

From (Stone) Soup to Nuts:
*Lessons from the creation of an
International & Intersectoral
Learning Commons*

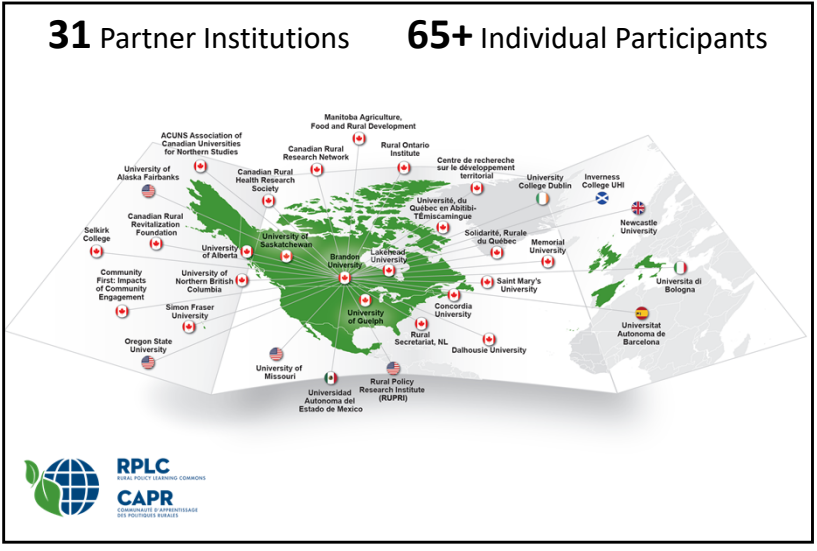
CRRF Conference
September 2017
Nelson, British Columbia



AGENDA

- I. Introduction of panel (Sean M)
- II. What is the RPLC? (Bill A)
- III. Rural policy priorities, activity (Ryan)
- IV. Networks and rural policy, places (Bill R)
- V. International perspective (Philomena)
- VI. Research and policy windows (Sean)
- VII. Accomplishments to date and evaluation (Elin)
- VIII. Future directions (Bill A, All)





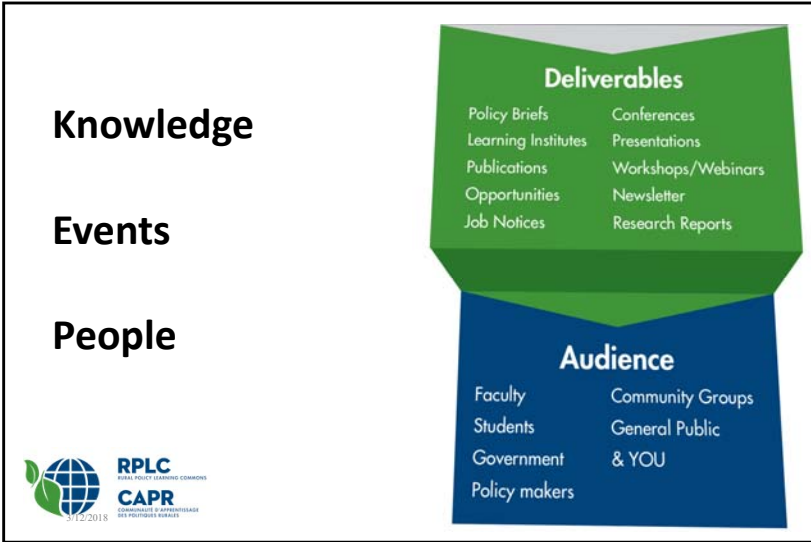
5 Research
Theme Teams

7 Knowledge
Mobilization
teams

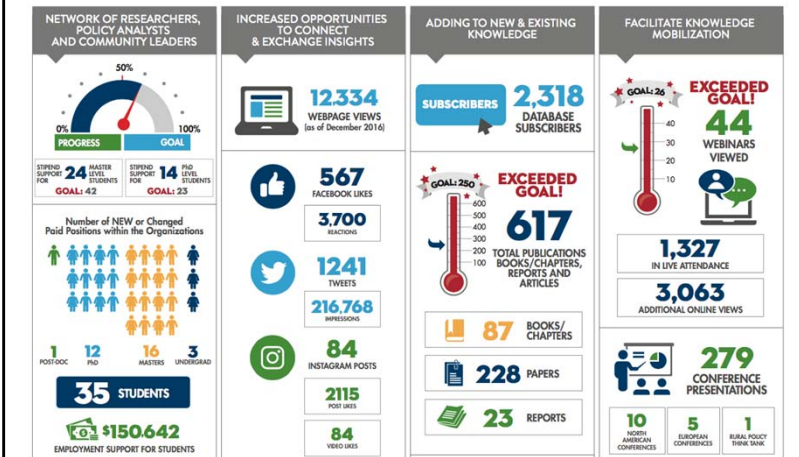


RPLC Theme Teams and Knowledge Mobilization Teams

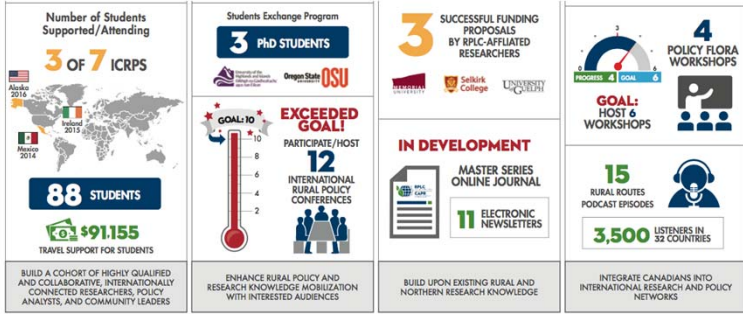
Governance 	Personnel Exchanges 
Migration 	Institutes 
Infrastructure & Services 	Policy Fora 
Natural Resources 	Distance Learning 
Transformations in Indigenous Communities 	Publications 
Digital Information Hub 	Social Media 



OUTCOMES TO DATE: June 2014 – September 2017



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- Some of the most obvious challenges to collaboration that we will discuss over the next couple of days are related to the different policy and institutional contexts related to the two provinces involved.
- We will hear many of these from those who are more familiar with their details, so I will focus instead on the challenges to collaboration among people in 3 types of contexts that are particularly relevant to taking action in rural places.
- I will then turn to consider some of the strategies and actions we could take to overcome these challenges.
- All of these contexts are represented among the participants at this workshop.
 - And they all provide valuable contributions for overcoming the challenges of the future.
- (*)The first type is represented by the researchers among us.
 - Primarily those who are connected to universities, colleges, and research centres,
 - But also those who are involved with policy research in governments and corporations.
- (*)The second type is composed of policy-makers and related practitioners who develop and make the policy and program decisions that structure our interactions and allocate resources.
- (*)The third type includes the many people, businesses, and groups that make up our communities.

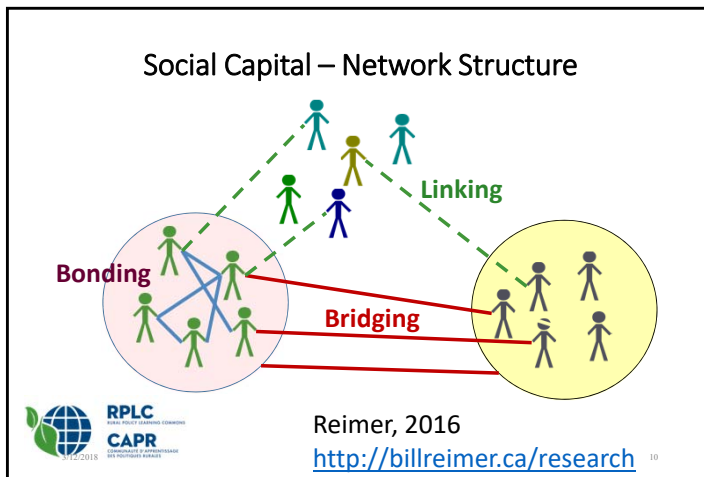
- We are all experts in our domains
- We operate in different institutional and career contexts

From: (Reimer, 2014)
<http://billreimer.ca/research>



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- Reimer, Bill (2014) “Collaboration Challenges: Research, Policy, Community” Québec Lower North Shore-Labrador Straits Regional Development: Towards Regional Collaboration, Blanc Sablon (QC) & L’Anse au Clair (NL), October 14-16. <http://BillReimer.ca/research>.



- At the most general level, relationships among individuals and groups have been analyzed in terms of two general characteristics: their **structure** and the **norms** which guide individuals in those relationships.
 - That is, analysts focus on **Who** is interacting and **how** are they interacting?
 - There are many ways in which this has been done.
 - Networks have been represented by their centrality, closure, reciprocity, density, strength, segmentation, and distance, to name a few.
 - I will focus on three of these that turn out to be particularly important for community action and capacities.
 - The extent to which the structural links are Bonding, Bridging, or Linking
 - Bonding** (*) networks are those connecting people or groups who are relatively similar in their social characteristics.
 - E.g. Family, close friends, neighbours
 - Often used to analyze specific groups as well – and consider characteristics of the relationships within the group (as opposed to those outside the group). This is the purview of social cohesion studies.
 - Bridging** (*) networks are those among people or groups who are dissimilar with respect to important demographic or social characteristics (gender, ethnicity, age, income, status, etc.) – or in the case of specific group studies: those outside the focus group.
 - Linking** (*) relationships are sometimes differentiated to identify networks among people who are dissimilar with respect to power (e.g. power to provide services or resources).
 - This concept has been inspired by the identification of the “strength of weak ties” proposed by Granovetter (Granovetter, 1973, 1983): He found it is often the more casual connections we have with people who are quite different from us that are most valuable for the introduction of new ideas, innovations, and opportunities (e.g. finding a job).
 - Sensitivity to the distinctions among bonding, bridging, and linking social capital can be highly relevant for rural policy.
 - All forms should be considered to take advantage of social capital analysis and assets.
 - It’s not enough to focus our policy on a specific community, group, or individual alone – but we should consider as well how they are connected to those who are similar to them, to those who are different, and how they are connected (or disconnected) to those with access to important resources.
 - The town of Seguin, ON discovered this when they (reluctantly) invited their seasonal residents to sit on municipal committees in the face of considerable resistance to proposed changes. These seasonal residents not only learned about the importance of these changes – thus reversing their previous reluctance, but were able to bring resources to the municipality via their connections with powerful people in the Ontario government (see reference below).
 - But: it is not only the structural conditions that will have an impact on community action.
- Jacob, Benoy, Lipton, Becky, Hagens, Victoria, and Reimer, Bill (2008) “Re-thinking local autonomy: perceptions from four rural municipalities” *Canadian Public Administration*, 51:3 (Sept) 407-427.
 - Reimer, Bill (2016) “[Understanding Social Capital for Community Development Policy](#)” Presentation to the International Comparative Policy Studies Summer School, Fairbanks, Alaska, July 16.

Questions for policy-makers and practitioner

- How can we help you?
- Where do you get your information?
- Who's missing from your networks?



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- Reimer, B., & Brett, Matthew. (2013). Scientific Knowledge and Rural Policy: A long distance relationship. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 53(3), 272–290.
<http://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12014>

LESSONS LEARNED

