

Place, technology, and innovation – overcoming barriers in the Columbia Basin-Boundary

What are the top challenges in our region related to innovation and technology? According to a RDI poll taken at the 2017 Convention and AGM of the Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments, the largest challenge relates to funding and capital (30% of respondents). Tying for second place was access to supports; education, skills and training; and resistance to change (~12% each).



Attendees at the Place, Technology, and Future of Rural Communities presentation and discussion session (co-hosted by the RDI and the [Canadian Regional Development](#) research project) offered up detailed insights into the challenges we face in the region, from resistance to change to limited local capacity to lack of awareness and beyond. It was observed that the pace of change is rapid, which can make it difficult to keep track and keep up to date. Dealing with change was noted as being particularly challenging where there are slow institutional processes or discomfort with technology.

However, challenges were not the focus of the session. The Canadian Regional Development team shared strategies that had been adopted in other places across Canada. These included the ability of businesses and communities to adapt and adopt new technology, whether that was new computerized inventory and ordering systems or using GPS to map local trails. Training and learning was also front and centre, highlighting that any person or organization can learn to use or incorporate technology – so long as they start where people are and work towards tangible and pragmatic outcomes. Collaboration, incentives, and support were also highlighted as important strategies.

When asked to share their ideas for solutions and strategies, attendees had no shortage of ideas. Partnerships with educational institutions was an idea with many different versions, such as linking remotely with university programs for training, or creating innovation centres (think Fab Labs) that work closely with local colleges and high schools. Collaboration was also a critical strategy – getting groups to work toward similar goals, as well as making more efficient use of existing resources – getting the word out about all the opportunities, resources, and expertise that already exists. The need for new methods of funding were brought up, leading some to highlight community investment funds as one alternative method of finding dollars to support projects. A willingness to be innovative, and careful attention to place are important elements to all of the above.

So where to start if you're looking to become more comfortable with technology? Or if you simply want to enhance the efficiency of your organization? As we round the corner into a new school year we see new opportunities for developing new skills, whether that's through continuing education courses at [Selkirk College](#), [College of the Rockies](#), [Okanagan College](#), or [College of New Caledonia](#), free massive open online courses (e.g., [edX](#)), at the [MIDAS FabLab](#), [Community Futures](#), or any of the many other options for skills development.

Media Contact: Sarah Breen, Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, 1-888-953-1133 x. 21246, sbreen@selkirk.ca.

This article is a product of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College. We are a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research and related outreach and extension support. Visit www.cbrdi.ca for more information.

FREE PUBLIC PRESENTATION – ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As part of the [Different By Design](#) conference being co-hosted by Selkirk College this September, the opening Keynote Panel will be free and open to the public. Keynote speakers Heather Hall (University of Waterloo), Terry Van Horn (Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation), and Traart Van den Berg (Land Info Technologies) will be speaking on Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Economic Development. The panel and reception take place September 20, 2017, starting at 6:30 pm at the Capitol Theatre in Nelson, BC.

Get your tickets here:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/opening-keynote-panel-tickets-35773264798>

OPEN DATA, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION WEBINAR

The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute and Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre at Selkirk College are partnering to deliver a webinar on open data, local government and economic development in the region. This webinar will include presentations from Ian Parfitt, Coordinator of the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre, Tom Dool of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, and a representative from the Kootenay Real Estate Board.

Details: Wednesday, September 13 from 12-1pm (PST) / 1-2 (PST).

[Click here to learn more](#)

[Click here to register](#)



cbrdi.ca



[About Us](#)

[Communities](#)

[Research Areas](#)

[Resources](#)

[Contact Us](#)

RDI Focus is a monthly e-blast highlighting stories of well-being in our region. You are receiving this email because you have attended an RDI event or have subscribed to receive updates on RDI.

[Edit your subscription](#) | [Unsubscribe instantly](#)