Welcome to this edition of HazNet.

Once again, CRHNet is proud to present its latest edition of this newsletter, which is growing in size, diversity, and depth of coverage. Our focus continues to be the advancement of knowledge development through the highlighting of news items, discussions and concepts. Your contribution and involvement in the related dialogue is welcome and could be advanced through this medium as well as the various components of our website (www.CRHNet.ca).

The annual CRHNet Symposium is part of our contribution to that “discussion.” After the whirlwind activity since our last newsletter, it’s time to take stock and extend our appreciation for the tremendous contributions made by our membership and partners in making the 2012 symposium – held in Vancouver, a tremendous success. The organizers, with great support from our partners, sponsors, volunteers and membership, delivered a great social and learning event, which included a rich offering of insightful, innovative and thought-provoking presentations or panels. The growth in the number of participants - presenters, attendees and vendors - clearly illustrated the success of the symposium; so was the continued interest and active support by federal departments or agencies including Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC), Natural Resources Canada (NRC) and Public Safety Canada (PSC).

Immediately following the Symposium, which included our Annual General Meeting, the new Board again conducted a day-long Strategic Planning workshop to review the association’s progress and to continue advancing its goals. The board set six priorities for the coming year; key among them is ensuring that “CRHNet seeks to inform and influence (if necessary) policy and practitioners to achieve disaster risk reduction rather than act as a lobbyist”. Another key priority is to explore and then facilitate the creation of a network of networks towards an improved approach for disaster risk reduction in Canada.

CRHNet was established for that purpose but is committed to the exploration and implementation of a more dynamic model.

The other priorities include the advancement of the existing website, establishment of a more active membership engagement, and enhancement of the current publications or information sources. Each of these projects has a designated lead and a related working group. Your suggestions and involvement are welcome. (If interested, please contact any Board member.)

To achieve the above objectives, the Board has set as a priority the revision of our governance structure, related linkages, and service delivery model. We hope that this effort would better serve our Association, its Members and its network partners. This effort is based on feedback or suggestions from our membership and provides opportunities for members to contribute to CRHNet’s activities and initiatives.

As we look to the coming year and to the next symposium (November 2013) in Regina, we believe that CRHNet’s modest contributions to the cause of risk reduction and resilience are becoming more important, if not essential to the profession and the practice of emergency management in Canada. That also implies that we have a responsibility to be relevant and responsive to the interests of our...
members, stakeholders and partners; your board remains committed to that goal.

While our membership is growing, and includes the “CRHNet Young Professionals and Student Network”, we continue to reach out to individuals or other organizations with similar objectives and values. YOUR involvement is welcome! Together we can make tremendous contribution to Canada’s disaster risk reduction.

Ron Kuban and Ernie MacGillivray, CRHNet Co-Presidents

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Greetings and a warm welcome to current and new members of the Canadian Risk and Hazards Network to the 8th edition of HazNet.

It has been a busy six months since the last edition of HazNet and a lot has been happening as has been mentioned by our Co-Presidents. My time has been spent on a number of items – mostly assisting the Board with moving ahead with its strategic planning initiatives. The CRHNet Board under the leadership of Ernie MacGillivray will be putting in place a new task oriented management structure, and work plan for 2013. This should energize and in many ways revitalize the Board.

Did I mention that CRHNet had a very successful Symposium in Vancouver this past October? It was the most successful of our Symposia, not just in terms of numbers of delegates but because of the numbers of high-quality presentations, the great mix of researchers and practitioners and the social and networking opportunities. Many thanks as well to the Sutton Hotel for helping us host such a great event.

As always, I enjoy getting articles for HazNet – it gives me an opportunity to link up with those I get to meet at various conferences and events and touch base to find out how people are doing. I am so pleased we have got such a great collection of articles by researchers, practitioners and students – including a number of interesting book reviews.

One of the major initiatives that CRHNet is embarking upon is to revitalize the CRHNet website. It will soon be changing thanks to Bert Struiik, who in his spare time is working to develop a Web 2.0 version by the summer of 2013. Many, many thanks to Bert and much appreciation to Colleen Vaughan for her support of CRHNet.

Many thanks also to Saskatchewan EMO and the University of Regina Organizing Committee comprised of: Mieka Torgrimson, Murray Sanders, Patty Doroshenko, Sylvia Waterer et al. for taking on the challenge of hosting the 10th CRHNet Symposium in Regina - November 5th-8th 2013. Visit www.CRHNet.ca/annual symposium for details.

The National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) has, for the past three years, been an integral part of the CRHNet Symposium week, along with the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency management (SOREM). Public Safety Canada has once again graciously considered holding the 4th National platform adjacent to, and in the same location, as our 10th CRHNet Symposium in Regina. Please stay tuned for more details.

Welcome to Veronica Moreno, who will be assisting yours truly. Veronica will be focusing on membership solicitation and renewal as well as working with the CRHNet 2013 work plan sub-committees.

I would be remiss if I didn’t thank Royal Roads University – both Meghan Knauf and to Jean Slick for there continued support.

Finally I wish to thank the CRHNet Board of Directors for their continued work and to our fearless leaders Ernie MacGillivray and Ron Kuban for their leadership. As a famous man said, “The art of leadership cannot be understated.”

Don’t miss out on this year’s great symposium! Come on down and join us in Regina!

Larry Pearce
Executive Director Email: larrypearce@shaw.ca

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CREATING RECOVERY: A NEW CANADIAN-U.S. PARTICIPATORY PROJECT ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AFTER DISASTER

By: Robin Cox, Royal Roads University and Lori Peek, Colorado State University

The saying goes that no one who is exposed to a disaster is untouched by that experience. That saying is no less true for children and youth than it is for adults, and yet the experiences and perspectives of the youngest disaster survivors have long been excluded in research and practice (Anderson, 2005).

Evidence from cross-sectional and longitudinal research consistently indicates that children who are exposed to natural, technological, and terrorist disasters report higher levels of emotional and psychological distress including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder compared to children who had not experienced a disaster (Barrett, et al, 2008; Weissbecker et al., 2008). A report on the impact of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill on children and families, for example, estimated that over 19% of the pediatric population in coastal Louisiana and Mississippi experienced emotional or behavioural distress related to the oil spill (Abramson et al, 2010).

A growing body of evidence suggests, however, that children and youth can demonstrate remarkable resilience and capacity in the face of disasters. When given opportunities, children can actively contribute to their own recovery and to the recovery of those people and places around them (Peek, 2008). Where hazard awareness and risk reduction are integrated into school curriculum, children often serve as information conduits within their families and among their peers (Ronan et al., 2008). Moreover, their potential vulnerability can serve as powerful motivator of action within families and across communities. Even so, children and youth often lack power and official channels to share their perspectives, concerns, and ideas and most disaster professionals lack child health or child development expertise (Anderson, 2005).

Our newly launched Canadian-U.S. research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), is attempting to provide such an opportunity. The project will directly engage disaster-affected youth from Slave Lake, Alberta and Joplin Missouri. Both communities experienced devastating disasters within a week of each other in May 2011.

On May 16, 2011, winds gusting up to 100 kilometers fueled a complex of wildfires known as the Flat Top Complex and drove one wildfire into the community of Slave Lake. The fires forced a region-wide evacuation of approximately 15,000 residents. Although there were no serious injuries and only one recorded death associated with the fires, 40% of Slave Lake was destroyed. This included the town hall, library, main shopping mall, and over 370 homes. By the time the fires were contained, they had caused the second-largest insurable loss in Canadian history, totaling more than $700 million.

On May 22, 2011, less than a week after the Slave Lake wildfire, Joplin experienced an EF-5 tornado (the highest strength on the Fujita scale). After the tornado touched down, it was on the ground for nearly 40 minutes. The deadly twister killed more than 160 people and injured over 1,000. Between one-quarter and one-third of the physical infrastructure in Joplin was destroyed, including the complete devastation of over 2,000 buildings. Joplin High School, the main public high school in the city, was flattened.

As part of this project, our research team will use visual, text-based, and digital story telling strategies with youth in both affected communities in Canada and the U.S. to explore young people’s perspectives on their needs, capacities, and contributions in...
disaster recovery. The stories and knowledge products participating youth create through this exploration will extend disaster recovery and resilience theory and provide possibilities for ongoing peer-to-peer support. The goal is to empower youth to help shape policies and practices that more effectively address their vulnerabilities and strengths and create opportunities for them to contribute to the long-term resilience of their communities.

Our research team, which is led by us, currently includes two graduate and several undergraduate research assistants from Royal Roads University and Colorado State University. Four of us traveled to Joplin in January 2013, to begin preliminary fieldwork in that community. During that initial visit, we met with and informally interviewed over 40 community leaders representing the schools, local government, the health care system, the private sector, the faith-based community, the emergency management community, and the arts community. One theme consistently emerged in those initial interviews, which is that youth are interested in paying it forward, sharing the insights and lessons they have learned with others who may experience disasters. We are currently working to build a project website so that we can more regularly share updates, as well as the insights of participating youth and the stories they produce. Moreover, over the coming months we will continue our research and community engagement work in Joplin and begin fieldwork in Slave Lake as well.

Questions about the project can be directed to Robin.Cox@royalroads.ca or Lori.Peek@colostate.edu.