


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

## Ipods, Algae, and Oil: Your place in the future of (rural) Canada

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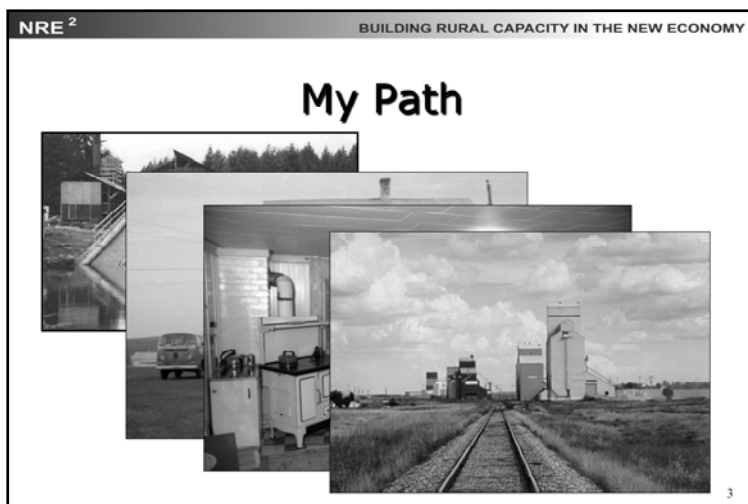
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- Acknowledgements:
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Concordia University
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- Statistics Canada
- CRRF
- NRE Research Team
- Rural Citizens in our field sites
  
- What is it like to do social relevant research?



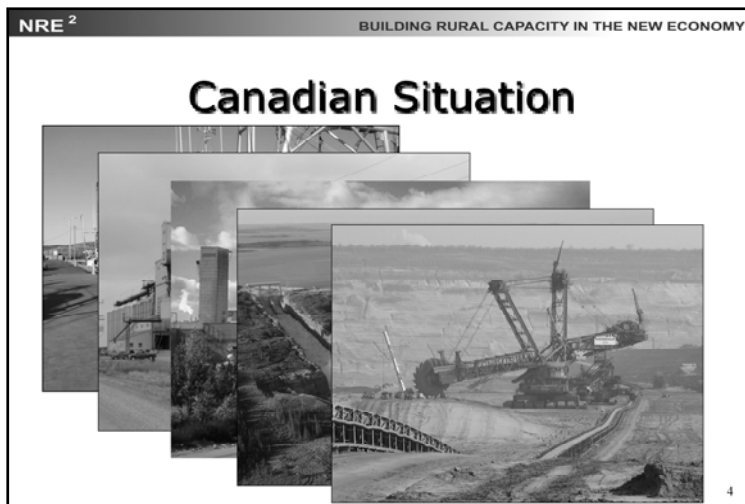
### Introduction

- Suggest to students – Ask your teacher what they were doing at your age
  - (S) For me it was 1961-62-63 (age 17-18-19)
    - Graduating from high school, facing my first years at UBC
  - Context
    - No photocopy machines, fax, or laptops
    - Computers filled a room – main communication with punch cards, only 1 terminal used by the operator
    - No internet or person on the moon (1969 – Neil Armstrong)
  - I enrolled in physics, chemistry, and math
  - Assumed I could pick a job and would get it when I graduated
  - “The war” was the Vietnam war – in its beginning stages under Kennedy
  - First Nations people had just been given the right to vote (1960 – Canadian Bill of Rights)
  - The Lesage gov’t was elected in QC – giving official support to the Quiet Revolution
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- 30 Year later
    - I am in the social, not the natural sciences
    - (S) I am married with 3 grandchildren
    - (S) I am coming off of 10 years of research on rural communities
    - I am in a world that is interconnected on an unprecedented scale
  - As we have learned about the natural and social we are catching a glimpse of the consequences of our actions at a global scale.
  - It is a sobering discovery since the news is not always good.
  - But it is a valuable and in many ways noble cause since our lives are fraught with danger if the lessons are ignored.
    - If we don’t recognize the relationship between our desire for a peppier car and the increase in skin cancer, asthma, or diminishing glaciers we will be condemning future generations to environmental challenges, disease, and food crises.
    - If we don’t recognize the relationship between our fundamental beliefs about right and wrong and the emergence of injustice and genocide, we are condemning ourselves to continued danger and fear of a political nature.



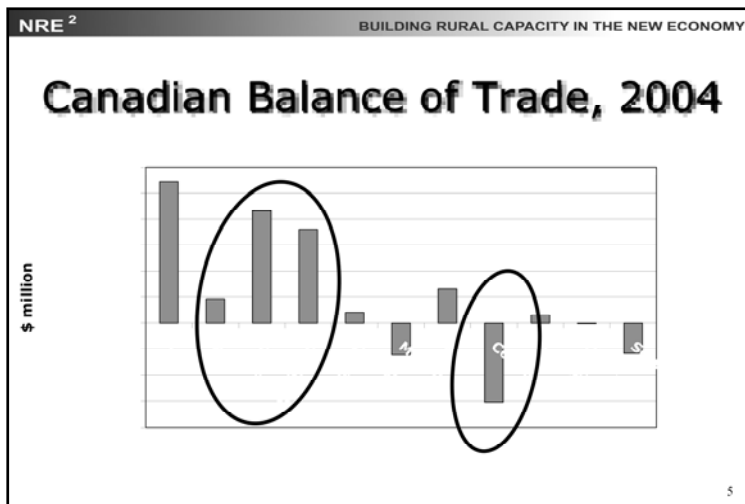
### My path

- For many reasons – of interest, skill, chance, and fortune – my own realization of this interdependence has focused on the circumstances of people and groups in rural places (especially Canada).
- (S) I had the good fortune to spend time in a small forestry town in BC (course work and employment)
- (S) The changes occurring there captured my attention so when I came to QC following a job, I continued this line of investigation – Cap-St-Ignace
- I wanted to know how these people were facing the changes around them – in the hope of minimizing the negative effects.
- (S) I started the inquiry at the level of households, but quickly learned that it was not a household matter but a community one, a regional one, a national and international matter. Phenomenon was complex and interdependent.

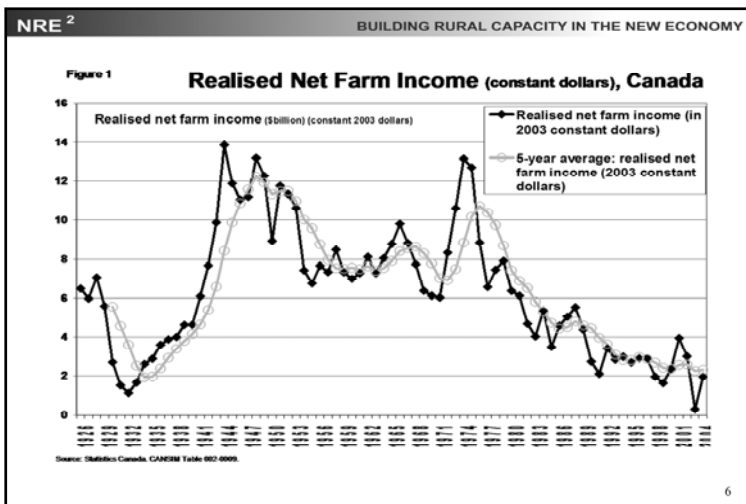


### Canadian situation

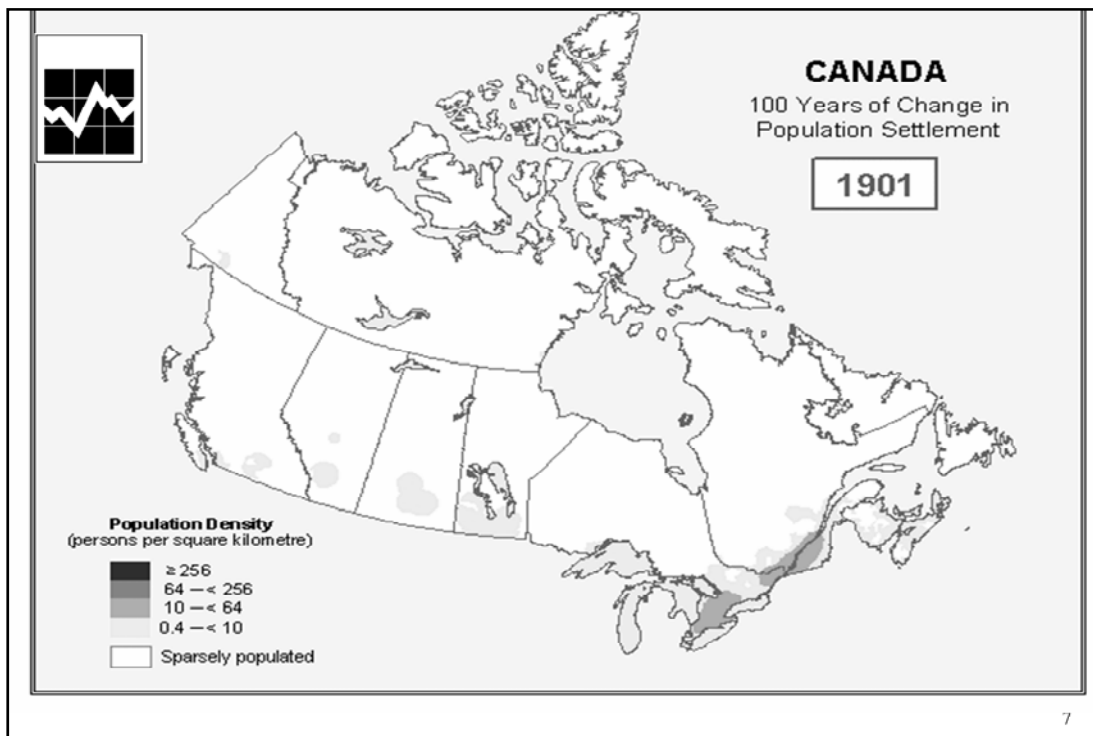
- Our need for food and primary products has been organized around cheap food and products
- Canada is a trading nation
  - It was established as a source of resources for other countries and continues to be deeply embedded in exchange to this day.
  - It used to be (S) fish, (S) wood, fur, metals, butter, and (S) grain – and continues with the addition of (S) energy, (S) petroleum, and water.
  - Instead of producing many of our own consumer goods – we trade them for our natural resources



- In this graph of our national balance of trade – we see how the millions of dollars we spend on consumer goods (S) (Ipods and clothing) are paid for by selling our energy, forestry products, auto parts, agricultural goods and fish (S).



- We are very good at trading
- Amount of goods traded have gone up in spite of international competition
- However:
  - To do it we have had to mechanize and expand the production of goods through consolidation and specialization
  - E.g. Farms have got larger – produce more with fewer people.
  - Food has become cheaper
  - Incomes to producers have declined.



- Consequence
- With fewer jobs, people have moved to the cities
- So far, cities have been able to absorb these new workers
- But we are now facing challenges even within the cities
  - Not just from population growth – but including infrastructure demands, pollution, and quality of life.
- Specialization of crops and intense production has meant a greater use of chemicals
  - Producing side-effects like algae blooms, health risks, and environmental stresses

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## **Observations - 1**

- Rural Canada is diverse
- Primary industries are shedding labour
- Manufacturing and services competitive
- Industry has concentrated
- Environment more important
- Knowledge-intensive employment growing
- Price of communication and transportation is falling; moving people increasing

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Many other changes are taking place concurrently:

- Rural Canada is becoming more diverse
- Primary industries are shedding labour
- Manufacturing and services remain competitive
- Industry has concentrated
- Environment is becoming more important
- Knowledge-intensive employment growing
- Communication and transportation prices are falling, but the cost of moving people is increasing



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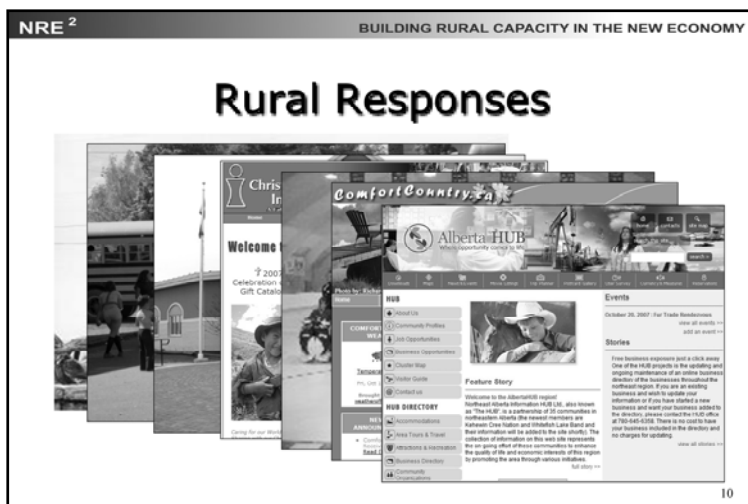
## Observations - 2

- Youth leaving, families returning
- Government services more regional
- Rural aging fastest
- Rural perceived as safe
- Immigration strong
- Local capacity is critical
- Rural and urban Canada are interdependent

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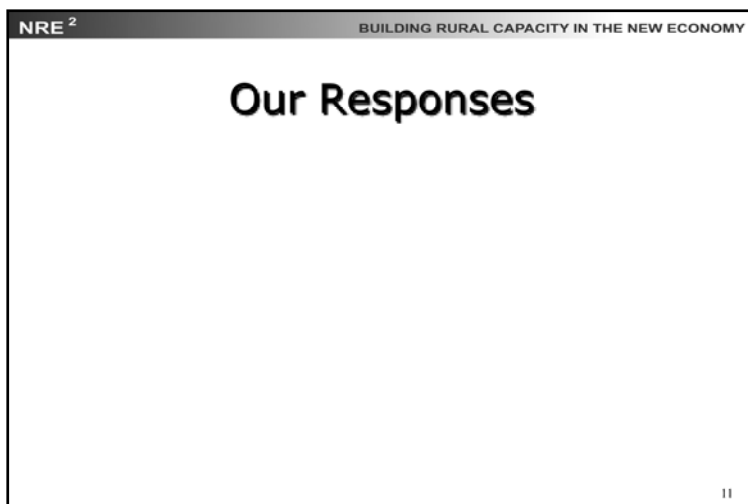
### Further observations

- Youth leaving, families returning
- Government services more regional
- Canadian society is aging but rural places are aging faster than urban
- Rural perceived as safer than urban (provides opportunities and challenges)
- Immigration will remain strong – although cities are the destinations of choice
- Local community capacity and social capital are critical for rural revitalization
  - Our European colleagues have pointed out how the traditional focus on human capital only goes about halfway to explain the differential performance of rural places
  - They refer to the rest as the ‘intangibles’ – the characteristics and processes related to local capacity, social capital, networks, and governance
- Rural and urban Canada are interdependent
- These observations served as a background to some of the major questions in our research work (NRE<sup>2</sup>):
  - How can capacity to respond to those changes be increased for rural people and communities?
  - What are the strategic options for rural people and communities?



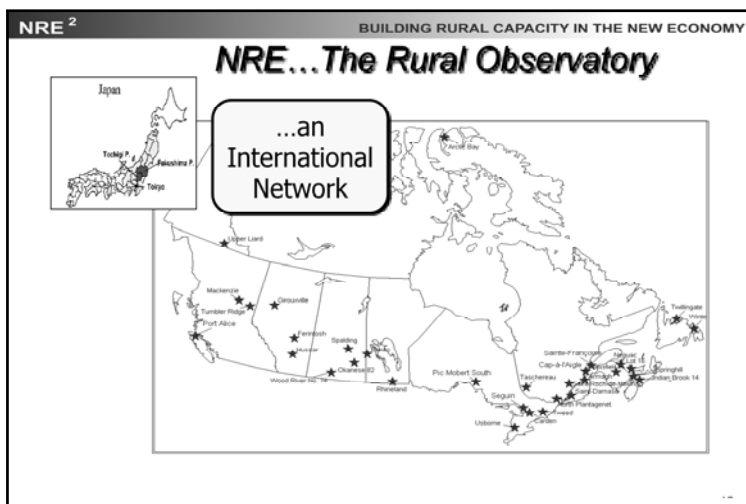
How have rural people responded?

- Diversify economy
  - (S) Cap a l'Aigle
- Reorganize their institutions
  - (S) Ste-Paule
  - (S) Tumbler Ridge
- Innovate
  - (S) Springhill – child care, geothermal
  - (S) Warner
- Form alliances
  - With other communities
    - (S) Tweed, Madoc, Marmora, Stirling, Centre Hastings
  - With cities
    - Edmonton (S)



What have we done?

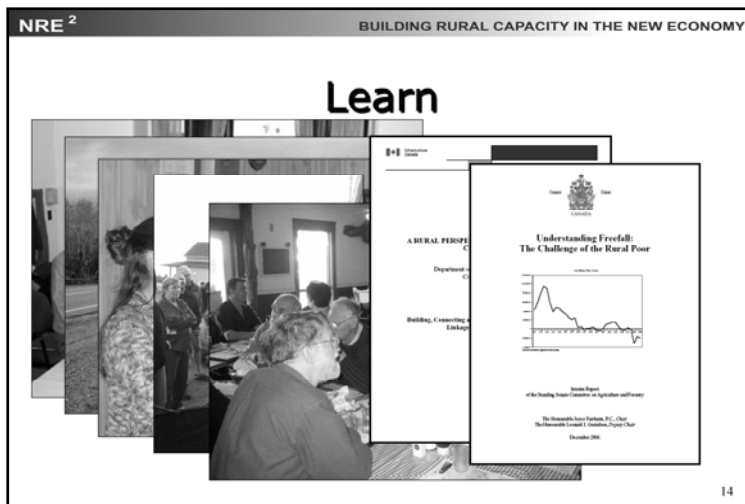
- Investigate
  - Rural Observatory
  - Data reorganization and collection
- Collaborate
  - Field sites and media projects
  - Exchanges (including Japan)
- Teach and learn
  - Research
  - Citizens
  - Practitioners
  - Policy-makers
- Facilitate the 'rural voice'
  - Media
  - Research
  - Policy



- Since 1987 we have met twice a year to bring together our research, policy, and practical concerns
- In 1997 we established a research project to overcome some of the problems we identified
  - *[High quality research*
  - *Extensive collaboration nationally and internationally*
  - *Comparative analysis]*
- (S) We established the Rural Observatory as a key component of this project
  - 32 systematically selected rural sites (5 key comparisons)
  - We entered into collaborative relations with those sites
  - (S) Japanese interest and formal alliance
- Over the 9 years of the project have conducted research on 4 themes:
  - Governance
  - Services
  - Communications
  - Natural resources and environmental management
- Prepared more than 6 databases:
  - *[Census data (4 cycles – 1986-2001)*
  - *Household survey (2000 rural households)*
  - *Surveys of rural media (newspapers, radio, bulletin boards, etc.)*
  - *National survey of rural and urban people re. environmental values*
  - *Capacity surveys*
  - *Extensive log and qualitative data from sites]*
- Produced wide variety of products for academics, policy-makers, and rural people.
  - Books, articles, pamphlets, brochures, booklets, web, and multimedia products
- Extensive connections with policy-makers at municipal, provincial, national levels
  - Through workshops, conferences, consultations, invited presentations
- Began with the question:
  - What are the major changes taking place in rural Canada? (NRE<sup>1</sup>)



- Collaborate
  - (S) Conferences – always in rural areas
  - (S) Field sites (S)
  - (S) Exchanges (including Japan) (S)




- Teach and learn
  - (S) Research – Census materials, historical materials, (S) field work, (S) discussion
  - (S) Interaction with rural citizens
  - (S) Collaboration with community development practitioners
  - (S) Policy-makers at all levels
    - Local
    - Provincial
    - (S) Federal

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## Opportunities?

- Curious
- Passionate
- Knowledgeable
- Imaginative



Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

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Your responses and opportunities

- We are looking for people who are:
  - Curious
  - Passionate
  - Knowledgeable
  - Imaginative
- You can prepare by
  - Directing your learning according to your interests
    - Becky (City-Farm)
  - Learn useful skills
    - Data analysis
      - Mike (Statistics Canada)
    - Social engagement
      - Jessica (Director of charities for private corporation)
    - Travel
      - Martin (UNESCO Regional Child Protection Specialist – Eastern and southern Africa)
    - Asking questions
  - Taking initiative on research and action
    - E.g. Deatra (PhD student – multiple sites)

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## The New Rural Economy Project

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### Impacts

#### •Federal

- Instrumental in the establishment of a Cabinet Role during the Liberal government: Secretary of State for Rural Affairs
- Continue to be consulted on policy issues:
  - Hon John Godfrey: Minister of State for Cities and Communities (municipal gas tax)
  - Prime Minister's Special Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (Mike Harcourt) – Rural Caucus
  - Alliance: CRRF, FCM

#### •Provincial

- Invited for consultation on rural-related issues
  - QC – Minister invited us for special meeting during deliberations on a rural policy
  - NF – Consultation regarding regional zone boards
  - NS – Consultations re. Halifax development corridor
  - ON – Invitations to Ontario Rural Council; Foundation for Rural Philanthropy
  - MB – Invitation – Manitoba Rural Forum

#### •Municipal

- Research contributions
  - North Bay; West Prince County, PE; St-Donat; Nelson, BC; Newtown, NL; Trois-Pistoles; Nanaimo; Alfred; Sackville; Meunster; Altona; Miramischi; Ferintosh; Ste-Damas; Prince George (Mackenzie, Tumbler Ridge); Tweed; Benito; Twillingate; Taschereau – Workshop and conference sites
  - 32 field sites: give-backs and connections
- Other
  - Inspiration for newsletter in Lot 16, library in Benito, run for mayor in Benito, communication project in Hussar

#### •International

- CJ Project in Japan
- DORA project in Europe
- Victoria towns project in Australia
- Sentinel communities project in Kansas (RUPRI)