

S N O W

Foreword: I compiled SNOW from the collection of notes we retrieved from the service providers we met in the Boundary – Kootenay and Okanagan regions in our road trip to Grand Forks, Castlegar and Kelowna on February 8 -10, 2011. Some quotes and reflections derived also from informal conversations with friends and acquaintances we met along the road. Please pass along those involved in our meetings and add your comments, and notes, and let me and us in the team know if you object to any of all of this information to be shared with others. Ideally, we would like to have a travelling journal and writes like this one uploaded in our website. Thank you All for your thoughts and insights.

Collaborative writes reflecting the perceptions of service providers, community members and researchers about “rural and remote” in Interior BC



With the voices of:

Family workers and counsellors, early child development professionals, infant and support child development consultants, community nurses, mental health representatives, families, graduate students/researchers representing "The Boundary Family Centres" (www.boundaryfamily.org/) Kootenay Family Place SCDP; Brent Kennedy AIDP/SCDP, Central Okanagan IDP, community members in Grand Forks and Genelle, BC, UBC-Vancouver campus, Faculty of Education
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Snow. Up, turn, down, and then up again, *what is rural, what is remote*. The words weave in and out of our thoughts, and we reflect on what we have heard, the images of the landscape in front of us.

Rural is open fields.



The road continues. Up, turn, turn, turn, up and then down –up again.

It is not the same to drive this road when you have gas stations and shops on the side. Like think of driving this road with a sick child. Two and a half hours like this.

A gas station – closed, snow covering them up. A coffee-slash-meat selling-slash-convenience store. End of town. The road goes on.

Time eats everything up. Going from one place to the next. You need a car – a good car. Can't have a beater in these roads. Can't afford to have your car break down –there's no one out there.



In a conversation that one of the community agency representatives had with parents discussing what is it like living in rural and remote communities and having a child with disability, the parents shared the following:

- o The cost of services - as many of them are single parents
- o Lack of -or very limited- public transportation; some people don't drive, don't have a car
- o The price of gas
- o Time taken off work
- o The perception that professionals in Grand Forks are not as knowledgeable like people in Kelowna or Vancouver
- o There is no speech therapy during the summer



Dead deer on the road. Grouse flying low, will they land on our car? Cattle slowly walking on the snow on the fields we pass by.

Expensive. The cost of gas to drive from one place to the other. Accessing services here is expensive. You have to plan for meals too.

Some of us have families [in caseloads] that we can't reach. These are families that don't have a phone, don't have a car. That's really remote (families in Beaverdell). They don't have these services (electricity, phone, car) - by choice.

Is rural captured in a postal code?

The definition of rural and remote is based on external systems that do not work.

The postal service's system is an external system of defining what is rural and remote.

In Grand Forks, some of the representatives from community agencies define themselves as rural; other small places around them are remote.

Maybe people in Midway, Beaverdell or Rock Creek think Grand Forks is Urban, they add.

And up in Castlegar...

Postal code? That does not make sense. Castlegar is not considered rural - no intermediate 0! And yet I have to drive to at least five different places to get things. Shoes - yes I can get shoes for my son, if I am lucky with the two sizes they have.

They use Kelowna for a measure. The farther you are from Kelowna, the more rural you are considered.

And they are not consistent:

We are not rural? But Summerland --which is closer to Kelowna--, **is**? It's only 15 minutes from Penticton!

We have the services here; maybe this is why we're not rural.

I feel very rural. I need to take my daughter to Children's hospital in Vancouver, and I need to take four days off work because of that.

On the road to Trail, a ten-minute drive from Castlegar...

A mom:

I think here is rural, not remote. I have wifi.

Her child:

My house is rural. It says it on the selling contract.

Grandma:

I am so happy I have someone to talk today! I do not know how to use the computer! (Translation from Spanish)



How are rural and remote different, then?¹

Service providers in the Castlegar area describe remote as places that don't have a big store, no school and where children need to travel to school.

No services in the community, service providers need to come to them.

And yet...

No hospital in Castlegar, need to travel to Trail or Nelson.

Castlegar is rural. If a child needs shoes we have to go to Trail which also have very limited selection.

(But postal code indicates is an urban area)

Public transportation is a big problem here, although the bus service has recently improved.

Most rural places have some sort of public transportation, not remote.

(So what is remote.)

Remote is no cell phones. 15 minutes from here there is no cell phone reception.

Today I will go on a home visit to the Nakusp. It is only three and a half hours out there, but there is no cell reception. I will not be in communication with my family for two days - unless I find a landline, which is rare cuz you can't find those phones too often anymore.



¹ It was suggested to our team that, in order to answer some of the questions about living in rural or remote communities...we should probably ask people who lived both in rural and urban communities, because people who haven't lived in both will have problem answering some questions...

The context for rural and remote.

And back to the Boundary area, in a conversation with a resident just outside of the Grand Forks city limits:

I consider myself rural.

Not remote.

You have to consider the context of where I came from. We were the only ones in our area. Like there was...nothing.

Remote for me is like those folks in Beaverdell. There was a time when the police would not even go there!

Leaving Big White behind. Entering Okanagan country. Last hill, up.

Reflections on the road

And to think that just a few years ago people would just pack their kids in a sled and off they went, if the car broke.

What I see that makes it different from then is the gap: No buses. Little or no technology -- cell and internet in some areas- no land line, no cell reception or internet only 15 minutes down the road.

Back then even cities had limited access to public transit, and not everyone had a private telephone line - no internet or cell yet, of course.

Today cities receive all of the services.

When you leave the city, you have a perception that it is all connected because of the roads, but in reality, not everyone can access the roads. And it is very isolated - in every sense.

You would not use the sled unless you are in a remote community with no roads - or no year-round roads.



Highway 33-Kelowna: fences, homes, a gas station. It's open. Bathroom, coffee and a long distance telephone card.

We ask a service provider if they see families in rural communities.

Peachland and Oyama - some of the families that live there are on the higher side, they have the abilities to live there, they can afford it.

Rural doesn't necessarily mean low SES.

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THANK YOU!

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(Photos by Maya Goldstein)