

- *Acknowledgements:*
- *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*
- *The Rural Policy Learning Commons*
- *CRRF*
- *NRE Research Team*
- *Rural Citizens in our field sites*
- "The new realities of rural places require new forms of collaboration among researchers, policy-makers, and community members. This keynote address identifies the personal, professional, and institutional challenges to such collaboration in the face of those new realities and suggests several strategies that can be used to address them. The strategies are not only relevant to the conference deliberations which will follow, but to future individual, government, and community action on behalf of rural revitalization."
- Other materials produced by Dr. Reimer can be viewed via <http://billreimer.ca>.
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- New Relationships, New Realities.
- Our conference title succinctly captures the challenges and opportunities before us – both over the next 2 days as well as the next 2 years or decades.
- By identifying those new realities and by building new relationships we hope to meet the challenges, identify the opportunities, and make the choices that will ensure a vibrant, wealthy, and sustainable future for all rural, remote, and northern places.
- This is a lofty goal, but one that has probably motivated most of you in the room today.
- It certainly has motivated most of us in CRRF over the last 27 years.
- We have been working at it long enough to know that it won't be easy.
 - But we have also learned some of the tricks and tips along the way that have been most successful.
- It is some of those insights that I would like to pass on to you today.

How do we create effective rural policy and programs for a Canada where...

- ▶ Cities are dominant
- ▶ Trade is externally dominated
- ▶ Immigration is increasing in importance
- ▶ The state is withdrawing from its social mandate
- ▶ Natural resources are stressed?



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- I will begin with some of the New Realities, then move on to the implications they hold for New Relationships
- There are many changes that have been affecting rural Canada over the last 50 or so years – changes that create new realities for us to consider.
- Here are a few that I have drawn from a longer list you will find on my website.
 - (*) Cities are dominant
 - (*) The economy is global
 - (*) Immigration increasing in importance
 - But generally weaker in rural areas
 - (*) State is withdrawing from its traditional social mandate, and
 - (*) Resources – including the climate – are being stressed by human activities
- *[These emerge in general from my 30+ years of research on rural issues and specifically from the 11-year New Rural Economy project which I directed (<http://nre.concordia.ca>)]*

The Challenge: Collaboration for Action







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- We can be certain that there is no silver bullet or “one size fits all” solution to the challenges that these imply – for they are multiple, complex, and “wicked”
 - These are problems that are difficult to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing conditions
 - In fact, trying to solve one of them may reveal or create others. (I presume this sounds familiar to most of you.)
- However, we do know that we must address them – and we must address them **collectively**.
- This is not a task for one person, one organization, one community
- All the stakeholders must be at the table – or at least as many as possible – including those with contradictory perspectives and interests.
- This has been a guiding principle of CRRF over the 27 years of its existence – and it is embedded in the organization of the new **Rural Policy Learning Commons** just recently announced by SSHRC last month.
- Your presence at this conference is an indication of your own commitment to such collaboration – and it’s for that reason we have much to hope for as we think about the New Realities and New Relationships.
- However, as most of you already know, such collaboration is not easy.
 - Especially where we have diversity of interests, perspectives, and commitments around the table.
- So this challenge is the one I would like to consider as we move into the next few days and prepare for the next few years.




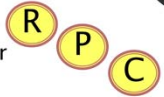


- I will focus today on the challenges to collaboration among people in 3 types of contexts that are particularly relevant to rural, remote, and northern places and policy.
- I will then turn to consider some of the strategies and actions we could take to overcome these challenges.
- All of these contexts are represented among the participants at this conference.
 - 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 – in this case those primarily in rural, remote, and northern areas.



- We need people working in all of these contexts to deal with the challenges of the future.
- However, there are many difficulties we face in working together.
- (*)We hear plenty of complaints about researchers at our events, in the media, and on the ground:
 - They take too long to get results,
 - They use a language that is esoteric and often impossible to understand.
- (*)We can also find a long list of negative comments about policy-makers and practitioners:
 - They are too concerned with counting beans and filling out forms
 - They create too much red tape.
- (*)Even community people come under fire for
 - Being too preoccupied with narrow concerns – they don't see the big picture,
 - They are just looking for handouts, or
 - In the case of businesses – they only look at the bottom line.
- How can we work together under these circumstances since we come from such different places and face different demands?
- The first step to this goal is to understand the various contexts in which we operate and the constraints we face in each context as a result.
- The contextual and institutional demands can easily get in the way of collaboration – but they often exist for good reasons – that must be recognized.
 - If we understand them, it will get us a long way to overcome the frustrations we feel and
 - I would argue – the differences can be used to facilitate collaboration with a little imagination.

Why are you here?

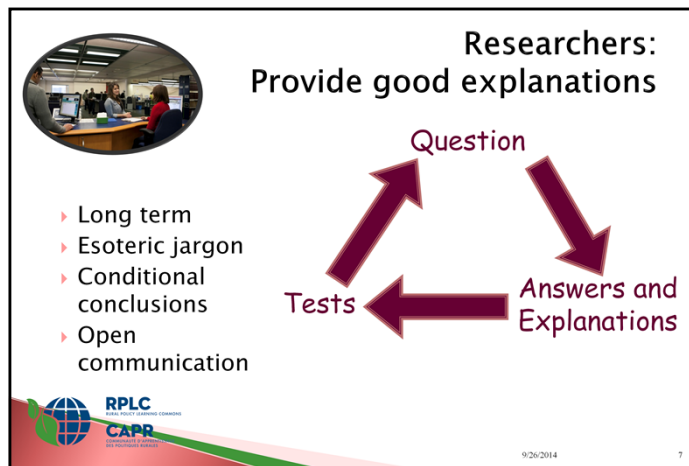
- ▶ Pick a card and write on it:
 - Your prominent context
 - Researcher
 - Policy-maker/practitioner
 - Community member
- ▶ **What do you wish to achieve at this conference?**
 - Why are you here?
- ▶ Share your card with the others at your table

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•Roundtable activity

- I would like to pause for a few minutes now and get your feedback regarding your own context and objectives for this conference.
 - It will also serve to introduce you to your colleagues around the table and in some cases begin the process of collaboration to which I refer.
- Pick up one of the (colour) cards on your table and write an R, P, or C in the upper left hand corner – according to the prominent context in which you operate: Researcher, Policy-maker or practitioner, Community member.
- If you operate in more than one of these contexts, then choose the one that is most demanding or challenging for you.
- Then write on the card a short statement of what you would like to achieve at this conference.
 - An answer to the question “Why are you here?”
- When you have done this, introduce yourself to the others at your table and exchange those cards.
 - Look for the points where you share objectives and where you differ.
 - If you find you needed to clarify what you wrote, then feel free to add that to your card.
- I will give you 5 minutes.
- I will ask you to leave the cards on the table at the end of the session
 - We will pick them up and use them for our evaluation and planning.



- As you compared notes with those around you, you were likely to find that you share some of your objectives and differ on others.
- Those that are shared can provide key bases for collaboration.
- But I would like to focus on some of the places where they are different – and think about ways in which these might also be used as bases for collaboration.
- The first step to this goal is to understand the various contexts in which we operate since they will provide useful information about the constraints we face when seeking to work together.
- Looking first at **researchers** – at our best, we are expected to provide **good explanations** for various phenomenon (like I am trying to do today)
 - We need good explanations to make appropriate choices – in policy, programs, businesses, communities, and even our personal lives.
 - Typically, researchers do this by asking questions and systematically improving on the appropriateness of those questions.
- At a general level, our energy is focused on a continual cycle involving the following components
 - (*) Formulating a question that is appropriate for research.
 - (*) Providing a series of reasonable answers to the question – with the explanations associated to each
 - (*) Testing the relative validity of competing answers through the use of logic and/or empirical evidence.
 - (*) Revising the question or questions as a result of that analysis.
 - Then repeating the cycle as we build confidence in the various explanations identified.
- This is what I teach my students and it is what constitutes my colleagues' work when they are at their best.
- Note that this requires us to:
 - (*) Be involved in long-term projects over: months, years, and decades, not days or hours;
 - (*) Develop esoteric jargon in our efforts to make important distinctions in explanations and methodologies; and
 - (*) Draw conclusions from our work that are always conditional and hypothetical.
 - We never “prove” a conclusion, we at best support one conclusion over another.
 - At our best we are a modest lot – since there is always the possibility that our logic is faulty, that better evidence may be found, and a better explanation might be suggested.
 - (*) It also requires us to be open and transparent in our communications – since only by exposing our work to others can our confidence in the conclusions can be increased.
 - That is why we have traditions of peer review, reproduction of results, and transparency of methodology.
- In order to understand the full dynamics of our collaborations, however, we have to consider the institutional contexts in which we work.
- These contexts structure the ways in which we conduct our research, the trajectories of our careers, the competing demands on our research, and the organization of our collaborations.



Researchers: Institutional Constraints

- ▶ Demands for
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Community service

• **Challenges for collaboration**

- Discipline focus ∴ rural has lower priority
- Academic focus ∴ non-academic have lower priority
- Imprecise criteria for success ∴ limited networks



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- The universities, colleges, and Research Centres in which we operate make more or less three main demands on our time.
- (*) The first demand is on our teaching (typically measured in terms of the number of students, their levels, and the amount of time we spend with them).
- The second demand is for research.
 - Measured by the value of grants and the number and type of publications in academic journals and books.
- The third (and usually least stressed) demand on us is for service to the community.
 - The “community” is mainly interpreted as the university or other professional organizations – not the general public.
- The judgements regarding the relative value of these are made by our peers – most often in our departments and faculties.
 - They tend to be conservative and discipline-focused in those evaluations.
- (*) These conditions create challenges to networking and collaboration.
 - (*) It is more valuable for us to be discipline-focused than inter-disciplinary researchers.
 - Immediately puts rural issues on the back burner since they tend to be complex and multi-disciplinary.
 - (*) It is more valuable for us to focus on topics of interest to academic networks than non-academic.
 - (*) The criteria for success are imprecise – therefore increasing the stress on our junior faculty.
 - If you don’t know what will be valued, one tends to be exhaustive in background research, highly conditional in claims, and somewhat possessive in the sharing of ideas and strategies.
 - Plays havoc with communication outside a relatively narrow collection of colleagues.
 - In the current ideological climate we are often pressed to focus our research questions and results on economic and business objectives as opposed to those of a social or basic research nature.

Policy-Makers/Practitioners:
Make good decisions in a complex world



- ▶ Good information
- ▶ Authority
 - Appropriate representation
 - Accountability
- ▶ Public vision



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- Compare this to policy-makers and policy-designers.
- We expect them to make reasonable decisions in a complex world – decisions that promote wealth, justice, and social support, in a sustainable fashion.
 - These decisions are often made in the face of crises and complex (wicked) problems – those with contradictory requirements and incomplete information.
- In order to do so they require:
 - (*) Good information: reliable, appropriate to the issue, and as thorough as possible;
 - (*) Appropriately designated authority
 - In Canada, this includes a requirement for:
 - The proper representation of constituents, and
 - Accountability (transparency) of the activities and outcomes of the policy-makers' decisions.
 - (*) The cultivation of a **public** vision in their decision-making – as opposed to a private one.
- We ask this of our policy-makers and practitioners so we can be sure that the decisions are made in the public interest and that spending is appropriate and fair.

[“wicked” problem – impossible to resolve because of contradictory requirements, incomplete information, and/or because they are difficult to recognize or comprehend.]

Policy-makers / Practitioners: Institutional Constraints



- ▶ Need quick decisions
- ▶ Appropriate representation and accountability
- ▶ Limited cross-department collaboration
- ▶ High turnover



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- These conditions and the institutional legacies of our governments produce several challenges for collaboration (especially across disciplines and departments), however.
 - (*) The long-term horizons of research and their highly qualified conclusions are often seen as useless or inadequate for the quick decisions that must be delivered by policy-makers.
 - (*) The (justifiable) demands for appropriate representation and accountability are often seen as obstacles for collaboration.
 - The severe financial constraints of the current neo-liberal climate exacerbate these challenges.
 - (*) Cross-departmental collaborations are particularly vulnerable
 - They are typically not standing departments, therefore, they have ad hoc budgets and a relatively weak power base when it comes to bargaining for resources and policy attention.
 - Community (place-based) issues are inherently cross-department.
 - But the policies, programs, and budgets within each of these departments are often jealously guarded and the mechanisms to share resources tend to be complicated and difficult.
 - (*) The high turnover in staff (especially under conditions of austerity) means:
 - There is often a reluctance to act on the part of new people,
 - The staff are continually being trained in the basics – not advanced skills – and the institutional memory gets lost, and
 - There are often uncertain mandates from above (as people wait to see what the next person, policy, budget, or program will bring).
 - This simply exacerbates the inability to take a long term view, consider all aspects of an issue, and to act.




Community Members: Create sustainable livelihoods

- ▶ Food, clothing, shelter (income)
- ▶ Human capital (talents and skills)
- ▶ Social networks (social capital)
- ▶ Safe environment



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- What about the interests and objectives of those who operate in the third type of context I am considering: the citizens, municipal officials, and other groups within rural communities?
- At their best, community people are in the business of creating and sustaining healthy, wealthy, and productive livelihoods for themselves, their families, and their communities.
 - These are all commendable and valuable objectives.
 - Community people do this by directly engaging with the people and groups in their neighbourhoods and regions, contributing through paid and non-paid activities, and supporting their families and communities.
- In order to do so they require:
 - (*) The basics of life: food, clothing, shelter
 - In Canadian society this usually means an income – through job, business, investments, or pensions.
 - (*) They also need the talents and skills that allow them to function as individuals – what economists refer to as human capital;
 - (*) And we should also recognize their need for social connections for support, information, and companionship.
 - (*) All of these must be available in an environment that is relatively safe from social or natural dangers.



**Community Members:
Institutional Constraints**

- ▶ Competing demands
- ▶ Voluntary activity
- ▶ Searching for quick and simple solutions
- ▶ Policy regimes too general
- ▶ Limited information

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- In the community context, the major institutional and professional constraints they face are intimately connected to their daily lives.
- (*) One of the most important is that there are many competing demands from many different domains in their lives.
- (*) A second is that the management of these demands is largely voluntary.
 - Earning a living, raising kids, caring for the elderly, repairing and maintaining a home, supporting neighbours, while taking care of personal and social needs are all examples of these demands – and there are no commonly agreed upon MOUs, terms of references, by-laws, or procedural manuals to manage these demands.
 - Even sustaining a resilient and vibrant economy or improving the social and environmental qualities of a local community depends on volunteers.
- These types of demands have increased over the last 40 years as many communities age (care-givers become care-recipients), populations decrease in the more remote places, women move into the labour force, and the state withdraws from its social support responsibilities as defined in the welfare state era of the 50s and 60s.
- (*) Like the policy-makers, people in local communities are searching for easy and tractable solutions to crises and effective strategies for long-term negative trends.
- (*) In addition, our New Rural Economy research and more recent work by Kelly Vodden and her colleagues shows that provincial and federal policies and programs are unlikely to be seen as appropriate for these local conditions (<http://nre.concordia.ca>; <http://cdnregdev.wordpress.com/>).
- (*) Finally, the type of information for communities to make decisions about their futures is often inaccessible or incomprehensible.
 - This means that considerable local energy and resources are often spent in ways that are ineffective:
 - Addressing the symptoms of the crises rather than the root causes
 - E.g. chasing smokestacks that exacerbate the vulnerability of communities to external forces; turning to the type of jobs that are themselves destined for increased competition and lower, insecure wages.
 - There is generally, a lack of recognition of the broader social forces that drive the local changes – changes that are often outside the local communities' control.

Your Suggestions?

- ▶ Pick another card and enter your predominant identity **R P C**
- ▶ What would it take for you to include members from the other two contexts in your deliberations?
 - What could you do?
 - What could they do?



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- There are many important and commendable objectives identified among these three contexts in which we work.
 - All of these objectives and their related contexts are necessary when we come to address the challenges of the future.
- However, they also create considerable constraints when it comes to working together.
- Therefore I would like to take some time to think about ways in which these constraints might be accommodated – or even used by those in one type of context to engage with those in one of the other contexts I have identified.
- My request is now for you to take a XX coloured card from your table and
- Write an R, P, or C in the upper left hand corner to indicate the context in which you most often find yourself: Researcher, Policy-maker or practitioner, or Community member.
- Write your answer to the question:
 - What would it take for you to include members from the other two types of contexts in your deliberations?
 - What could you do to make it happen?
 - What could they do to make it happen?
 - Consider not only how this could be done in the context of a conference like this, but also in the longer term – over the next weeks, months, or years.
- Once again, share your answers with others and modify them, if necessary, on the basis of the suggestions of others.
- Look particularly to those who operate in contexts that are different than yours.
 - See if you can identify strategies and actions that would make collaboration easier and more useful.
- I will give you 5 or so minutes to work on these.
- Leave the cards on the table at the end.
 - We will collect them and prepare an account of them in our evaluation.



Strategies for Researchers

- ▶ Involve non-academics early, frequent, critically
- ▶ Go to the mountain
- ▶ Use the “mother-in-law” test
- ▶ Support community-engaged research
- ▶ Organize strategically within research networks

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•How can we overcome these quite considerable differences in needs, resources, and social contexts?

•They all seem to get in the way of effective collaboration.

•I will outline some strategies I came up with when thinking about this challenge.

•How many are on your lists? Think about how we might add to the list.

•First researchers.

•How can you get the input of policy-makers and citizens in a way that respects their interests and contexts while advancing yours?

•(*) My first suggestion is to invite non-academic people and groups to participate **early** in the research process, **frequently** as it develops, and to **serve as critics** at each stage of the cycle.

•I recognize that this has to be done carefully since the debates and discussions among researchers can often be interpreted as confusion and conflict by those outside the circle.

•(*) Don't expect the non-researchers to come to you. Instead go to their turf – like CRRF has been doing for 26 years.

•(*) My third suggestion is to integrate the “mother-in-law” test into all public communication.

•This test was suggested by my colleague Ray Bollman as a criteria to use when explaining research results:

•Can you explain the results and their importance in a way that your mother-in-law would understand – even if she is only mildly interested? For those without mother-in-laws the principle works just as well if you think of someone who matters to you, is not familiar with academic jargon, and is likely to be somewhat cautious in their praise.

•(*) My fourth suggestion is to proactively support the value of community-engaged research.

•Often the greatest problem is not the administrators of our institutions but our peers and colleagues.

•We are, therefore, in a position to mentor our colleagues to ensure that the many demands of this type of research are included in their CVs, that they become an important part of the evaluation in our committees, and that the criteria for the quality of the engagement be clearly formulated.

•(*) A fifth suggestion is to organize strategically within the various research partnerships in which you are involved.

•Consider especially how you can manage the demands from policy-makers and communities that take you away from your core competencies and objectives.

•This worked well in our NRE project.

•Since we had both junior and senior researchers in our project, we were able to adopt an informal arrangement whereby the junior faculty were encouraged and supported to produce the traditional materials of our profession: journal articles and books, while the senior faculty took on the challenges of community engagement, media responses, and grant-writing.



Strategies for Policy-makers: Co-optation and seduction

- ▶ Engage researchers and community early, frequent, critically
- ▶ Create venues for research and community members
- ▶ Provide opportunities for students
- ▶ Support long-term research networks
- ▶ Take on more knowledge translation

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•What about policy-makers and practitioners? Are there strategies they may adopt to increase collaboration with researchers and community people?

•(*) I see from the existence of this conference and others like it in CRRF's history, that there is already effective use of my primary strategy suggestion: Take initiative to engage researchers and community people in your policy and program formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

•(*) Given the fiscal and institutional constraints against such initiatives, this can often mean dreaming up innovative events and venues to make it happen.

- Like a meeting of academics and policy-makers that was initiated by the Hon John Godfrey in 2005 when he was faced with the challenge of dividing up the gas tax among cities and communities.

- Or the "Deans and Deputy Ministers' Forum" organized by Dalhousie's President that brought together Nova Scotia Cabinet members with university Deans and selected academics for lengthy, in-camera discussions on a topic of the Cabinet's choice.

- The opportunity alone is often enough to attract researchers' attention.

•(*) Researchers are also interested in finding opportunities for our students. In most cases this involves financial support, but it can also be combined with the offer of experience in a policy milieu. Perhaps some imaginative thinking could be directed to ways in which more students in other smaller or more remote places can also benefit. The newly minted **Rural Policy Learning Commons** provides many opportunities to make this possible.

•(*) Most of these strategies require the long-term support of a pool of research and analysis talent.

- A vibrant pool of researchers who are relatively free to pursue a wide variety of issues – from pie-in-the-sky to practical, theoretical to marketable – is an important basis for quick responses to short-term crises.

- A necessary ingredient of this strategy, however, is that sufficient effort has been made from all sides to familiarize themselves with the demands of their partners, so the responses to crises are not diverted by the legacy of mistrust that can emerge from a lack of regular and diverse engagement.

•(*) My final suggestion for policy-makers is to take on a greater burden of the "knowledge mobilization" process and accountability demands from researchers and community people.

- I have been struck by how often the researchers are expected to do the work of drawing out the policy implications of results without adequate dialogue with the policy-makers and practitioners.

- Only a small number of us are trained as policy analysts – and even then, the training is often general and abstract without the benefit of practical experience.

- We are not consultants – think of us as volunteers.

- Bring your issues and questions – and policy analysts – but in the spirit of mutually clarifying the issues and developing more appropriate responses, not the search for simple answers.

- This is one reason why internship and training opportunities are so important for bridging the research-policy gap.

- This suggestion also applies to the accountability demands of your role. Managing fiscal and documentary records is time-consuming and takes energy away from the main value of the research and voluntary group activities.

- It is a necessary part of policy and governance structures, however, so they should bear the burden of it by taking it on directly or providing resources in other contexts to do so.



Strategies for Communities: Co-optation and seduction

- ▶ Build a learning community
- ▶ Integrate newcomers
- ▶ Use your local assets to entice researchers and policy-makers
- ▶ Formalize community groups



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- As I considered the ways in which communities might overcome some of the challenges against collaboration, I found myself getting excited about the possibilities.
- As a result of my Canadian and international research, I found many examples of community initiatives that increased the collaboration with policy-makers and researchers in very productive ways.
- (*) In the community of Awano, Japan, for example, they take community learning seriously – turning most of their community celebrations into occasions for learning about research, policy, markets, and trends in other parts of the world.
 - They do it by using their neighbours and alumni or diaspora – the many young people or families that have moved out of their village.
 - They organize homecoming events and invite their alumni to return – with pictures and stories. They provide venues for these people to show the pictures and tell the stories of the places they have been and the things that they did. In the process they inform the community about the world. Since many of these people are now researchers, policy-makers, business-people, and corporate workers, they create new opportunities for collaboration and alliances outside the community.
 - They view their departing youth and community residents as intelligence gathering agents, not as a loss to the community.
- (*) In one of the communities with which we worked over the 11 years of the NRE project we heard how they were having difficulty with the seasonal residents (many who were policy-makers from Ottawa and Toronto) who came to enjoy the tranquility of Parry Sound.
 - They decided to include these people on their municipal committees and discussions.
 - The community discovered that the resistance to municipal proposals declined once these people saw their benefits. Even the resistance to municipal tax increases dissipated significantly, and
 - They had the added advantage that several of the seasonal residents were provincial-level policy makers and corporate executives who were able to identify new sources of funding for local initiatives.
- (*) I have been involved with a number of community events where the communities use their local assets to entice researchers or policy-makers to make a local contribution.
 - As part of a university initiative, I was invited to a tour of a local winery and a meal in the world class restaurant associated with their establishment in exchange for a media article on sustainable businesses.
 - When speaking with the owner I realized that he was extremely interested in a wide range of research results – from the chemistry of wine to the dynamics of climate change. These are clearly issues that are directly related to the success of his business.
 - I suggested that by using the meal as inducement he would have little trouble finding strategically chosen researchers from the 4 universities in the area – to come and discuss their research and its implications for his business and community.
 - In fact, I expect he would be able to invite local community people and groups to the event – perhaps even covering the cost of the meal itself.
 - There are few researchers I know who would not be interested in speaking about their work in exchange for an appetizing meal.
 - In the process they would add to the knowledge and capacity of the community.
- (*) Greg Halseth's work as part of the NRE project showed that community groups with Boards of Directors are more likely to receive funding than those without.
 - This should provide a clue to a good strategy for any group looking to connect with governments.
 - By formalizing their organization they help to meet government's concerns about accountability and representation that preoccupy our state agencies.

In Summary

- ▶ Researchers
 - Include local knowledge
- ▶ Policy-makers
 - Treat researchers and community members as volunteers
- ▶ Community members
 - Create multiple venues for collaboration
- ▶ Expect and welcome surprises in each collaboration

<http://rplc-capr.ca>




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•None of these strategies will work, however, if there isn't also the fostering of mutual respect for each others' contexts, constraints, and contributions.

- (*) For researchers:
 - It takes an efforts to pass the mother-in-law test.
 - It requires multiple efforts to engage with policy-makers and community members in a search for the relevance of your insights to specific challenges.
 - Sometimes you must risk your own position to recognize and champion the effort and successes of community-engaged colleagues when sitting on departmental and faculty committees.
- (*) For policy-makers
 - You must make an effort to participate in research and community events – in a spirit of curiosity.
 - Keep your cool with the sometimes intense debates and differences of opinion – recognizing their importance for good research and good policy
 - You could take on a greater burden of the “knowledge mobilization” process from researchers and community people.
 - We are not consultants – think of us as volunteers.
 - Don't expect us to provide the policy solutions – bring us together with your policy people to work on the issues.
- (*) For community members.
 - Seek and create multiple venues for access to researchers and policy-makers.
 - Universities and colleges have many faculty members and students who will respond enthusiastically to specific challenges and invitations.
 - Use the internet facilities for engagement and tools at your disposal.
 - A good place to start is the Rural Ontario Institute or Rural Development Institute websites – or the Canadian Rural Research Network blog. They all have valuable resource links.
 - Another is the Rural Policy Learning Commons. This is a partnership project designed to facilitate collaboration in the interest of rural, remote, and northern places.
 - At present there are 30 institutional and 60 individual partners from 8 countries and we are seeking to expand this network significantly over the 7-years of the project.
 - I encourage you all to familiarize yourselves with this project and consider ways in which its resources (financial, institutional, and human) can be used in your work.
 - There are many of the participants at this conference so it will be an excellent opportunity for you to explore these options.
 - Make use of in-kind local assets in exchange for information and/or public event.
 - A couple of nights lodging for a family,
 - A free golf game,
 - A snowmobile adventure,
 - A walk in the woods.
 - These could all be appealing to various researchers and policy-makers.
 - You can also make use of your human assets – including those who have already left
 - Pool funding support for someone to attend an external event, but require them to present their insights to all upon return. How many of you are committed to passing on what you have learned at this conference back to your communities? Where are the opportunities to do this?
- The goal is to create a long-term sustainable relationship among all types of people, not a one-off event.
- Must be nurtured in the spirit of curiosity, understanding, and exploration.
 - Learning usually includes a period of confusion and unease since considering different perspectives often involves moving us out of our comfort zone.
- (*) Expect and look for pleasant surprises in your engagements with others.
 - They reveal your biases and assumptions,
 - They stimulate innovation, and perhaps most of all
 - They make the work exciting.

Facilitating Collaboration for New Rural Realities

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- Ask for examples of challenges or strategies that I haven't mentioned.
- Ask: What strategies can be used at this conference?
 - Seek out tables where you don't know the people – and exchange information about yourselves.
 - Think of a question to ask in each session.
 - Approach a stranger and ask them about what they do;
 - For students – ask them what they were doing when they were your age, what their plans were, and how they worked out.
- Other materials produced by Dr. Reimer can be viewed via <http://billreimer.ca>.