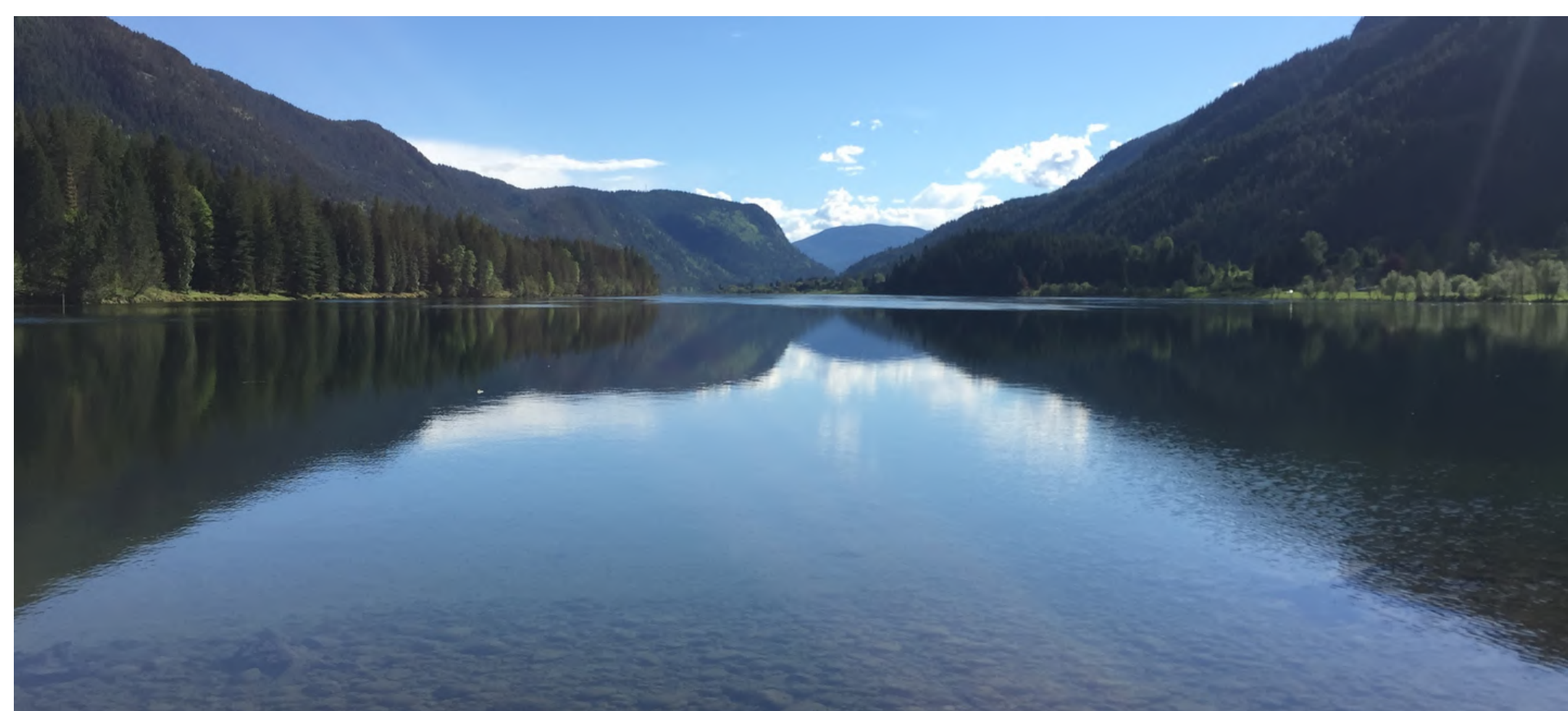


Figure 3: Kootenay River

The philanthropic landscape of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region has diverse representation from NGOs to community foundations and trusts. Community foundations in the Columbia Basin-Boundary, such those identified by Gibson et al. (2014, p. 10), exemplify locally-based, rural philanthropic activity that actively supports rural development.

These foundations help form the well-being of rural areas by “supporting initiatives that support community sustainability and revitalization, building connections to other community-based organizations, planning for future endowment growth to maintain their financial contributions to the community’s priorities, and taking a leadership role in the future of their communities” (Lorinc, 2019; Gibson et al., 2014, p. 32). A Google search for the region revealed examples of active philanthropy that focus on environmental protection and conservation, economic development, culture and tourism, education, technology, and social welfare.

Grant-making foundations and organizations such as the Real Estate Foundation, Columbia Basin Trust, and the Kootenay Savings Community Foundation have a strong presence in the region (Columbia Basin Trust, n.d.1, Kootenay Savings Credit Union, n.d., Real Estate Foundation British Columbia, n.d.). The Real Estate Foundation in British Columbia prioritizes building healthy communities and protecting natural environments by allocating grants focused on land use (Real Estate Foundation British Columbia, n.d.). The Columbia Basin Trust administers funds to the region based on benefits gained from the Columbia River Treaty and invests towards “the ongoing economic, environmental and social benefit of the region” (Columbia Basin Trust Act, 1996). Addressing other aspects of community well-being is the Kootenay Savings Community Foundation, which invests in non-profit projects and initiatives in the region that support culture, education, health, and more (Kootenay Savings Credit Union, n.d.). Research gaps exist in identifying grant-making foundations, such as those listed above, and linking them to new and existing NGOs as well as connecting funding streams from various foundations to specific projects.

Through the projects being completed at the Applied Research and Innovation Centre, researchers and NGO practitioners explore the needs of rural local communities (Figure 2). An important component of the Applied Research and Innovation Centre ICAR model is the involvement and mentorship of student research assistants (interns), who have the opportunity to independently and collaboratively participate in research.

Closely mentored by experienced researchers, these interns utilize skills gained through their education and increase employable skills. Partnerships with local organizations offer important opportunities to make connections with potential future employers and the community. Offering rewarding research job positions and projects that help interns make connections in the region enriches the knowledge base of our rural communities, and contributes to the retention of local knowledge and locally created solutions. Funding for this work is obtained through various grants, community partnerships, and Mitacs Canada, a not-for-profit grant-making organization. One project (see Table 1) was partially funded by the Real Estate Foundation and the funds were acquired by the Central Kootenay Food Policy Council (NGO). This led to a formation of a fee-for-service project partnership with the Applied Research and Innovation Centre as well as with other academic partners in the province. In addition, three funded internships were created and a Mitacs grant acquired to further support the project. This example demonstrates the complexity of funding sources and the relationship connections that are often formed and needed for local community-based projects with NGOs. While the extent of local philanthropic capital is largely unknown, local NGO funds for internship-based research projects are matched through the Mitacs Accelerate program (Mitacs, 2020). Multi-year Mitacs grants written by researchers and interns fund internships that support NGOs and community partnerships.

The goal of the ongoing creation of community-based partnerships is two-fold: 1) democratic community-engaged scholarship; and, 2) supporting community-specific research needs. In the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, the local connection between the Applied Research and Innovation Centre internship-based research team, community partners, and rural communities in which we live, results in what Woods (2016) calls being “in tune with the real issues that impact [the] daily lives of people” (p. 3). Ensuring that local interests and experiences are aligned with local funding sources provides communities with immediate value (Mulligan & Nadarajah, 2008).

Three specific project partnerships are outlined below to illustrate the types of research currently taking place (Table 1). Communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region are not unlike other rural areas in Canada, and common issues around rural development are shared, including economic growth, concerns about the changing climate, and natural resource depletion (Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, 2018). It can be argued that the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research partnerships between the Applied Research and Innovation Centre and local organizations contribute to both the understanding and mitigation of these issues in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region.

## Conclusion

The participatory ICAR model used by the Applied Research and Innovation Centre supports community research and community development by building research partnerships that support the linkage between evidence-informed, community-led, and place-based philanthropy and sustainability. This model also provides a research-focused learning environment for students and recent graduates and potentially creates professional career opportunities to retain skilled graduates in a rural area that consists of an aging population. As a result, the Applied Research and Innovation Centre is uniquely positioned to address research gaps in local capacity at multiple levels. Local communities and NGOs have limited resources and require research support that the

Applied Research and Innovation Centre has been able to provide. We believe that collaborating with local organizations by including academic contributions from groups such as the internship-based research team strengthens the resiliency and sustainability of rural regions in Canada and that locally-based academic partnerships with philanthropic and other organizations are an investment to the well-being of rural communities. The ICAR model has the potential to support other rural communities in similar ways.

This article describes the ICAR model that is embedded in the concept of sustainability while engaging rural NGOs, researchers and interns, as well as philanthropic approaches to projects that are place-based, community-led, and evidence-informed. Linkages among organizations also exemplify the nuanced funding interdependencies that are vital to rural areas. To highlight the intricacies of local relationships as well as approaches to funding, three examples of projects were provided. One specific example is used to highlight how funds from a grant-making foundation were used to build partnerships and acquire additional project funds.

Second, the ICAR model reveals the value and potential of including an experiential learning component for undergraduates, diploma students and recent graduates at a small rural College. The advantages of these partnerships also extend beyond the College to local communities that benefit from projects rooted in local needs and, if done well, provide NGOs and organizations with additional support and resources.

Project	Research Partner	Focus	Description	Funding
Pollinator Pathways Climate Adaptation Initiative	Kootenay Native Plant Society	Environmental Conservation	Conducting biological field-based surveys on local native vegetation and pollinators. The project also promotes citizen science. Results will inform conservation efforts, public outreach and education.	Mitacs Accelerate (under review), various other unknown funding sources (being secured)
Evidence-based Food Policy	Central Kootenay Food Policy Council	Food Policy and sustainable food systems	Mapping and identifying factors that will inform the viability of food systems in the Regional District of Central Kootenay, BC.	Mitacs Accelerate, Real Estate Foundation
Economic Disaster Resiliency	Community Futures Central Kootenay	Economic Development	Supporting local communities to create community-specific action frameworks that local governments, organizations, and businesses can refer to in a time of economic emergency.	Rural Dividend Fund Grant from the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development as well as the Regional Districts of Kootenay Boundary, Central Kootenay, East Kootenay, Town of Golden, and Columbia Basin Trust

Table 1: Research projects underway



## Notes

[1] The Columbia Basin-Boundary region is a rural region located in south-eastern British Columbia. It includes the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay, and Kootenay Boundary, as well as extending north to encompass Columbia Shuswap Regional District electoral areas A and B, and the communities of Revelstoke, Golden, and Valemount (Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, n.d.2).

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Figure 4: Blueberry Creek

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