



Learning through Service:

Community Service-Learning in Canada

**Implications for Rural and Remote
Communities**

Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Context: Rural and Remote Communities
- What is community service-learning (CSL)
- Principles of Practice
- Potential outcomes with CSL with Rural and Remote Communities
- Getting Started in CSL
- CSL Rural and Remote Communities
 - Batawa Project: Carleton University, Dr. Katherine Graham
 - Université du Sherbrooke- Simon Bolduc
 - University of Saskatchewan – Phaedra Hitchings
 - Northern Project- Kwantlen Polytechnic, Queens
- Open floor discussion





Context: Rural and Remote Communities

Possible Issues for Addressing Social or Economic Development

- Small population base, large geography:
 - Specific skills sets may be in short supply
 - Volunteer base may be overwhelmed/exhausted
 - Strong community culture
- Community specific solutions are needed
- Urban based programs may not fit-
e.g.economies of scale, cultural.....

Community Service-Learning: a tool to address issues.



Defining Community Service-Learning

- In Canada, the definition of CSL is still evolving and is adapted to local institutional and community cultures and contexts
- One definition: Experiential education approach that engages students in learning through service with the community and critical reflection on the process.



Principles Underlying CSL

- **Equality**- all have something to contribute, all receive a benefit, all have something to learn and something to teach.
- **Experiential learning**: Act, observe, reflect. Theory in action: Integration of service with learning explored through critical reflection
- **Community Engagement**: Work with communities to meet community needs



Key elements from the definitions

- **Experiential:** learning occurs through cycles of action and reflection: Application of theory
- **Reflective:** Conscious reflection on the meaning of the experience, and social justice issues.
- **Mutual:** Collaboration- all contribute, all benefit.
- **Relationships:** Collaboration among faculty/staff, students and community organizations at all stages- planning, implementation, and evaluation
- **Community Driven Service-** address community identified issues
- **Co-Creation of Knowledge-** intentionally reciprocal, valuing all ways of knowing- all teach, all learn.
- **Change** - self, relationships, communities, institutions

All Contribute, All Benefit

○ **Students**

- **Benefit:** Apply theoretical knowledge increasing its meaningfulness and usefulness. Deeper understanding. Build their experience and network. Clarify career direction. Build self-esteem.
- **Contribute:** Share their energy, knowledge, and time to assist a community with a specific issue or project.

○ **Communities**

- **Benefit:** Additional resources and perspectives to tackle issues or special projects. Build awareness of their situation. Institution relationship.
- **Contribute:** Share their knowledge and understanding, by providing an opportunity for learning, and by providing feedback.

○ **Faculty**

- **Benefit:** Learn from the students' experiences, by seeing the applications of knowledge, by being introduced to new perspectives, community interaction.
- **Contribute:** Knowledge, experience, time, and community relationship.

○ **Educational Institutions**

- **Benefit:** Stronger connection to the community, enhanced student retention, enhanced student success.
- **Contribute:** Resources required to support a CSL program.

Types of Community Service-Learning

- Co-curricular
 - Alternative Reading Week
 - Special Projects
- Curricular
 - Discipline Specific
 - Interdisciplinary Service Course
- CSL projects range from one day co-curricular service experiences to multi year, interdisciplinary projects and run the spectrum of a one-day co-curricular service program to intensive for-credit courses.

How do CSL projects come into being?

- **Faculty** engages with community organization(s) to negotiate a CSL project related to learning objectives.
- **Students** propose a CSL project to their professor and a community agency.
- **Community agencies** contact post secondary institutions to request a project.
- **International collaborations:** E.g. National Centre for Science and Civic Engagement (U.S.) looking for more Canadian Partners for a Great Lakes Environmental Project. <http://www.ncsce.net/>



Why Community Service-Learning

- A means to enhance the awareness of community needs among students and universities and empower them to become engaged in ways which are mutually beneficial (McKnight Casey et al 2005)
- CSL: a way to help universities and colleges contribute to developing resilient communities, and to provide communities with the benefits of sustained knowledge partnerships with post secondary institutions. (McConnell Foundation)

Why Community Service-Learning: Student and Faculty Outcomes

Student Outcomes

- Improved academic performance
- Values development
- Career choice direction
- Commitment to service post-graduation
- Learning enhanced by theory-application link
- Enhanced understanding of rural and remote communities

Faculty Outcomes

- Valuable relationships with community
- Deeper understanding of the contribution and needs of rural and remote communities
- New, more active pedagogy
- Generate new research opportunities
- Personal satisfaction in making a difference



Why Community Service-Learning?

Outcomes for the Institution

- Develop community engagement
- Increased capacity to attract funding
- Enhanced image and visibility in community
- Increases student engagement
- Avenue for putting the institution's Mission into action

Why Community Service-Learning?

Potential Outcomes for Communities

- Access human resources and skills not otherwise available and focus the resources on issues of import to the community
- Generate new insights
- Opportunity to educate students and faculty on rural realities
- Learn with students and develop long term relationships
- Engage in a long term relationship with the academic institution
- Promote rural living



Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning

A national network that supports the active participation of students, educators, and community organizations in community service-learning.

- **Clearinghouse Activities** – national website, email network, facebook, youtube channel,
- **Program Assistance** – support for design, delivery and evaluation; educational events
- **Knowledge Generation** – build research capacity, identify unique models, needs assessments, lead to develop common language and assessment strategies
- **CSL Field Development** – regional, national networks; partnerships within a variety of sectors; funding advocacy



CACSL Volunteer Team Activities

- **Engagement strategies** for communities, students, and faculty to better serve their needs
- **Connectivity**- building the CSL community, website revision
- **Tele-learning seminars**- give voice and provide skill building options
- **CSL Mentorship Program**
- **Policy and Sustainability**
- **Knowledge Management and Professional Resources**
- **Research**: Impact of CSL- Policy Lens Approach

Community Service Learning and your Communities

- More information on CSL: Written, audio, and visual 'how to' content www.communityservicelearning.ca
- Identify potential institutional partners in your region: <http://communityservicelearning.ca/en/partnerships.htm>
- Evaluate dimensions and outcomes of CSL: <http://communityservicelearning.ca/en/documents/AComprehensiveFrameworkforCSL.pdf>
- Join the CSL community: Join the email network info@communityservicelearning.ca, join facebook, youtube, or twitter.
- **Regional CSL Workshops** to bring together rural communities and CSL providers.
- Contact CACSL: geri@communityservicelearning.ca, 613 520-2600 Ext 8241
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Questions for Discussion

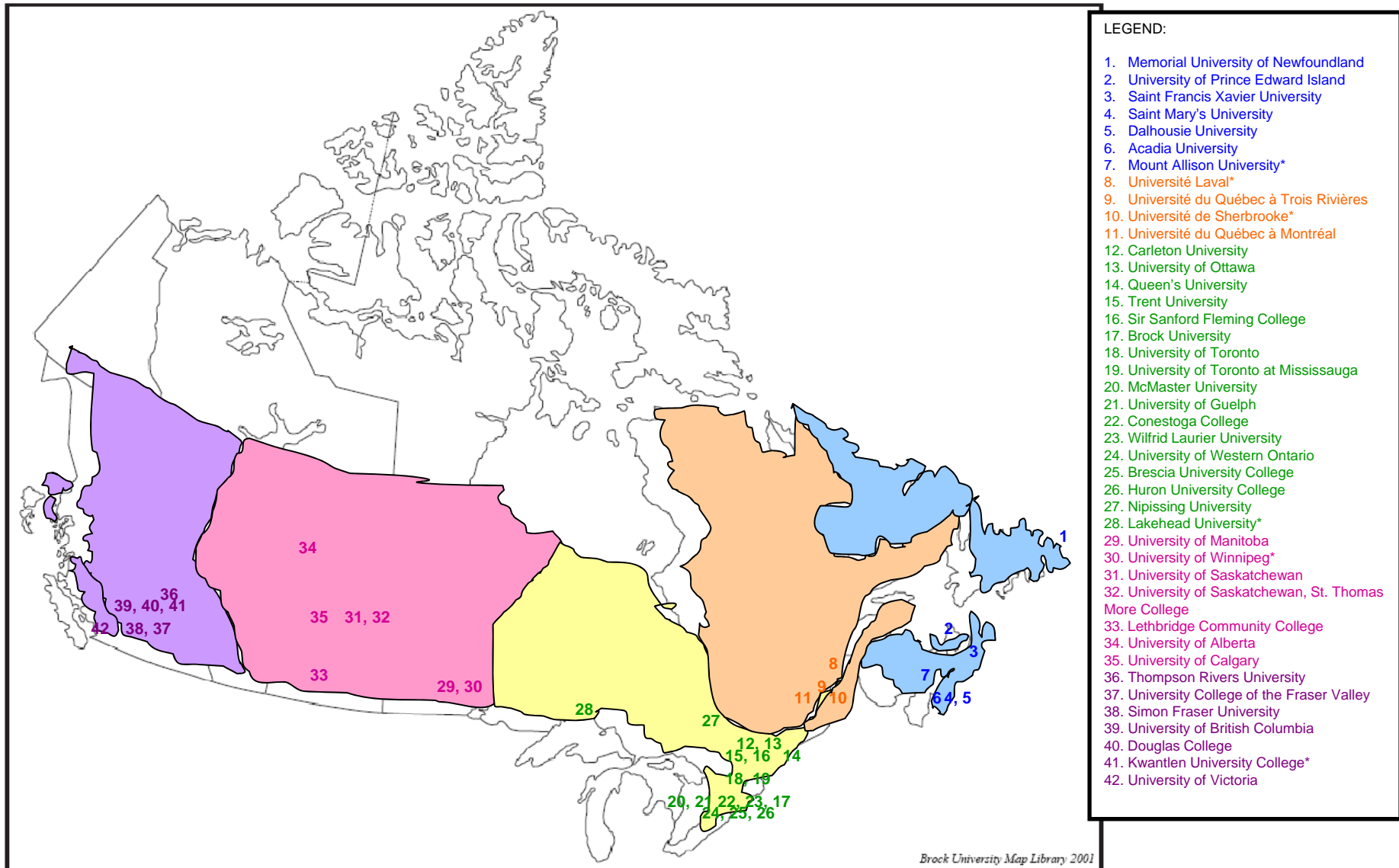
- How do you see the communities you work with engaging with post secondary institutions?
- What is needed to make CSL work for your communities?
- What intrigues you about the projects you heard about?

Conclusion

- Questions or comments:
 - Geri Briggs, Director
 - Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning
 - geri@communityservicelearning.ca
 - 613-520-2600 ext 8241
- Next Up: Hear the history of specific projects.

Annex 1: CSL Field in Canada

Based on 2005 data



This is a sampling of institutions providing CSL- not exhaustive.

Some Programs Across Canada

University of British Columbia THE LEARNING EXCHANGE



- A community engagement initiative based in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver.
- The UBC community (students, staff, faculty, and alumni) volunteer in inner city schools and non-profit organizations where they contribute to community programs while learning about inner city issues.

Some Programs Across Canada

TRENT CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION in collaboration with Trent University



- Accepts and helps develop proposals from community organizations in the region
- Matches Trent University students with community organizations to help meet those needs
- Engages in research, planning or community development projects, assists students to gain practical experience in their field of study while helping to solve current challenges in the community

Some Programs Across Canada

St. Francis Xavier University

COURSE BASED AND IMMERSION SERVICE-LEARNING



- **Course Based program:** service placements are integrated into several academic courses and includes activities that are of direct service to the public, providing administrative support, doing consulting projects, assisting with resource production and completing community-based research on behalf of an organization.
- **Immersion program:** students travel in groups to diverse communities in Canada and abroad and can integrate the service experience with their course of studies.

Some Programs Across Canada

UNIVERSITY OF QUÉBEC AT TROIS-RIVIÈRES (UQTR)

The Community Intervention Projects (Les project d'intervention communautaires, PICOM)



- Supports Community Intervention Projects (COMIPs) through teams of students in partnership with five organizations from the area
- With the support of a mentor and supervision from a faculty member, students cooperate to design and implement a community service project which address problems identified by a community group.



....the common good....

“ Service learning shifts attention away from an exclusive preoccupation with education as private gain and seeks to balance that concern with a focus on the common good.”

Edward Zlotkowski

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