

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Using Oral History for rural research and revitalization

Tom Beckley
Ray Bollman
David Bruce
Omer Chouinard
Ivan Emke
Greg Halseth
Bruno Jean
Patrice LeBlanc
Dianne Looker

Bill.Reimer@concordia.ca
nre.concordia.ca
www.crrf.ca
2009/04/07

Diane Martz
Solange Nadeau
John Parkins
Steve Plante
Doug Ramsey
Richard Stedman
Ellen Wall
Derek Wilkinson
Anna Woodrow

FCAR
CRRF
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UJ Project

Concordia UNIVERSITY
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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

- Title: What we want; What we did; What we can do: Using Oral History for rural research and revitalization.
- This presentation discusses the objectives of the New Rural Economy Project, the strategies used to meet those objectives, and how they might be relevant for oral histories and the Oral History Project. Objectives for knowledge-building, education, and policy-development are discussed.

- Acknowledgements:*
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*
- Concordia University*
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada*
- Statistics Canada*
- CRRF*
- NRE Research Team*
- Rural Citizens in our field sites*

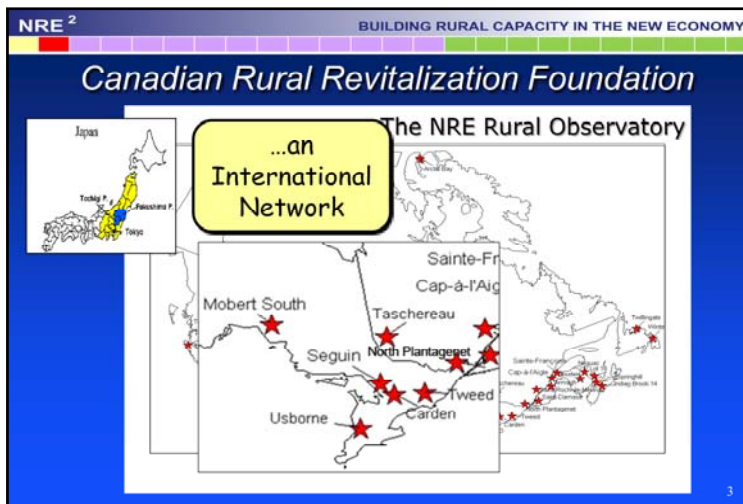
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Outline

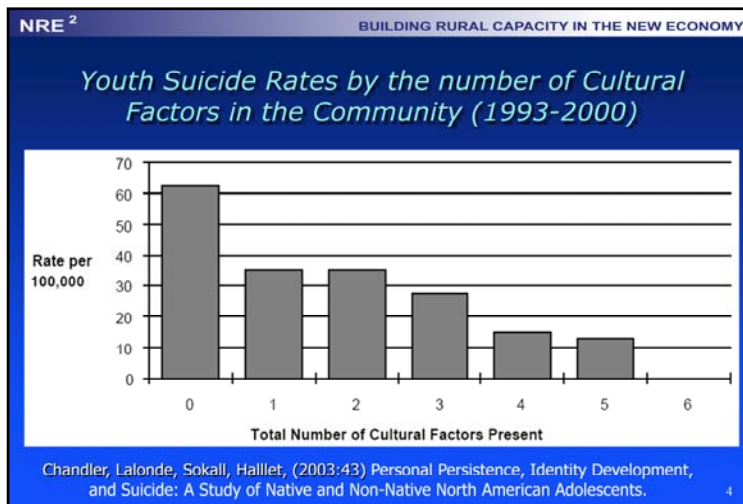
- What is rural-urban interdependence?
 - Trade and exchange
 - Institutions
 - Environment
 - Identity
- What strategic actions does it suggest for communities, urban centres, provinces?
 - 8 Suggestions

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- I would like to use the recognition of this interdependence as a basis for examining some of the changes that have been taking place in Canadian society over the last 80 years or so.
- It has not only helped us to focus our analysis of these changes
- But it has provided a lens that suggests some rather specific opportunities for policy directions in the future.
- My presentation will be structured around 2 main questions
 - (S) What is the nature of interdependence among rural and urban people and places?
 - Including a discussion of how it has changed
 - I will discuss this in terms of 4 spheres of interdependence:
 - Trade and the exchange of goods and services
 - Institutions
 - Environment, and
 - Identity
 - (S) What are some of the strategies that this interdependence suggests – for Rural communities, Urban centres, and provincial and federal governments?
 - I will discuss these in terms of 8 suggestions arising from our research and deliberation



- My comments emerge from 20 years of collaboration within the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
 - Researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, business people, and citizens
 - For 20 years meeting in annual conferences and workshops – in rural areas
- In 1997 we established a national research project: Understanding the New Rural Economy
 - Includes 15 core researchers in 11 universities across the country
 - (S) 32 systematically chosen rural communities (The Rural Observatory)
 - (S) 6 in Ontario
- Our Japanese colleagues were very impressed with this approach and asked us if we would collaborate with them to do the same thing in Japan
 - (S) With our help they selected 2 sites in Japan and ran a parallel and comparative project with ours One of the most general finding of that research was the realization of the extensive way in which rural and urban places are interdependent
 - Thus – it has become a central focus of our investigation
 - Research projects underway in 6 provinces
- My presentation is therefore indebted to the work and insights of many people in the CRRF and NRE networks.



- *Chandler, Lalonde, Sokall, Hallett, (2003:43) Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.*
- In their work on adolescent suicide among Aboriginal peoples, they discovered a very strong relationship between the failure to recognize aboriginal culture and suicide
 - In those communities where the history and culture were celebrated, the suicide rate dropped dramatically (cf. graph)
- Their subsequent work has led them to argue that:
 - A strong sense of identity and continuity is essential for healthy personal and social resiliency (and an important mitigating factor against suicide)
 - Identity and continuity is rooted in local events, relationships, and history – especially among narrative-based cultures
 - Undermining the legitimacy and credibility of this local history and relationships has significant negative effects on the identity of those closely connected with it – especially among narrative-based cultures
- This research, and supporting work among rural Quebec adolescents suggests to me that place-based perspectives are more important than simply a special focus of analysis for designing our policy and research – they touch on a critical feature of our sense of self and humanity along with our ability to function in confidence and sympathy with others
- It also suggests that we need to aggressively seek to understand the nature and relationship between narrative and essentialist approaches to the world
 - Our disastrous policies directed to the eradication of Aboriginal culture, the elimination of cultural and ethnic traditions, and the relocation of communities makes clear that the eradication of narrative for essentialist approaches is not the way to go
 - Instead, we are much better off searching for new ways in which the strengths of narrative understandings can be integrated with those of essentialist approaches to build new forms of governance which respect local places
- [Cultural continuity factors:
 - *Recognized institutions of self-government*
 - *History of Land Claims actions*
 - *Cultural Education – Majority of students attend a band-administered school*
 - *Level of local control over health services*
 - *Number of local cultural facilities*
 - *Extent to which local band controlled Police and Fire services]*

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