

## **RACHEL HERRON**

### **Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement**

Dr. Herron completed her PhD at Queen's University in 2015, and was hired by the Department of Geography (now Geography and Environment) at Brandon University into a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor that same year. In 2018, Dr. Herron was appointed as a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Rural and Remote Mental Health, the first such appointment to the Department of Geography and Environment at Brandon University.



Dr. Herron is one of the leading early-career health geographers in Canada. She has already gained international recognition for her original, high quality and impactful scholarship on rural dementia care. In addition to her appointment as a Canada Research Chair only three years after her PhD, Dr. Herron's contribution to her area of research is exemplified in her productivity, including authoring or co-authoring forty peer-reviewed journal articles (with three more currently under review), nine book chapters, one edited volume, twenty-eight community reports, and seventy-seven conference and other paper and poster presentations, many at international conferences. She is the founding Director of the Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health at Brandon University, where she has built a diverse team of Professional and Community Affiliates from within and outside the University. Remarkably, she has been principal or co-investigator on 20 successful new CIHR, SSHRC and other grants worth just shy of \$2 million since her arrival at BU. To her credit, many of these involve teams of more senior scholars and community leaders. And of the total, she is principal or co-principal investigator on 4 of the 8 Tri-Council funded projects. This ability to lead interdisciplinary, collaborative, community-based, capacity building teams of researchers in nationally funded research projects is a key strength of Dr. Herron that sets her apart from other early-career faculty. In only her sixth year at BU, she already earned a Senate Research Award – again, an exceptional accomplishment here at such an early career stage. At least one senior researcher with whom she collaborates has confided that it is exhausting trying to keep up with her!

Her research is making an impact beyond academia. Among other accomplishments, she was selected in 2021 as a participant in the Canadian Science Policy Centre's "Science Meets Parliament" program. Her work has been frequently publicized in local media. And her innovative project on dance and dementia, in conjunction with the National Ballet of Canada, resulted not only in scholarly presentations, publications, and an edited volume, but a short film that is circulating well beyond academia.

Dr. Herron is extremely popular with students and has brought original and engaging instruction to our Department's required Research Methods in Geography and her new Health, Place, and Environment courses, among others. At the graduate level, she serves as an effective mentor for students across four of Brandon University's five Faculties, being involved in student supervision in the Master of Environmental and Life Sciences (Science), Master of Rural Development (Arts),

and Master of Psychiatric Nursing (Health Studies), and Master of Education (Education). She has also been very active in community service at Brandon University, serving on numerous committees including the Indigenous Education Senate Sub-Committee, the Status of Women Review Committee, and the Conference Organizing Committee for Research Enhancement. Her work on Indigenization at Brandon University is particularly notable, as she is a real torch bearer for these initiatives, leading her Department and Faculty, and making significant impact across the university. She is also engaged with the external community, for example sitting on the board of directors of the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, a non-profit aimed at addressing issues of social justice, poverty, housing, and inclusion in Brandon's core neighbourhood. Her passion for community based research permeates every aspect of her career as a health geography researcher and educator.

Dr. Mark Skinner, a leader in Canadian health geography at Trent University, and co-principal investigator with Dr. Herron on one CIHR grant, states: "For those of us that work with Rachel at BU and elsewhere, her research success is underscored by her commitment to excellence in pedagogy and her passion for teaching geography and training geography students in the often more demanding (and certainly more rewarding!) smaller university setting of BU."

The Department of Geography and Environment considers itself extremely lucky to count Dr. Herron as one of its colleagues. Her dedication to teaching and scholarship is admirable. In several short years, Dr. Herron has established herself as a leader of numerous original and effective research projects on rural health in Manitoba and has become a respected scholar and speaker on the subjects of her expertise. As the summary above and her CV attests, she has achieved a record of productivity only seven years since her PhD that would be enviable even for someone approaching retirement.