



# Contact Information

**Courtney Mosentine**  
Director of Communications

E: [Courtney@radf.ca](mailto:Courtney@radf.ca)

P: 780.436.9585

C: 780.399.7336

F: 866.312.6253

[www.radf.ca](http://www.radf.ca)

Rural Alberta Development Fund  
Suite 300, 3203-93 Street, Edmonton, AB T6N0B2

# Rural Alberta Development Fund

Alberta is full of innovative and exciting ideas with the potential to have significant impacts on our communities and the people who call them home. Each and every corner of the province is full of what we call change agents: people with big ideas and the passion and determination to make them reality.

But sometimes it takes more than a great idea and fierce determination. That's where we come in. Our objective is simple: support rural Alberta communities in becoming stronger and more sustainable. We do this by acting as a catalyst, inspiring innovation, connecting change agents and providing seed money to help Albertans bring their ideas to life.

The projects we fund cross many sectors, but they all have one common theme. They are designed to improve the quality of life, success, and sustainability of rural communities throughout Alberta.

Every project began with a Big Sky idea in a community filled with tenacity and a fierce determination to make their ideas a reality.

We've funded more than 70 projects and there are still more Big Sky ideas out there.







# Our Story

## Our Province

The Rural Alberta Development Fund is a not-for-profit organization that works with Alberta's change agents to help the province flourish.

## Our Mandate

Our organization was created as a key outcome in the Government of Alberta's rural development strategy, A Place to Grow, to help rural communities, regional alliances and organizations kick-start projects that would contribute to the betterment of rural Alberta. In 2007, our organization was capitalized with \$100 million from the Government of Alberta to fund innovative rural development projects.

## Our Future

So far, we've funded more than \$75 million worth of change and innovation. We have until March 31, 2012 to commit our remaining funds.

We're excited to find out what programs will capture the remainder of our funds, but we're even more enthusiastic about what the future of our province could look like if another \$100 million worth of big ideas were put into action.

# Board of Directors

### Jann Beeston

Chair  
Hanna, Alberta

### Claudia Buck

Grande Prairie, Alberta

### Marie Logan

Lomond, Alberta

### Keith Ryder

Vice-Chair  
Stettler, Alberta

### Glenn Taylor

Hinton, Alberta

### Ken Nicol

Coahurst, Alberta

### Alden Armstrong

Paddle Prairie, Alberta

### Marc Butikofer

Summer Village of  
Island Lake South, Alberta

### Eva Urlacher

Cold Lake, Alberta



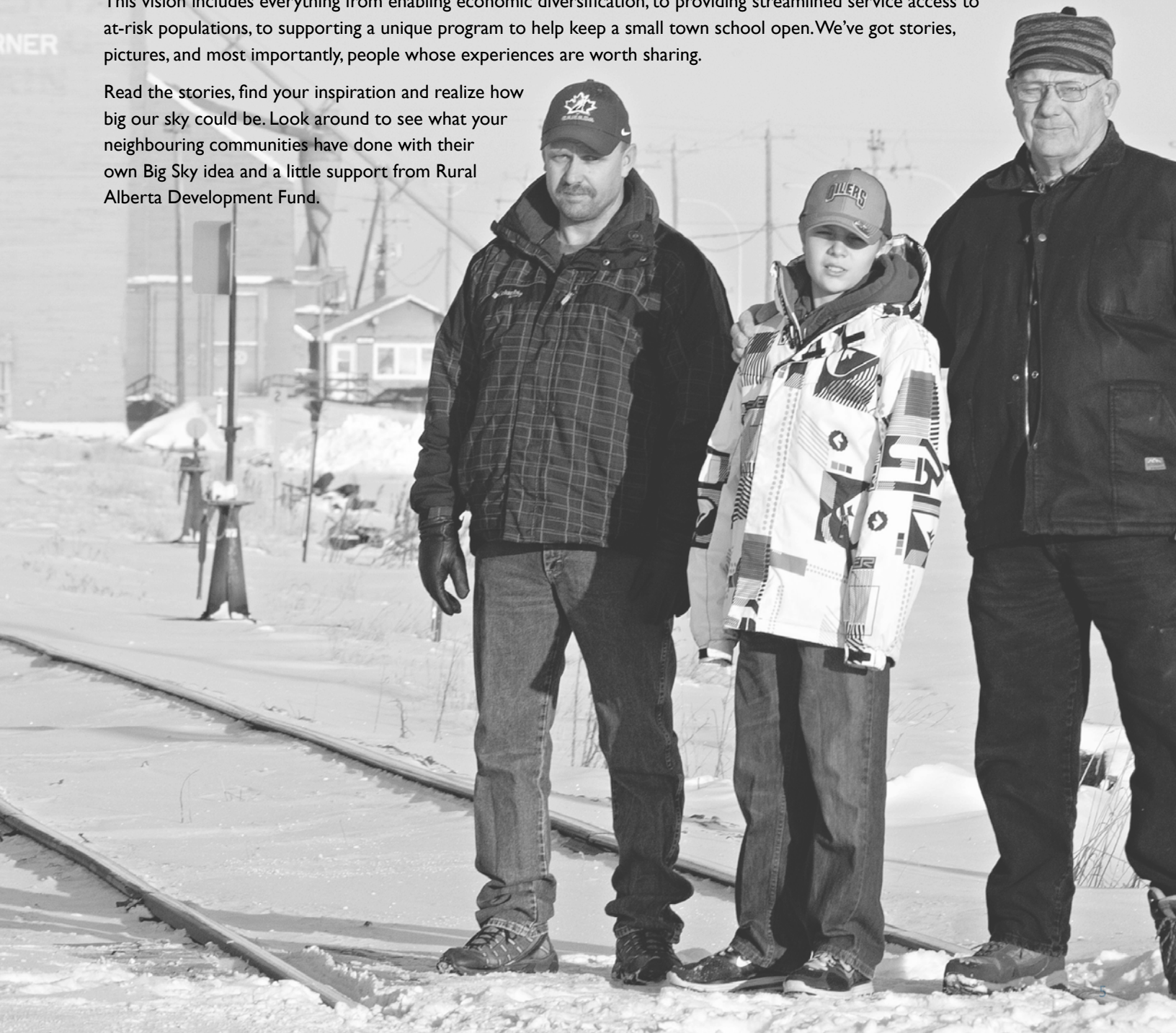
# What Success Looks Like to Us

Alberta's rural landscape is home to hundreds of communities of all sizes. Each has strengths and successes, and each faces challenges. Some challenges are unique, while others are shared among many rural communities.

One thing remains constant from community to community: Alberta is filled with big ideas and people with the passion to turn them into reality. The Rural Alberta Development Fund proudly supports Albertan ingenuity by strategically providing the seed money necessary to help turn ideas into reality.

Every day, we see the vision of Alberta's change agents come to life and impact our province's rural landscape. This vision includes everything from enabling economic diversification, to providing streamlined service access to at-risk populations, to supporting a unique program to help keep a small town school open. We've got stories, pictures, and most importantly, people whose experiences are worth sharing.

Read the stories, find your inspiration and realize how big our sky could be. Look around to see what your neighbouring communities have done with their own Big Sky idea and a little support from Rural Alberta Development Fund.





# Warner Hockey School

## HOW DO YOU SAVE A DYING TOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ALBERTA PRAIRIES?

In 2001, Warner's high school was in danger of closing. Like many rural Alberta towns, school enrollment was dwindling. Without a high school to engage youth, bring teachers and jobs to Warner, and act as a point of pride for the community, the town couldn't survive.

Warner residents knew that if their school left, businesses and infrastructure would soon follow. There was only one way to keep their school open and town alive: higher enrollment.

## COULD HOCKEY SAVE THE TOWN?

Warner had just invested in renovating what was once a grain storage elevator into an ice rink. Hockey is a huge part of prairie life, and Warner's rink supported the needs of many surrounding communities. Inspired by Big Sky thinking, Warner hatched a plan to save its school, and its town, with the sport it loved.

The idea of a school that integrated hockey into its curriculum was nothing new, but Warner recognized an under-represented demographic. Canada may produce the best women hockey players in the world, but there were few schools dedicated to female youth development. By creating a premiere women's hockey school, Warner would increase its high school's enrollment to a level that would save it from closure.

## CAN A SMALL PRAIRIE TOWN COMPETE WITH BIG CITY HOCKEY?

Warner was putting the future of its town into an untested model of growth. Even though Warner had a great rink, it still needed funding to create a coaching team, an innovative curriculum, dressing rooms, medical and support staff, student housing, and travel support. With the future unsure, Warner forged ahead and dedicated 32,000 volunteer hours to get the school going.

When the program was set up, enrollment followed. It helped that excitement for women's hockey was boiling after the Canadian women's national team gold medal

win at the 2002 Winter Olympics. In the U.S. it had also been mandated that colleges provide an equal number of funded spaces for women athletes are available to their male counterparts. Knowing there may be a future in the sport beyond high school was just another boost for young women hockey players to continue pursuing their passion.

In 2008, the Rural Alberta Development Fund provided \$534,000 to help turn Warner's program into a sustainable project, and one of the best women's hockey schools on the continent. The added support allowed the Warner high school to hire top coaches, skilled trainers, and an extensive support staff to take their impressive school to the next level.



## WHAT DOES PROGRESS LOOK LIKE?

Progress looks like the Doenz family.

Laura Marie Doenz is a full-time teacher's assistant and mother whose family has been a part of the Warner farming community since 1917. Laura Marie volunteered to help build the hockey school program that would save her town, and keep her family together.

Laura Marie's son, Adam wanted to continue farming the land that had been tilled by his father and grandfather.



But, Adam and Laura Marie both knew that without a local high school it would be almost impossible to raise the next generation of Doenz's on their Warner homestead.

Laura Marie's family was held together by Warner's revitalization. Not only did her son Adam marry and take over the family farm, but his wife was able to get a job teaching at the Warner school. The Doenz's now look forward to a fourth generation, keeping their roots in the soil they've worked for almost 100 years, and can stick to their plot of land for generations to come.



# The Mobile Trades Foundation

## WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN THE GRADUATION RATE IN YOUR SCHOOLS STARTS SINKING BELOW THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE?

In Northern communities like Lac La Biche, the temptation to take a good-paying job on the oil rigs comes early. As younger students watch their high school idols drop out, buy trucks, and gain independence, they start to think “Why not me?”

With 28.1% of its students not completing high school, the Northern Lights School District felt it needed to do something to prove to students that school was important and worthwhile.

## WHERE DOES CHANGE COME FROM?

Roger Nippard, Superintendent for the Northern Lights School District, wanted to find a way to keep his students invested in their high school experience and show them

that their education was something they could control. He had been working to ensure his schools offered multiple paths toward graduation, and living in the north, he understood the need for qualified trades people in the area.

Roger had seen mobile trade trailers before. Most were fully functional classrooms, housed in 53-foot mobile trailers and outfitted with all the equipment needed to teach a trade. The unique ability of these classrooms to move from school to school makes them valuable to school districts like Northern Lights, whose schools are spread out and unable to afford shop classrooms of their own.

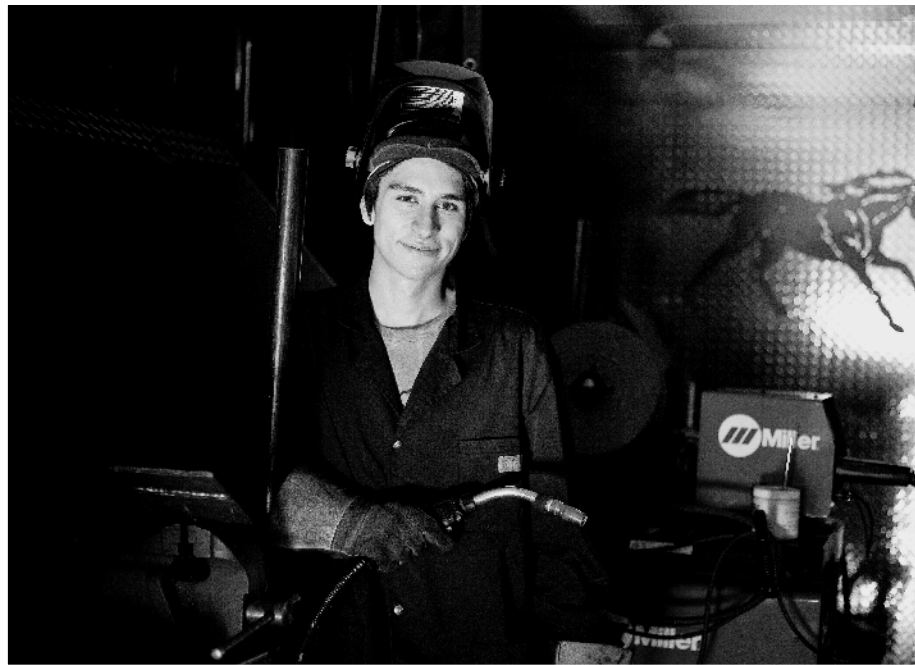
Roger asked Ruth Isley to gather the resources to purchase two of these trailers and the welding equipment required to teach students the trade. The Northern Lights School District then created a targeted program to introduce welding to students in Grades 7 through 12.

Roger hoped to engage students with this new program. Essentially, he was offering them a path to graduation that focused on practical skills which could be transferred into a future career.

## HOW DO YOU GO FROM BUILDING WELDERS TO BUILDING LEADERS?

The Northern Lights School District combined its own budget with the additional funds it had received from local organizations and community partners, like Imperial Oil, to secure welding equipment and two mobile classrooms. The school district aims to use these tools to educate young welders who have the potential to become future leaders in their communities.

The Rural Alberta Development Fund provided the Mobile Trades Foundation Program with \$1,056,750 to hire journeyman welder instructors and a dedicated program coordinator who could create and deliver an innovative curriculum.



## WHAT DOES PROGRESS LOOK LIKE?

In the Northern Lights School District, progress looks a lot like Cody Benson. Cody had given up on school. Bored and disinterested, he no longer had the motivation to drag himself out of bed in the morning and join his peers in class. He wasn't motivated by the theoretical approach of most of his classes, so he pulled himself out of the system and began slogging through his studies at home.

But when Cody heard about the Mobile Trades trailers coming to his school in Kikino Metis Settlement, he was re-engaged. Motivated by his grandfather's old "I had to walk five miles



each way to get to school" story, Cody spent one morning hiking for over one hour through -25-degree weather to make it to his welding class. Not only is he now acing his tests, attending his classes, and impressing his teachers, Cody is also mentoring younger students.

The Mobile Trades Foundation Program is a shining example of a Big Sky idea gone right.



# Centre for Research and Innovation

## HOW DO YOU CAPITALIZE ON INNOVATION?

Alberta's Peace Country, located in northwestern Alberta, is one of the most innovative regions in all of Canada. Alberta now has more patent applications per capita than any other Canadian province. The Peace Country, a region with only 5% of Alberta's population, is responsible for 40% of them. Area residents attribute their unique problem-solving skills to their geographic location. Historically, the isolation meant limited access to off-the-shelf products, especially specialty tools and parts; residents often created homemade solutions.

Despite this strong entrepreneurial spirit, the region wasn't fully capitalizing on their innovative potential.

## HOW DO YOU CHANGE THE CULTURE OF AN ENTIRE REGION?

Peace Country residents are very inventive, but no one recognized that their ability to be solution-driven made them a unique region. To get residents to embrace their

skills and encourage a culture of innovation, the Peace Country searched for resources and opportunities that would motivate, guide, and provide support to inventors to help turn their weekend projects into profitable products with sustainable economic growth.

In late 2007, the Centre for Research and Innovation (CRI) was born. It was developed out of a partnership between the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance and the Grande Prairie Regional College. The Centre's first goal was to provide local resources and assistance so that entrepreneurs and inventors could avoid making the six-hour trip to Edmonton to fill out papers and file for patents. The CRI's plan would encourage Peace Region residents to embrace their innovative roots, and provide additional guidance, advice on processes, and opportunities to network to further support the success of the region.



## HOW DO YOU MAKE INNOVATION SUSTAINABLE?

CRI represented an important step for innovation and growth in Northern Alberta, but was in need of a larger budget to enable change. The Rural Alberta Development Fund reviewed CRI's determined plan and stepped in, adding \$3.4 million to CRI's budget.

CRI's efforts are changing the way residents view their community. Weekend coffee talk is shifting from what's happening in the forestry, agriculture, and oil industries to what's happening in their local businesses. This shift has been noticed nation-wide. In 2010, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses named Grande Prairie as the top entrepreneurial city in Canada.



## WHAT DOES PROGRESS LOOK LIKE?

One of the best examples of innovation in Peace Country is that of the Corfe family. Phil Corfe was inspired by his father, Fred, an innovative machinist with over 50 years of problem-solving experience. Using the skills he learned from his father, Phil, his son Adam, and other family members teamed up to create a revolutionary saw that has gained international demand.



The Corfes used the CRI's resources to accelerate the invention and production process. They received help applying for patents and creating business plans, exposure to local and international networks, and were awarded \$50,000 through the Alberta Innovates Voucher program.

This has given the Corfe family the support and advantage they needed to turn their resource-based skills and ideas into a knowledge and innovation-based livelihood.

Phil is insistent that without the help of the CRI, they would still be playing around with prototypes. Instead, they're selling their saws in international markets, like Sweden, and have sales prospects in Brazil, Chile, and Portugal.

# We have So Many More Successes

## 211 Community Links

Aboriginal Community Enterprise Project

Aboriginal Leadership Best Practices

Aboriginal Sport Capacity

Agrivalue Investors Network

Alberta 4-H Development

Alberta Active/Creative (ACE) Communities

Alberta Energy Corridor

Alberta First Nations Economic Development Model

Alberta Rural Development Network

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)

Red Deer College Rural Health

Bio-Economy Incubator Initiative

Boreal Education Strategy

Buffalo Adventures Marketing Initiative

Building Land Management Tools

Canadian Badlands Tourism Development

Central Alberta Rural Manufacturers Network

Circle M

Common Ground Program

Communities Leading Recruitment & Retention

Composite Train Grading Project

Creating Pathways for Entrepreneurial Families

Creative Campus Development

Eagle Point/Blue Rapids Partnership

Edmonton Area Countryside Project

Family Service Delivery Framework

Farm Masters

Finishing the Dream

Forestry Training Program

Growing a Culture of Innovation

Habitat for Humanity

High Level Community Outreach

Integrated Community Clerkship

Junior Achievement Rural Expansion

Killam Regional Economic Development

Opportunity Shop: Learning & Work

Learning Communities Project

LINKages Rural Community Initiative

Mobile Trades Foundation Program

Mountain Pine Beetle Response

NEXTGEN Online

Northern Alberta GeoTourism

Older Adult Active Living

PEER Connections

Pipestone Creek Dinosaur Initiative

Pre-Employment & Trades-Related

Recreation and Habitat Lands

Regional Barrier Free Transportation

Rosebud Capacity Building

Rural Artistic Initiative

Rural Cluster Development Project

Rural Cooperative Outreach & Development

Rural Information Services Initiative (RISE)

Rural Safety Smarts

Rural Volunteer Leadership

Rural Wind Energy Capacity Development

Sports Coaching Development

STARS Critical Care & Transport Academy

Sunchild E-Learning Community

The Community Village

Three Little Pigs Housing Co-Operative

Tomorrow's Promise Today

Unmanned Vehicle Centre of Excellence

Value-Added Incubator Services (VISTA)

Vauxhall Baseball Academy

Vulcan Innovation Project

Warner Hockey School

Westwind Rodeo Academy

# Contact Information

**Courtney Mosentine**  
Director of Communications

E: [Courtney@radf.ca](mailto:Courtney@radf.ca)

P: 780.436.9585

C: 780.399.7336

F: 866.312.6253

[www.radf.ca](http://www.radf.ca)

Rural Alberta Development Fund  
Suite 300, 3203-93 Street, Edmonton, AB T6N0B2



