

**NRE<sup>2</sup>** BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

## Rural Vitality – From Surviving to Thriving: Insights from the New Rural Economy Project

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

Bill Reimer  
Bill.Reimer@concordia.ca  
<http://nre.concordia.ca>

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

May 21-23, 2008

Concordia UNIVERSITY  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

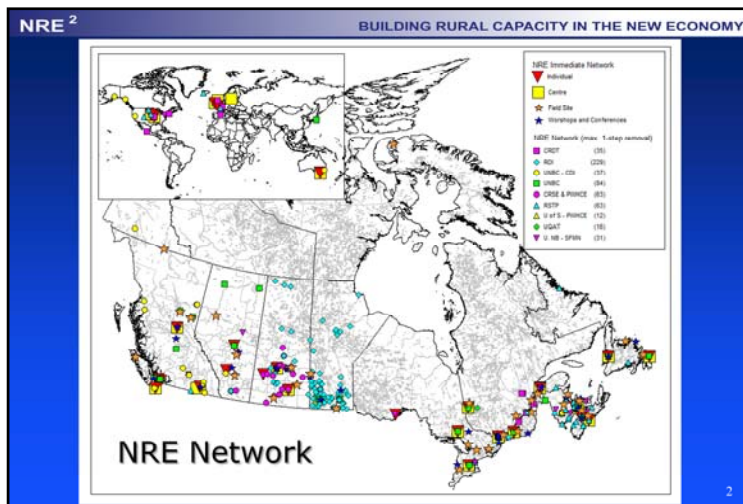
FCAR  
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UJ Project

The Monieson Centre  
PE/LA CF

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

•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
- The Monieson Centre (Queens), Prince Edward/Lennox & Addington Community Futures Development Corporation (PELA CDFC)



- Was asked to bring to this conference some of the insights that we have gleaned from our 10 years of research in the NRE project
  - Researchers, policy-makers, activists, citizens
  - National and international
- It is too much for the time available, so I have decided to focus on some of our results that are likely to be most useful to:
  - Local communities and groups (like those represented by the Prince Edward/Lennox & Addington Community Futures Corporation), and
  - The challenges of partnerships among researchers (like the Monieson Center), policy-makers (at all levels), and rural activists (whether they be in the form of municipal counselors, community leaders, or citizens)

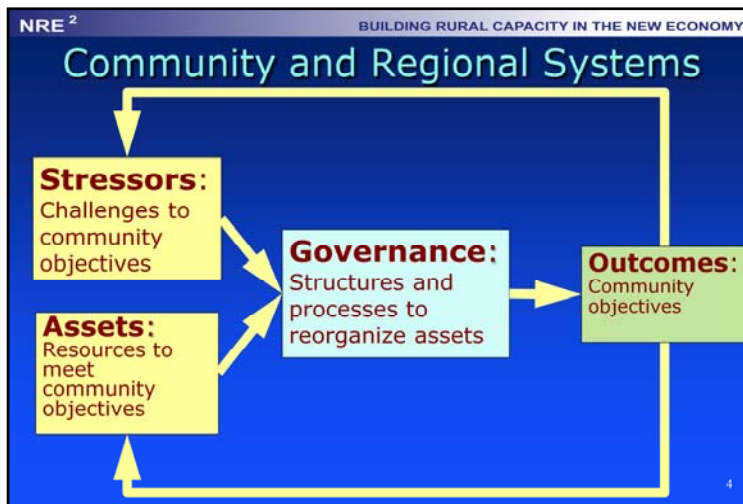
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## Questions

- How do communities innovate and adapt?
- What are the major obstacles to collaboration and partnerships?
- How might they be overcome?
- Implications for PE/LA region?

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- In doing so, I will address questions like:
  - How does community innovation and adaptation occur?
  - What are some of the obstacles to collaboration and partnerships?
  - How might they be overcome?
  - What are the implications for collaboration in the Prince Edward/Lennox & Addington region?



- We have found it useful to think about the processes of local community and regional development using a systems point of view.
- Our version is a kind of 'systems-lite' view of places, communities, regions, and networks
  - We treat them as somewhat integrated systems
  - (S) Then consider the outcomes as part of the ongoing process of system adaptation, innovation, and change
- From this point of view those outcomes are considered to be the result of 3 major factors
  - (S) The first are the stressors that affect the place or other unit of analysis.
    - These stressors can be a wide range of things – both good and bad – but they are the many events, crises, and trends that affect the fate of communities or regions.
    - It is important to focus on the trends that are likely to significantly affect rural places into the future
  - (S) The second are the assets of the community, region, network or system being considered.
    - These are the natural resources, amenities, financial, human, and social characteristics of the region or community – the things that can be mobilized to deal with the stressors
    - The difference between a stressor and an asset is not hard and fast, by the way – since stressors can become assets and vice versa – but as we shall see, I prefer to treat them as separate at this point and conceptualize this interdependence as part of the overall dynamic of the system
  - (S) The third element of the framework is the governance arrangements and actions that facilitate the reorganization and mobilization of assets in new ways to meet the challenges of the stressors – and hopefully produce the valued outcomes for the community
- (S) Since this is a dynamic system, these outcomes can also become stressors or assets in the future – either directly or indirectly
  - You can also see how assets can become stressors in the future via the governance intervention just as stressors can become assets within this dynamic system
- This framework has helped us to organize the many aspects of rural change and make the generalizations of our research relevant for specific places
- This framework suggests that people in local places ask questions such as:
  - What are the major stressors that we face and are likely to face in the future?
  - What are the assets we have or can create to meet those stressors?
  - What are the outcomes we desire?
  - What are the best governance structures and processes for reorganizing those assets to produce the outcomes we desire?
- Not only can we, as researchers, provide some help in answering these questions, but we can also suggest how those answers might be framed in ways that are directly relevant to different types of places

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## Stressors

- Urbanization
- Machines replace labour
- Global competition
- Knowledge economy
- Environment and climate
- Immigration
- Population aging (Aboriginal pop. growth)
- Governance reorganization

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•Some examples of the stressors we have identified as critical for the future of rural areas are included in this partial list

- Urbanization – movement of people from rural to urban areas will affect different places in different ways
  - In this region your challenges will be about managing the incoming people while protecting the assets that draw them (beautiful scenery, small towns, slower pace of life, and open spaces)
  - In other regions, it will be about dealing with population loss
- Substitution of machines (technology) for labour is likely to continue (becoming more productive and price-competitive means requiring fewer workers, so jumping on the commodity treadmill is likely to be a dead end for places wishing to grow)
- The economy will continue to be global – meaning both competitors and markets are world-wide (highly dependent on transport and communication costs, so the wild card may be the price of energy)
- Knowledge critical (knowledge of these global markets, knowledge about using the new technologies, and generally learning how to learn and anticipate the futures)
- The environment, climate, and sustainability will increase in importance (rural particularly vulnerable to its effects)
- Immigration will continue to be a necessity for Canada into the future – as it has been in the past
- Rural and urban communities alike need to consider the impacts of these (and related) issues on their local place if they are to thrive – but the process of doing so is often a challenge itself
- How do you draw attention to these issues within your region?
- How do you move people from perspectives and ways of behaving that exacerbate the negative outcomes of these processes?
- How do you form the alliances and partnerships across differences that seem insurmountable?
- It is to these types of questions which I wish to turn

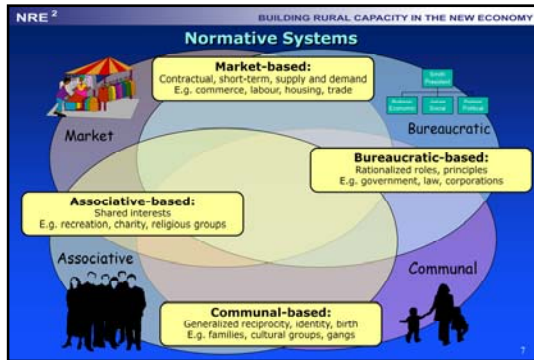
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## New Governance

- Private, Public, Civic Partnerships
- New technologies
- Boards of directors
- Multiple tools of governance
- Flexible structure

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- In response to these stressors, we (and others) have noticed the emergence of new forms of governance – especially in vital communities
- This new governance has the following types of characteristics
  - Collaboration among private, public, and civic sectors – emphasis on inclusivity of all relevant partners
  - Use of new technologies to communicate and collaborate (information-gathering, marketing, self-organization)
  - Use of boards of directors model for self-organization
    - Meet funding requirements (BoD more likely to receive funding)
    - Improve accountability
  - Multiple tools of governance used: fiscal arrangements, blend of volunteer and paid participation, town-hall style governance, consensus, professional and volunteer provision of accountability
    - In general – maintaining a flexible structure, open to change
- But it is also a major challenge to get there in many places
  - Part of our research has been about the challenges which communities face to take advantage of these new governance approaches
  - Particularly relevant for the type of relationship which the Monieson Centre and the Community Futures Corporation need to establish among themselves and local communities



- Some of the major challenges in establishing partnerships and identifying new assets are the different ways in which we view the world and organize our activities
- In order to get together, form groups, coordinate our activity, establish partnerships, and become friends we need to know about and respond to the various ways in which people behave, are inspired, and feel confident in their relationships – able to trust one another in the process
- Sociologists and psychologists point to these ways of relating as ‘norms’
- In our research work, we have found it useful to think about them in terms of four normative systems
- (S) Market relations (such as found in commerce, labour markets, housing markets, trade)
  - Based on supply & demand, contracts
  - Supported and controlled by trade agreements, competition legislation, labour law, better business bureau, and the courts
  - They are the norms that guide us when we shop for groceries, seek employment, or negotiate the purchase of a house
- (S) Bureaucratic relations (e.g. government, corporations, law, formal organizations)
  - Based on rationalized roles, authority and status, generalized principles
  - Controlled by legislation, corporate law
  - They are the norms that guide us when getting our driver’s license, meeting a doctor, following Roberts rules of order, or for most of us researchers, relating to colleagues or students
- (S) Associative relations (e.g. baseball teams, bridge clubs, environmental groups, meals on wheels)
  - Based on people coming together because they have a shared interest
  - Controlled by civil law, municipal by-laws, social norms, and informal sanctions
- (S) Communal relations (e.g. families, friendship networks, gangs, cultural groups)
  - Based on kinship, generalized reciprocity, favours
  - Controlled by informal norms, legislation, family law, and government support agencies
- All types are implicated in the individual and organizational linkages we use and develop, but some more predominant than others in specific cases or for particular types of organizations
- These systems are not always compatible, but they can be organized in such a way that they can reinforce one another for particular purposes and at particular times
- We have paid attention to the ways in which they have been reorganized in rural areas in order to meet changing conditions.




### Example of capacity: Cap a l'Aigle

- (S) Small village of 7000 on the north side of the St. Lawrence river
- (S) Several of the citizens had developed an interest in Lilacs (associative-based relations)
  - Had a club - volunteers
  - Exchanged stories, clippings
  - Discovered that there was a more general interest in lilacs throughout North America (Internet a contributing asset)
- When municipal council was exploring options for community economic development
  - One of the counselors had a relative in this club and raised the option of using it as a basis for economic development
  - With the club they developed a business plan
  - Got government funding
  - Established a festival
  - (S) Marketed the village
- In order to make this happen they used their capacity in all four normative systems
  - They used the communal-based norms of the municipal councillor to merge the associative-based norms of the lilac club with the bureaucratic-based ones of the local development agency. They added their capacity with market-related skills to develop a business plan and transform the process into a marketable image and event that now makes a major contribution to the economic health of the community
- But these normative systems do not always function well together



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## Bases of Understanding

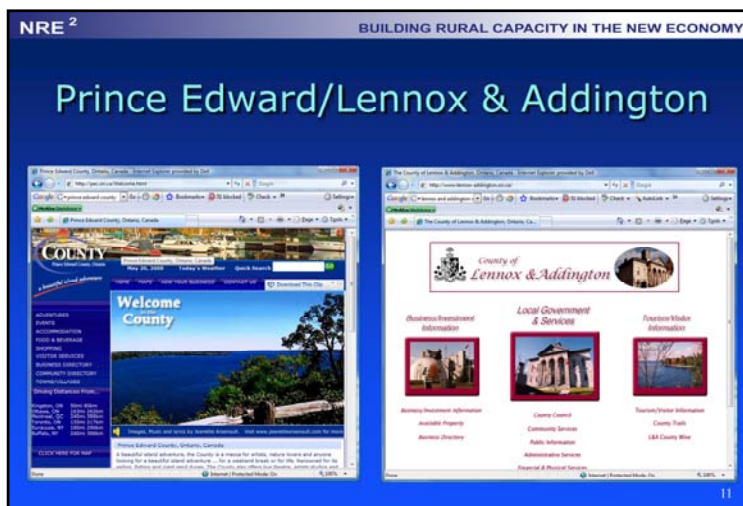
Narrative	Essentialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Born in Vancouver</li> <li>• Married to Fran Shaver in 1967</li> <li>• Four grandchildren by our 2 children</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sociologist</li> <li>• Professor</li> <li>• Father</li> <li>• Grandfather</li> <li>• White</li> </ul>

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- One of the most problematic collaborative relations in rural areas are the ones between bureaucratic organizations and the volunteer groups of our rural communities which run more on the associative and communal norms to which I referred.
- Chandler and his colleagues have conducted research that helps us to understand a major basis of this challenge – and thereby sets the stage for a more appropriate resolution
- In their research on adolescent suicide among Aboriginal youth, they identify two types of understanding which we use to make sense of the world, our place in it, the values we hold, and the relationships we form
  - The narrative form and the essentialist form
- Narrative is about understanding and deciding on the basis of stories, specific social relations, and unique historical circumstances – reminiscent of the ways in which we operate in associative and communal-based relations
  - From a narrative perspective, I am Bill Reimer, son of Lilian and Peter Reimer, born in Vancouver, moved to Quebec in 1972 and father of Daegan and JP
  - From a narrative point of view it is this type of information and story which gives me identity and meaning
- Essentialism is about understanding and deciding on the basis of underlying patterns and processes, general principles, and inferred trends – reminiscent of the ways in which we debate around our conferences and parliaments and met out justice in our courts\*
  - From an essentialist point of view I am William Reimer, a university professor, father, husband, white, male.
- Both are critical ways of knowing and both are in a struggle for legitimacy – a struggle made most visible when it comes to our efforts for bottom-up governance, government-community partnerships, private-public partnerships, and (as Chandler points out) suicide, social cohesion, and collective action
- Bureaucracies – by virtue of their mandate and success operate primarily on essentialist principles
  - We are identified by our roles (teacher, student, administrator, janitor, senior citizen, client) and are easily replaceable within those roles
  - We make assessments and enforce accountability in terms of general products: publications, money, events, and membership
  - All of these are necessary in a complex society – and we ensure they are followed through a justice system built on the same principles
- However, local communities and (as Chandler points out) our personal identities operate more often on a narrative level
  - Our sense of self, our sense of community (and thereby our commitment to community), our most personal values, and our strongest attachments are formulated in terms of narrative – the stories by which we make sense of ourselves and our world
  - Newspapers and advertisers know the power of this – instructing their journalists and upcoming copy writers to look for the story and craft their material in terms of the story
  - Religious and ideological groups make use of it as well – constructing and reconstructing a history of their current position in terms of challenges overcome, special relationships (with one god or another), and destinies built on the stories of the past.
- From the point of view of governance, therefore, the recognition of these different ways of knowing and reorganizing our governance structures to respect them becomes a critical issue
- Without doing so, we will continually be faced with conflict and misunderstanding – usually rooted in discrediting one or the other rather than being able to build on their strengths
- I would like to illustrate this point by reference to a story – the story of the Carcross/Tinglit Nation in the Yukon



- As the result of recent land and governance settlements, the Carcross/Tagish Nation – along with many Aboriginal groups in BC and Canada – are faced with the enormous challenge of reorganizing their economic, social, health, education, political, and welfare institutions
- They have responded with an innovative and promising approach – that bodes well for the future of place-based governance
  - Each of their policy documents begins with a study of stories – primarily oral stories in this culture, told to them by their elders and recorded with a view to particular policy objectives
  - They started with family policy – compiling the stories and working on the identification of principles and themes that inform them about the role, importance, and nature of family learning in their culture.
  - Out of these stories, they then develop the positions, programs, and criteria that are necessary to merge with the more essentialist approach of our government and judicial systems – producing a policy document to guide their institution-building and relations with other levels of government
  - Their final act is to design a dance – a dance which represents the policy and its roots in the history and culture of the nation which developed it
- So far, the territorial authorities have accepted this innovative approach to self-government – one which recognizes the stories, people, and places of Carcross, but which merges with the statutes and regulations of the broader government
- I put this example before you for two reasons
  - It illustrates some of the implications of our focus on place – implications that are likely to take us outside the comfort of our research and governance traditions and challenge us to entertain new forms of thinking and new forms of governance – better adapted to the idiosyncrasies of place, and
  - It inspires us to see how such exploration and transformation might be done – in this case learning from the people and cultures that we were so quick to discount and suppress. Many other experiments of this nature are taking place as we come to agreements with native peoples in BC, in Nunavut, and across the country.



- How does this relate to the counties of Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington?
  - After all, you are not engaged in formal land claims or self-governance claims with the government
- But that is not quite true
  - You are, I can see from your web sites alone, interested in what is done with your land and amenities – and you are concerned with how you might achieve the many projects and enterprises that will improve your conditions
  - And you are – of course deeply engaged with government organizations
  - If you understand some of the normative requirements of these organizations and learn how to use them, you will be better able to negotiate with them
  - But if you also understand how your own concerns and perspectives are different than those reflected in essentialist formulations, you will also be better able to learn what you want without the danger of losing something in the process of ‘translation’
  - It may mean something like the Carcross nation did – going first to your constituents, in the language they understand, before working in a transparent manner to bridge the gap with government agencies

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## Government and Researchers

- Bear the burden of the bureaucratic requirements:
  - Fair applications and accountability
- Accommodate and respect existing social organizations
- Adjust demands to local time frames
- Share power
- Explore innovative governance arrangements

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- There is also a message here for government and other bureaucratic organizations
  - If you ignore the power and importance of these other ways of understanding and operating, you may get some product, but you will often undermine the very thing which inspires and motivates the people in the communities
  - We have often heard from our community people how they would be happy to volunteer to help out with the local baseball league, the community renovation project, or the women's shelter, but they are not interested in sitting on committees, filling out forms, or meeting with government reps
    - (S) These forms and accountability structures are justifiable demands from a bureaucratic organization – and one which we support within a democratic society, but if these demands are not also accompanied with the resources and supports they require, they will overwhelm the basic motivations for local action and thereby act against the very thing which they were established to create.
  - (S) We have a number of examples where government agencies (and often agents) have found ways to accommodate these other ways of knowing and organizing
    - The Carcross/Tagish nation is one major example, as is the development of Nunavut and several other First Nations entities
    - In all of these cases, it involved the local group coming together on its own terms to work out what they want, how they want it done, and what they want to preserve
    - It also required the Federal, Provincial, or Territorial government to reassess the way in which it meets its mandates for fairness and accountability – exploring the role of healing circles in the health sector, community reconciliation in justice, private-public partnerships in economic development, and roundtable structures in regional development
    - It requires more attention, however, since government agencies hold the power in any partnership and their tendency is to create parallel structures rather than work with the existing ones – structures which are usually more compatible with the ways in which local people operate
    - (S) The successes were achieved over a long period of time – often involving conflict and confrontation (and usually well beyond the time frame of our political and gov't institutions)
    - (S) They also involved the government agencies relinquishing power to balance the relationship a bit better (often kicking and screaming)
    - (S) But we point to these successes in the end because they ultimately generated better understanding and a willingness on both sides to find acceptable compromises that bridge the different ways of knowing and operating
    - These successes show us it can be done – that the results are surprising – and the results are exciting and inspiring

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•8:30 a.m.

•**The New Rural Economy**

- Louise Paquette**, Director General FedNor – Panel Moderator
- Bill Reimer**, Director, New Rural Economy Project, Concordia University
- Charles Fluharty**, Director of Policy Programs, Rural Policy Research institute (RUPRI)
- Mark Drabenstott**, Director, RUPRI Centre for Regional Competitiveness
- 
- 10:30 Refreshment Break

•Request:

- There is a growing interest in rural policy among decision-makers in academic, government and business circles. Researchers who achieved renown studying economic development in urban areas (i.e. Professor Michael Porter) are now shifting their attention to rural economic development ("competitiveness") as well as the relationship between rural and urban communities. Neither exists in a vacuum but we know surprisingly little about how urban-rural relationships work, especially in an economic development context. Added to this dynamic are the significant changes taking place in rural communities related to demographic and population shifts and restructuring in the resource and manufacturing sectors. What opportunities exist in this new rural economy and how do communities and regions position themselves to renew and enhance their vitality?
- This Panel offers an opportunity to learn about key Canadian and US initiatives that are expanding the knowledge base about the new rural economy and the challenges, needs and opportunities facing rural communities in North America and how these organizations are influencing policy development by providing expertise and perspective on the impacts on rural places and people.
- Participants can also learn why regional approaches are critical to surviving in today's global economy and what key approaches/tools and policies are most effective in advancing and developing a regional perspective.

•Possible themes:

- Rural-urban interdependence
  - growth adjacency
  - Structures of interdependency
- Governance reorganization: regional governance in QC and AB, First Nations governance
- Social capital – its contributions
- Asset identification and competitiveness (vs. commodity production) – working from where you are at:
  - Finding something new to export
  - Looking regionally for critical mass
  - Direct marketing/niche marketing to the world