



RURAL FUTURES

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

UNIVERSITY
of GUELPH

Rural Futures Annual Report 2022-2023

Blake Glassford & Ryan Gibson

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph

August, 2023

The "Rural Futures: Mobilizing Knowledge and Sustaining Partnerships" project is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance. For more information on the research project please visit <http://rural.uoguelph.ca>.

Rural Futures: Project Highlights

199

Identified rural-focused research faculty at the University of Guelph

5,112

Research outputs generated by UofG researchers over the past 10 years

INITIAL PARTNER DISCUSSIONS FOUND

3 Main Takeaways

impacting the dissemination of rural knowledge to the relevant partners



Knowledge is often **delayed and disconnected** from its intended audience

Desire for easily **digestible knowledge** and **collaboration** between rural partners



University knowledge is **disseminated**, but **rarely recognized and celebrated**



Rural People



Rural Environments



Rural Places

3 Key Themes

integrated into the website

Next Project Steps



Continue developing rural research **'pathfinder'** website

Continue **discussions** with rural partners



Continue rural research **knowledge sharing**

Why Rural?

The future of rural places, people, and environments is critical to the province of Ontario. With **469 of the province's 577 municipalities considered rural**, making up over **17% of the total population**, ensuring the sustainable health and wellbeing of rural communities *is* securing Ontario's long-term prosperity. While there are **several organizations dedicated to the creation and sharing of rural-based knowledge**, that knowledge does not always reach rural actors in a timely and efficient fashion. Thus, new mechanisms must be created to guarantee that relevant, rural-focused knowledge is delivered to those who need it the most.



The Rural Futures Project

The University of Guelph is globally renowned for its commitment to forwarding research and knowledge to support rural communities. In collaboration with rural partners, “**Rural Futures: Mobilizing Knowledge and Sustaining Partnerships**” is enhancing knowledge mobilization at the University of Guelph and partners by **creating a centralized platform to facilitate the spread of rural-based knowledge to the actors most in need of it.**

This initiative facilitates **rural knowledge sharing**, ensuring **experiences within the University of Guelph are mobilized to rural partners** in local government, community-based organizations, charities/non-profits, Indigenous communities, all levels of government, businesses, and other researchers. The project intends to **build partnerships with actors outside the University to facilitate future collaborations and strengthen local communities.** This initiative is funded through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.



Rural Futures Activities to Date

Rural Futures Website

Incorporating the advice of our rural partners and the findings from our associated research, the Rural Futures initiative created the [Rural Futures web portal](#). The website presents readers with background information on the project, information on the research team, and contact information for future inquiries.

We are in the process of constructing a database of rural-based researchers at the University of Guelph. This database will be used to highlight the academic achievements of researchers, notify stakeholders about upcoming and ongoing research projects, and provide a platform for future collaborations. We are currently collecting profiles. For anyone interested in submitting a profile to be showcased on the site, they can submit their information through the [website's intake form](#).

#RuralGuelph Social Media

To promote rural research emerging from the University of Guelph, a unique hashtag was created for social media platforms - #RuralGuelph. The hashtag is included on messages about new rural research, recent publications, new resources, and upcoming events. #RuralGuelph is used on Facebook, Twitter/X, and LinkedIn posts.



Conference Presentations

The Rural Futures research team presented at two conferences: The [2022 Northern Directions Conference](#) hosted by the Northern Policy Institute and the [2023 Rural Symposium](#) co-hosted by the University of Guelph and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. These posters highlighted the purpose of the project, its importance to rural Ontarians, and upcoming activities.

Upcoming Rural Futures Activities

As the Rural Futures project continues into 2024, here are some upcoming projects for rural stakeholders to look forward to.

Rural Knowledge Database

The Rural Futures initiative will construct an inventory of rural-focused research. This inventory will consist of academic works created at the University of Guelph, as well as knowledge generated by rural partners across the province of Ontario.

Online Survey

As the website continues to grow in its capacity and outreach, the Rural Futures team is looking for feedback on the current state of the website. The team will be circulating a questionnaire about the functionality of the website. Watch rural.uoguelph.ca for more information.

Rural Researcher Profiles

Rural Futures is currently constructing an inventory of rural-focused researchers, both internal and external to the University of Guelph. As this database continues to grow, we highlight profiles to showcase the diversity of research occurring at the University of Guelph. Further profiles can be found at the [Rural Futures website](#).

Caleigh Copelin

Animal Biosciences

Email: ccopelin@uoguelph.ca

Caleigh is a Masters student studying equine behaviour and welfare. Her current research examines welfare outcomes of riding lesson horses in Canada, identifies management practices to improve welfare outcomes, and intends to enhance the sustainability of the riding lesson industry.

Joshua Barrett

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development

Email: joshua.barrett@uoguelph.ca

Joshua is a PhD candidate in Rural Studies. His research centers on local governments and improving socioeconomic conditions in rural communities. Joshua also works as a Senior Environmental Planner at Stantec focusing on climate change adaptation and the green economy.



Natasha Wepler

Plant Agriculture

Email: nwepler@uoguelph.ca

Natasha, a Filipino-Canadian Masters student at the Ridgetown Campus, studies the impacts of western bean cutworm (WBC), *Striacosta albicosta*, and other insect pests that pose a danger to Ontario field crops. Her research aims to understand over winter survival strategies of WBC and enhance the economic viability of Ontario corn crops.

Damilola Oyewale

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development

Email: doyewale@uoguelph.ca

Damilola comes from an Agricultural background and has practical experience in community-driven planning activities. Damilola is passionate about policies and practices that create sustainable and equitable communities.



Mary Thornbush

School of Environmental Sciences

Email: mthronbu@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Thornbush is currently involved in a research study examining soil crusting in agricultural experimental plots located in southwestern Ontario. Her area of focus is Soil Science, with an emphasis on image processing, and she is a member of the Soil Imaging Laboratory.



Current Rural Activities

The University of Guelph is home to some of Canada's largest contributions to rural people, environments, and places. The following section showcases an illustration of rural initiatives taking place among University and community partners.

Rural Review



RURAL REVIEW
ONTARIO RURAL PLANNING,
DEVELOPMENT, AND POLICY

On February 23rd, this year's copy of The *[Rural Review: Ontario Rural Planning, Development, and Policy](#)* was published. The website, launched in 2017, presents research and publications focusing on issues relevant to rural planning, development, and policy topics. It also highlights each year's entries for the University of Guelph's Rural Symposium, including oral and poster presentations, as well as plain language summaries.

People's Archive of Rural Ontario

While crucial to the wellbeing of Ontario, stories of rural lives are rarely captured for the wider population. Launched in 2021, the [People's Archive of Rural Ontario](#) (PARO) is a living archive designed to showcase and preserve the diverse stories and lived experiences of rural Ontarians. These compelling short stories use a range of media and are freely accessible to all. PARO aligns itself with the needs of rural Ontarians and is overseen by a growing team with varied backgrounds ranging from academia to museum curation. PARO is also supported by several external partners, including the Rural Ontario Institute, Ontario Barn Preservation, and the Rural Diary Archive.

In 2023, PARO added new stories that represent the full array of rural life across the province of Ontario. These stories cover a wide range of topics, from Durham, Ontario's [Symphony in the Park](#), to the [experiences of the Black community and their links to farming in Chatham](#). For further reading and to keep up-to-date with new stories, make sure to visit their [website](#).



Rural Project Spotlights

Dairy at Guelph Podcast

Dairy at Guelph is a research organization at the University of Guelph dedicated to enhancing dairy-related research through collaboration and network building. In furthering this endeavour, [Dairy at Guelph launched its podcast](#) to share its ongoing work with rural stakeholders across the province. Dairy at Guelph releases a new episode each month to celebrate and share new, dairy-related research. To date, Dairy at Guelph has released three episodes.

- Episode 1: Calf Health and Management with Dr. Michael Steele
- Episode 2: Dairy Cattle Diseases, Biosecurity and Management Practices with Dr. David Kelton
- Episode 3: Genetic Selection for Sustainable and Resilient Dairy Cows with Dr. Christine Baes

To access more episodes, or explore other projects from Dairy at Guelph, visit the [Dairy at Guelph website](#) for up-to-date releases.



ROI Housing Information System

While rural communities [continue to grow across Ontario](#), there continues to be a shortage of rural housing information, inhibiting the creation of affordable housing across the province. To address this issue, the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) and the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus have been hard at work constructing a centralized data tool for rural housing. The [Rural Housing Information System \(RHIS\)](#) works by consolidating pre-existing data into a single digital platform, thereby helping municipalities, developers, and non-profit builders' access rural housing information to help create rural-focused affordable housing developments.

More information is being uploaded to RHIS, and the final version will consist of the following categories: demographic trends, average market rents & home prices, available zoned & developable land, local organizations for collaboration, soft costs, available building incentives, relevant municipal planning by-laws, and assets & amenities that support residents.



Grand River Community Play Project

The Canadian Rural Center for Creativity launched the [**Grand River Community Play Project**](#) in 2022. This project, consisting of several interweaving artistic and storytelling initiatives, focuses on connecting the diverse network of rural communities and Indigenous peoples that live along the Grand River watershed. Supported by a team of creatives, including artists, technicians, and producers, the project is a collaboration of a wide range of partners, including various academic, professional, and Indigenous institutions.

The project continues to collect stories and projects, including photography, performance through quilting, and documentary film making, with it culminating into a full production in August 2024. The community play is a collaborative method of creative storytelling practiced all over the world. As a community-led production, the final product will be a culmination of the various meetings and workshops, creating a unique theatrical experience that will reflect the diverse nature of those who call the Grand River watershed home.





rural.uoguelph.ca

