University Institutes
Partnering for Rural Research
and Community Development

Presented at
Reversing the Tide:
Strategies for Successful Rural Revitalization

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October 6, 2008
Overview

- Rural Research Centres in Canada
- RDI’s approach to rural research and community engagement
- RDI’s work: illustrative examples
- Lessons learned for partnering rural research and community development
- Possible roles for University Institutes
- Discussion
RDI’s Approach to Rural Research & Community Engagement

**Practice**
Rural research and community development is community-based and people-centred.

**Policy**
Community engagement contributes to informing and influencing policy-makers.

**Research**
*Participatory Action Research* involves participation in the research by the people in communities. It aims to empower participants through their participation in and control of the research agenda, process and findings.
Illustrative Examples

Community Collaboration Model Project

- built collaborative partnerships and processes between communities, governments and academic institutions.

Rural Immigration: Demographics & Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon & Area

- created a dialogue group to encourage a dynamic exchange between the community, employers, government and researchers.
Community Collaboration (CCP) Model Project

Governments
Rural Teams in Saskatchewan, Yukon & Manitoba

Academic Institutions
Brandon University (RDI),
University of Saskatchewan,
Malaspina University-College (Nanaimo BC)
and Yukon College

85 Communities,
3 Rural Teams,
& 4 Academic Institutions

Communities
Saskatchewan, Yukon
& Manitoba/Nunavut.
CCP Process

Building Community Capacity

Time

Activities

Community Capacity

External Facilitation (RDI)

Visioning

Vision Refining

Agenda Setting

Project Activity

RRT Advisory Group

Forming

Resources – Financial & Human
Regional Round Table Projects

Yukon

Bayline - Manitoba

WaterWolf - Saskatchewan
Community Participants’ Comments about the CCP Model Experience

The regional round table has helped build understanding between government departments, communities and First Nations. This understanding will be a key asset toward building trust.

The value of face-to-face meetings was emphasized by a number of regional round table members.

This level of cooperation and working together is quite extraordinary.

The regional round table has more influence that we originally recognized.

Now we need to focus on how to use the influence for positive changes in our communities.
Rural Immigration Research Areas and Interests

Demographic Shifts and Population Change
- Utilize traditional data analyses (Statistics Canada).
- Utilize demographic modeling.
- Build an international research network, exploring comparability.

Workplace and Community Experiences
- Explore the implications of an influx of diverse cultures on Brandon and southwestern Manitoba, and in the workplaces.

The Worker
- Explore workers’ experiences with the TFW process.

Retention Rates
- Explore retention rates in Canada, southwestern Manitoba, and in the workplaces.

Temporary Foreign Workers in rural Canada
- Gain information on the process of recruiting and hiring TFWs.
Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon & Area

TFW Estimates, 2007-2011 with Estimated Family Arrivals

Source: Economic Development Brandon (2008)
RDI Temporary Foreign Worker Dialogue Group

- Established a multi-sector, discussion group comprised of community, industry, government, & researcher representatives.

- Discussion topics include:
  - Roles & responsibilities of involved stakeholders
  - Recruitment, settlement & retention
  - Implications for smaller centres & service providers
  - Transitioning from TFW to Provincial Nominee
  - Family reunification
  - Community preparedness

- RDI’s role extends from process facilitator/recorder, to research contributor and policy advocate

Communication amongst all sectors and stakeholders is critical to developing settlement priorities, service provision strategies, and community programs to successfully react to the influx of newcomers that Brandon is experiencing.
RDI’s Lessons Learned: Communities Partnering in Rural Research & Community Development Initiatives

To effectively partner, communities need to:

- move from competitive to collaborative strategies;
- have individuals devoted to and championing partnership and relationship-building efforts who have
  - desire
  - time, and
  - leadership and organizational skills;
- be strategic & purposeful in the partnerships and collaborations they enter into;
- achieve consensus on their vision, goals & objectives; and
- contribute resources.
RDI’s Lessons Learned: Governments Partnering in Rural Research & Community Development Initiatives

To effectively partner, governments need to:

- move from funding deliverables to supporting capacity development;
- better manage files horizontally;
- better manage complex accountability structures;
- have mandates and reporting structures that are flexible enough to work with communities and regions in non-traditional ways:
  - move from “under the radar” to “in the radar”; and
- be flexible, creative & innovative in program and accountability structures to fit with and adjust to community interests:
  - permission to be creative to accomplish agreed-upon goals.
To effectively partner, academic institutions need to:

- find new and creative ways to engage the human and capital resources of universities and colleges to be more engaged in community development processes;
- enable communities to view academic institutions as resources to their efforts;
- view communities as something more than research laboratories;
- better understand and value community service by:
  - refining understanding of how community service is defined when individuals are “judged” for advancement purposes and;
- minimize role ambiguity by clearly defining the University Institute’s role. Role ambiguity leads to trouble.
Possible Roles for University Institutes

- Process Observer/Recorder Case Study
- Process Facilitator/Advisor
- Researcher/Fact Finder Data Analysis
- Apply lessons learned Linker to alternatives & resources
- Educator/Trainer Engaged in problem solving, decision making & action planning
- Policy/Program design & evaluation

Low engagement in content
Low engagement in outcomes
High engagement in process
High engagement in outcomes
Research
Community Development Practice
Policy
Collaborative Strategies for Rural Development Require:

- Development of trusting and valued relationships and partnerships that take
  - deliberate effort
  - time
  - committed, skilled and sustained leadership.

- Recognition that building these types of relationships and partnerships are investments that require resources.

- Financial resources to develop, maintain and grow these investments.
Discussion
For Additional Information

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CCP Model Project
http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/ccp.asp

Rural Immigration & Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon & Area
http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/rdi/tfw.asp

Rural Research Centres
http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/researchcentres.asp