

# A Researcher-in-Residence Initiative for Cultural Mapping, Economic Development, Social Inclusion and Urban Planning in Small Cities

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We begin with the proposition that small cities are increasingly challenged to develop cultural and social policies—and related cultural policy research methodologies—that are expected to work with (or for) other policy areas such as economic development, social inclusion, crisis management, environmental sustainability and urban planning.<sup>1</sup> Cultural mapping provides a ready approach and platform for this intersectoral work. As a field of inquiry, cultural mapping represents two interrelated areas of study and practice: The first focuses on cultural assets, identifying, locating and quantifying tangible and intangible assets, typically with the aim of developing a cultural resource or community asset map. The second area, associated with the rise of critical cartography, employs participatory mapping techniques to create a multivocal community narrative of place, bringing stakeholders together in purposeful conversation and group problem solving. Taken together, the two areas of cultural mapping seek to combine the tools of modern cartography with vernacular and participatory methods of storytelling to represent spatially, visually, and textually the authentic knowledge, assets, values, views, and memories of local communities. Both forms of mapping have become increasingly employed by governments, most notably municipalities, and by academics worldwide, often under the premise that they promise an ability to engage and connect with populations and communities not normally inclined towards political/academic participation.

Yet, as those studying the field have noted,<sup>2</sup> cultural mapping tends to be employed as a one-time initiative, *a project rather than a long-term strategy*, and thus remains not fully articulated or integrated within city planning and development practices. We present here a research update on a new community-engaged research program, one that takes up the opportunity to explore in depth how to integrate participative knowledge-creation and self-representation processes, rooted in community, within policy and planning processes, linking them to political decision-making processes and action.



Artful Engagement in Small Cities: Beyond the Project. This curated video documents three interrelated community-engaged research initiatives as case studies: a Public Showers Project undertaken by United Way, ASK Wellness, the Steelworkers Union and Thompson Rivers University; a LGBTQ2S+ Cultural Mapping Pride Project inspired by the Researcher-in-Residence’s cultural mapping initiatives and undertaken by the Salmon Arm Arts Centre, the City of Salmon Arm and a coalition of community stakeholders; and the creation of a Researcher-in-Residence Initiative by the City of Kamloops and the university. All three initiatives represent the special zones of contact at play in community-engaged research collaboration in smaller communities. Taken together, these initiatives speak to the importance of moving beyond the project and toward sustainable creative partnerships, where practices such as cultural mapping become more than merely transactional (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1muS6qIz5dY>)

In January 2021, we launched a three-year, co-funded community-engaged research model, embedding a researcher-in-residence (see box: “Box 1: What is the Researcher-in-Residence Model?,” page 4) team in City Hall and a series of city-driven projects, with the aim of creating a sustainable bridge between the City and the University. The objective here is the integration of participative cultural mapping practices over a significant period of time and in a manner meaningful to the City’s cultural, economic development, and community planning and policy processes.

### **Background**

The Researcher-in-Residence (RiR) Initiative is built upon working partnerships previously established through two nationally-funded Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) grants, both focusing on mapping the culture of small cities. Two research MOUs, one with the United Way and one with the City of Kamloops, have extended these partnerships, with the University taking a lead role in highlighting social innovation and community-engaged research as priority areas. Working together with these partners, and as a result of our recent scholarship<sup>3</sup> we

were invited by the City of Kamloops (British Columbia, Canada) to further animate community-engaged research and cultural mapping methodologies as strategies for addressing social and cultural problems arising from the dual crisis of opioid overdoses and COVID-19.

Three years ago, in an effort to support local resilience and empower communities, British Columbia's Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions provided \$1.8 million to fund an initial cohort of *18 Community Action Teams*, each using the funds to create locally-driven initiatives designed to address the crisis in their 18 communities (BC Government, 2018). Typically, these communities have focused initial attention on "mapping the crisis," seeking to make visible networks of support services, tangible and intangible assets, local statistics, and the personal stories of those most affected. Complementing these community-based initiatives is a series of four government-funded *Overdose Action Exchange* events, which like the *Action Teams*, are designed to "[d]evelop...multisectoral responses that [are] inclusive of all partners (First Nations communities, Municipalities, first responders, front-line community agencies, people and families with lived experience, businesses, local government agencies [for example, housing social development, education], and the local recovery community)."<sup>4</sup>

Again, involvement of peers, of those with lived/living experience, has been identified as critical for finding community-based solutions; and participatory mapping of local culture and peer experiences has become a common vehicle for giving voice to that involvement. If these maps establish critical spaces for interrogation and resistance, linguistic empowerment, and participatory decision-making vital for the identity of disenfranchised groups,<sup>5</sup> we need to understand better their form, their current use, their interpretation, their impact, and their potential rhetorical power.

Within Kamloops, a city of 96,000 people hard-hit by the dual crisis of opioid overdoses and COVID-19, an Action Team has been struck comprised of health service providers, city administrators, municipal planners, researchers, community organizers, business leaders, Indigenous leaders, artists and people with lived experience. Both the Action Team and the City requested support from our research team, initially, seeking a cultural mapping of the overdose crisis over a three-year period, and thus providing a unique opportunity to study the efficacy of participatory mapping protocols as a means of focusing community dialogue on healthy communities, of documenting and making visible the voices of those with lived and living experience, of generating enhanced community participation in municipal planning, of integrating community-engaged research practices, and of co-developing solutions and evidence-based decisions.

In effect, in aligning itself with the aims of the Action Team, and in working with the University, the City of Kamloops volunteered to become a living laboratory for a three-year study of community-engaged research and participatory practices in small city urban planning. A three-year Accelerate Grant from Mitacs (a national, not-for-profit organization that has designed and delivered research and training programs in Canada for twenty years), with matching funds from the City, enabled the launch of the Initiative.

As participant observers—a team including an embedded researcher-in-residence, five student researchers, a senior faculty researcher, two City managers, a university-based Director of Student Research and Public Engagement, and the University’s Office of Research and Graduate Studies—we are able to monitor and assess (to observe, document, analyze and evaluate) the integration of cultural mapping and planning processes *as they occur* and over a significant period of time. Through the use of draw-talk protocols, social network mapping, case study documentation and narrative analysis, guided-interviews and town hall dialogues with the participants, including our research collaborators and community partners, we are able to test, consider and refine those best practices to suit local conditions—with the aim of sharing our results with smaller cities and communities generally.

#### Box 1: What is the Researcher-in-Residence Model?

The RiR model is a variant of the X-in-Residence model, whereby a person with a particular expertise is integrated into a context where that expertise is often absent. This includes but is not limited to Poet-in-Residence,<sup>6</sup> Writer-in-Residence,<sup>7</sup> and Artist-in-Residence.<sup>8</sup> This model intends to “address the tendency of people with expert knowledge to socialize and work with like-minded people. This tendency can distance the expert from the wider society within which they operate, rarefying the expertise and excluding others from it.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, at a time where universities face a “crisis of relevance,”<sup>10</sup> as academics are increasingly specialized, embedding scholars within other organizations and institutions within their home community may grant them insight into the workings and dysfunctions of these organizations in a way that can build new and practical knowledge in service of the community.

Such a model is predicated on the notion that knowledge is not always straightforward nor unidirectional i.e., from the mouths of experts to the minds of practitioners. Instead, there is the view that for research to have an impact on the wider world “both knowledge producers and users need to be involved in its creation and its application.”<sup>11</sup> As one of the barriers to this approach to knowledge creation is the divide between subject experts and practitioners, a position such as the RiR can serve both parties.

In particular, the RiR “works as an integrated member of a service-based improvement team rather than as a dispassionate observer of improvement activities. They actively negotiate their academic knowledge rather than just present or impose it, integrating it with the more applied expertise of the practitioners.”<sup>12</sup> The researcher brings an understanding of research methods, expertise in evaluation, and a willingness to interpret local evidence through a theoretical lens, as needed. In return, the RiR may develop a better understanding of the political skills required to effect change, which is important in the context of the kinds of social and technical innovations described and advocated by academic institutions.<sup>13</sup> In this way the RiR can have the synergistic effect of benefiting the host organization, the academic institution and the researchers associated with the program through the creation of new, practical insights for decision making.





This animated video, first prepared for presentation to the Kamloops City Council, provides a detailed introduction to the Researcher-in-Residence Initiative. It explains that though there is a Researcher-in-Residence (a postdoctoral fellow, Cheryl Gladu), the Initiative is more than a person; it is a team of faculty and student investigators collaborating with city staff to co-create research questions designed to inform decision making at the City of Kamloops. The “in-residence” model means that we conduct our research while being embedded in the community, rather than from the campus (<https://www.youtube.com/embed/NB7wOL26m2w?feature=oembed>)

Within the context of the opioid overdose crisis, and now complicated by the coronavirus pandemic, cultural mapping has increasingly been pursued as a means for understanding the ‘lived reality’ of the community. Through such formats as photo-voice and graphic illustration, people at the heart of the crisis, notably those who use drugs, are invited to share their experiences. Yet while cultural mapping methodologies often pay tribute to the voices of marginalized and vulnerable people, many fail to represent these voices adequately and authentically. This failure oftentimes takes the form of over-interpretation, whereby the voices of participants become subsumed, as in many graphic facilitation forms of cultural mapping, by the over-arching voice or interpretation of an ‘expert’—leading to an (often unconscious) over-writing of the voices most affected.

Of the cities affected by the opioid crisis, small cities, and particularly small cities in British Columbia, bear a disproportionate weight—showing hospitalization rates for opioid-related issues at 2.5 times higher than rates in Canada’s largest cities.<sup>14</sup> For small city health care providers, governments and communities, the crisis can feel insurmountable. However, one

area of consensus has emerged over the last few years: a commitment that new ideas, new insights, and possible solutions will be found *through conversation with those with lived/living experience*. Involvement of peers has been identified as central to help reframe the crisis, to chart new ways forward, to empower the participants, and to effect action planning generally and in multiple areas at the local level. Yet, as with other areas of city planning and decision-making, including those voices in meaningful ways remains a work in progress.



The Labyrinth between Riverside and Pioneer Parks, Kamloops, where a Lost Souls public art installation took place on April 14, 2021, the fifth anniversary of the province declaring the opioid overdose crisis a public health emergency. Each pair of shoes represents a person who has died of an overdose locally.

In this context, our opioid mapping work, a foundational component of the RiR Initiative, asks two related questions: “How can cultural mapping as a participatory action research method enable small cities grappling with the opioid crisis, beginning with Kamloops, B.C., represent authentically the lived dimensions of the crisis, and produce new forms of co-created knowledge leading to change?” and “How can these cultural mapping methods be refined and the principles extended, through the introduction of a RiR model, to engage all citizens in meaningful problem solving and decision making generally?” Employing a participant observer approach, embedding a researcher-in-residence and accompanying graduate student researchers (interns) working 50 per cent with the City of Kamloops’ administration team and 50 per cent with Thompson Rivers University’s social innovation

lab, we have begun to observe, survey and document, map and interview, analyze and interpret the dynamics of project development, the mapping and consultation processes, the relative quality of participation, the contributions of those with lived experience, the impact on decision making, and the viability of integrating cultural mapping as an ongoing resource for project and community development.

The anticipated outcomes of this work will include: (1) enabling new cartographic and visually-informed ways of thinking about and responding to the opioid crisis as it is played out within Kamloops, and within small cities generally—leading to systemic forms of change; (2) assessing how current practices of cultural map collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation cohere with the key aim of including and preserving vernacular voices and local knowledge; (3) exploring the lived and felt reality of the crisis alongside statistical/empirical data, and in relation to official cartographic representations of place; (4) developing participatory, multi-modal and arts-led insights surrounding the crisis and issues emerging from the crisis leading to enhanced community dialogues and the design of protocols for positive change and transformation; (5) creating research and research models pertaining to the crisis and issues emerging from the crisis that are inclusive—produced through multi-level community agency; and (6) developing insights informing community mapping of the crisis, leading to the design of new ways of assessing and describing participation, citizen empowerment, and impact generally.



The Opioid Overdose Mapping Project, Kamloops and Comox Valley.

This commitment to the cultural mapping of the opioid crisis in Kamloops will be ongoing in years one-through-three of the research program. In addition, and in partnership with the City of Kamloops, we are coordinating and extending mapping methodologies and community-engaged research strategies to projects identified as related to and/or emerging from the crisis, including notably a consideration of how cultural mapping and community-engaged research could inform the development of the City's new Cultural Strategic Plan and projects in areas related to housing, homelessness, healthy communities, childcare, local and regional economic and cultural development, community and neighbourhood development; tourism, food security, emergency management modeling, and crisis management communications. Toward that end, the research team will engage in or help facilitate related city-driven projects as they emerge.

This activity is further scaffolded by support from the University's Office of Research and Graduate Studies through its Community-Driven Research Program, which coordinates and funds teams of faculty and students to work on community-engaged projects. This in turn allows for an additional line of research inquiry, a self-reflective three-year case study of best practices in community-university research collaboration, with a focus on research project formation, community networking, stakeholder relations, participatory decision making, the integration of cultural mapping methodologies in municipal policy development and planning, and effective implementation of community-engaged research results in small city settings.

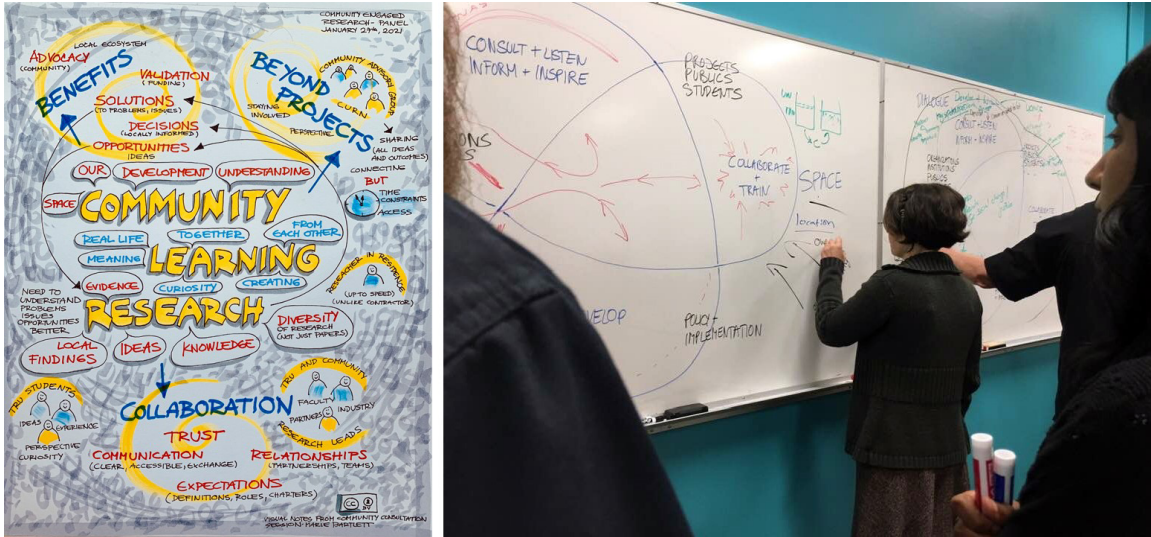
The RiR Initiative addresses challenges that

1. have direct impact and relevance to the community;
2. require action by the City through, for example, changes in policy and bylaws, changes to internal processes, or the creation of services, programs, partnerships and/or the allocation of funding;
3. require research and discovery, especially in cases where community stakeholders are uncertain about the best course of action and seek to learn more about the problem and potential solutions before taking action;
4. require experimentation and innovation, recognizing where effective solutions need to be designed and tested before being fully implemented;
5. are focused at the local level but require consideration of and/or action at regional, provincial and/or national levels; and
6. require a tolerance for measured risk and miscommunication, recognizing that the generation of better outcomes may risk the production of unknown, unintended or unwanted consequences.

(Adapted from principles developed by the Guelph Lab, University of Guelph)

We see the linking of our research to city-driven project work as providing an in-depth opportunity for partnership development, co-creation, collaboration, networking and team building—as creating real world opportunities to complement or replace more top-down public consultation methodologies (for example, the survey, the public hearing, and the expert-led focus group), all the while increasing participation of those with lived/living experience.





Community-Engaged Research Planning Workshop.

A key challenge is to move from observation and participation to the co-development of cultural policies alongside and informing economic development, social inclusion, and urban planning. As noted, cultural mapping provides a useful approach and platform for this intersectoral work. During the last thirty years, the phenomenon of cultural mapping has gained international currency as an instrument of collective knowledge building, cultural and artistic expression, municipal governance, community empowerment and counter-mapping, policy development and community building <sup>15</sup>

We are attracted to cultural mapping as a social practice that invites multiple forms and modes of non-specialized vernacular discourse—from Indigenous communities, locals, those with lived/living experience, peers, and those from non-profits and grassroots organizations representing multisectoral viewpoints—into the public sphere of community identity formation, political and social advocacy, local knowledge production, municipal planning, cultural sustainability planning, participatory decision-making, and community engagement.



Cultural Mapping Session, Salmon Arm.

More broadly, such research involves cross-sectoral collaboration, intense stakeholder investment and support, the negotiation of shared and mutually beneficial aims, the

recognition and adjustment of power relations, a commitment to participatory decision making, opportunities for student and community partner training, and a mapping of community networks, assets, and cultures. Thus responding to the call to create meaningful university-community partnerships that “move beyond platitude, becoming part of the day-to-day routines of universities.”<sup>16</sup> The three-year RiR Initiative affords the city the opportunity to test and document best practices in (1) community-university research engagement, (2) the integration of cultural mapping to effect more participative and pluralist policy development and planning, and (3) the development of new models for enhanced participatory decision making specific to small cities.

The city benefits through the presence as an embedded team in terms of project development, project management, provision of community and staff workshops, coordination of university research resources in alignment with municipal objectives, and the co-authoring and co-presentation of research results. In concert with the city, we aspire to share the RiR Initiative as a model of community-engaged research for small cities and smaller communities across Canada and beyond. Toward that end, we welcome feedback and inquiries; and we look forward to networking nationally and internationally with other city-university collaborations that employ cultural and participatory mapping methodologies as central elements of their research design and purpose, their municipal planning and policy development.

### **RiR Projects Launched or Planned During the First Six Months of the Initiative**

Complementary to and building upon the cultural mapping of the City’s opioid overdose crisis, the RiR initiative features two formal streams of research project development, as the RiR team works on a set of projects, while also connecting on-campus faculty to city staff to pursue additional research collaborations independent of the RiR team. At two points in the year, corresponding with the application cycle for the City-University Community Research Fund, the postdoctoral fellow engages with departmental heads at the City of Kamloops to solicit ideas around potential research partnerships. These initial ideas drive most of the research projects and programs that are associated with the RiR initiative.

### **RiR Team Research Projects**

RiR directed projects are selected by the Executive Advisory Committee, which is comprised of the Faculty Academic Supervisor, the University Associate Director of Student Research and Public Engagement, the RiR, the City’s Arts and Community Development Manager, and the External Relations Manager. Thus two projects were selected as a focus for year one.

### **Mapping the housing continuum in Kamloops**

This project involves mapping out the various services available to citizens who are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. By updating and building on an existing map new layers of information will create a number of heat maps detailing various kinds of experiences related to the housing continuum in the city. The project started with a wide consultation of various players in the city, both at the City of Kamloops and in the wider

community: housing service providers, health care providers and representatives of neighbourhood associations. This consultation provided our team a better understanding of the context from the perspective of various stakeholders, and allowed us to develop layers to our map that seek to address visually some common concerns around the development of housing along the housing continuum from a place of greater evidence. For example, one layer seeks to model rent affordability throughout the city, while another layer seeks to demonstrate the relationship (if any) between the services available in the community and land values in neighbourhoods.

### **Cultural Strategic Plan**

Starting in the fall of 2021, we will begin work with city planners and community stakeholders on the development of the city's Cultural Strategic Plan, employing cultural mapping methods that give visual representation to all participants, including and especially those typically underrepresented by such planning processes. We will be documenting this process as a case study and opportunity for the integration of participatory mapping, for embedded research networking and partnership building.

### **Emerging research collaborations between the City of Kamloops and on-campus faculty**

In addition to the two projects described above, City directors have identified another 12 areas of potential research collaboration with the city. Several on-campus faculty have been invited into initial conversations with city staff about undertaking research projects in collaboration with the city. These projects are still in their early stages, but include:

- a. a literature review on municipal climate governance;
- b. change management at the City of Kamloops; and
- c. equity, diversity and inclusion at the City of Kamloops.

### **Spontaneous project development**

In addition to these two formal processes for project development at the City, the RiR team has noted that projects may emerge spontaneously in response to the initiative of faculty or community members. It appears that the bridging presence of a team of university colleagues at the city and within the community provides a clear entry point to potential partners looking to initiate community-engaged research. For example, two faculty members with interests in city parks have reached out about orienting part of their research portfolio towards a collaboration with the city and have been introduced to key staff who view the prospect of such research as helpful in the process of decision making around municipal parks. The parties are currently pursuing the formation of at least two collaborative research projects.

The RiR team was also approached by our community partner, the United Way, about identifying a faculty member who would help them craft a better research instrument for their work. They are looking to develop and test a measure for stigma around drug use in Kamloops, so that they might be better able to map and measure the impact of their anti-stigma campaigns in the future. The partners believe that creation of a valid baseline measure



may help support various programs at the City and in the wider community, including RiR work in the future, given the nature of our research program.

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Cheryl Gladu is the Researcher-in-Residence Postdoctoral Fellow at Thompson Rivers University. She has an interdisciplinary PhD in Design and Management from Concordia University. In addition to being curious about nearly everything, she studies how people co-create systems and structures for simpler yet richer lives and, to that end, has investigated collaborative housing communities. Before this work, she co-created and managed a small upstart green real estate development company that developed Canada's first net-zero multi-unit residential building using a unique integrated design process. In addition to her research, Gladu has over a decade of experience teaching, with a primary focus on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

### **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge financial support provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, by Mitacs, by the Vancouver Foundation, and by the City of Kamloops. In addition, we thank the following for their contributions to the video productions. Financial support: Simon Fraser University's Community Engaged Research Initiative. Video production and editing: Stephen Ingle, Single Shot Productions; Pat Ebert, Pro Video Services. Editing and photographic assistance: Kristina Bradshaw, Thompson Rivers University; Kate Fagervik, Salmon Arm Arts Centre; Emily Hope, Kamloops Art Gallery. Video research and writing: Wendy Margetts, RiR graduate intern.

Finally, we want to thank our research team members Nancy Duxbury, Sharon Karsten and Sukh Heer Matonovich for the multiple discussions and collaborations that have contributed to the ideas and practices presented here.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Duxbury, 'Cultural Mapping: Addressing the Challenge of More Participative and Pluralist Cultural Policies and Planning. *Canoas* 33: 17-29.'

<sup>2</sup> Evans, 'Cultural Mapping and Planning for Sustainable Communities'.

<sup>3</sup> Badham et al., 'Creative Cartographies: A Roundtable Discussion on Artistic Approaches to Cultural Mapping.'; Duxbury, Garrett-Petts, and MacLennan, *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry*; Duxbury, 'Cultural Mapping: Addressing the Challenge of More Participative and Pluralist Cultural Policies and Planning. *Canoas* 33: 17-29.'; Garrett-Petts, 'The Vernacular Rhetoric of Cultural Mapping: Everyday Cartography in the Public Sphere.'; Garrett-Petts and Karsten, 'Artist-Led Cultural Mapping: A Catalyst for the Re-Imagination, and the Re-Formation, of Municipal Power Hierarchies.'

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<sup>5</sup> Zompetti, 'A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric'.

<sup>6</sup> 'What Does a Poet in Residence Actually Do?'

<sup>7</sup> 'Writer in Residence'.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, 'Artists in Place: The Bunkhouse Project Pilot Program Summary and Evaluation'.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall et al., 'Moving Improvement Research Closer to Practice', 802.

<sup>10</sup> Hoffman, 'Reflections'.

<sup>11</sup> Marshall et al., 'Increasing the Impact of Health Services Research on Service Improvement: The Researcher-in-Residence Model', 220.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall et al., 'Moving Improvement Research Closer to Practice', 338.

<sup>13</sup> Moore McBride and Mlyn, 'Social Innovation and Civic Engagement: Toward a Shared Future?'

<sup>14</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information / Institut canadien d'information sur la santé, 'Smaller Communities Feeling Impact of Opioid Crisis in Canada'.

<sup>15</sup> Caquard, 'Cartography II'; Crawhall, 'The Role of Participatory Cultural Mapping in Promoting Intercultural Dialogue - "We Are Not Hyenas"'; Evans, 'Cultural Mapping and Planning for Sustainable Communities'; Duxbury, Garrett-Petts, and MacLennan, *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry*; Gerlach, 'Vernacular Mapping, and the Ethics of What Comes Next'; Guldi, 'A History of the Participatory Map'; Kerski, 'Mapping for Understanding Community, Region, and the World: Using GIS in Native Education'; Kitchin and Dodge, 'Rethinking Maps'; Pillai, *Cultural Mapping*; Roth, 'The Challenges of Mapping Complex Indigenous Spatiality'; Gerlach, 'Lines, Contours and Legends'.

<sup>16</sup> Cherwitz, 'Toward Entrepreneurial Universities for the 21st Century (SSIR)'.