

IMPACTS OF THE NRE ON RURAL SITES, EVENTS & POLICY

Interviews with site representatives and researchers
Conducted November 1-3, 2003 in St-Damase, Quebec

Interviewer: Lyndsay Lyghtle

Respondent: Ellen Wall

- Tweed is the only site that has obvious impacts
- NRE money has helped them through events; promoting or creating activities within their community
- They have financially grew through the creation of restaurants, bed and breakfasts and more local businesses
- The heritage centre has improved
- The interest that has been shown towards their community by the project has been taken to heart by the residents who live there (it's made them proud of where they live)
- All of the information is given back to the community which helps to motivate them while providing exposure for their community to the outside areas
- The person who runs the heritage centre (Evan) write about NRE related projects in his newsletter which in turn provides exposure for the project
- Carden and Osborne have had no obvious impacts within their areas
- There was some income provided to local people who conducted the household survey, but none since
- Both areas do not have downtown's to better or to revitalise
- Osborne in a way gets over studied and many residents are becoming tired of carrying out interviews, so there is less and less participation which tends to create havoc for the NRE project
- These residents are taxed due to the NRE project and other research which they are involved in from the local university.

Interviewer: Lyndsay Lyghtle

Respondent: David Bruce

- Participation of the site people has resulted in discussion of new ideas - what the community foresees for it's self and what their goals are.
- Preparation for coming to St-Damase and Japan a community meeting was held, which discussed what research has met so far and what information the community wanted brought back from the meetings.
- Explore community development commission (creation of one): This was a direct result of interaction with people from other sites and the understanding of volunteer limitations
- Provincial government is using the map that was created from the household survey to help them understand the community of Lot 16 and to understand the community development commission.
- Springhill has also had participation by the site that has resulted in the discussion of new ideas - again what the community see's for it's self in the future
- Participation of Don Tabor (CAO) in Japan trip has lead to greater interest and commitment by town council to better use the NRE information and statistics.
- High Creast Nursing home is using the results of the volunteer study to develop a new volunteer recruitment and management strategy
- Capacity model shared with Nova Scotia government consultation on community development policy

Interviewer: Funmi Omole

Respondent: Greg Halseth

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The NRE has made direct impacts on Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge (sites Greg's working on). Direct impacts have been made on people in these areas through direct talking/voicing with them and this has created awareness in them.

The NRE has made a big impact on policies in Mackenzie: there is a variety of local plans going on and stable development obtains in the area: there has been business recruitment, senior housing, and services retention. This has brought industrial restructuring and improvement in the quality of life of the people.

Tumber Ridge is also coming along well with revitalization. It lost 2 coal mines, and needed inputs from lots of organizations, NRE, councils, and the government for its revitalization. Through the efforts of the above-mentioned, Tumber Ridge has been able to recover its coal mines. Also, another point to note is that before, the population of Tumber Ridge was 3,000. It later went down to 1,000 but now, it has gone up, and back to its former level (3,000), with the in-migration of young families; more seniors are still in town though. All these reflect the contribution of NRE to the development of these areas.

Interviewer: Funmi Omole

Respondent: Vance and Beverley Wensel

In general, the research has created more awareness in the Wensels to keep closer eyes on the people in the community.

Concretizing or making the NRE information and research objectives materialize in the rural area is not an easy task but NRE information gets the rural people excited. This is difficult in the sense that the people complain of economic hardship/stress (grain problems, cow disease, etc) they experience. They are however excited when they hear that things can be better even with their stay in the rural area. They particularly get uplifted when they are made known that they are not the only rural people experiencing such difficulties (as confirmed by other NRE researchers during conferences). The Wensels try to explain to the people that they are also farmers and have also decided to stay in the rural area and show that things can also work out for the people (using themselves as a point of contact through NRE).

They are still learning the NRE research impact on the policies; it is an on-going process. They need to first of all, know policies, and pay more attention to them, and then get to know politicians responsible for making policies in the area to find out NRE's impact on the policies of the area.

Interviewer: Funmi Omole

Respondent: David Connel

David says that little development has been made at the general level; no direct observable impact has been made.

The NRE has however made an indirect impact on the rural areas (Tweed and Usborne). For example, a chamber of commerce has been established; it is a big association which has just started and also making progress. There is also the Tweed Heritage centre which has some published documents of the NRE

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which people can go through when they are there. This is a way of getting people informed in the area. This serves as an indirect impact of NRE on these areas.

David however points out that there are problems in these sites which go beyond the power of NRE. For example, Usborne is one of the richest agric. farming areas but still faces the challenge of high prices of food. The influence NRE can make on this issue is limited since it is not in charge of making policies for this locality. Also, the NRE influence on the creation of tourism in Tweed is limited.

Interviewer: Angela Briscoe

Respondent: Diane Martz

The NRE provided assistance and early coordination in Wood River for community groups and businesses to come together to develop a producer car-loading facility with the Sustainable Community Planning Project.

At last year's conference (fall or spring 2002), the site participants said they had learned that other communities are facing the same issues and provided them with an idea of options that they could pursue to respond to issues.

In Spalding, one site representative decided to run for mayor in the municipal elections, having been motivated in part by her involvement with the NRE and participation in the trip to Japan.

In Ferintosh, not much impact has been observed. At a certain point there was the realization that the research had been representing certain groups' perspectives (e.g. the mayor) while others' were not represented (e.g. the couple who owned the B&B). It will be interesting to watch if any changes come from the involvement.

In Hussar, the NRE has had an impact by making efforts to change attitudes and reinforce existing attitudes in order to promote a proactive approach. The NRE has had a positive impact by reinforcing positive approaches.

Overall, the NRE has made research sites aware that they can make use of the research being done, that it is not out of their reach.

Interviewer: Angela Briscoe

Respondent: Ray Bollman

[Rural Secretariat, CRRF (AARRG)]

CRRF brought together people from various institutions including provincial and federal government bodies and some NGOs through annual conferences since 1989, and since 1987 more informally. It provided a think tank atmosphere unlike anywhere else with leading thinkers and protagonists. The NRE team was very passionate about rural issues, and debate created learning opportunities by realizing things that people were not in agreement about.

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There is no competing rural research group and everyone involved in policy making is aware of the fact that CRRF has been a leading group, producing the best research, including Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, provincial- and federal-level research on rural development. CRRF may have been less visible in Quebec because of the Université Rurale.

CRRF network and websites provide briefs to parliamentary committees (Senate, House of Commons, Joint Committees). If you look at the policy outcomes, it is difficult to say how much CRRF influenced it. If you ask whether the policies ran counter to CRRF's position on the issues, the answer is no. And if you ask whether the policies support CRRF's position on the issues, the answer is also no. There is a grey area in the middle or on the ends. Part of the difficulty of evaluating CRRF's influence is the limited amount of rural policy-making that has taken place. But CRRF has provided a "rural lense" for considering how to apply the same policies to rural Canada and the different outcomes and implications.

The Secretary of State for Rural Development succeeded in getting a share of the federal infrastructure program allocated to rural development. But again it is hard to say if this was an outcome of CRRF activity or if it was a result of strong rural Ontario representation in the federal liberal caucus.

CRRF's main impact is its visibility, through the working paper series, but not research whereas the NRE has research with content and findings but the presentation of "200 research contributions" on the website makes it hard to access. But eventually the NRE will contribute substantive information when it is easier to access. CRRF's contribution was more through the process of information and products like conference proceedings and papers.

Community involvement in the research is not the same as published products of the research. There is a need for more research results to be published and posted systematically on the website in order to increase the NRE's impact. This would be a major contribution because they have major results, but the presentation is not systematic enough.

The process of having CRRF conferences and the activities of the NRE have made an impact by building networks. If someone needs a contact in another province, the only networks I know of are through the NRE.

Another impact is "brainwashing"; students are trained and educated to see "rural" in a certain perspective.

A strength of the NRE is the collegiality among colleagues, but the weakness of this is that there is a lack of strong leadership to assign projects, manage quality control, ensure that the website is up to date, and produce outcomes such as academic presentations, book chapters, and conferences.

Interviewer: Angela Briscoe

Respondent: Ivan Emke (*with input from Tom Beckley*)

The on-site activities of the NRE produced employment in Winterton through the household survey. They are aware of us, our information is posted on community bulletin boards and there has been some media coverage. The key leaders in the community know us, but less so.

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(TB) In Twillingate, the site visit raised the profile of our work and encouraged local people to participate.

The NRE has established networks: people came to the conference and made contacts with other site people, which gives them a sense that they are not doing something wrong in their community (there are other communities experiencing similar challenges).

(TB) Participants get excitement and positive feedback from other rural sites about things that they have tried.

It is hard to know what has an impact on the community because it takes time for those impacts to show. Even big government infusions of funds may not show any impacts for a while. The question of impacts is an obvious one to ask, but it is hard to answer. It becomes extra complicated with two sites. There are two other big projects happening in the two sites and people get the projects confused.

Important contributions have been establishing ongoing relationships with community members and putting some money into the communities.

(TB) We are like a "sympathetic ear."

Interviewer: Seynabou Sissoko

Respondent: Zoel Breault, Neguac

La ville de Neguac a plusieurs défis qui sont: la lutte contre l'exode des jeunes, attirer de nouvelles entreprises, le suivi de la décision Marshall sur l'intégration des autochtones dans la pêche, et l'après-forum de la Baie de Miramichi.

Depuis l'implantation de projet NRE a Neguac depuis 1998, on note plusieurs réalisations qui peuvent être liés de près ou de loin au projet. Ces changements sont :

- 1) la création d'un centre d'appel avec la génération de 35 emplois constitués majoritairement par des femmes
- 2) l'organisation d'un forum économique pour rapprocher la communauté de Neguac à Burnt Church et aux autres petites communautés environnantes pour voir ce qui pourrait être réalisé de concert sur le plan économique et à ce propos, il est envisagé le recrutement d'un coordonnateur (agent de développement)
- 3) il y a eu un développement (réflexion) au quai de Neguac d'une valeur de plus de 500,000\$ pour pouvoir accommoder et faciliter l'intégration de nouveaux pêcheurs autochtones dans la pêche commerciale
- 4) il y a la réalisation d'un projet touristique sur le site de l'île à fin d'une valeur de 250,000\$ pour la construction des infrastructure dont un phare et d'autres site d'attraction
- 5) il y a eu un développement d'une usine de mise en marché de l'huitre, La Maison Beausoleil, qui emploie à temps plein une quinzaine de personnes
- 6) il y a également eu un grand développement dans les bleuetières et l'élevage individuel des huitres

Du travail est toujours entrain d'être fait pour essayer d'augmenter les capacités des communautés. A ce propos, il y a un projet de relance économique de la péninsule acadienne datant de 1999. Le projet n'a pas

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encore donné les résultats escomptés mais il n'en demeure pas moins qu'il est porteur de beaucoup d'espoir. Même son de cloche pour le projet de relance économique de la pêche.

On note également une grande amélioration des réseaux de communication à travers la municipalité car la plupart des dynamiques se fait par l'intermédiaire de conseil municipal.

Le projet NRE a apporté beaucoup de changements positifs dans la plupart des cas dans la communauté de Neguac mais la bataille est loin d'être remportée car les défis sont encore présents et les besoins criards. On va préciser les plus gros problèmes auxquels sont confrontés les populations de Neguac :

- 1) Le plus gros problème est l'exode des jeunes
- 2) Absence d'une grande dynamique locale (50% des éducateurs de l'école vivent à l'extérieur de la communauté)
- 3) L'industrie forestière, incluant la sylviculture, devient de plus en plus difficile avec la mécanisation et l'exploitation intensive
- 4) Les coûts élevés des assurances automobiles rendent le travail des jeunes et leur intégration au monde de travail très difficile car se payer une voiture devient hors de portée des jeunes qui vivent dans une localité où le transport en commun est inexistant.
- 5) La crise autochtone de 1998 (qui perturbe quand même depuis 1990) a apporté un stress et des craintes car intégrer les autochtones dans la pêche commerciale implique la suppression d'emplois de pêcheur conventionnels. On doit faire la même intégration dans l'industrie forestière.

Interviewer: Seynabou Sissoko

Respondent: Omer Chouinard

Le projet NRE est implanté à Neguac depuis 5 ans, notamment en 1998. De manière générale, on note beaucoup de changements pour la plupart positifs qui peuvent être liés à la présence du projet dans la communauté de Neguac.

En effet, avant 1998, les populations de Neguac très peu actives avaient une conception à forte connotation économique du développement. Ce fut l'événement d'une pensée systémique d'une approche intégrée. Depuis l'implantation de projet, on note une très bonne conscientisation et par ricochet une meilleure cohésion des divers groupes socio-économiques de Neguac.

En effet, ils ont une autre lecture du développement qui considère l'aspect économique comme étant partie intégrante d'un système sociale, culturel, et environnemental où les critères sont interdépendants les uns des autres.

A cet effet, ils ont mis sur pied un comité d'environnement qui a pour vocation de s'adonner à une surveillance écologique avec une meilleure gestion de la qualité de l'eau, une information des citoyens de l'importance du maintien de la qualité de vie du milieu qui les entoure d'ici une plus grande attention sur la surveillance des zones côtières.

Le projet NRE a aussi permis une bonne conscientisation des leaders locaux qui ont adopté une stratégie d'une meilleure valorisation du patrimoine et une intégration des communautés autochtones, acadiennes et anglophones.

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Au bout de cinq ans, les communautés de Neguac sont plus en mesure d'être considérés pour ce qu'ils sont et ce qu'ils sont capables de faire étant donné qu'elles sont entrainées de gérer localement leur destins en respectant leurs ressources pour avoir des communautés en santé et durables.

Les populations locales se rendent de plus en plus compte que Neguac pourrait constituer un modèle de gouvernance étant donné qu'il n'y a plus que l'économie qui soit au poste de commande. C'est à dire l'importance de la culture acadienne, autochtone et irlandaise comme ciment d'action collective durable et viable.

Il demeure très important de préciser que l'influence du projet NRE dans la communauté de Neguac est très mitigée car si les populations pour une meilleure gouvernance demandent des suggestions [les chercheurs sont à même de faire des suggestions en autant qu'il y ait des gens capables de prendre les choses en charge]; d'autre part, ces mêmes populations n'aiment pas toujours qu'on leur fasse des prescriptions, mais plutôt qu'on les accompagne et qu'on respecte leur cheminement tout en amenant des critiques et des contributions positives. Cependant il y a encore des [accrocs?] et des violations à leur cheminement en tant que communauté.

Interviewer: Seynabou Sissoko

Respondent: Fleur-Aimée Choquette, St-Damase

Le projet NRE est présent à St-Damase depuis seulement 3 ans. St-Damase est une communauté qui a la réputation d'être une paroisse riche car elle est proche de deux grandes villes à savoir Montréal et St-Hyacinthe, ce qui lui permet de bénéficier de beaucoup de services. St-Damase a également ses propres infrastructures à savoir :

- 1) une centre de loisir
- 2) une bibliothèque municipale avec connexion internet
- 3) 2 usines d'épuration d'eau
- 4) un service de santé (3 médecins)
- 5) une pharmacie
- 6) une maison pour personnes âgées (autonome)
- 7) une maison semi-autonome pour personnes âgées
- 8) garderie à prix modique

A date il n'y a pas encore d'impact négatif du projet NRE sur la communauté de St-Damase, qui est assez autonome.

Interviewer: Lori Gould

Respondent: Derek Wilkinson

The NRE is viewed favourably in the research sites, people seem to appreciate it but does not think it's a central part of their lives. There is no real impact [on their lives], it is irrelevant.

[Where is the consent form for this interview???!]

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Derek has presented to the town council and the issues included in the household survey helped them to figure out their priorities.

(LG) Why no impact?

Because of time constraints, lack of a package outlining the findings. This type of research is not great for farmers and everyday people, it is more for policy-makers.

In Seguin, people know more about development and government than people in the NRE. They are very knowledgeable about politics, etc. and are retired and spend time educating themselves and getting to know about it.

Interviewer: Lori Gould

Respondent: Lorraine Schneider, Benito

- NRE has developed focus, exposure for outside people looking in
- Issues (all 6 themes discussed today) have been addressed
- Will aid in expansion and development by giving the town tools to reach their future goals
- As diverse and intricate each characteristic in each site is, there are still similarities and we all face similar challenges
- This meeting will educate the rest of the town population so that there is more interest and support for development (integrate it as a fully functioning tool of the community)
- People remember Lori coming to the community but do not yet fully appreciate what this is doing
- Written by Lorraine herself: “NRE helps us recognize our potential – establish tools of education, information, communication, development and technology so that we may work together to provide more opportunity, create more incentive to encourage our youth and our community to become involved in our future growth and direction”.

Interviewer: Lori Gould

Respondent: Simone Weinsbrodt, Benito

- The meetings put us in touch with other communities with the same problems
- More broad perspective on what we can contribute
- We get ideas from other communities
- Bill, David & Peter have helped us understand the system better (from identifying the problems, developing the ideas & then implementing it)

Interviewer: Lori Gould

Respondent: Doug Ramsey

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The first level of the impact of the NRE is that it raised levels of hope, which may be dangerous if they don't have the answers to follow it up.

The second level of the impact is in illustrating to the communities that their local issues are being faced by other communities across Canada. People meeting others from across the country brings home the message that we all face the same issues, moreso than just seeing it on the news.

The third level of the impact is a mechanism for networking. There has been some follow-up between community members. The Cross-Site Learning project gives continuity (i.e. on-line conferencing on a subject). The levels of networking vary between sites and may change or fluctuate over time. Some sites have stronger connections, like Springhill which is headed by David Bruce. When people leave the conferences there is a drop in the impact.

The fourth level of the impact is data collection and examination/analysis. It gives them a tool, the science behind their issues: they can take data to government to lobby for a new doctor, for example. The data gathered by professional researchers and universities is more credible.

Interviewer: Cecilia Pares

Respondent: Pat Dawn, Osborne

She cannot think of any anecdotes, only that when the community learned that the NRE was coming they thought "Not another group coming to research us!" She thinks they help the NRE more than it helps them. Farms can't be bought by young people so why not just accept it. Technology also allows us to do more now with fewer people.

When the group of Japanese visited us she wished she could have been able to talk with them, especially "the old man" that came.

Church is where people gather together, and otherwise people function quietly, independently, so the lifestyle does not inspire too many communitarian activities. The community is socially split. People are not interested in diversification of activities, they want to stay with the ways of life that they know and like.

There is no way to create jobs, the hospital is the only one that creates employment. And people go where the schools are... Does not see how the NRE can help the community.

Interviewer: Cecilia Pares

Respondent: Ed Zak, Laflèche

The results of NRE research have been relegated to a shelf because the people from the community do not understand them, or what to do with them. Only five or six community members have gone to college or university, so it's hard to get people excited about research results. The local newspaper wants a report when he returns from the conference, but he does not know what to say to them; does not know how the NRE can help them.

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If the researchers that come to the community interview negative people they are going to get negative results. That is what has happened. People usually have hard lives and are just trying to survive, the outcomes are usually negative.

But his wife is very enthusiastic and has organized the Chamber of Commerce. They own a B&B. Mr. Zak mentioned jokingly that the NRE helped them by staying at the B&B [but this is not what he has in mind as a real impact of the project, because it only helped him and his family]. Most people are volunteers.

They need to know which direction to take to make advances in business and get beyond the present situation. They want to know how to do this, to be *shown* how it can be done.

The information disseminated to the community is not in plain English, which makes it very difficult for common people in the community to understand and benefit from it.

Interviewer: Cecilia Pares

Respondent: Laura Ryser

- The case of Tom Briggs from Mackenzie: He showed a great interest in making contact with the NRE, going to its conferences. He asked for a study on his community as where people lives, worked, why people was leaving the town. He also asked specific information about population trend for a project of a senior center.

- Tumbler Ridge: When they were doing the 2001 survey, there was closure announcement. People were to stressed, so it was no the time for making researches. Anyway, NRE staff was able to make a transition survey about services, skills, programs, all this with the intention of a better planning process. This research helped to influence the educational programs at place, as some other aspects of others projects in the town. For more information on this case and others, is possible to go to www.unbc.ca (In Greg Halseth's papers).

- Lora thought afterwards on asking directly Tom Briggs on the effects of the NRE project in his community:

+ NRE helped to create a dialogue with managers of different mills, so they stay in town.

+ he thinks it is very important to understand what would make people stay in the community. On this subject she thinks is important for helping employment the hospitals, and the education and recreational sectors. The employment offices are not functional, and are expensive.

+ he considers also of great importance knowing how the services not available at the community make the prices in it raise.

+ he thinks the events organized by the NRE help people of different sites to know each other, and understand better their situation. Is better to prevent further situations, so is easier afterwards to deal with them. This help people to become responsible.

+ NRE doesn't bring solutions, it contributes to a better understanding. It is the role of the community to find solutions that come from within. He believes in the importance of maintaining this project alive, better understanding of their problematic is really helpful.

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Interviewer: Luc Bisson

Respondent: Patrice Leblanc

- Création liens – links between participants and researchers
- Problématique: Les participants découvrent qu'ils ne sont pas tous seuls au monde
- Fournir informations aux participants
- D.G. Taschereau
 - Aide pour son travail
 - actions concrètes : patrice n'est pas sûr si la NRE s'est transformée en actions concrètes.
- Réflexion faite par le Groupe Impacts Politiques Canadienne (reflexions for the government people)

Interviewer: Luc Bisson

Respondent: Bill Reimer

- Bringing people together
- Overall view : you are not alone
- Research rural Canada: NRE-CRRF
- We are the only one Group of research at the National Level
 - rural research understood
- Help to create rural policies
- Help to create le Ministère des régions
- Help the Cabinet members to take actions
- Help to Create the Rural Ministry
- Ministère: lobbying, research, more
- Sample frame
 - Comparison / international community - Japan, G.B.
- Research results: capacity process of the communautés
- Consultations importants / ministères

Interviewer: Luc Bisson

Respondent: Tom Beckley

- Blissfield (N-B)
- Rural
 - No local government
 - No active committees
 - CSD (stat)
- Rural parish
- Maurice Green wanted to buy la scierie du village :

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- Because the owners wanted to Dismantle it ;
- Voulait fermer - 50 jobs
- Mais Maurice Green voulait que le communauté l'achète
- Alors il a pris contact entre la NRE et TOM a donner exemple de l'achat de compagnie de bois communauté, soit la Scierie Tembec à Témiscaming.
- So he organised Town Meeting population : 20-25 people
- Présenter un plan d'affaires

Net results:

- Gave the community more knowledge & confidence ;
- NRE students help in the process of the plan d'affaires ;
- Community felt that they were not alone – there's some more in your situation.

Interviewer: Luc Bisson

Respondent: Tom Briggs

- shopping outside the town : plus de sensibilisation plus à la population pour acheter local ;
- operation user firendly
- quality services
- IMP : for the mayor to be :
 - Being seen in the community
 - Be available
 - Conseillers municipales doivent avoir la même attitudes que le maire
 - Not to have a Picture of doom and gloom > we have to show a positive attitude in the city for the citizens ;
- One major problem :
- People living outside the community but they work in Mackenzie - Living in Prince George
 - Northern residents reductions – lost
 - Walk out of town
 - Management in town
 - Not the workers

The net results of the NRE :

- Identify the problems or issues ;
- Communicate to people the problems ;
- NRE very helpful for him ;
- The positive attitude always comes from the municipal consils.