PEOPLE, PLACES, POLICIES AND PROSPECTS
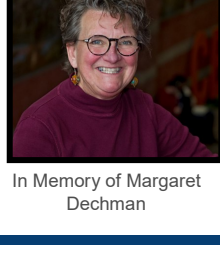
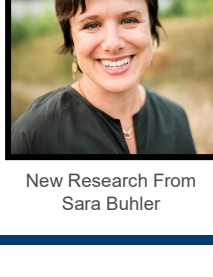Affordable Rental Housing for Those in Greatest Need

In This Edition

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National Update and Our Three Regions

Over the last months, our three regions have been growing their teams, adding community partners, and hiring new students and researchers with first-hand experience with affordable rental housing.

We have also been working on comparing our three regions with respect to community characteristics, affordable housing infrastructure and community need. Our regions have quite different backgrounds: the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), in the territory of the Mi'kmaw Nation, represents a deindustrialized area with high unemployment and decline, although local First Nations communities show both economic and population growth. Saskatoon, located on Treaty Six territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis, is a larger (and growing) center with a population of about 246,000, with a diverse and rapidly growing Indigenous population. Ottawa, in the heart of the territory of the Algonquin Nation, is the biggest community in our research project. With just over one million residents living in the city, Ottawa is characterized by lower unemployment, a large federal public sector work force, and a widening income gap. Our three regions also feature different rental housing landscapes: for example, Ottawa's vacancy rate is much lower than Saskatoon's or CBRM's, while average rents in that city are much higher as well. In CBRM, in contrast, average rents are considerably lower than even the national average.

Despite these differences, our three study sites show remarkable similarities with respect to core housing need and homelessness. The most recent data available through CMHC show that in Saskatoon, CBRM and Ottawa, approximately 30% of all tenants are in core housing need, with one-person and single-parent households most likely to be so. Our most recent point-in-time homelessness data (from 2018) show that our three communities have equal proportions of their local populations experiencing homelessness (with 1,400 people in Ottawa, 475 in Saskatoon and 115 in CBRM) and that homelessness is disproportionately experienced by those identifying as Indigenous.
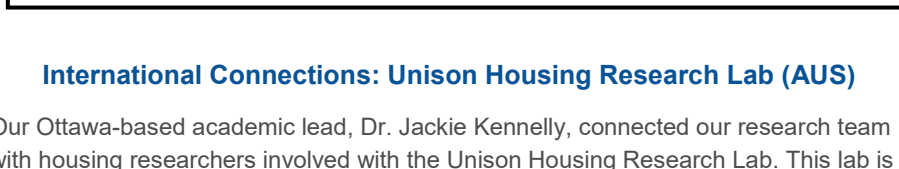

In Memory of Margaret Dechman

It is with much sadness that we share with you that Margaret Dechman passed away suddenly late last fall. Margaret was a co-applicant in our partnership grant, and was a member of the Atlantic-based research team. She was an associate professor of sociology at Cape Breton University in the Department of L'nu, Political, and Social Studies. Margaret was also a cherished colleague, mentor and friend.

Margaret was an outstanding community-based researcher, and over her ten-year career at CBU she engaged in many community-based research projects on the theme of social exclusion. She worked extensively with the Ally Centre of Cape Breton, an organization for street-involved members in the region. Other local partners with whom she worked included Cape Breton Correctional Facility and Public Health of Nova Scotia Health.

Some of you may be familiar with Margaret's role as Principal Investigator for the final phase of a longitudinal research project called the Family Mosaic – this is work she led before joining CBU. This tracked 500 Nova Scotian children from the time they were born until they reached 20 years of age. On the basis of this research, she authored numerous reports and gave presentations across the country. This work played a significant role in directing public and government attention to the serious impacts of social exclusion across numerous government mandates, ranging from education and employment to health, justice, and social assistance.

In addition to her research projects she served on many policy/programing-related committees including the Patient, Family, and Community Advisory Council for Nova Scotia Health, the Partnership Committee for the Opioid Overdose Prevention Program, and the Island Community Justice Society. Margaret is sorely missed.

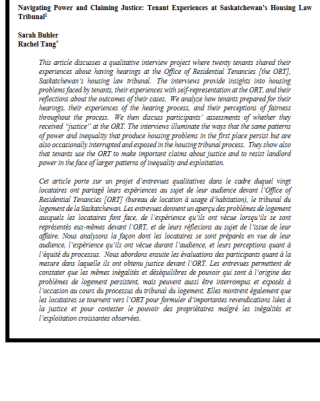## International Connections: Unison Housing Research Lab (AUS)

Our Ottawa-based academic lead, Dr. Jackie Kennelly, connected our research team with housing researchers involved with the Unison Housing Research Lab. This lab is based out of the Social and Global Studies Center at RMIT (located in Melbourne, Australia) and was founded in 2017 with a 5-year funding commitment. With a goal to create new, multidisciplinary, empirical and conceptual knowledge they are focused on:

1. What actions can be taken to develop social housing that creates vibrant communities, improves tenancy sustainability and satisfaction, and maximises their impact on tenants' social, economic, and health outcomes

2. The effectiveness of homelessness program interventions

3. Approaches that help translate research into policy and practice

Though the lab is focused on contributing to building Australia's housing research capacity, initial conversations between Unison Housing Lab's researchers and the People, Places, Policies and Prospects team have involved productive knowledge sharing as well as discussion of future opportunities to collaborate.

Research Highlight From Saskatoon - By Sarah Buhler

We are pleased to have the opportunity to highlight research published by one of our Saskatoon-based researchers. Sarah Buhler and her colleague Rachel Tang recently published *Navigating Power and Claiming Justice: Tenant Experiences at Saskatchewan's Housing Law Tribunal*. This research presents the findings of a qualitative project for which twenty tenants shared their experiences with the Office of Residential Tenancies (the ORT), Saskatchewan's Housing Law Tribunal. It gives insight into the tenant experience, perceptions of fairness and tenant reflections on their case outcomes.

Discussion of whether tenants received "justice" at the ORT follow with interviews illuminating patterns of power and inequality mirroring those that produce housing problems in the first place. The interviews also highlight that tenants use the ORT to make important claims about justice and resisting landlord power in the face of patterns of inequality and exploitation.
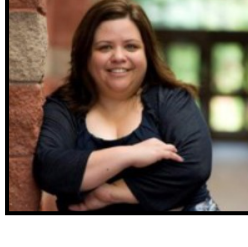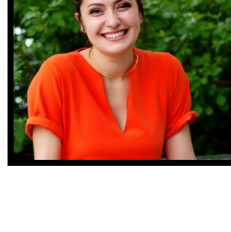
Access to the full article available is here: https://wyaj.uwindsor.ca/index.php/wyaj/article/view/6421. Watch for further research from **Sarah Buhler** involving Saskatchewan's Housing Law Tribunal.

Introducing a Few of Many Team Members from Across the Country

Luc Theriault is a sociologist of organizations with expertise in Canadian social policy, third-sector studies, and program evaluation. Luc studied in Montréal and at the University of Toronto (PhD, 1995) and has worked as a social policy researcher and educator at L'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) (1995-97) and at the University of Regina (1997-2004) before joining the Department of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick in 2005. He has maintained an interest in the intersection between social economy and social housing issues for many years.

Isobel Araujo (she, her, hers) is a Master's student in Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is passionate about policies, programs, and processes that support her vision of just, livable cities. Isobel is currently working as a research assistant supporting overarching components of this project, with a focus on the application of gender-based analysis to our work.

Melissa MacDonald is a Mi'kmaq woman from Membertou, Nova Scotia. Melissa graduated from the MBA in Community Economic Development program at Cape Breton University in 2019. She continued her professional development and completed the Professional Lands Management Certification Program in 2020. She has worked for Membertou for over sixteen years, the last year as the Lands Officer. It is an exciting time to be working as the Lands Officer; Membertou enacted its own Land Code in September 2019 and now has the ability to manage its own lands. Melissa is working as a research assistant with the Atlantic-based team.

The Rural Development Network (RDN), formerly the Alberta Rural Development Network, is a not-for-profit partner organization on this research. The RDN offers community social development services. They seek to equip rural communities with tools, information, and expertise needed to jumpstart projects and help identify and access funding to support projects.
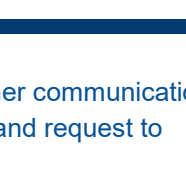

RDN's work also includes advocacy on broader issues, and amplifying the collective voice of rural communities to fuel affordable housing development, community revitalization and improve the quality of life for rural Canadians.

The RDN recently developed a *Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing*. More information about getting your own copy is here: https://www.ruraldevelopment.ca/publications/guide-to-developing-affordable-housing The RDN also leads the Canadian Association on Rural and Remote Housing and Homelessness, which will be meeting remotely for a symposium in early June (https://www.crrhh.ca).

If you or your organization has an announcement or project you would like shared, please reach out to William Roy, our National Project Coordinator, at **coordinator@cbu.ca**. We can help share your news and increase the reach of important work being done in the housing sector by all of our community and academic partners.

If you would like to unsubscribe to this newsletter and other communication from coordinator@cbu.ca, please reply to this email and request to unsubscribe.

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