



Update on the Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning Commons - July 2017

The autumn of 2017 will see a return of the Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning (RAIL) Commons conference, which was developed to address the large gap in educational training opportunities focused on rural community and economic development. First held in Camrose in 2015, this second conference is to be hosted by Olds College from September 29 to October 1 of this year. RAIL Commons will be an exceptional learning forum for councillors, mayors, CAOs, EDOs, economic and community development professionals, and students from across the province. Currently, we have sessions entitled:

- Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged
- Working with Rural Volunteers to Improve the Quality of Life of Older Persons
- Enhancing Broadband Connectivity in Alberta
- Science, Who Needs it?: Developing a Social Science Framework for Alberta Parks
- New Tools to Assess the Cumulative Environmental, Community and Health Impacts of Resource Development
- Environment, Community, Health Observatory Network: Strengthening Intersectoral Capacity to Understand and Respond to Health Impacts of Resource Development
- Farmland Conservation and Fragmentation: Where, Why, What Next?
- Specialized Counseling Services: A Rural Model
- Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association Transportation, Site Study, and Municipal Energy from Waste Plug'n Play Tool updates
- Citizens Engaging Citizens: the story of Devon's Voyageur Park
- Why would youth want to live here? Beaver County's approach to engaging rural youth

Other topics will include women in municipal politics; flood management; and the role of microbreweries in rural economic diversification. Additionally, there is a pre-conference grant writing workshop with Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC) director, Dr. Lars Hallstrom. See rail-commons.ca for more information and registration.

The 2015 RAIL Commons was well received by those who attended with 97% of evaluation respondents indicating that the topics provided were appropriate and relevant. Overall, participants praised the variety of topics covered and the informative value of the presentations.

- *Great presentation and examples. Lots of food for thought. Left fully charged-in a good way.*
- *Very relevant, helpful and applicable to rural communities.*
- *Very tailored to rural communities; provided fantastic examples I can apply to my community.*
- *I hope to be involved with the next RAIL conference so I can fill more holes in my knowledge base and understanding.*
- *Also a great opportunity to network with other communities and organizations. Great value for price.*

The ACSRC assists rural communities in meeting diverse challenges through fostering constructive dialogue, promoting interdisciplinary and collaborative research, and developing partnerships.

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