

## Immigration in the New Rural Economy

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2010/01/25

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**•1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. The urban and rural contexts**

•In the competitive globalized world, our communities must constantly find new and innovative ways of to stand out, to develop or, at the very least, to ensure their own survival. They must strive to recruit the most productive and dynamic people. The quality of their environment depends on a multitude of factors related to their surroundings. What are the distinctive characteristics of an urban metropolitan environment, a non-metropolitan urban environment, a rural near-urban environment, and a remote rural environment? What are the social interactions like in each of these settings? What lessons can decision makers learn when developing public policy that focuses on attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants?

•Presenters:

•- **Bill Reimer, Department of Sociology, Concordia University, Montréal, *Immigration in the New Rural Economy***

•- **Miu Chung Yan, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, *Bridging Newcomers in the Neighbourhood Scale***

•- **Julie Drolet, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, *Settlement Experience in a Small City***

•- **Sandeep Kumar Agrawal, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University, Toronto, *Welcoming Multicultural Neighbourhoods***

•How Could Canadian Communities Be More Welcoming?" in Ottawa on January 25, 2010. The seminar will include four panels: 1) A proactive approach by federal, provincial and municipal governments; 2) The role of non-governmental organizations; 3) The urban and rural contexts; 4) Francophone and Anglophone minority language communities. I would be very pleased if you would accept our invitation to be a speaker on the panel 3 to discuss the issue of immigration in the new rural economy.

•This presentation will address the special challenges and opportunities of rural communities for attracting, integrating, and retaining newcomers. Particular attention will be given to the changing conditions of rural areas and their strategic options for the future. Examples from Canada and abroad will be used to illustrate initiatives and their outcomes. Policy options for municipalities, regions, provinces, and the federal government will be suggested.

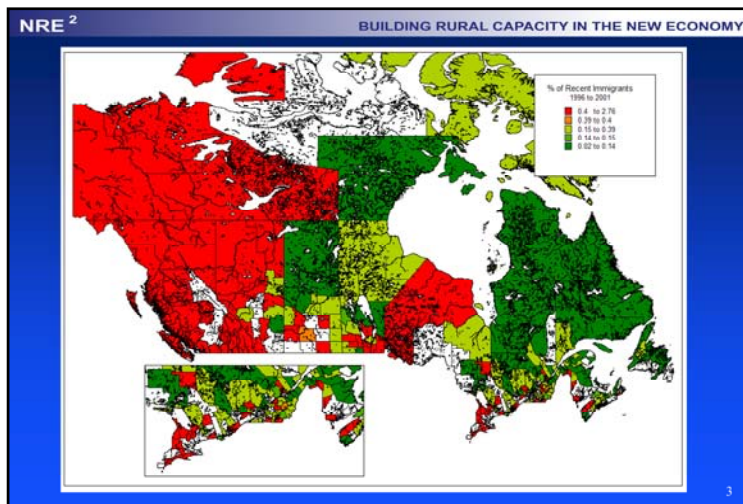
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## How can we make our communities more attractive and welcoming?

- Economic capital (Jobs)
- Human capital (education, skills)
- Social capital (networks and quality of life)
- Natural capital (environmental assets)

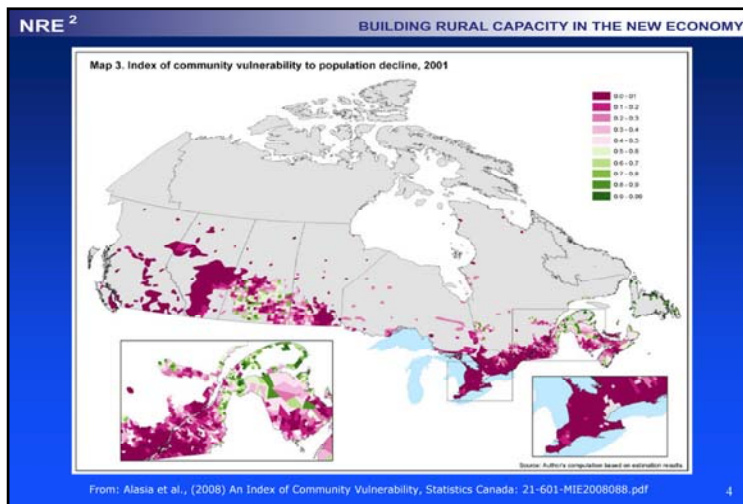
2

- Questions:
  - How can we make our communities more attractive and welcoming?
  - What policies facilitate this?
- What is special about rural when answering these questions?
- Many of the answers are similar for both rural and urban areas
  - Jobs to make them attractive
  - Human capital (education) to boost capacities
  - Social capital
  - Quality of life to make people want to stay
- What is special about rural is distance, density, and identity
  - [Urban-adjacent, non-adjacent, and remote have different challenges and outcomes and slightly different answers to the questions]
- From a community perspective
  - Need local initiatives to identify and reorganize local assets (natural, human, social, and cultural)
    - E.g. Springhill and old mines, St. Clement and handicapped skills
  - Develop and learn to use regional, national, and international linkages in new ways
    - E.g. Japanese and their diaspora, Tweed and old competitors; Seguin and seasonal residents
  - Build social infrastructure as much as physical
    - E.g. Inuvik and arena to greenhouse, Winkler and Mennonite heritage to full range of social supports, Cap-St-Ignace and super Canadienne
- From a government point of view – how facilitate these initiatives?
  - Support social infrastructure as much as physical
    - E.g. Manitoba and Winkler, SRDC experiment in Cape Breton I.
  - Take initiative on regional infrastructure
    - E.g. Quebec and the MTCs vs. AB approach
  - Provide time and resources for collaboration
    - E.g. Quebec and MRCs; Community Futures
  - Explore alternatives on representation and accountability
    - E.g. Food risk in wildfire (Lost Creek); SRDC experiment, medical practitioners
  - Learn to collaborate with a wider range of partners
    - E.g. Volunteers, informal networks, innovative private sector



Immigration is an equivocal solution to the challenge of rural depopulation

- Immigrants want to go to the urban regions just as non-immigrant Canadians
- Yet – immigration makes a significant contribution to some rural areas – in spite of the general trend to urbanization
- Provides a useful basis for research and understanding
  - Which places are successful in attracting and retaining immigrants?
  - Why?
  - What are the policy implications of these results?
- On the map – red areas are the regions (Census Divisions) with a relatively high proportion of recent immigrants (1996 to 2001).
  - Removed urbanized CDs
  - Predominant in the West (note bias of CD areas)
  - Southern Manitoba
  - Selected CDs in Ontario, Quebec, Maritime Regions
- Reflects the more general research (cf. Metropolis publication)



- Alasia, Alessandro, Ray Bollman, John Parkins, and Bill Reimer, (2008) "An Index of Community Vulnerability: Conceptual Framework and Application to Population and Employment Changes, 1981-2001" Statistics Canada: *Agriculture and Rural Working Paper Series*, Catalogue no. 21-601-MIE – No. 88. [<http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/21-601-MIE/21-601-MIE2008088.pdf>]

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## What's special about rural (then and now)?

Old Rural Economy	New Rural Economy
• Homogeneous culture	• Diverse cultures
• Low knowledge demands	• High knowledge demands
• Resource commodities	• Services and amenities
• Simple and repetitive	• Complex
• Low mobility	• High mobility
• Local relations important	• External relations important

5

Our research has been stimulated and inspired by the transformation of the Canadian economy in general and its manifestations at the rural level in particular

- We feel that understanding the nature of these changes is critical to the vitalization and revitalization of rural Canada
- It means we are better able to position (rural) Canada for these new conditions?

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## What's special about rural (compared to urban)?

- Distance and density
- Structure of the economy
- Environment
- Identity

6

- What makes rural special when considering immigration?
- Distance and density
  - Lower critical mass
  - Less (accurate) information
  - Fewer services
- The structure of the economy
  - Sector domination (less diversity)
  - Vulnerable to boom-bust cycles
- The environment
  - Non-moveable assets
  - Vulnerable to climate change (extremes)
- Identity
  - Geographical and heritage-based
  - Cultural and ethnic based
  - Higher social capital – associative and communal



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## Creating welcoming rural places



**Distance and Density**

- More (accurate) information
- Multiple communication venues
- Regional organization



**The Economy**

- Local-appropriate programs
- Integrate employers
- Target potential migrants


### Creating welcoming rural places

- Distance and density
  - Improve information – plus more realistic information
    - In Seguin they dealt with resistance and ignorance of seasonal residents by putting them on municipal committees – found they not only became informed about local challenges, but used their external networks to overcome those challenges in unique and effective ways
  - Utilize multiple communication venues when informing about government and other programs (not just internet)
    - In Mackenzie, it was the community operated radio that was the key source of information
    - In Lot 16, PEI it was the local newsletter
    - In most small towns it can be the local bulletin board
  - Build long-lasting regional structures (to overcome density challenges)
    - Quebec has the advantage of MRCs – and they have demonstrated their effectiveness for building the capacity of local towns
    - In Tweed, the community overcame a long history of regional animosity when they sought out the help of nearby towns to facilitate a national conference. The success of this initiative has led to continuing collaboration as a tourism destination under the banner of “Comfort Country”
- Economy
  - Develop local-appropriate programs (metro-adjacent, non-metro-adjacent, remote)
    - Winkler used its historical legacy in the Mennonite culture to find immigrants and facilitate their integration
  - Integrate employers in local and regional planning
    - Communities along the Miramichi river established a committee of businesses, volunteer groups, fishers, and government who faced a common challenge related to the water quality in the watershed.
    - Employers worked closely with community organizations to ensure an adequate labour force in Brooks, AB
  - Target potential migrants by skills
    - The city of Yellowknife turned to experienced diamond mine workers from around the world when it needed labour for its new mine

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## Creating welcoming rural places


**The Environment**



- Market assets
- Match assets to potential migrants

- Target origins with destinations
- Work with existing groups
- Acknowledge multiple knowledge

**Identity**



8

### Creating welcoming rural places

- Environment
  - Market natural assets
    - Tumbler Ridge targeted young retirees in its campaign for new residents. These were the kind of people who would be most likely to appreciate the natural environment.
  - Use them as assets for potential immigrants
    - The dog sleds, vistas, and culture of Whitehorse is enough to justify direct flights from Northern Europe throughout much of the year.
- Identity
  - Target strategic place of origin
    - Demographers know the importance of culture and language in the establishment of migration flows or chains. Once a critical size is established, they become self-sustaining cycles. Winkler and Brooks, AB used these in an explicit fashion to reach this critical mass.
  - Work with – and support – existing groups
    - Government bureaucracies tend to treat volunteer, ethnic, religious, and family groups as problematic both with respect to accountability and representativeness.
    - Most of the people in these groups tend to treat the forms and regulations of government as a diversion from their primary reason for participation.
    - Local groups are the most trusted of the groups in rural communities – government organizations are the least trusted.
    - Governments would be well advised to find ways to work with these groups rather than hide behind the regulations or attempt to duplicate the structures (e.g. Band Councils vs. tribal councils)
    - Social Research and Demonstration Corporation project in Cape Breton
      - Community Employment Innovation Project ([http://www.srdc.org/en\\_publications.asp?type=6](http://www.srdc.org/en_publications.asp?type=6))
      - Carcross/Tagish nation dealt with this by starting with stories – then worked from there to regulations.
  - Acknowledge and work through multiple ways of knowing and collaborating
    - Narrative vs. essentialist
    - Associative and communal
    - Difficult for bureaucracies since they operate on generalized principles
      - Bear the extra costs of inter-knowledge collaboration



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## Attraction and Retention

- Build local economy
- Build local institutional capacity
- Provide cultural and social support
- Flexible and broad-based approach

**Build local capacity**

9

### Key Elements for Attraction and Retention of Immigrants

- Economic viability and possibly growth
  - Consistent with our research identification of local capacity as critical for economic growth as well as governance
  - Multiple reasons for immigration (employment and retirement)
- Institutional capacity
  - Local, regional, provincial, federal
  - Collaboration at all levels
  - Destination and region of origin
- Cultural and social support
  - NGOs and local leaders critical
  - Use existing (informal) assets
- Welcoming social context
  - Targeted and appropriate services
  - Broad-based approach (not just worker, but family as well)
  - Mechanisms for feedback and adjustment to special needs
- Critical role of local community
  - Building local capacity means
    - Collaboration with local groups (formal and informal)
    - Supporting governance capacity where necessary
    - Regional view

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10