

Youth Creating Disaster Recovery



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Meet the Team

Robin Cox is Associate Professor and Program Head of Disaster and Emergency Management at Royal Roads University.

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Project Overview

The goal of this project, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, is to engage disaster-affected youth, their parents, and the community of Slave Lake in participatory action research focusing on youth recovery after the wildfires. Our team is also working in Joplin, Missouri as described on page 3 below. This study will empower youth through research and contribute to the development of youth-inclusive approaches to disaster recovery. We will use creative methods designed to engage youth collaboratively and creatively in individual and shared meaning making. This project will contribute to an understanding of the ways in which social, economic, and personal factors influence disaster vulnerability among youth. It also focuses on their capacity to recover and contribute to individual and community resilience.

Guiding Research Questions

1. What is the story of recovery for youth in Slave Lake?
2. How did youth contribute to helping the community, and each other, move forward after the wildfires?
3. What people, places, spaces, and activities have been most important for youth in recovery?
4. How were the needs of youth met and unmet in the recovery process?
5. What are the most important changes since the wildfire for youth, families, schools, and community?





Project Launch

Our first trip to Slave Lake was a tremendous success! We met with so many wonderful people whose insight, creativity, and enthusiasm will certainly help shape our project over the coming years. During our initial trip in May we:

1. Met with and conducted formal and informal interviews with over 30 people in Slave Lake.
2. Visited local schools and the school board to explore possibilities of working together in the future.
3. Went on a driving tour of Slave Lake to see the fire damage, the rebuilding progress, and the beautiful landscape.
4. Visited local organizations including the Boreal Centre, the Native Friendship Centre, and the Slave Lake Fieldhouse and Arena.
5. Met with representatives from community organizations that work with children and youth.
6. Spoke with inspiring young people and received feedback on our project design.

Meet our Guest Researcher



Shelley Pacholok is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan Campus. She is partnering with the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery team for our research in Slave Lake. Shelley is primarily interested in learning more about how disasters facilitate relationships and connections across social divides, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexuality.

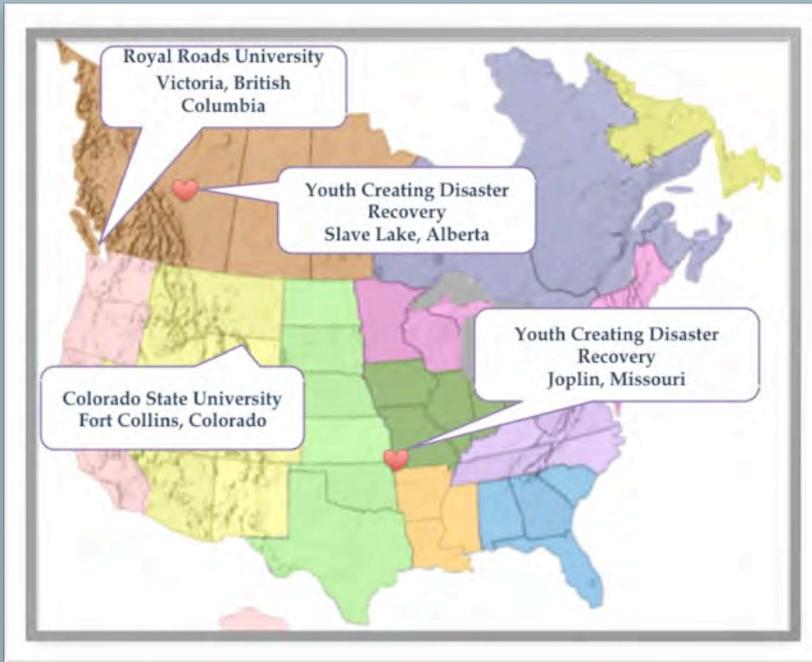
Key Insights

During this trip, we learned many new things, including:

1. Youth have important things to tell us about the short and long-term recovery process from the fire and their stories are compelling.
2. Youth are particularly interested in sharing their stories in order to help others. Giving back has been a central aspect of the recovery process.
3. Community groups and organizations are also interested in better understanding young people's experiences of the fire—what helped with or hindered their recovery—so they can best serve youth and provide opportunities for them to contribute to Slave Lake's recovery process.
4. There is still much to be done in Slave Lake and community members are working hard to rebuild and recover.



Lead Research Centers for the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery Project



The Disaster and Emergency Management Program at Royal Roads University explores the theoretical foundations of disaster and emergency management. Integral to the program is the understanding that disasters are more than hazards; rather they are a product of the inter-relationship and mutual construction of the environmental, social, economic, and political spheres. This approach supports the notion that disaster and emergency management processes and practices can and should contribute to risk reduction, community resilience, and sustainable communities.

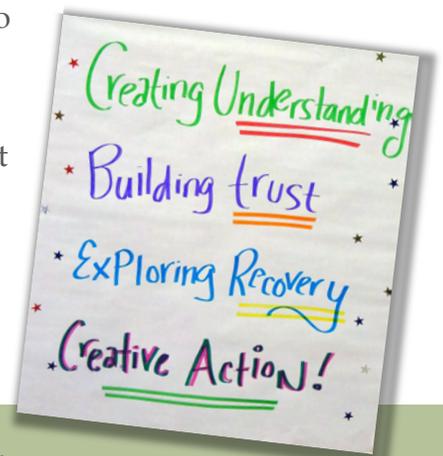
The Center for Disaster and Risk Analysis (CDRA) at Colorado State University is dedicated to reducing the harm and losses caused by natural, technological, and human-caused disasters. Central to achieving this goal is learning how social inequality impacts the ability of marginalized groups to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster.



Combining Research

Following our trip to Slave Lake in May, we returned to Joplin, Missouri to begin our first round of creative workshops with youth. We recruited 13 young people who participated in a variety of workshop activities, including Photovoice (combining photos and stories) and video.

Youth participants shared stories of the tornado and the aftermath, providing important insights into what has been important in their recovery. They also began thinking about ways they might use their stories and creative expressions to reach out to members of their community as well as disaster affected youth in other communities. We learned so much from these inspiring young people and can't wait to begin a similar process in Slave Lake!



Next Steps

1. Work with our new connections in Slave Lake to design a creative workshop process to involve young people in an exploration of what disaster recovery has been like and what it means to be a young person in Slave Lake.
2. Look for ways to connect youth participants in Slave Lake with youth participants in Joplin and in other disaster affected communities.

Thank You

It was such a pleasure to meet so many wonderful people in Slave Lake. The generosity and enthusiasm that we felt from each and every person was more than we could have hoped for. We look forward to building on these relationships and establishing new ones as we continue our work in your very special city.

Top Photo: Research Team—Christopher Lyon, Robin Cox, and Jennifer Tobin Gurley



Funding Support

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada provided funding for the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery Project. SSHRC is a Canadian government research funding agency that promotes and supports world-leading postsecondary-based research and training initiatives in the humanities and social sciences. Learn more at: <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx>



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