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SOCIAL COHESION AND RESILIENCE ACROSS COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED A DISASTER

ABSTRACT

Disasters are unpredictable events that have catastrophic impacts. There is now a focus on disaster resilience and capacity building in the recovery of the community. Resilience literature also suggests a staged model of disaster impacts and likelihood of staged manifestations of resilience. It also points to a potentially important link between place-based social cohesion and resilience. This article reports on comparative findings of cohesion and resilience indices in four Canadian rural communities that experienced disasters and evacuation in potentially different phases of coping and resilience. Buckner's Index of Cohesion and the Index of Perceived Community Resilience are examined in each community for relationships (correlation) between cohesion and resilience and for differences in the intensity of these variables. Our findings show a consistent significant positive correlation between cohesion and resilience, although the strength of the relationship varies. Findings also show place-specific differentiation in the mean intensity of both cohesion and resilience scores; temporal phases of disaster recovery for each community are also noted. This information can help in disaster recovery planning by ensuring supports are available at key points in time for communities that experience disasters. Other research is needed that compares communities that have experienced different types of disasters and over time periods to document any changes to resilience or cohesion thereby assisting with disaster policy development and programme planning.

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