

THE DATA MATTER.

CRDCN QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THIRD QUARTER - SEPTEMBER 2022



Serving our network



This issue of *The Data Matter* is all about different ways we, the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) serve our stakeholders and network members.

We begin with an article about our Executive Director, Martin Taylor, and the role he has served in for more than six years. At the end of March 2023, Martin will be retiring and the CRDCN is currently searching for an Executive Director to lead it through an exciting new transformative phase in its history. Those interested in [applying for the ED role](#), or those interested in understanding more about the CRDCN, may wish to read it. It provides a little taste of some more exciting announcements set to be revealed during our Fall Data Forum on October 19, 2022.

This Fall Quarterly issue of *The Data Matter* also features an article by the members of our Research team, highlighting key training and knowledge development opportunities coming this fall. The Research team members also explain how they can further engage researchers to help them along their journey.

Next is a look at our [upcoming Fall Data Forum](#) on October 19, 2022. This event is free thanks to the generous funding from our federal partners and promises a full day of learning sessions about new datasets, data sovereignty, and a discussion with international experts on ways to securely govern data while expanding access to more researchers. The article links to registration, the agenda and more!

Thank you as always for reading and we wish you a very happy fall!

Ryan Murphy
Editor, *The Data Matter*

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The Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) is a premier research and training platform for over 2,000 researchers in the quantitative social and health sciences in Canada. The Network provides unique access to Statistics Canada data on 33 campuses across the country to advance knowledge and inform public policy. It is funded by SSHRC, CIHR, CFI, the FRQ, Statistics Canada and our 42 primary and affiliated partner universities. CRDCN is recognized as one of Canada's Major Science Initiatives.

On the qualities of a CRDCN Executive Director

The upcoming retirement of the CRDCN's Executive Director (ED), Martin Taylor, has prompted our Board to initiate a search for his successor. Together with the other members of our CRDCN central management team, this has led me to consider the qualities that make for a successful and respected ED. My thoughts were influenced by remarks that Martin himself shared in his recent McMaster Convocation address where he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science:

"Life and career goals matter... the intrinsic and vital interplay of strategy and opportunity. Goals imply a strategy, a plan, a pathway, but context and situation determine opportunities... without a strategy it's hard to evaluate and recognize opportunities and yet without opportunities a strategy is essentially moribund. It's the conjunction of the two that's crucial."

This conjunction is made all the more poignant and timely as the CRDCN enters an exciting phase in its development enabled by the virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) initiative - transitioning from a network of solely physical Research Data Centres (RDC) to an advanced IT platform providing both RDC and remote access to Statistics Canada and other microdata, whereby researchers will enjoy upgraded, streamlined and more widely accessible services across Canada.

As we enter this new phase and seek a new ED, Martin reflected on the role in conversation with me. His central point was that of nurturing and strength-

ening partnerships that are vital to the success of the Network that are – in his words – “fundamental to the DNA of the CRDCN.” They are the essential building blocks without which there would be no CRDCN.

To that end, the CRDCN has restructured and strengthened its governance and management under Martin's leadership and has been recognized accordingly by our federal funding agencies — the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) — as demonstrating best use of the growing investments they collectively contribute.

Martin, supported by Michelle Gauthier (as Special Advisor to CRDCN), was careful to ensure our governing bodies have the right balance of external senior level and highly qualified members from government, the private and non-profit sectors, as well as internal members drawn from experienced Academic Directors at our partner universities. This has served us extremely well in providing that critical combination of due diligence and strategic wise counsel with Andy Bjerring, and now Janet Halliwell, serving as highly respected and experienced Board Chairs.

The ED has played a lead role in fostering and strengthening partnerships beyond our governance bodies, as evidenced by the CRDCN's MoU with Statistics Canada, which clearly outlines our complementary roles and shared principles in promoting best use of microdata to advance research and inform public policy to benefit Canada and Canadians. These principles are shared among the highest levels of Statistics Canada leadership, through regular exchanges with



**Martin Taylor,
CRDCN Executive Director**

the Chief and Assistant Chief Statisticians, and the Directors of both the Operations and Integration, and Data Access Divisions.

Likewise, our relationship with McMaster University as our host institution has provided leadership support at senior levels through the Offices of the Vice-President Research, as well as additional capacity to grow the Network since the inception of the CRDCN in 2000. CRDCN benefits greatly from the long-standing expertise and experience of the McMaster research administration as one of Canada's leading research-intensive universities. Moreover, supported by our Academic Directors, we have promoted advanced quantitative research at our 33 partner universities and with our many affiliated universities, not to mention international engagement whereby we learn and share best practices beyond Canada.

If, as stated earlier, partnerships are the "DNA of the Network," then the ED is the nucleus providing the CRDCN with the combination of strategic vision and opportunity that promote our growth, impact, and success. In speaking with Martin about his hopes for our [new Executive Director](#) and Board members, I have learned much about our current ED, echoed again in his Convocation address – "that we value colleagues for how much they know and friends for how much they

What you need to know

- Martin Taylor, as Executive Director, has led a restructuring of CRDCN's governance and management team and the successful renewal and increase of the Network's federal funding.
- He has fostered and strengthened CRDCN's profile and partnerships in Canada's research and data ecosystem.
- Upon Martin's retirement announcement, a search for a new Executive Director is currently underway.

care, and so how precious when the two come together in the chemistry of the leader and their team."

- Michèle Anderson, Director of Communications and Engagement, CRDCN

Serving CRDCN stakeholders - Behind the scenes and in the spotlight

The CRDCN – and the research data ecosystem – has evolved significantly over the course of the past 20 years in a number of ways. What began as a passion project of sorts for a small group of researchers who sought to pave the way for access to Statistics Canada microdata holdings, has now become a nation-wide network of Research Data Centres (RDCs) on 33 university campuses across the country.

We write this from the desks of the CRDCN Research team, a small but dedicated group of three:

Johanne Provençal, Research Program Director (PhD, Education); Grant Gibson, Assistant Director, Research and Evaluation (PhD, Economics); and Peri Abdullah, Manager, Research, Training and Knowledge Mobilization (PhD, Kinesiology and Health Science). Each day we bring that same passion to serving the CRDCN research community and CRDCN stakeholders.

Sometimes, that means putting the spotlight on the incredible work of CRDCN researchers – now more than 2,200 strong – at universities across Canada and

across disciplines. The [bibliography of journal articles and policy reports](#) authored by CRDCN researchers on our website, the [webinar series](#) with *Canadian Public Policy* and the *Canadian Journal of Economics*, and CRDCN's "[research-policy snapshots](#)" are just some of the ways that we highlight the work of researchers.

Other times, we are behind the scenes providing training for the next generation of highly qualified personnel (HQP). CRDCN offers more than a dozen training offerings a year, which are informed by the needs of the community, based on researcher responses to the annual researcher survey.

CRDCN also supports PhD students who use RDC data in their dissertation with \$1,200 through the CRDCN Emerging Scholars Grants. In addition, the annual National Policy Challenge invites students using RDC data to compete for prizes (\$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500) by pitching their research questions and findings to a panel of government and academic colleagues.

Always, however, it means setting the stage to support the CRDCN research community to advance research and contribute to evidence-based decision making for stakeholders both inside and outside of the academic sector, including government, non-governmental (NGO) and private sectors. This is accomplished through activities ranging from information-sharing events, such as [workshops](#) and [panel series](#), to [calls for research proposals](#) funded through collaborative programs with our partners.

In the past year, the CRDCN Research team has harmonized these efforts – [integrating many into an annual cycle](#) – to maximize how they mutually strengthen and advance each other and to facilitate partnerships, so that we can better serve the CRDCN research community, stakeholder partners, and by extension, the diversity of Canadians living from coast to coast to coast.

On behalf of the CRDCN Research team, we invite you to engage with us so that we have a better understanding of shared stakeholder priorities and can



strategically address them together.

- Johanne Provençal, Research Program Director;
Grant Gibson, Assistant Director, Research and Evaluation;
and Peri Abdullah, Manager, Research, Training
and Knowledge Mobilization, CRDCN

What you need to know

- The CRDCN Research portfolio is led by a small but dedicated team of three central staff with academic backgrounds in economics, health and education.
- The Research portfolio is integral to managing the bibliography of journal articles and policy reports authored by CRDCN researchers.
- In the Past year, the team has harmonized webinars, policy snapshots, workshops and other initiatives to maximize their impact and advance partnerships to better serve the CRDCN research community.

A day for all things data

Of the many seminars, training opportunities, workshops and events the CRDCN is involved with each year, the annual fall event is something special.

This year, the CRDCN has decided to do things a little differently. Our event this year will again be hosted in an online setting, but instead of hosting one discussion or presentation per day over two weeks, all sessions will be held on a single day, October 19, in a forum format.

The 2022 Fall Data Forum will feature presentations, as in past iterations of the conference, but also some very educational workshop sessions related to datasets and a thought-provoking roundtable discussion with esteemed international panelists.

The inclusion of an international session continues to be an important facet of our annual event. As a national organization, we know how important it is to collaborate, connect and work with our colleagues in the research community on an international level. The theme for this year's international panel is data democratization and balancing private data with public engagement. CRDCN's Special Advisor, Dr. Michelle Gauthier, will serve as moderator for this discussion with three expert data stewards: Dr. Jeanne Holm, Deputy Mayor of Budget and Innovation for the City of Los Angeles and former U.S. federal communications and collaborations lead for Data.gov, has been consulted by NASA, the UN and many others; Deborah Yates, a data governance and data assurance expert from the United Kingdom has led data governance projects for the UK-based Open Data Institute and is sought after by governments and corporations around the globe on issues of data governance and data sovereignty; and Dr. Tracie Affi, Canadian research scientist and data scientist, and a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Childhood Adversity and Resilience at the University of Manitoba, where she is a professor in psychiatry and in community health sciences at the Max Rady College of Medicine Community Health Sciences. Her work has informed health policy and legislative

changes at the national and international levels.

"Canada has both much to learn from key comparator countries and much to offer by way of leadership in these important discussions about actively engaging the public in the collection, analysis and use of data while protecting confidentiality and privacy," says Dr. Gauthier. "Data Forum participants will no doubt benefit from the opportunity to hear from these experts, engage them in virtual conversation, and draw their own conclusions about how Canada's approach compares



with that of the U.S. and the U.K."

The event begins at 11:00 a.m. ET with a presentation from Aaron Franks from the First Nations Information Governance Centre, discussing the principles of OCAP – Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession of First Nations data by First Nations – data sovereignty in their true context of collective rights. Franks will describe the data and information infrastructures First Nations are building to support self-determination and

self-governance, and explain how their Data Centre, Data Strategy, and education and training programs work in the context of mainstream data.

This very important discussion will be followed by CRDCN Executive Director Dr. Martin Taylor presenting a look to the future of the organization, including progress on the virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) network platform and the CRDCNs plans for future data access in Canada.

Other sessions on the day will include training workshops on current and new datasets and linkages, such as: the Longitudinal and International Survey of Adults, Census data, health data, business data, Social Data Linkage Environment, and a session on minimizing bias hosted by the Statistics Canada Questionnaire Design Resource Centre.

“The Data Forum will be an excellent opportunity to engage our research community and their partners on the exciting possibilities for innovative projects afforded by new StatCan data files soon to be available through the CRDCN,” says Dr. Taylor. “StatCan data experts have been paired with CRDCN researchers to explore the important questions and policy implications that these new data will support. This virtual event is an opportunity not to be missed.”

There is still plenty of time to register to attend any and all of the sessions. Registration is free, thanks to

generous federal funding by our core funding partners. Visit [the Fall Data Forum website](#) to register for one or more sessions and learn more about the Data Forum.

What you need to know

- The CRDCN Fall Data Forum is online, October 19, 2022.
- The event will feature workshops, round-table discussion and presentations.
- The international session will feature a discussion with three expert data stewards from the U.S., U.K. and Canada.

If you have any feedback or ideas for future articles or themes, please reach out to us at info@crdcn.ca.