

Research Assistant Opportunity Casual Position

Housing Futures in Monteverde

Position start date: as soon as possible

Overview: The proposed project supports ongoing analysis of two existing datasets: a comprehensive household survey and seven arts-based workshops with local youth (five of which have already been completed) exploring their housing and ecological futures. Preliminary workshop findings indicate consistent themes across groups: limited educational pathways beyond tourism; mental-health stress linked to economic pressures; frustration with municipal governance; displacement and spatial segregation between foreign and local families; the lack of public spaces; and a strong desire for meaningful participation in community decision-making. Youth expressed feeling unheard by adults yet deeply invested in shaping the region's future. These themes underscore calls in the literature for engaging young people directly in community development and planning (Black & Walsh 2019; Botchwey et al. 2019; Teixeira et al. 2020). Aligning the youth findings with the household survey data, with 394 household respondents, will generate a more comprehensive understanding of how housing and ecological inequities are experienced across generations and how residents imagine feasible futures.

The project has four main objectives: (1) to support data analysis and publication from the MVI household survey and youth workshops; (2) to integrate and compare findings across datasets to map the lived impacts of transnational gentrification on housing and ecological well-being; (3) to prepare a second Partnership Engage Grant (PEG) application focusing on youth capacity building, community engagement, and strategic planning; and (4) to continue a history of the present of Monteverde through the lens of transnational encounters.

Specific activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Data Analysis

- Conduct collaborative qualitative analysis of arts-based youth workshops, including coding, theme development, and synthesis of findings. This will include working with local community members on analysis as well.
- Support quantitative and mixed-methods analysis of the MVI household housing survey, with a focus on the intersections of housing, ecological pressures, and transnational dynamics.
- Mapping similarities and differences between survey and focus group findings.

2. Writing, Knowledge Mobilization, and Dissemination

- Contribute to drafting scholarly manuscripts and public-facing summaries for community use.
- Prepare materials for presentations, conference submissions, and community dissemination events in Monteverde and at one academic conference.
- Support the preparation of open-access outputs in alignment with AU's open scholarship commitments.

3. Development of a Partnership Engage Grant (PEG) Application

- Assist with drafting the second-phase Partnership Engage Grant proposal to submit in March 2026, including literature review, identifying community priorities, outlining research objectives, and preparing supporting documents.
- Work with AU and MVI stakeholders to design youth-focused capacity-building activities and community-driven research components for the PEG application.
- Help articulate project timelines, budgets, and partnership contributions.

4. Additional Research and Administrative Support

- Attend regular project meetings with AU and MVI teams.
- Support documentation data management, and the organization of collaborative sessions.

The successful candidate will work with, and directly report to, Dr Katie MacDonald at Athabasca University. Dr MacDonald will provide adequate training for the project.

The Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) will gain hands-on experience in community-based research while working closely with partners. They will learn to engage respectfully with local youth and community members, including co-interpreting data and contributing to project planning. They will receive training in qualitative and survey data analysis using LibreQDA, including coding, theme development, and integration of findings from household surveys and arts-based youth workshops.

The student will also be mentored in grant development for the next Partnership Engage Grant application, helping to draft sections, plan activities, and align community priorities.

Mentorship will include biweekly meetings with Dr. MacDonald to discuss project progress and support day-to-day tasks. In addition, the GRA will participate in monthly professional development sessions that Dr MacDonald already holds with current research assistants covering topics such as systematic reviews, strategies for academic note-taking, and intersectional coding approaches. These combined mentorship activities will support both the GRA's research skills and broader professional growth.

Qualifications:

- Only Athabasca University graduate students are eligible for this position
- The student must have some proficiency in Spanish as the data is in Spanish.
- Experience in data analysis is an asset.

Amount of total hours: About 420 hours

Anticipated average hours of work per week: About 8 hours/week for 8 months

Maximum hours per work per week: 16 hours

Rate: \$24.99/hour

Location: virtual

Anticipated Position Start Date: May 1, 2026

How to apply:



Qualified individuals are encouraged to submit their application by email to Dr. MacDonald at macdonaldk@athabascau.ca. Applications should include (as a single PDF file):

- a brief cover letter that summarizes your skills,
- interests and experience;
- a current resume or curriculum vitae;
- and the contact information for 1-2 references.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

We strongly encourage applications from individuals with lived experience related to housing or community development, as well as from equity-deserving groups including Indigenous people, racialized individuals, 2SLGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and others historically underrepresented in academic research.

Athabasca University and the researchers are committed and seek to support equity in employment and research opportunities. We strongly encourage applications from Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, and other historically marginalized groups. Applicants are welcome, but not required, to self-identify in their letter of application.

