



## Update on the New Rural Economy Project

October 1, 1999

Bill Reimer, Research Manager

This document summarizes the major activities of the *New Rural Economy* Project since the last update (May, 1999). If you would like more information, check the NRE web page (<http://nre.concordia.ca/>) or contact Bill Reimer ([reimer@vax2.concordia.ca](mailto:reimer@vax2.concordia.ca)). We are always looking for new participants and partners.

### 1. The NRE National Workshop in Newtown, NF

The annual NRE Workshop was held in Newtown, NF: a small community on the east coast of the Island. From 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of May, we met at the newly refurbished Barbour Theatre and Conference Centre to move the research agenda ahead. Results from the field sites were exchanged and key issues debated. We came away from the meeting with a list of priority projects for the coming months and several potential opportunities for the longer term. Priority projects were the following.

- **Third Sector Organizations:** What problems and opportunities do voluntary associations face in rural Canada, especially with their government relationships? What strategies should they use to improve their situation?
- **Community Capacity:** What does it mean and how should it be measured?
- **Exit and Return Migration:** Why do people (especially youth) leave rural areas and why do they return?
- **Rural Enterprises and Networks:** How do rural enterprises contribute to the local economy? What characteristics of rural communities support the maintenance and expansion of rural enterprises?
- **The Dynamics of Leading and Lagging Rural Regions:** Why are some regions leading and others lagging? How does this change over time?
- **Validation of Sample Frame:** How well do the sample sites represent the characteristics of the sample frame? How might the sample frame indicators be improved?
- **Livelihood Strategies:** How do people maintain or adjust their livelihood strategies under changing rural conditions? What new work opportunities do they create?
- **Complex Dynamical Systems:** Under what conditions are rural communities sustainable?
- **Canada-Japan Project:** What can we learn about strong rural communities from the Japanese experience?
- **Communication and Marketing of our Insights:** How can we better communicate the results of our work?

Exploratory Projects were the following.

- **Evaluating Rural Indicators:** What are appropriate indicators for understanding rural issues?
- **Social Cohesion:** What is it? How is it related to the welfare of rural communities?
- **Changes in Financial Resources:** How has access to financial resources changed in rural

Canada? What problems and opportunities do these changes create?

- **Update of Sectoral Dependencies:** How have sectoral dependencies changed since 1991?
- **Rural Health:** How has access to health facilities changed in rural Canada? What problems and options do these changes create?
- **Systems of Inclusion and Exclusion:** What processes of inclusion and exclusion are most important for rural Canada? Who are included and who are excluded under the new rural economy?
- **Impacts of Climate Changes:** How are climate changes likely to affect rural Canada?

A report with photos from the workshop can be found on the NRE web pages.

## 2. Canada-Japan Project

The *CJ Project* was officially established this spring. Our most recent event was the presence of Drs. Nobuhiro Tsuboi and Masachi Tachikawa at the Newtown workshop. They gave us an overview of the administrative and agricultural regions in Japan as a basis for discussing the selection of field sites in that country. We were very pleased to hear in June, that the Japanese Team at the *Institute for Rural Revitalization for the 21st Century* (IRR21) selected *Awano machi* in Tochigi Prefecture and *Iitate mura* in Fukushima Prefecture as the two sites for comparative analysis.

After the Newtown workshop, Dr. Nobuhiro was able to continue his sojourn in Canada with a tour of three of our Québec field sites: Ste Françoise, Cap à l'Aigle, and St Damase (photos from that tour are now in the NRE web site photo gallery). He was joined by Bruno Jean, Peter Apedaile, Mario Carrier, and myself. The learning which occurred reinforced the value of our comparative approach to understanding rural Canada and encouraged us to establish such tours as an important part of our research program.

The CJ Project will continue in December when Bruno Jean and I travel to Japan to visit the two sites. I am sure we will have much to report as a result of that visit.

## 3. Working Group on Major Structures and Processes Affecting Rural Canada

The activities of this working group have not advanced significantly since our workshop in March. The 12 papers were sent to the Rural Secretariat along with the Update to the Rural Canada Profile (see below) which was part of our contract agreement under this topic. Revisions have been made to some of the papers. This project will continue at a slower pace unless funding can be found. When funding is found, we will hold a second meeting to discuss revisions of all the papers. They will be integrated into a book and the issues identified will be used as a basis for further NRE research.

## 4. Update to the *Rural Canada Profile*

The *Rural Canada Profile* was prepared by the Interdepartmental Working Group of the Federal Government using data up to 1991. With the support of the Rural Secretariat we have added two major elements to that study: the inclusion of data for 1996 and the analysis of the data at the census subdivision level rather than the census division level. This extended the analysis in time and made it more precise for the level of analysis with which we are concerned. The results of this analysis have been published as a report from the NRE entitled "Update to the Rural Canada Profile". Copies can be obtained through our

web site or by contacting the NRE office.

## 5. Working Group on Third Sector Organizations

This group has completed the study of third sector organizations funded under the Canadian Rural Partnerships Program of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The results can be found in three reports:

- **Voluntary Activity and the State: Commentary and Review of the Literature Relating to the Role and Impact of Government Involvement in Rural Communities in Canada** (by Joan Marshall)
- **The Role of Voluntary Organizations in Rural Canada: Impacts of Changing Availability of Operational and Program Funding** (by David Bruce, Paul Jordan, and Greg Halseth)
- **Voluntary Organizations and Government Funding: Partnerships, Skills, Awareness – An Education Strategy** (by Ellen Wall and Todd Gordon)

The first is a review of the literature regarding voluntary associations. Marshall reviews the theoretical and empirical material regarding volunteer behaviour with particular focus on rural concerns. She identifies how the earlier research linking volunteering with social class and civic participation serves as a basis for more current preoccupations with volunteer groups as mechanisms for service delivery. This shift from a concern with social integration to social support sets the stage for the research in the other two reports.

The second report focuses on the empirical research conducted in nine of the NRE field sites. It focuses on volunteer organizations and inquires about the issues which they face in rural areas. They report that the problem of finding and maintaining members and adequate funding are the two most important problems faced by most organizations. The researchers found that the organizations were surprisingly isolated from many communication networks which may help them deal with these problems.

The third report picks up from the other two with a strategy for the maintenance and growth of volunteer groups. It points to the importance of **awareness, skills, and partnership**. **Awareness** is necessary to identify funding opportunities, and the political preoccupations which might free up support. **Skills** are required to gain access to information and write the proposals required by public and private institutions. **Partnership** highlights the necessity for voluntary organizations to search for links beyond their own communities.

These three reports make a substantial contribution to our understanding of voluntary organizations in rural Canada. They represent three fundamental aspects of the NRE program: high quality scholarship, grounded research, and practical applications. We will build on this base to expand the work which they have begun. The three reports can be found on the NRE web site and are being prepared for publication.

## 6. Access to Government Services in Rural Canada

The report on *Access to Government Services* was submitted to the Rural Secretariat in May. It provides an analysis of the data from 25 of the NRE field sites regarding the location and accessibility of services from all three levels of government. It suggests that:

- there is significant variation in access to services, particularly by site: the closest baby delivery facility, for example, was located about 15 km from one of our sites but 150 km from another;

- the availability of transportation, especially an automobile, is a crucial factor for accessing services;
- youth, and the elderly are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to access;
- rural norms for service accessibility vary considerably: rural citizens, for example, spoke of accepting more distant services as a tradeoff for rural life, whereas many local administrators were asking for the services to be located within their jurisdictions; and
- further research on the issue of access is needed: especially at the level of households and with a wider variety of indicators than distance and time. Local perceptions, road conditions, access to transportation, and the location-allocation of resources must be included in our future analysis.

## **7. Validation of the NRE Sampling Frame**

Using knowledge gained from the field work and additional macro-level analysis we have been able to test the classifications originally proposed for the NRE sampling frame, review our understanding of the dimensions it represents, and revise our identification of particular sites. This analysis led to the reclassification of 17 sites (cf. new table attached). Most of the misclassifications occurred on the institutional capacity dimension (11 site changes). The changes on the other dimensions were much fewer: local/global (1); fluctuating/stable (4); not adjacent/adjacent (4); and leading/lagging (2). Although this will change the analysis of our results, the decision was made to continue with the research in the original field sites. This will still allow us to test the importance of the five dimensions. Should we be able in the future to add more sites, the issue of empty cell locations can be revisited. These results reinforce the value of comparison between the census indicators and local indicators, especially with respect to the institutional characteristics of communities. Human Resources Development Canada provided the support for this project.

## **8. Comparison of Leading and Lagging Regions**

My presentation to Statistics Canada identifies the multidimensional character of leading and lagging statuses and the extent to which their differentiation is related to economic, demographic, institutional, and political processes. This analysis will be continued in two directions:

- the field data will be used to evaluate the validity of the census variables and the leading and lagging dimensions they represent; and
- the linked data in the Rural Canada Database (1986, 1991, 1996) will be used to identify the changes in leading and lagging status which have occurred between 1986 and 1996.

This research has begun with the development of indicators which are consistent across the three census years. Funding will be sought for its development.

## **9. Strategies for Leading and Lagging Communities - Alberta**

The Alberta team has been very active over the past year as it took the theoretically derived results from its complex dynamical systems approach to the field. Using these models, they determined that it is possible for some forms of agricultural price stabilization to introduce uncertainty into economic outcomes for rural places. They also identified strategic options for trapped rural economies to break out and aim for sustainable outcomes. This last year, they visited the rural villages of Hussar and Ferintosh to validate some of those options.

Strategies are being developed to reorient the village economies to those of Calgary and Edmonton in keeping with the principles derived from the theoretical work. These strategies focus on ways to integrate the common interests of neighbouring rural villages and towns in a cooperative framework for labour and housing market development, service provision, and governance based upon a reorientation to the metropolitan markets. We expect to expand the insights of this analysis to other sites through the work of the community capacity team and the macro-level comparisons of leading and lagging regions.

## **10. Site Profiles**

Four more site profiles are on their way to completion: Spalding, SK; Wood River, SK; Port Alice, BC; and Arctic Bay, NV. The three remaining sites are still under negotiation. You will also see more entries to our photo gallery for 3 of the Québec sites.

## **11. Rural Livelihoods**

The research team in Southern Ontario has been very busy with research in Huron County (thanks to the support of OMAFRA and the Ontario Rural Council). This summer they published a valuable study of their work in a book entitled: *Dynamics of the New Rural Economy: An Exploration of Community-Sponsored Research from Huron County* (Tony Fuller and Paul Nichol, eds, Guelph: University School of Rural Planning and Development). This volume examines the demographic, social, and economic context of the county; labour market activity (including enterprises and household labour); and provides an assessment of action programs directed to economic development. It also provides a pretest of the household survey approach which we are using for the next stage of the NRE project. Check it out.

## **12. Community Capacity**

Work continues on a profile to gauge the extent to which a community has the ability to cope with a variety of stresses, to avoid becoming locked in to irreversible outcomes, and maintain its ability to substitute options in the future. This work will continue with a view to a program of 'ground-testing' the more theoretical aspects of the study with feedback from the field sites. Funding has been received from the Canadian Forest Service and a workshop is in the planning stage for early November. A document related to that workshop is posted on the NRE web site.

## **13. Social Cohesion Project**

In response to the SSHRC call for proposals on *Social Cohesion in a Globalizing Era*, I submitted a Letter of Intent based on our NRE work. This was accepted with 31 others for the second stage of the competition. Work began on the full proposal in June and the final proposal was sent off at the end of September (a copy of the proposal can be found on the NRE web site).

The project includes a team of 17 researchers and 12 partners. It proposes household surveys in 24 of our field sites in conjunction with macro-analysis using the Rural Canada Database. Five Working Groups would be established to examine the *economic, service provision, social participation, communication, and community capacity* aspects related to social cohesion. They would be supported by a *Working Group on Methodology and Protocol* to deal with definitions, the design of instruments, and implementation of the

surveys. The final decision from SSHRC is scheduled for January, 2000.

#### **14. NRE Data Centre (<http://nre.concordia.ca/>)**

Roger Des Ormeaux has been very busy this last four months keeping the NRE web site up to date. You will see the many new additions to the site by looking at “What’s new on the Web site”. He has added a number of NRE documents, added more photos to the photo gallery from the field sites, put up some more site flyers, linked us with several other research projects, and added the CRRF Newsletter. We also kept him busy adding drafts and documents as the Social Cohesion Proposal grew.

Roger kept this all up even as we had to move the physical location of the server. We are still located at Concordia University, but on the Loyola campus until our permanent digs are prepared in the Canadian Jewish Congress building in downtown Montréal. Concordia recently purchased this building and is moving a number of archive-related groups into the facilities. It is a beautiful building and will be shared with an interesting mix of organizations. We look forward to moving in once January rolls around and are grateful for the support which Concordia has provided for this facility. Hopefully, you won’t notice the change in location as a user of the site. Be sure to check it out on a regular basis.

#### **15. CERF Conference - Rural/Urban Differences in Economic Development**

The Canadian Employment Research Forum is planning a conference on the above topic for June, 2000. Several CRRF/NRE members attended a meeting with CERF to develop the framework and the call for papers went out in May. Seven of the 17 papers on the preliminary program are from our network.

#### **16. Communications and Publicity**

We have begun exploring options for the more effective communication of our research results. All NRE reports and documents are distributed using a standard format and logo. We have also developed a format for an NRE folder to hold materials related to the project. Site flyers have been prepared for 15 of our sites so far. We have drafted the text for a number of flyers entitled “Insights and Options” for inclusion into the NRE package. These flyers are intended to summarize the major insights from our research for a popular audience. They would include graphs, photos, and/or text boxes along with strategic options implied by the insights. Prototype versions will be produced over the next few months and will be used to solicit funding for final production of the NRE folders and materials.

#### **17. NRE Presentations and Meetings**

It has been a busy time for presentations and meetings as communications and lobbying continues on behalf of the NRE. Some of the major events since the spring are:

- **Presentation to the 20 Regional Zone Boards in Gander.**

As part of the Newtown meeting, Rob Greenwood arranged for a presentation on the NRE at their meeting in Gander. I outlined the history of the NRE and suggested ways in which the Zone Boards might find our work to be useful. I was aided by a number of the workshop participants. A copy of

my *Powerpoint* presentation is available on the NRE web site.

- **Presentation to Monique Bégin, Sous-ministre des Régions du Québec**

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, Bruno Jean, Peter Apedaile, Nobohiru Tsuboi, Mario Carrier, and I made a presentation to M<sup>me</sup> Monique Bégin, the Assistant Minister for Regions in Québec. The meeting included 13 other people from her office. We presented an outline of the NRE project, some of the interesting findings, and an introduction to the rural situation in Japan. It was a lively and valuable discussion of the issues and a remarkable showing of support for the work we are doing (especially in Québec).

- **Presentation to the Office of Rural Health, Health Canada**

On September 10<sup>th</sup> I met with John Wootten, the Director of the Office of Rural Health and about 12 other members of his team. I presented material regarding the NRE project and our proposal to SSHRC regarding Social Cohesion (the Powerpoint presentation can be found on the NRE web site). There was considerable interest shown in the possibility of using our infrastructure for asking specific questions regarding health issues and collaborating on various issues relating to community health. The growing interest in rural health is reinforced by the National Workshop to be held later this month (Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>) in Prince George. The objective of this workshop is to discuss approaches to identifying issues and establishing an infrastructure for research on rural health. Raymond Pong, David Bruce, Renee Lyons, and I will all be at that workshop.

<b>The NRE Sample</b>	<b>June 1999</b>	sgrid9.wpd		<b>Cell</b>	<b>Lagging</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Leading</b>
Low Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Not adjacent	Low capabilities	0		1	
Low Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Not adjacent	High capabilities	2	Springhill, NS (1211008) Twillingate, NF (1008028)	3	Girouxville, AB(4819048) Arctic Bay, NT (6104018) Cap a L'Aigle, QC (2415040) Humphrey, ON (3549001)
Low Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Metro adjacent	Low capabilities	4	Indian Br 14, NS (1208014) Ferintosh, AB(4810004)	5	
Low Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Metro adjacent	High capabilities	6	Tweed, ON (3512031) Okanese82,SK (4706815)	7	N.Plantagenet, ON (3502031)
Low Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Not adjacent	Low capabilities	8	Pic Moberg S,ON (3558061)	9	Upper Liard, YT (6001032) Lot 16, PE (1103028)
Low Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Not adjacent	High capabilities	10	Benito, MB (4620043) Neguac, NB (1309038)	11	
Low Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Metro adjacent	Low capabilities	12	Carden, ON (3516036)	13	
Low Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Metro adjacent	High capabilities	14		15	
High Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Not adjacent	Low capabilities	16	Belleterre, QC (2485065)	17	
High Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Not adjacent	High capabilities	18	Spalding, SK (4714028)	19	Port Alice, BC (5943017)
High Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Metro adjacent	Low capabilities	20	St.RdeMekinac, QC(2435045)	21	
High Global Exposure	Stable Economy	Metro adjacent	High capabilities	22	Winterton, NF (1001332) Armagh, QC (2419035) Hussar, AB (4805019)	23	St. Damase, QC (2454015) Mackenzie, BC(5953033)
High Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Not adjacent	Low capabilities	24	Blissfield, NB (1309021)	25	Tumbler Ridge, BC (5955003)
High Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Not adjacent	High capabilities	26	Ste. Francoise ,QC (2411030)	27	Wood River, SK (4703042)
High Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Metro adjacent	Low capabilities	28		29	Rhineland, MB (4603036)
High Global Exposure	Fluctuating Econ	Metro adjacent	High capabilities	30		31	Usborne, ON (3540001)

Total number CSDs selected per province (based on population density, lagging leading based on greater proportion of csd's)

Newfoundland: 2 (both lagging)

Prince Edward Island: 1 (leading)

Nova Scotia: 2 (both lagging)

New Brunswick: 2: (both lagging)

Quebec: 6 (4 lagging, 2 leading)

Ontario: 6 (3 lagging, 3 leading)

Manitoba: 2 (1 lagging, 1 leading)

Saskatchewan: 3 (2 lagging, 1 leading)

Alberta: 3 (2 lagging, 1 leading)

British Columbia: 3 (3 leading)

Yukon: 1 (leading)

Nunavut: 1 (leading)