



Student Highlight

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Fallon Brook

Undergraduate Student at Brandon University

GETTING TO KNOW FALLON BROOK

Fallon Brook has deep connections to rural life, having grown up on a cattle farm in rural Manitoba. This connection is continued through her partner's family who live rurally in the Yukon, where they visit often. Fallon is currently majoring in philosophy, a discipline that deeply resonates with her interests due to its boundless nature. Within philosophy, there is an emphasis on curiosity and critical thinking.

RESERACH AND WORK EXPERIENCES

Fallon's background in philosophy complements all her work, especially through her current roles and responsibilities as they pertain to community engagement. This is because both fields require the ability to assess and explore many diverse opinions. This skill set is particularly valuable in community-based projects where perspectives can vary widely. Fallon's education has equipped her with the patience and vocabulary necessary to work with a variety of folks with their unique perspectives. These research and literary insights are incredibly helpful in navigating the complexity of community-based work, which tends to evolve over time.

Before returning to school in 2021, Fallon was self-employed. This experience allowed her to become more skilled in time management and explore personal strengths and areas of interest for continuous growth. Such experiences have been instrumental in shaping Fallon's approach to both work and education.

WHAT'S MORE

- *Fallon worked as a Registered Massage Therapist for 7 years*
- *Through the ConnectedMB project, Fallon has been instrumental in the further strategic planning in RDI Knowledge Mobilization for RDI*

Rural Development Institute
Brandon University
 270-18th Street,
 Brandon, MB R7A 6A9
 204-571-8515
brandonu.ca/rdi





Community-based research is like a big jigsaw puzzle in and of itself. You're not only balancing a lot of different perspectives, but a lot of different elements.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Fallon is actively involved in the ConnectedMB project - conducted by RDI in collaboration with the Internet Society, Manitoba Chapter. This project focuses on assessing the capacity required for independent community broadband projects and their impact. Her role in the project involves engaging with various communities to better understand how these broadband projects have been conducted in the past. This can include communities that have owned their own fibre networks, as well as those who hired external companies for connectivity. While Fallon has taken on many tasks through project management, she is primarily responsible for community engagement – serving as the main contact for community members. Fallon has been able to work with the diverse project team to learn new skills and adapt to the application of new methods in community engagement as the project evolves.

One of the exciting aspects of the ConnectedMB project is the development of a podcast to document and share research findings. Fallon is enthusiastic about the opportunity to help communities make informed decisions based on their unique capacities, and believes that these understandings can also be useful to build capacity within RDI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Fallon's future is open-ended. She plans to complete her undergraduate degree at Brandon University in 2026, and there is a strong interest in continuing her education through graduate studies. While she is interested in applying the experiences and skills gained from current projects to a community development master's program or engaging in a graduate program that integrates philosophy and community work, she is open to all of the possibilities that lie ahead.

The Rural Development Institute is grateful to be affiliated with a variety of communities, agencies, academics and students across Canada and beyond. These relationships have facilitated the development of unique networks allowing for collaborative projects to take form, and RDI wants to extend its appreciation to all rural researchers.