

October 6, 2010

Alberta Rural Development Network Annual Report Released

The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) has completed its first year of active operations and is releasing its Annual Report at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Red Deer on October 14, 2010.

ARDN is a partnership of Alberta's 21 publicly-funded, publicly-governed post-secondary institutions working together to support and enhance rural development through education, research, networking and collaboration. The Network receives support from all 21 institutions as well as funding from Rural Alberta's Development Fund, with funding from the Government of Alberta.

Outgoing ARDN Chair Roger Epp, Dean of University of Alberta – Augustana, said that ARDN had many achievements during its first year of operations but still has a lot of work ahead. "We hope to establish ARDN as the go-to organization for rural development research in Alberta. We need to encourage more active collaboration, connections with communities and exchange of rural research results."

Highlights of the 2009-2010 operational year include:

- Formation of a team of post-secondary contacts to link with individuals and organizations involved in rural development in the communities they serve.
- Organizing a provincial conference, *Creating Rural Connections*, held in Lethbridge in May 2010. This conference was a catalyst for more than a dozen collaborations.
- Development of funding criteria and the awarding of ARDN's first research and networking event grants in spring 2010.
- Launch of a website that features research and partnership projects with an interactive online forum to discuss them with project leads and others.
- Establishing a process for self-assessment to ensure ARDN's work is effective and makes a difference.

Incoming ARDN Chair Rick Neidig, President of Northern Lakes College, said that the Network will build on its successes, but will also focus on long term sustainability. "We need to be financially sustainable, and we also need to find people who believe in our vision, people who will share their expertise and enthusiasm to make the Network grow."

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ARDN's AGM will be held in advance of two public events: a showcase from 2:30-4:30 pm featuring presentations on rural development research projects by five of ARDN's member institutions and an evening networking reception, which runs from 5:00-9:00 pm and features a 6:00 pm keynote presentation by Thaddeus Guldbrandsen, the Director of the Center for Rural Partnerships in New Hampshire. All events will be held in rooms 2901 A&B at The Centre for Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing at Deer College. They are free of charge but registration by email to exec.assist@ardn.ca is recommended to ensure a seat.

To obtain a copy of ARDN's Annual report, go to www.ardn.ca or call toll-free 1-877-987-1006.

The Alberta Rural Development Network is a partnership of Alberta's 21 publicly-funded, publicly-governed post-secondary institutions. ARDN is funded in part by Rural Alberta's Development Fund, with funding from the Government of Alberta. The Network supports and enhances rural development in Alberta through research, education, networking and collaboration. To learn more, go to www.ardn.ca.

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Media Contact:

Dee Ann Benard, Executive Director
Alberta Rural Development Network
780-449-1006 ext 223
exec.dir@ardn.ca