

## **Introduction**

# **Rural Tourism and Recreation in Canada**

**Rhonda Koster**, Guest Editor

Director, Instructional Development Centre, & Associate Professor  
School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism  
Lakehead University  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada  
[rkoster@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:rkoster@lakeheadu.ca)

Rural Canada has a long history of economic and social change. The continuing processes of change in rural areas have been further intensified by the globalization of the world's economy. As a result, rural communities across the country have struggled to adapt to an economy that no longer supports reliance on primary industries (see, for example, the special issue of this journal on the new rural economy [vol. 1(2), 2006]). The development of tourism and recreation is frequently identified as one strategy for creating a more diversified economy, especially in areas that have unique natural and cultural amenities. Indeed, the increasing urbanization of Western countries motivates people to experience tourism and recreation activities found only in rural areas. With this heightened interest in rural regions as places for tourism and recreation, it becomes imperative that scholars, community leaders, elected officials, and planners critically examine the opportunities for rural tourism and recreation to better plan for their development and management, while being cognizant of the challenges presented by resource development and/or protection.

Although considerable research concerning rural tourism and recreation exists, relatively little has examined their varied impacts, practices, and implications within a Canadian context. As such, in 2008 the Rural and Tourism & Recreation study groups of the Canadian Association of Geographers hosted a special joint session during the annual conference. Given the positive response to the session, organizers subsequently issued a call for papers, encouraging a broad range of submissions so as to capture the breadth of Canadian research.

This special issue of the *Journal of Rural and Community Development* is the culmination of those efforts. It comprises 12 articles and 2 case studies that provide an indication of research on tourism and recreation in Canada. The topics covered are broad and varied and include

- agricultural landscapes: challenging whether agritourism is in fact a niche market of rural tourism and questioning whether agritourism is a viable diversification strategy for farm families; an examination of the goals that drive agritourism and on-farm entrepreneurial development in Canada; the potential contributions of heritage farm animals to rural and last-chance tourism; and how the framework of countryside capital helps in examining a culturally unique rural landscape and further aids in managing such landscapes that are threatened by urban encroachment;

- leisure styles of rural residents: an exploration of the leisure styles of residents in a remote community over a long period during which significant economic changes have occurred; and an investigation of leisure styles of rural recreationists in Canada, through an examination of time use, leisure setting, leisure activity participation, and leisure motivation;
- natural resource management: an examination of the angling experience, economic impact, and community development associated with the creation of a fishery, which highlights the potential for developing nature-based recreation amenities as a strategy for economic diversification; and an analysis of Ontario's *Resource-Based Tourism Policy* in terms of the context within which the policy operates, the policy document itself, and an examination of its impact and effectiveness;
- community-based tourism and social economy: an exploration of the ways in which social-economy organizations might facilitate rural community tourism development related to the creation of protected areas; and the potential for social-economy enterprises to contribute to the implementation of community-based tourism strategies;
- innovation and rural tourism: an assessment of the adoption of sustainable tourism practices among operators through an examination of attitudes, type of practices adopted, motivations and barriers, and ways to support sustainable practices adoption; and an assessment of how student extension tours to rural tourism operations can facilitate student learning and assist operators through feedback from students and faculty; and
- case studies: an examination of how community stakeholders' views toward tourism have changed over the course of the development of the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area; and a discussion of a cultural tourism program and how its success at drawing tourists has contributed to the redevelopment of the downtown and the provision of employment alternatives to a previously industrial community.

The editors hope that these varied papers will aid in furthering an understanding of rural tourism and recreation in Canada. The issues in tourism and recreation development and management are great, but so too are the opportunities.

As guest editor, I would like to acknowledge and thank both Dr. Doug Ramsey (Rural Study Group, Co-Chair) and Dr. Holly Donohoe (Tourism & Recreation Study Group, past Chair) for their varied contributions to this special edition.