



Alberta Rural Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ARCH²)
Quarterly General Meeting
Tuesday, February 16, 2021 1pm-3pm
Virtual Chair: Cassandra Rasko

Attendees: Dee Ann Benard, Paul Edginton (City of Wetaskiwin), Cassandra Rasko, Jayde Roche, Lisa Belanger, Julia Juco, Kelly Petraschuk, Maude Ouellet, Candace Pambrun, Sharida Csillag, Diahann Potrebenko, Kathleen Turner, Sydney Stenekes, Jessica Hutton, Jennifer Westwood, Cindy Easton, Diahann Polege-Aulotte

Regrets: Cheryl Findlay, Adrian Michelutti, Angie O'Connor, Kristie Gomuwka, Melissa Masse Olimphy Heramosillo de Elizondo, Steve Madden, Lynne Bossmann, Lisa Brown

1. Call to Order & Introductions – **Cassandra Rasko** called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. A review of the Google Meets platform was given along with an icebreaker. Welcome to our newest member – **Paul Edginton** from the City of Wetaskiwin.
2. Approve Agenda – **Cassandra Rasko** asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. **Sharida Csillag** moved – all in favour. **Motion carried.**
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – **Cassandra Rasko** asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting on October 21, 2020 as presented. **Cindy Easton** moved - all in favour. **Motion carried.**
4. Updated ARCH2 Brochure – Now that ARDN has rebranded to the RDN, we are in the process of updating our one-page brochure on the ARCH2 Network. This PDF will be shared with everyone as soon as the final edits have been made.
5. Canadian Rural and Remote Housing and Homelessness Symposium – Update – **Lisa Belanger** updated the group on the virtual symposium details. It is now to take place on June 1-3, 2021. This is the first time the event will be virtual as it was 'in person' in 2018. Conference event link here: <https://www.crrhh.ca/>. Currently the Call for Presenters is open until Feb 28/21 – feel free to submit or share with your contacts. RDN has confirmed 3 keynotes to date – Jessie Thistle, Avi Freedman, Margaret Pho. Registration is set to open at the beginning of March, 2021. Credits for tickets purchased last year will be honored. We estimate the cost per ticket will be around \$250 – hoping for great attendance. We will be looking for volunteers for moderating sessions, etc. later – if interested, you can connect directly with **Lisa Belanger** or **Shelby Rowein** at RDN directly.
6. RDN Updates

- **General RDN Update - Dee Ann Benard** spoke about the RDN Rebranding – still in the process of transition. Still will look the same for the most part but our reach will expand across Canada. RDN continues to work on issues such as homelessness, affordable housing, rural revitalization, rural immigration, substance use, rural transportation, rural broadband, seniors concerns, rural sustainability. We have created a group called the **Canadian Rural Collaborative** to address issues across Canada keeping Rural Canada in the conversation and at the table (came about through an idea that was submitted for the Canadian Healthy Initiatives Fund that was not funded). Rural Revitalization – connecting economic & social development – started on a project to bring all these things together with a community in Ontario – Hornepayne – less than 1000 people in the community. Working with them to create a model of rural revitalization that can be used everywhere. Always looking for other communities in the pilot project. Dee Ann’s slides will be sent to everyone.
- **Rural Immigration Update - Jayde Roche** reported on the latest developments with this initiative. A project was recently completed with school of mental health – report is almost completed and will be shared on our website when finalized. This report should be able to help with immigrant’s issues and filling the gaps. Working in areas of anti discrimination as well – looking to expand into more communities. Technology task group on everything immigration – was looking at digital service delivery options – this group will be making recommendations to the federal government and RDN continues to advocate for rural communities. Current funds open right now – connect with Jayde if more information is needed – jayder@ruraldevelopment.ca **Elnaz Aliasl** is involved with a new initiative on Rural Transportation working on ways to identify needs/share resources on rural transportation and solving issues. If interested, connect with Elnaz directly at elnaza@ruraldevelopment.ca
- **Homelessness Estimations – Julia Juco** gave an update on the most recent Homelessness Estimation from fall/2020 that has been recently completed. 28 communities started, a few dropped off, resulting in 26 different groups collecting surveys from Sept-December, 2020. With a few communities left to report, we have received 1886 responses so far. Unlike first time, more women this time around by a 2/1 margin. Julia reviewed some of the statistics with the group. Currently, we are working with groups to get their individual reports done and back to the communities. Promotion of the data collected is in the works. News Release templates will be provided to each community to post on their own in hopes for an impactful release across the board.
- **SUAP Update – Cassandra Rasko** updated the group that the SUAP program has moved from an ‘in person’ format to a ‘Virtual platform’ for youth to experience. Poster to be sent out soon for you to share with your communities. Currently, we are looking for 3-5 groups to pilot this virtual exhibit. Please share with your contacts and connect with Cassandra directly at cassandrar@ruraldevelopment.ca if you have information on potential participants in this pilot project.

- Reaching Home Update – **Sydney Stenekes** gave an update to the group on this initiative. An additional \$1.8 million was received for emergency COVID-19 relief. The initial amount was \$800K so a total of \$2.6 million has been received for emergency COVID-19 funding. RDN received requests for over \$10 million with only \$1.8 million to allocate in this latest round of funding. As of December, 2020, 14 new projects have been funded including help with temporary housing, basic needs, homelessness intervention (utilities and rent), support of additional staffing for shelters, mat programs etc. The other half of the \$1.8 million will be going towards capital projects. Announcements on those projects to come soon. Canmore has a new mat program which is one of the new projects that was approved. 63 projects total have received some sort of funding. RDN has hired additional administrative help to oversee this project. This past fall announced \$299 million Canada wide for the next fiscal year – we are still waiting to hear what portion of that will be coming to us for rural Alberta. If you have any questions on the Reaching Home initiative, connect with Sydney at programs@ruraldevelopment.ca

7. **Roundtable Updates:** Each member has a few minutes to share news and updates. In addition to this, provide your “asks and gives” – “ask” of the group (questions you have, help you are seeking, etc.) also what you can “give” to the group (things you can offer):
 - **Diahann Polege-Aulotte** - Bonnyville & District FCSS– business as usual in her area – she is in the office 2 days a week, working 3 days from home - just started this format in December. Individuals in the community – Bonnyville Shelter for Men is up and running which is helping to alleviate the pressure off them. COVID-19 numbers in the community are going down. Grant for emergency funding from the fall received through RDN has been used – ongoing.
 - **Cindy Easton** – Mountain Rose Women’s Centre – hosting coordinator for senior housing association assessment. They have identified 6 areas of concern through the assessment - transportation, knowledge of resources and how to access, housing costs and affordability for seniors housing, cost of living in rural, isolation and mental health, personal safety and perception of rural crime, volunteers and how to use seniors to volunteer. This project is new and exciting – if you are doing any projects in your area on these senior components or transportation issues or rural crime – please connect with Cindy. Cindy will send Cassandra the report that was provided. Dee Ann also would like to meet with Cindy on various potential projects – Kelly to set this up.
 - **Jennifer Westwood**– Fort Macleod & District FCSS - working with RDN & the SHI team for affordable housing strategy and business package – wrapping up towards the end of the month – trying to get the community involved regarding location, perspectives, companies that are interested in building, etc. Is having trouble spending grant funds that were allocated towards providing traditional wellness classes – haven’t been able to do that because of shut down due to COVID-19. Has been hitting brick walls on how they can proceed. Also education for tenants and landlords – looking for ways to give various educational platforms to community members

but is struggling. Jessica Hutton shared there is some information on Tenant Education through them <http://www.camroseopendoor.com/tep.html> - free on the website.

- **Sharida Csillag** – Town of Stony Plain - can relate to Jennifer’s concerns. Stony Plain has just relaunched/released ‘Poverty Strategy’ – good time to incorporate lessons learned and progress made. Accepted by most councillors but not all – having to deal with pushback on universal childcare, equity, etc. Does anyone have any research on post COVID-19 support on items such as childcare changes, changes in basic necessity, wages, equity, etc? Looking for information on feasibility research on environmental scans that address homelessness in the community, keeping homeless youth off the streets – what are others doing? Always available to brainstorm and provide support on anything you need. Cassandra sent information to Sharida, but if you’re also interested, please contact Cassandra.
 - **Kathleen Turner** – County of Grande Prairie FCSS - working on integrated coordinated access with HelpSeeker – ongoing “No Wrong Door” is the moto! Working in partnership with UofC on a child and youth mental health project – along with Medicine Hat and Lethbridge – just getting underway now on that. They were able to access funding through the United Way for COVID-19 emergency needs. Second Harvest has grants available for food security – food banks etc. - have a look. Regional Handibus implementation plan – ongoing to coordinate and partner within communities in the region – if anyone has any knowledge on this topic, please connect with Kathleen.
 - **Jessica Hutton** – Camrose Open Door - 24/7 integrated response hub started in December. They now have a dedicated outbreak site and are back to normal. During these COVID-19 times, they are averaging 50 people a night – before it was more like 15 people per night last year. They have been taking advantage of many health options from the province – they all showed up in a big way! Had high medical needs that needed to be addressed as well – 94% categorized as high need! Into the next phase of addiction treatment centre – servicing all of central Alberta. Looking at developing response hub into other rural locations – buses to be used so they are mobile and can get to locations quickly. Youth programming is still running in Camrose – running normally but mostly on a virtual basis.
 - **Paul Edginton** – City of Wetaskiwin - This is Paul’s first meeting – he has been working closely with Jessica Hutton since July/20. First time working in this type of community role in Wetaskiwin. Trying to change the conversation in the community on homelessness and the homeless – trying to help them to understand trauma and how it’s connected to the vulnerable population. The Hub was the first step towards that. Very involved with Reach Edmonton – community safety – building a steering committee. Connect with him if you have any input on these subjects. Looking forward to learning more from this group.
8. Gaps in Government Funding – **Sydney Stenekes** reported that the Federal Government has made available much funds for housing and homelessness this past year, but wanted to know what gaps this group is seeing in funding so she can advocate for them in the months to come?
- Replies:
- Administration costs seems to be a gap in all grant funding
 - Seniors and Isolation – funding will be ending, but the need will continue to be an issue
 - Continuation of these grants in general- what is the plan going forward?

- Seniors accessing transportation to vaccination sites – is this something others are interested in? yes
- Better education for seniors on vaccination process and information on correct information – dispelling the myths
- If you think of anything else, send ideas to Cassandra directly and she will add to the minutes.

Cassandra Rasko added - FYI – HelpSeeker is receiving 2.5 million to increase their App platform – great news for all of rural!

9. **This meeting was adjourned at 2:48 pm.** June/21 is the next quarter and the next meeting will take place after the symposium.