Our team is currently working in three communities:
1.) Joplin, Missouri—In May of 2011 Joplin was struck by a devastating tornado that resulted in over 160 deaths, 1,150 injuries, and the complete destruction of over 2,000 buildings; 2.) Slave Lake, Alberta—In May 2011 Slave Lake was affected by a wildfire that resulted in the evacuation of 7,000 residents and the loss of 374 properties; and most recently 3.) Southern Alberta—in June 2013 Southern Alberta experienced the worst flooding in Alberta history. Over 100,000 people were displaced, four people lost their lives, and multiple communities are just beginning to fully assess the overall devastation. This study, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, will contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which social, economic, and personal factors influence disaster vulnerability and resilience among youth and the ways in which youth are contributing to the recovery of their peers, families, and communities.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

**MEET THE TEAM**

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

Lori Peek is Associate Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of the Center for Disaster and Risk Analysis at Colorado State University.

Jennifer Tobin-Gurley is a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University and a Research Coordinator at the Center for Disaster and Risk Analysis.

Cheryl Heykoop is a Child and Youth Participation and Protection Advisor with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development.

Sarah Michaud is a Master’s student and Research Assistant at Royal Roads University.

Matthew Godsoe is a Doctoral student and Research Assistant at Royal Roads University.

**KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1.) What are the stories of recovery for youth in disaster affected communities?

2.) How do youth contribute to helping their communities, and each other, move forward after a disaster?

3.) What people, places, spaces, and activities are 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 after a disaster for youth, families, schools, and communities?
YCDR continues to move forward with plans to collaborate with youth from High River and Calgary on creative, arts based, youth engagement initiatives. We are partnering with the inspiring Antyx Community Arts program from Calgary and the High River Hearts and Minds program to develop a digital storytelling workshop for youth. We hope to recruit grade ten and eleven students to participate in this multi-day workshop which will take place in High River in early July. Together we will explore their stories of disaster recovery and resilience as well as their ideas for other youth-focused, creative engagements in their community.

In March, Robin and Sarah from YCDR, and Richard from Antyx joined Fawna Bews from the Hearts and Minds project in High River. We had a chance to introduce the YCDR project to members of the High River Youth Collective and some staff and students at Highwood High School and Notre Dame Collegiate. Even though we did not have much time to hang out, we were excited by the conversations we had and by the creative activities that are already happening in High River. We are looking forward to working with youth in High River and Bowness. We are excited to be working with youth in both communities and to hear their ideas about how to increase youth engagement on a path towards community resilience.

While we were in town, Fawna introduced us to Jerry Shiel, the visionary behind the High River Art Wall. We were so inspired by the emergent public art project that Sarah returned to High River a few weeks later with two youth from Slave Lake. Both Michelle and Hayden experienced the devastating Slave Lake wildfire and have been participating in YCDR along with several of their friends. Check out our photo-story feature on the High River Art Wall on page 3.
In the midst of the devastation of the Southern Alberta floods, Jerry Shiel of High River spontaneously created a public art project on the walls of his flooded home. The Art Wall, as it became known, began with some of Jerry’s own mud covered art work. He screwed several pieces of art to the external walls, spray painted “Art Wall” on the outside of the ravaged siding, and then drilled screws across his walls inviting others to contribute their art. The idea took off and other flood survivors in the community began contributing art and artefacts to the wall.

On April 6th, almost ten months after the floods, an event was held to celebrate the Art Wall prior to it being taken down and the house raised to make room for a new home. Sarah Michaud attended the ceremony as part of the Youth Creating Disaster Recovery project. Sarah’s research focuses on youth and environmental education in the context of the post-disaster environment. Both her thesis and YCDR are using arts-based processes to explore disaster recovery experiences with youth.

To capture the stories behind the artwork contributed to the Art Wall, Sarah traveled to High River from her home in Edmonton along with Hayden and Michelle from Slave Lake who are now pursuing post-secondary education in Edmonton and who are participating in the YCDR project. They both lived through the 2011 wildfires in Slave Lake and have generously contributed to the YCDR project with their time and insightful reflections on their recovery experiences. They did not hesitate to accompany Sarah on an opportunity to share in the recovery of people who are now experiencing a similar rebuilding process.

Upon suddenly being handed a microphone as an invitation to share a few words with the High River residents who had gathered at the Art Wall, Michelle humbly offered up the following as encouragement with Hayden nodding in agreement. “We know that you have gone through a lot too. When we got asked to come here and be a part of this, we were so excited because we want to hear your stories and we want to hear what you guys are going through and if there’s anything you need to hear from people who have gone through something kind of similar, if we can give you any piece of advice or any little piece of knowledge that maybe you guys can take away from us, then we’re totally here for that. We’re just here to listen.”

The dismantling of the Art Wall brought together people who had contributed art work to the wall alongside those who had simply found encouragement in its emergence over the past months. For High River’s Jay Crawford, who lost his girlfriend in the flood, the Art Wall was deeply part of his recovery over the past year.

“The Art Wall gave me that hope that I was looking for, and seeing it come down is hard because it means so much to me.”

Crawford was nominated as the official curator of the Art Wall and was given two of the pieces as they came down from the wall.

The High River Art Wall served as a shining example of an emergent project that simply and humbly invited individuals to share about their recovery and to be reminded that they are in the company of their community around them as they do so.
On Friday, April 4, 2014, Jennifer Tobin-Gurley joined **Art Feeds** and **Joplin High School** in Estes Park to give back to children affected by the September 2013 flooding.

**Art Feeds** and **Joplin High School** partnered to raise money for over 500 art packs to donate to students at **Estes Park Elementary School**. On April 4th, Jennifer drove up to Estes Park, Colorado, to meet the Joplin crew and spend a day leading art projects with students. The team led 30 minute sessions with each class where the students received new art supplies, decorated art bags, and made super hero capes to express the unique super powers of each child. This exercise helped students to think about how each one of them has a special super power that they use to make the world a better place. Some common responses were “I am a caring friend” “I help take care of the animals” and “I help my family.” This was such a powerful and fun-filled day!