

Appendix C: *ARBRI Day Looks to the Future*. An Article for the Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin (BARB)

ARBRI Day Looks to the Future



Tony Tin gave a presentation on the Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin, an online database of research and resources.

ARBRI Day, held on March 14 in the Academic and Research Centre, brought researchers and academics together with a group of potential collaborators to encourage new research projects under the umbrella of the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute.

Attendees heard a wide variety of presentations on research projects and other topics: deliberative democracy, legal services and legal education in rural and remote communities, the highly successful Athabasca University Geophysical Observatory, citizen science programs, economic pressures on the Athabasca River Basin, the Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin and fundraising opportunities for research within ARBRI.

"The target audience was AU researchers," said Dr. Lisa Carter, interim director of ARBRI, "and we wanted to have a broad range of speakers. Having Martin Connors, Dale Dewhurst and Lorelei Hanson on the list was an indication of the range of ideas that can be brought to the table."

The Athabasca River Basin plays a significant role in defining the society, culture and economy of central and northern Alberta,

and AU is taking a multi-pronged approach to shaping ARBRI, Carter said, involving academics, industry and communities. "As a non-partisan body, ARBRI will provide a platform that is openly accessible to people to learn about all aspects of the Athabasca River Basin."

"It's really exciting to see a new concept like this taking shape," said ARBRI Day organizer Jim Sellers. "Eventually, I believe, ARBRI will be a major component of the research work done at AU."

Given its central location on the banks of the Athabasca River, many have long felt that AU was a natural place for such a research institute. ARBRI was created in 2008 to encourage multidisciplinary research on the river basin.

Emeritus professor Dr. Robert Holmberg spoke of the founding of ARBRI. With the building of the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill in 1988, he said, then the largest single-line kraft pulp mill in the world, people realized there was no comprehensive knowledge of the river basin in its entirety. "In order to make the best decisions, one needs to know what is known," Holmberg said. "The idea that AU should

'adopt' the river basin stayed with me for a number of years because it was an important resource but also because it would promote multidisciplinary research and collaboration at AU"

Two major collaborative projects are now underway at ARBRI. The Hinton/Grande Cache Sustainability Project is examining long-term, diverse options for economic, environmental and social development. The Community Engagement Project will collaborate with and interconnect a number of research and assessment projects underway at various locations in the Athabasca River Basin under the direction of a variety of organizations. These projects are supported by the Alberta Rural Development Network and the RBC Blue Water Fund.

A third ARBRI project is the continuing development of the *Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin*, which will factor into every other ARBRI project as it becomes a repository and distribution point for the results and data from each project.

Presentations from ARBRI Day are available on the [BARB site](#).