



Highlighting Rural Researchers

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Dr. Doug Ramsey

Chair of the Department of Rural Development

WHAT'S MORE

- *Dr. Doug Ramsey's personal connection to rural and remote living has been an inspiration driving his work*
- *He has conducted and contributed to a variety of different research projects relating to agriculture, rural tourism, community condition*
- *Since 2000, he has occupied a variety of positions supporting the city of Brandon, the province in Manitoba, and Brandon University*
- *He was a founding editor of the Journal of Rural and Community Development*

GETTING TO KNOW DR. DOUG RAMSEY

Doug Ramsey is a professor and researcher in the Department of Rural Development here at Brandon University (BU). He is originally from a small agricultural community in southern Ontario, and has gained a variety of rural and remote life experiences through working on various farms growing up, alongside his sister's married connection to agricultural life. These experiences inspired him to pursue an education and career focused on what it means to live and work rurally. More specifically, Doug has focused his work to reflect on how rural agricultural communities could persist for the future generations. At the University of Guelph, his research focused on the impacts of policy and economic condition on rural communities.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Doug was the first hire into the new Department of Rural Development at Brandon University in 1999. Soon there-after, he began research in the restructuring and diversification of Ontario agriculture. Through this work, leaders in these communities were asking questions about how tourism could support community economic development. With the assistance of Dr. Robert Annis - then the Director of the Rural Development Institute - Doug immersed himself within the world of national and international tourism research. This included the development of tourism courses for Brandon University, and collaborating on the development of the Tourism Research Centre at BU in 2003. Doug also founded the SSHRC-funded Journal of Rural and Community Development (JRCD) in 2005, which focuses on sharing rural and remote community developmental research.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Doug was asked by Dr. Rachel Herron to join in research projects related to rural and remote mental health and well-being. One of the first projects he began working on was the assessment of "rural-dwelling older adults' experience of isolation and loneliness." These explorations into rural and remote mental health continued, leading to a variety of different projects and publications.

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The opportunities for local development have increased exponentially.

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ONGOING RESEARCH AND CURRENT PROJECTS

Doug has since been focusing on research that explores the lack of mental health research within rural and remote communities, resulting in personal and professional barriers for individuals. One specific project came to fruition due to the contracting of the Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health (CSRMH) by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to conduct a deep-dive assessment into suicidality in rural and remote communities. A second project from this exploration examined barriers faced by front line healthcare workers in rural Manitoba during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Doug is currently working on two other research projects. First, he is collaborating with Dr. Christopher Malcolm and Dr. Derrek Eberts to assess the effects of COVID-19 on tourism and recreation in southern Manitoba. This project is funded through a SSHRC Partnership Grant and has three priority areas of inquiry: the increased interest in golfing; how families have been impacted by the participation in children's recreational hockey; and finally, how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted museums in small towns.

With specific recognition to the working museums across southern Manitoba, Doug is interested in exploring how communities have been adapting to the changing economy and work forces in rural and remote areas. It is important to assess how communities can adjust to offer opportunities to engage with the public within the context of local tourism.

He is also working on a Brandon University Research Committee (BURC)-funded project focusing on community connections to food. This project takes place in Norfolk County, Ontario - his home community and region where his PhD research took place. Historically, 90% of Canadian tobacco was grown in four counties in Ontario, most of which being in Norfolk. However, in the mid 2000s the Federal Government abolished the tobacco growers marketing board, and in doing so offered farmers a land buy-out. At this time, many folks decided to adjust the scope of their farm operations or changed career paths all together. One result was an increase in agricultural diversification, including processing and direct marketing. This new interest in entrepreneurial explorations reinforced the importance of community networks due to the need to support local. The goal of the project is to create a food web outlining these local connections between agricultural production, processing and retail – and in particular, those connections that remain within Norfolk and bordering counties. This assessment into the unique connection to food and drink showcases community resilience in the southern Ontario region.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are so many new and emerging opportunities to explore the world of rural and remote living. With the variety of projects being conducted by researchers such as Doug Ramsey, it may be possible to further understand how local rural and remote communities respond to change.



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