



BRANDON UNIVERSITY

# Rural Works: A Rural Policy Think Tank SUMMARY REPORT



RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



### **Rural Development Institute, Brandon University**

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

For more information, please visit [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi).

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# INTRODUCTION

*Rural Works! A Rural Policy Think Tank* took place at the Keystone Centre in Brandon, Manitoba on November 6, 2014. The vision the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Brandon University and its long-time partner, Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development (MAFRD) had for the day was two-fold. First, it was to create a time and place for a conversation about economic development in rural Manitoba. Second, was to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of RDI by Brandon University. The day turned out to be a success with over 70 people engaging in meaningful conversations about the future of rural Manitoba. This document is intended to provide a background of the work that led to *Rural Works!* and summary of what happened that day with the hope of engaging others in a bigger conversation so we can work in collaboration to design a successful future for rural Manitoba.

## A Brief History of RDI

October 25, 1989 was the grand opening of RDI at Brandon University. It was established because Brandon University and the Province of Manitoba had the *insight* to understand that rural issues were important and worthy of investigation. This new partnership was based on the province's commitment to fund core operations and projects at RDI and Brandon University's commitment to undertake rural-focused research that can inform good public policy decisions. Partnerships like this one have been so integral to RDI's achievements over the years that the theme of the 25th Anniversary was "Celebrating Partnerships".

RDI's beginnings took root during a conversation defining a new rural agenda for Manitoba that started just over 25 years ago. Headlines in the late 1980s read, "A new agenda for rural Manitoba", and "Now is the time to ease inequities, officials told". Talking rural was a courageous conversation then and it continues to be a courageous conversation today.

Brandon University and RDI also had the *foresight* to know continued support for rural and related research comes from growing rural researchers and, as a result, the Department of Rural Development and a Masters in Rural Development degree were established. Over fifty rural researchers have graduated with a Master of Rural Development or Graduate Diploma in Rural Development from Brandon University.

RDI strives to *innovate* by building and strengthening a network of partners to support rural development with applied research, knowledge, dissemination, and learning. One key partnership is the long-standing relationship between RDI and the Province of Manitoba which has been forged through a strong one with Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development (MAFRD). Through agreements over the years, the province's decision to invest in RDI has resulted in research that provides a better understanding of rural youth migration, issues related to immigration and how

to be welcoming communities, and Manitoba's food processing industry, among other topics. Today, the Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC), hosted at RDI connects universities, research institutes, organizations, and governments in countries across multiple continents.

Fostering discussion, sharing knowledge, and improving practices with a shared goal of developing and implementing effective policy is the *action* taken by RDI and its many partners. The Journal of Rural and Community Development (JRCD), published by RDI, is an open-access academic journal available online around the world – [www.jrcd.ca](http://www.jrcd.ca). On average there are 1,000 downloads a month to 38 countries from the site. In addition, RDI makes a number of its research publications available for free on its website – [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi).

RDI's accomplishments over the years are numerous. For a more detailed history see Appendix A "Achievements Throughout the Years".



## Talking Rural

The purpose of *Rural Works! A Rural Policy Think Tank* was to create a time and place where people could come together to talk and understand rural Manitoba as a dynamic place and rural development as dynamic activities. It was also planned in a way to create an understanding that rural development is not the property of one government department, but many government departments and agencies contribute to its success. *Rural Works!* was about opening the door to an ongoing conversation across departments and across Manitoba that is informed by rural Manitobans.

The conversation at *Rural Works!* was focused on rural economic topics, leaving social and environmental topics for another time. This dialogue takes root in the understanding that rural Manitoba is an economic contributor, it provides environmental goods and services, and it is an integral element of urban Manitoba.

The rural economy across the globe and right here in Manitoba has changed and is still changing. Partridge and Olfert explain these in their 2010 article, *The Winner's Choice* – <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29646/>. Rural residents no longer do almost everything in one community, instead, they live, work, shop, and play in different communities in their region. Partridge and Olfert argue that using a functional economic region as the base geographic measure rather than individual communities on their own is the better way to analyze economic information and formulate policy. Rural economic changes have been enabled by a number of factors including a reduction of economic reliance on primary agriculture, an increase of labour-saving techniques that reduce the number of available jobs, better transportation networks, and retail spending happening at a regional, rather than local, scale.

Additionally, changes in federal and provincial government policy are impacting rural Manitoba. Some of these changes include: the loss of the Federal Rural secretariat and the Rural Team; changes in immigrant settlement service delivery; the shift to a rural development focus within MAFRD; and municipal amalgamations.

Functional economic regions were the geographic basis of measure in the 2013 RDI report, *Identifying and Explaining Self-Contained Labour Areas in Rural Manitoba* – [www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2011/02/Report-1-Identifying-Explaining-SLAs-in-Rural-MB-Final-April-30.pdf](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2011/02/Report-1-Identifying-Explaining-SLAs-in-Rural-MB-Final-April-30.pdf); in this report, functional economic regions are referred to as self-contained labour areas (SLA). The economic patterns and activities of local businesses and residents was determined by tracking where people live and work using Statistics Canada data. Commuting patterns helped delineate which municipalities are located in each of the 18 SLAs in Manitoba and propose sub-SLAs for regions that have a large geographic area and/or population.

Rural problems are wicked in that they often require several organizations, departments, and agencies to be involved and respond with success. Interdepartmental cooperation to understand and respond to rural challenges and opportunities begins with conversations across and within these different entities. Even though *Rural Works!* focused on economic factors, it is important to recognize rural issues also require integrating social and environmental factors.

In order to provide context to this new conversation about rural Manitoba, it is helpful to understand that rural Manitoba has at least three types of rural:

1. Northern and Remote (with an existing Northern Development Strategy),
2. Metro Rural (around Winnipeg with municipal partnerships defined in The Capital Region Partnership Act), and
3. Prairie Rural (the area that, as yet, has no plan).

MAFRD plays an important role in creating a sustainable rural economy; however, it is not the only department connected directly to rural economic development in Manitoba. RDI has identified an additional 11 Manitoba government departments that have policies and programs that influence rural economic issues. Any one department would be challenged to update, coordinate, and implement initiatives that sometimes must be

responsive and at other times are proactive.

Some provinces have released rural development plans and strategies that are intended to provide a common vision and articulation of actions the province will undertake to develop rural regions with a sustainable future. British Columbia and Alberta both released their plans in the fall of 2014. Each plan was developed based on consultations with rural stakeholders and can be found online: British Columbia - [http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/Rural%20Report\\_Web.PDF](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/Rural%20Report_Web.PDF) and Alberta - [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi12085/\\$FILE/reda-final.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi12085/$FILE/reda-final.pdf).

Since 2001, Quebec has undertaken a very comprehensive, regional approach to rural development, enshrining various actions and responsibilities in legislation. This collaborative approach ensures regions have the means to act, with the requirements and responsibilities for government departments and agencies clearly outlined. For more about Quebec's approach to regional development, please listen to the recent RDI webinar on the topic, which can be found here - <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/webinars-and-speaker-series/>.

In 2012, Nova Scotia responded to the federal government's decision to discontinue core funding to regional economic development organizations in Atlantic Canada by undertaking a review of regional development authorities and make recommendations about the best model going forward. This review resulted in the establishment to Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) that provide leadership on economic priorities and development economic development plans for the region. More information about the RENs can be found here - <http://www.novascotia.ca/econ/ren/>. Newfoundland and Labrador has a Rural Secretariat that is responsible for engaging the public, supporting collaboration, research to help inform decision-making, and supporting 10 advisory councils. Information about the secretariat can be found at - <http://www.ope.gov.nl.ca/rural/index.html>.

*Rural Works!* was designed in a way to challenge assumptions about rural Manitoba by having a respectful conversation that is open to redefining common understandings. A good conversation about economic topics in rural Manitoba starts with asking tough questions about assumptions. Is agriculture still the largest driver of the rural Manitoba economy? Are communities open to working on a regional level? Is there a better way to measure success in rural Manitoba? *Rural Works!* participants had many conversations that reflected a variety of concepts, issues, and interests. The people that took the time and put in a sincere effort to contribute at *Rural Works!* demonstrated a willingness to rethink how rural development in Manitoba is done, as well as the ability of citizens, academics and government to get together and design a prosperous future for rural Manitoba.

## Manitoba Departments Engaged in Rural Development

- Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
- Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Conservation and Water Stewardship
- Education and Advanced Learning
- Finance
- Housing and Community Development
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Jobs and the Economy
- Labour and Immigration
- Mineral Resources
- Municipal Government
- Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection

## The Participants

Over 70 people from a broad spectrum engaged in rural development in Manitoba came together at *Rural Works!* to have a conversation about economic development in rural Manitoba. Most provincial departments involved in rural development sent representatives from senior management to front-line staff. Rural leaders and advocates from community and business organizations also enriched the conversation.

The voices at *Rural Works!* were not all the voices in rural Manitoba. Yet the participants' insights and opinions reflect the diversity of their backgrounds. Strengthened by their diversity, everyone shared a common purpose and focus on how to work together to advance rural development in Manitoba.

*“Of all the places, communities, the provinces, the states, the regions that I’ve visited over the years, I don’t think I’ve ever seen as much common sense of purpose, mutual respect, willingness to collaborate as I have here in Manitoba. It’s real. It’s capital. It’s wealth. It’s political, social capital that you all have and need to capitalize on. So, I am very impressed.”*

- Participant





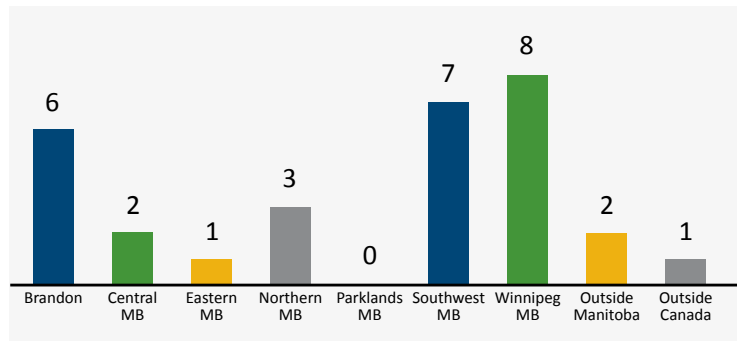
## Engaging Participants with Mentimeter

Dr. Lars Hallstrom, Director of the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities and Dr. Ryan Gibson, a graduate of Brandon University and professor at Saint Mary's University, led an engaging session that used, Mentimeter, an interactive online technology that gathered information about who the participants were and where they came from, as well as feedback from

participants in real-time in a discussion about what assets there are in rural Manitoba. What can be learned from this discussion is that rural Manitoba is rich with assets and has a strong foundation rooted in the seven capitals: financial, built, social, human, natural, cultural, and political.

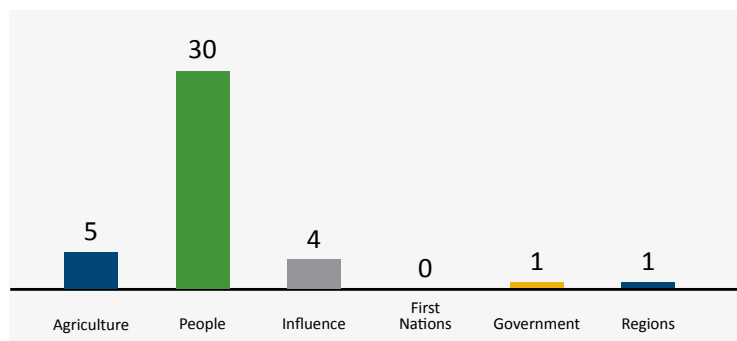
### WHERE IS HOME?

The first question helped identify where home was for participants Rural Works!. The majority of respondents traveled from outside of Brandon, with eight people coming from Winnipeg and seven from the Southwestern region of Manitoba. Two respondents traveled from outside of Manitoba and one came from outside of Canada. There were no respondents from the Parklands region.



### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON RURAL IF IT DISAPPEARED?

Thirty people, a vast majority of respondents, felt that the disappearance of people would have the greatest impact on rural. Five respondents felt the loss of agriculture would have the greatest impact and four felt that the loss of influence would, while government and regions were each identified by one respondent.



## Rural Manitoba's Assets

Participants answered six open-ended questions about what the greatest assets in rural Manitoba are. The following section uses word clouds created from the answers given by participants to give a visual representation of what assets were most often identified.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF AGRICULTURE IN RURAL MANITOBA?



**Land** is agriculture's greatest asset in rural Manitoba. This natural capital was mentioned the most by respondents. **People** and **community** were also used frequently to describe the greatest asset of agriculture in rural Manitoba. These assets draw on social, human, cultural, and political capitals. **Knowledge**, **ability**, and **productive** were human capitals used often to describe agriculture's assets in rural Manitoba.

*Ability to adapt*

*Commodities for the world*







WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF GOVERNMENT IN RURAL MANITOBA?



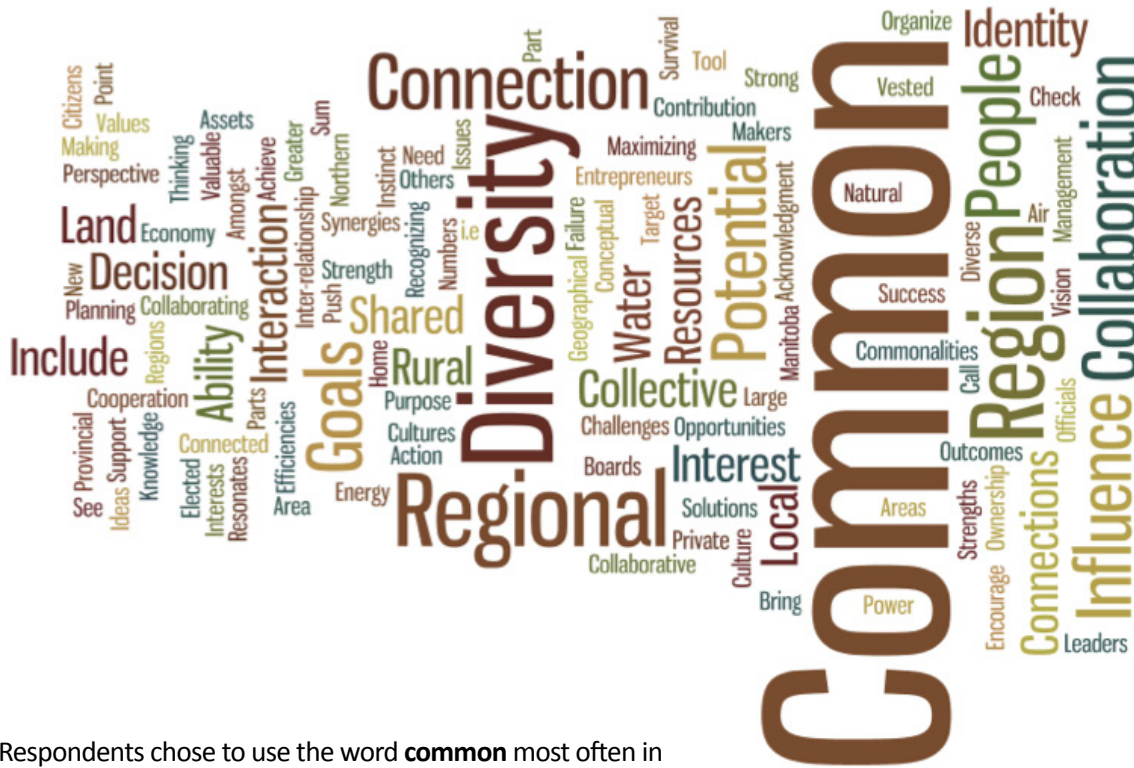
**Common** was used most often by respondents when describing what the greatest asset of government in rural Manitoba, suggesting a draw on social and political capitals. The word **diversity** was also used in many responses. Diversity also draws on social and political capitals, but it brings in human and cultural capitals as

well. Respondents also included the words **region** or **regional** a number of times. Regions are an asset of government in rural Manitoba that draws on all seven capitals: financial, built, social, human, natural, cultural, and political.

*When they work together regionally, are open to change and let the generational shift happen.*

*Proximity to the people and resources and greater understanding as a result.*

## WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF REGIONS IN RURAL MANITOBA?



Respondents chose to use the word **common** most often in their answers which could be considered an asset using social and political capitals. The words **region** or **regional** repeated in descriptions, suggests that regions in and of themselves are an asset. The words **connection** or **connections** were used frequently, demonstrating the use of social capital. **People, diversity, influence, collaboration, and potential** were all commonly used words in responses. These assets use social, human, cultural, and political capitals.

### DISCUSSION

Some interesting comparisons about the words used in responses can be made. First, the word **community** was used often to describe the greatest asset of agriculture, people, influence, and First Nations in rural Manitoba, however, **community** does not show up at all in the word clouds describing the greatest assets of government and regions in rural Manitoba, suggesting that a community-focus is no longer an asset at the regional or government level. Second, respondents often used two words that

*Common purpose, common identity and common goals.*

*Influence. Connected.*

seem like opposites, **common** and **diversity**, to describe the assets of government and regions in rural Manitoba. Respondents frequently used the word **diversity** to describe the greatest asset of people in rural Manitoba, but that is the only other question where the word common or diversity appears in the word cloud. This suggests that regions and governments are entities that can transcend commonality and diversity.

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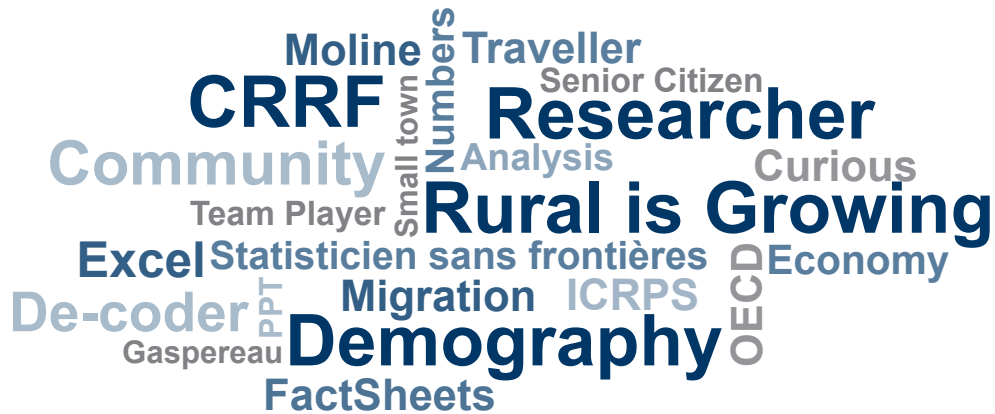


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## Presentation Summaries

Three leading rural academics from North America presented statistical information, theoretical perspectives, and new ways of valuing rural Manitoba as a way to set the stage and generate ideas for discussion during the Conversation Cafés in the afternoon. This section includes summaries of their presentations.

### 10 Facts in 10 Minutes

Dr. Ray Bollman, retired statistician from Statistics Canada, presented 10 facts that provide insight into what data collected by Statistics Canada tell us about rural Manitoba's population and economy.

One key lesson shared in the presentation is that the problem one is trying to solve should determine the measure and the geographic scope of that measure. This was demonstrated with two facts. The first fact is that the size and structure of rural Manitoba changes depending on whether the data used measures population, employment, or Gross Domestic Product (GDP), therefore, it is important to decide if the problem at hand is one that relates to population, employment, or GDP. The second fact is that rural Manitoba has changed from a community-centric society to a more open society: people now drive in different directions for work, education,

recreation, and entertainment. This change suggests that a shift away from community-centric units of measure to one that focuses on functional economic regions acknowledging the fact that people no longer do everything in one community would provide a better understanding of the economy in rural Manitoba.

Two facts presented challenge widely held assumptions about agriculture and rural Manitoba. The first is that manufacturing, not agriculture, provides the most jobs in the rural goods-producing sectors. The second is that farmers have been a minority of the population in rural Manitoba since 1971 and their numbers continue to steadily decline. The implication of these facts is that efforts to develop rural Manitoba's economy should include, but not be solely focused on, primary agriculture.

The data show that the population in rural Manitoba is growing in some areas, but not all. In some communities, population growth is driven in part by immigration and in some communities, population growth is driven by a young, growing population of Manitobans that identify as Aboriginal, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. When a closer look is taken at whether or not young people are returning to rural areas, the data shows they predominantly return to larger centres and rural areas that have easy access to the City of Winnipeg. These facts reinforce the need to look at population changes in the context of functional economic regions to better understand how the number and diversity of people in a region have changed over time.

The value of human time, measured in wage, is increasing. This fact has a paradoxical impact on the rural Manitoba economy. The good news is that the real wage rural Manitobans earn is going up, the bad news is that



this results in more mechanization to reduce labour costs resulting in fewer jobs for people to ship more goods. The data shows that there is a labour shortage on the horizon in every region of Manitoba which will present a significant challenge to economic development in rural Manitoba. Soon there will not be enough people for available jobs, which will have an acute impact on those

rural regions that are not growing and continue to present challenges to the ones that are growing.

The powerpoint for Dr. Bollman's presentation can be found on RDI's website at – [www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-10-Facts-in-10-Minutes-by-Dr-Ray-Bollman.pdf](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-10-Facts-in-10-Minutes-by-Dr-Ray-Bollman.pdf)

## Changing Paradigms for Rural

Next, the Director of the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities, Dr. Lars Hallstrom, spoke about changing paradigms for rural Manitoba and the complex nature of the systems that rural communities are, and are part of.

Rural communities are complex systems on their own and are also part of larger systems. Every rural community is embedded in a number of different systems at the same time. Local, regional, provincial, national, and international systems all exist in and around rural communities. These systems can be described in six broad categories: trade and commerce, environment, people, society and culture, health and well-being, and infrastructure. The complexity of rural communities and their embeddedness in multiple dynamic systems pose a challenge for putting effective public policies in place.

Systems theory can help provide a way to better understand the complexities of rural communities. There are five components of systems theory (von Bertalanffy). First, systems are open and they interact with their environments. Second, systems acquire new properties through emergence. Third, systems continuously evolve, change is always happening. Fourth, systems are, for the most part, self-regulating. Fifth, systems are nested in other systems. These components of systems theory can be used as a framework through which policy solutions to public problems can be developed.

Changing complex systems can be challenging. Interventions to change systems can be categorized as capacity, collaboration, competition, and capitals. The capitals can be further broken down into seven categories: built capital, financial capital, political capital, social capital,

human capital, cultural capital, and natural capital (Flora and Flora 2013). By focusing on the seven capitals, as well as assets instead of liabilities, the characteristics of healthy rural communities can be better understood. These communities focus investment, programming, and evaluation in all seven capitals and they consider each capital, and their interaction with the other capitals, as important. Functionally meaningful partnerships and linkages between the capitals exist in healthy rural communities. Also, there is an understanding that investing in one capital can yield returns in multiple other capitals.

Understanding systems and capitals provides an integrated, and integrative, framework for considering rural development and rural policy. Focusing on capitals shifts the emphasis from weaknesses to strengths. This approach helps to provide structure and create links in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating public policy. Systems and capitals can be used to support scenario modelling and also as a tool to engage others in the decision-making process. This framework can also be used to structure the measures used to assess the amount and impact of change.

What is seen depends a lot on where one is standing, which in-turn shapes what policies are developed and how they are implemented. Using a framework that considers multiple bottom lines throughout the policy process can lead to more integrative and holistic rural policy across and within sectors.

The powerpoint for Dr. Hallstrom's presentation can be found on RDI's website at – [www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-Changing-Paradigms-for-Rural-Manitoba-by-Dr-Lars-Hallstrom.pdf](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-Changing-Paradigms-for-Rural-Manitoba-by-Dr-Lars-Hallstrom.pdf)

## Rethinking the Value of Rural

The morning session was wrapped up with a presentation by Dr. Tom Johnson from the University of Missouri, Columbia on rethinking the value of rural that raised the idea we value what we measure and encouraged participants to start thinking about different ways to measure successful development in rural Manitoba.

Conversations about the economy often involve statistics about GDP, unemployment rate, employment growth, and population growth. However, these measures leave out the question, “What about wealth, sustainability, and quality of life?” Population growth tells us nothing directly about the changing prosperity of residents. Employment growth does not consider the quality of jobs and ignores the role of capital income. The unemployment rate ignores those who drop out of the labour force or migrate during economic downturns, which is an acute problem for rural areas. The GDP ignores depreciation and degradation of productive capital and also ignores most intangible and non-market costs and benefits. Once what is left out of the measurement is considered, traditional economic measurements become a misleading measure of national success and that new measurements should be actively embraced.

Recently, focus has shifted to measuring wealth, particularly rural wealth. Comprehensive wealth accounting measures the seven forms of capital (financial, built, social, human, natural, cultural, and political). Measuring comprehensive wealth overcomes the shortcomings of traditional economic indicators. It is a long-term indicator that gives a better indication of performance over time. Aggregate wealth is an indicator of the ability to produce income in the future. Comprehensive wealth includes tangible capitals (financial, built, and natural) and intangible capitals (human, social, environmental, and cultural). Thus comprehensive wealth is an indicator of sustainability into the future.

A complete accounting of wealth may never be fully achieved, some forms of capital defy measurement, and this way of measuring development can be controversial, however; it is feasible to approximate measurements, even imprecise and incomplete measurements can improve decision-making, and, perhaps most importantly, if we measure it, we value it.

There are many accounts at a Canadian level that show a shift toward measuring comprehensive wealth. The Canadian Financial Flow Accounts and the Canadian System of Environmental and Resource Accounts are two examples. In addition national-level accounts for human and social capital are to be developed. While these national accounts are not yet disaggregated into the functional economic region level or even the provincial level, they can be with modest investments in data collection and analysis.

Comprehensive wealth accounting measures the return on investment in the environment, education, health, intellectual property, and social capital. It clarifies and quantifies the abstract concept of sustainability and recognizes that investing in one capital will have a positive impact on other capitals. This broader way of measuring development focuses strategies on local assets, drawing attention to the returns to investing in public assets and the relationship between these public investments and private wealth creation. Undertaking comprehensive wealth accounting at a functional economic regional level and a provincial level will garner a better understanding of the dependence that urban residents and businesses have on rural areas for wealth creation. It will also help demonstrate just how significant the return on investment in rural people and places truly is.

The powerpoint for Dr. Johnson’s presentation can be found on RDI’s website at – [www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-Rethinking-the-Value-of-Rural-by-Dr-Tom-Johnson.pdf](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-Works-Rethinking-the-Value-of-Rural-by-Dr-Tom-Johnson.pdf)

# Conversation Cafes

The afternoon portion of *Rural Works!* brought participants together in smaller groups to drill down on seven specific questions. A station was set up for each question staffed with a facilitator from MAFRD and a recorder from RDI. Presenters from the morning session served as a resource at some stations.

The questions themselves were developed collaboratively with the Think Tank presenters, MAFRD staff, and RDI. The topics were drawn from previous conversation cafes with community stakeholders engaged in rural development, held as part of developing RDI's 11 Fact Sheets. The seven topics discussed during the conversation cafes were:

1. What data do we have? How do we use it? What can we share? What do we still need?
2. What assumptions do we need to alter as we move forward?
3. In Manitoba, how can government departments work together for a coordinated approach to rural?
4. Where does agriculture fit in rural policy?
5. What is the role of government in rural development? Federal? First Nations? Provincial? Municipal?
6. How do we invest in rural? What are the mechanisms for investment? How do we capitalize on our rural investment?
7. How do regions, rural, and policy fit together?

## RURAL FACT SHEETS

The 11 fact sheets are available on the RDI website at [www.brandonu.ca/rdi/25th/](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/25th/) and cover the following topics:

- Rural Population Size and Change
- Components of Population Change
- Patterns of Job Growth and Decline
- Working Age Population
- Aboriginal Population
- Immigrant Arrivals
- Agricultural Price Change
- GDP in Agriculture and Food Processing
- GDP by Sector in Non-Metro
- Non-Metro Employment Patterns
- Intentions to Build in Non-Metro



# Conversation Summaries

## 1. WHAT DATA DO WE HAVE? HOW DO WE USE IT? WHAT CAN WE SHARE? WHAT DO WE STILL NEED?

There was general agreement in the cafes that people working in rural development need to look for new sources of data and new ways of collecting data that is relevant to rural Manitoba. At the same time, there is a need to be conscious that what we measure will define us. Available data is useable, but not reliable. Changes to the 2011 census and data collection methods, such as phone surveys, are two examples participants used to describe the limitations of statistical information on rural Manitoba.

A number of different tools and available data sets were discussed. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs has a tool that measures the attractiveness of the community to specific groups of people such as young people and immigrants. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy was mentioned as a source of data collected by the

Regional Health Authority. Tax file data, health data, and labour force survey data from Statistics Canada came up during the conversations. Participants also mentioned that the provincial departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Municipal Government. Another source of data raised was real estate data on property sales by community. In addition, the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics is possibly looking into a community accounts process similar to the one currently in place in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**A CHALLENGE** raised during discussion was the lack of information sharing and coordination between provincial departments on what data is being collected and how it can help with decision-making on rural development. Another challenge raised was the need for more local level data for communities to use in decision-making.

## 2. WHAT ASSUMPTIONS DO WE NEED TO ALTER AS WE MOVE FORWARD?

Participants agreed that there are assumptions about rural Manitoba that should be challenged. Assumptions have implications to the future, the role of government, and the role of stakeholders.

**A CHALLENGE** related to specific assumptions about rural Manitoba included:

- Agriculture is the largest and most important industry in rural Manitoba.
- Rural Manitoba is not diverse.
- Rural is the same everywhere.
- Small businesses in rural Manitoba are not as good as chain stores in urban Manitoba.
- Rural Manitobans cannot influence policy because a majority of Manitobans live in the city.
- There is only one way to deliver services and there is no need to change.
- More funding is always required to implement change.



### 3. IN MANITOBA, HOW CAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WORK TOGETHER FOR A COORDINATED APPROACH TO RURAL?

There was consensus amongst the participants that there needs to be political will and dedicated resources for a successful coordinated approach to rural development. Cabinet Ministers are considered integral in moving ideas forward and Deputy Ministers are integral to implementing these ideas. However, participants felt it was important for all levels of departments to be encouraged to be involved in rural development and participate in decision-making.

**A CHALLENGE** is to better engage rural residents. As important as provincial Cabinet and Deputy Ministers are, participants strongly felt that they need to listen to rural Manitobans. Working collaboratively, breaking down barriers, and emphasizing action; were all raised by participants as well as taking a holistic approach and creating a safe space for honest conversations about future actions.

### 4. WHERE DOES AGRICULTURE FIT IN RURAL POLICY?

The notion that agriculture must be included in rural policy was generally agreed upon by participants. Agriculture is a key driver of the rural economy. Agriculture policy while once synonymous with rural policy, needs to be part of a broader rural development policy initiative. How rural policy defines agriculture is important and some participants suggested that the definition should go beyond primary agriculture to include value-added opportunities in the food and energy sectors.

There was disagreement about whether or not a farm should be considered like any other business and not

receive any special considerations, for example with respect to taxation. There was recognition that policy is important for planning development, as well as dealing with conflict on the landscape between farmers and non-farmers.

**A CHALLENGE** is to provide better education about the agriculture and food industry, particularly in urban areas, as is recognizing the important resource that MAFRD is for farmers and the development of the agriculture industry as a whole.

### 5. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT? FEDERAL? FIRST NATIONS? PROVINCIAL? MUNICIPAL?

Participants expressed that the role of government in rural development is multi-faceted and complex. This is compounded by the fact that multiple departments have varying, but important roles in rural development. Governments can enable and facilitate rural development, however, decisions should be made as close to the issues as possible. The need for a broad, articulated vision of rural development shared between levels of government and across government departments was a reoccurring theme. Many participants made it clear that rural Manitobans are demanding to be part of government conversations and decision-making.

Some of the specific roles that government play with respect to rural development discussed were:

- Regulator (e.g. environmental and food safety policies)
- Employees that support and help advance community projects.
- Contractor of services related to rural development (e.g. Conservation Districts)

Regionalism and the need for some form of regional organization was also a common theme during the discussion on this question.

**A CHALLENGE** is determining how best to work across departments and levels of government so that efforts are coordinated around a common vision.

## 6. HOW DO WE INVEST IN RURAL? WHAT ARE THE MECHANISMS FOR INVESTMENT? HOW DO WE CAPITALIZE ON OUR RURAL INVESTMENT?

There was a shared understanding that investment is a choice and that investment can mean change. Participants raised the need: to better understand how people invest in rural Manitoba; for investment to come from within and outside of rural Manitoba; and to define, and promote what rural Manitoba has to offer.

There were a number of different types of investment in rural Manitoba raised during this conversation including:

building capacity, building public infrastructure, private industry investing in its own infrastructure, and the volunteer time of community members.

**A CHALLENGE** is how to look at investment in rural Manitoba differently and how to fully measure wealth in rural Manitoba.

## 7. HOW DO REGIONS, RURAL AND POLICY FIT TOGETHER?

A common theme during this conversation was the importance of a dialogue about functional economic regionalization in rural Manitoba led by the provincial government. Included in this dialogue should be the development of a shared vision for rural development in Manitoba, particularly a Prairie Rural Economic Development Strategy. The need for more consistency in data was also raised in the context of regionalization.

Many participants expressed that the definition of regions should be locally driven, or, at minimum, include rural Manitobans in a meaningful way where they have influence over the outcome. Some referenced the experiences in other provinces, such as British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

There was concern expressed that regionalism has inherent limitations and that drawing boundaries can cut communities off from each other. Rural regional policy must be flexible and match the needs of the people, instead of the geography. Perhaps there is a role for more place-based policy in functional economic regions going forward. Some conversation was had around the requirement for equitable distribution of resources between the regions because different regions have different capacities to make use of those resources.

**A CHALLENGE** is to establish a common vision for Prairie Rural Manitoba that engages everyone from residents to community organizations to businesses to governments.

## Rural by Design: A Call To Action

The agenda for *Rural Works!* was a call to action, a call to deepen the conversation and understanding of development in rural Manitoba. Responses to perennial and emerging problems require us all to think ahead and plan, to design our desired future for rural Manitoba. Rural by Design is the next step in that call to action, a way to bring the conversations about rural Manitoba together and continue the focused dialogue that began at *Rural Works!*.

Rural by Design is a vision that inspires rural Manitobans to determine their own rural futures. With an approach that fosters innovation and flexibility, this process will enable direct involvement and local ownership of planned actions for future success. In order for rural Manitoba to design a successful future, everyone, from rural Manitobans, to government, to businesses, to academics, are encouraged to join the conversation.

To assist with the conversation, RDI has made the following six community recommendations for action:

- 1. Initiate and participate in conversations about the many dimensions rural development in Manitoba. Share those conversations with all levels of government to assist in articulating a Prairie Rural Economic Development Strategy.**
  - Remember that you can influence rural policy by making your voice heard, sharing your ideas and stating your case.
  - Join with others to strengthen your voice.
  - Consider topics and issues from different perspectives. Different perspectives may lead to different solutions.
- 2. Ask questions to better understand how different government departments are involved in rural development. Contribute to helping government and others move forward in stating a common vision and improving service delivery into rural regions.**
- 3. Consider approaching your economic development activities based on a functional economic region as a way to respond to issues and opportunities in your community and others. Seek and share examples in effective economic development from other provinces and regions.**
- 4. Inform your decisions by investing attention and resources into data collection.**
  - Ask yourselves: What information do we need to plan as a community, region and province? what information do we have locally? How might we collect and share that information?
  - If you are collecting data, check to see if what you're measuring is the same as others. Perhaps there is a more standardized way to collect data so it can be better understood, as well as compared across boundaries and over time.
  - For example, encourage tourist attractions in your region to track visitors in the same manner. This might help you determine if your tourist promotion dollars are being effective.
  - Consider your community values and how your plans for economic development reflect those values.
  - Determine what is being measured and how it is being measured to ensure data collected can inform decision-making and promote rural Manitoba as a place to invest.

**5. Apply your energy and resources to collaborative approaches for rural economic development in Manitoba. Inform yourself of what resources, research, and expertise exist in government and organizations that can support social, economic, and environmental planning for successful rural development.**

- Partnerships are integral to achieving your vision. Consider ways to build and strengthen partnerships with neighbours in your functional economic region.
- Invest in capacity to do more regional economic development – partnering with rural and urban communities, tax sharing agreements, qualified and trained professional staff, and working with a plan.

**6. Pay attention to and list your assets. What are they and how can local and regional assets be used for your growth plan for the future? The seven capitals (financial, built, natural, human, social, intellectual, and political) can be a useful framework to ensure you have identified a range of assets as you plan for the future.**

*For more information, please see Rural by Design: Recommended Actions from Rural Works! A Rural Policy Think Tank for more information.*

# APPENDIX A

## Throughout the Years

A timeline of the achievements and progression of the Rural Development Institute throughout the years.

## INSIGHT

A Memorandum of Agreement for establishing the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University was signed between the Government of Manitoba as represented by the Minister of Rural Development and Brandon University. This agreement provided Brandon University with funding for core operations and projects to establish RDI.



The relationship between RDI and the Manitoba Government was clarified including an emphasis on informing public policy. Brandon University and University of Manitoba faculty members became more involved with rural research.

Brandon University Senate enacted the policy and administration framework for the Rural Development Institute.

The research focus at RDI expanded. The Institute attracted a multi-disciplinary roster of both rural people and researchers, including scholars and senior policy strategists from across Canada.



# 1989



# 1992/93

# 1990



# 1994/95

Between 1990 and 1993, the Director of RDI played a leading role in the formation of the Canadian University Network on Rural Development (CUNORD). This network linked RDI to rural academics throughout Canada.

RDI expanded its network of national and international collaboration, and worked to interest more Brandon University faculty in their activities.

A national project with Human Resources Development Canada and the OECD, to strengthen collaboration with Agriculture and Rural Restructuring Group of Canada was completed.

RDI compiled and published a directory of approximately 400 scholars in Canada with rural research interests.

The Institute finished three projects with the Canadian Forest Service.

RDI published the research findings of two Masters theses in rural education.

## FORESIGHT

The Brandon University Senate approved a motion to reorganize the structure of the Rural Development Unit. The Rural Development Institute was created as a separate unit of the University, reporting to the Vice-President (Academic and Provost) and the Department of Rural Development joined the Faculty of Arts.

Dr. Robert Annis, Executive Director of WESTARC Group Inc., was appointed as the new Director of the Rural Development unit.



WESTARC Group Inc., a non-profit consulting group focused on applied research, training and economic development across Western Canada was integrated with RDI.

Dr. Richard Rounds became Chair of the academic Department of Rural Development.

The President of Brandon University activated an RDI Advisory Committee.

Only eighteen months after the establishment of the Rural Development unit, there were three full-time faculty members in the Department of Rural Development with more than 20 students enrolled in the new graduate program.

To enhance community engagement, RDI helped establish and agreed to direct the BU Community Outreach service. The role of the Director of Rural Development Institute was now solely focused on applied research and directing the Brandon University Community Outreach Service. This service was a direct way to engage rural community interests and help position the use of research (led by BU faculty) to define issues and opportunities and to contribute to local solutions.

**1999**

**2001**

**1998**

Brandon University reviewed research, teaching, and outreach activities of the WESTARC Group Inc establishing the Rural Development unit which included the Rural Development Institute, the new academic program of the Department of Rural Development and the Brandon University Community Outreach Service.

Work began on establishing and hiring three new academic positions for the new Department of Rural Development and Master of Rural Development and Graduate Diploma academic programs.

The Rural Development unit received core funding from Brandon University and the Manitoba Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

**2000**

RDI concentrated on building partnerships among provincial and federal government agencies with the aim of securing financial support for research and related activities.

Research topics during this year included community economic development, community leadership, rural adaption and change, agro-economic and environmental issues, rural tourism, rural health, information management and technology utilization, and rural policy development.

Through the Rural Development Institute, Brandon University received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada's national health research granting council.

**2002**

RDI is a founding member of the Manitoba Alliance for Research on Community Economic Development (CED). This alliance consisted of the Rural Development Institute, the University of Manitoba, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the University of Winnipeg. It received a multi-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct research on community economic development.

RDI released the book, "The New Countryside: Geographic Perspectives on Rural Change" edited by Dr. Ken Beesley, a professor with the Department of Rural Development. The publication was jointly produced by RDI and Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.



Twenty-six presentations, nine reports and working papers, four book chapters and three new fact sheets were published.

The Brandon University Board of Governors granted RDI the ability to recognize RDI Research Affiliates.

RDI took a leadership role in the project design and implementation of the new 5-year Community Collaboration Project Model Project: Empowering Communities and Building Capacity.

A new research initiative emerged from ongoing work on rural immigration. RDI continued studying immigration in Brandon and southwestern MB, particularly the temporary foreign worker process.

RDI implemented the Student Internship Program for undergraduate and grad students at Brandon University.

From 1999-2005, BU Community Outreach Service responded to over 100 requests from faculty, students and the community, and facilitated over 50 projects which included financial support.

The Youth Standing Committee of Rural Team Manitoba commissioned RDI to coordinate and conduct research to investigate the extent of youth migration in rural and northern Manitoba.

**2003**

**2005**

**2007**



**2004**

**2006**

**2008**

RDI received approval from the Greencover Technical Assistance Program, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, for a multi-year project focused on leafy spurge on the prairies.

RDI and Department of Rural Development's Graduate Students Association hosted the 2006 International Comparative Rural Policies Studies (ICRPS) program at Brandon University.

A study of youth mobility in selected regions of Manitoba on behalf of Rural Team Manitoba was completed.

From 1999-2004, RDI led a multi-disciplinary team for the SSHRC Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities research project. The Principal Investigator was Dr. Fran Racher from Brandon University.

RDI upgraded its web presence.



RDI shared research findings and related activities with more than 150 rural and northern communities and organizations in western and northern Canada.

RDI completed two multi-year projects, the Community Collaboration Model Project and the Health Care Access of Northern Residents projects.

Brandon University and the Province of Manitoba signed a new Memorandum of Agreement for RDI for the fiscal years 2003/04 to 2005/06.

**ACTION**

The Department of Rural Development launched an online journal, The Journal of Rural and Community Development. RDI served as the publisher with an International Editorial Board.

\* The accomplishments in this chronology illustrate RDI's achievements from hundreds of people and countless partnerships over 25 amazing years. I apologize to those whose achievements are an integral part of this chronology but not listed.



A multi-year research project began, titled Building Welcoming Communities: A Multi-Sector Regional Collaborative Approach to Rural Immigration focusing on the impact of new immigrants to communities in rural and southwestern Manitoba.

Two research projects were completed: Economic Impact of Leafy Spurge in Manitoba and Pathway Prevention of Invasive Species: Increasing Education and Awareness.

The RDI research project, titled A Scan of Community Foundations in Manitoba ended.

Over 29 publications were completed with 6 forthcoming from research projects.

Dr. Robert Annis announced his retirement as Director of the Rural Development Institute and an international search for the next Director was launched.

**2009**

RDI negotiated and recommended Brandon University sign a 5-year funding agreement with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.



At the national rural policy conference Rural Canada Ready to Grow, hosted by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, Dr. Bill Ashton and Dr. Ray Bollman hosted a pre-conference event: New Rural Economy Symposium, with the assistance of Lori Gould.

RDI received an Honorable Mention from the Manitoba Government at 2011 Manitoba Excellence in Sustainability Awards on April 5th, 2012.



RDI launched social media training as part of their Social Media Engagement non-credit certificate. The training was offered in June and November.

RDI initiated the drafting of a new Senate policy to enable non-credit professional development certificates.

RDI incorporated a 'prototype design' method into an applied research project that resulted in an interactive website that responded to economic development community needs.

**2013**



BU paid tribute to Dr. Robert Annis.

Dr. Bill Ashton was appointed as the new Director of Rural Development Institute.

RDI continued to study rural immigration, especially temporary foreign workers in Brandon and the western Manitoba area.

RDI actively worked to facilitate cooperation with other groups across Western Canada as they dealt with invasive plant species which led to the establishing of a western regional network for collaboration on invasive species.

**2010**



RDI hosted a two and a half day national rural policy conference, On the Bright Side: Rural Canada Works with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and over a dozen local to national partners. Our 180 participants joined 36 presenters.

After consulting the RDI Advisory committee and the Vice President (Academic and Provost), the committee's mandate was aligned to multi-year projects. As such, projects each have a project advisory committee.

**2012**



This year marked the second year of a four year project, Agriculture Greenhouse Gases Program, project in collaboration with the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District.

RDI completed a two year inter-disciplinary community-led research project, Pathfinder for Communities: Selecting Tools for Community Economic Development.

RDI initiated research into rural broadband connectivity and applications of social media tools.

Thirty-six publications and presentations and projects were undertaken by RDI and its research affiliates.

A learning needs study was completed to better understand the interest in training related to social media tools.

# Thank You...

## To Our Sponsors

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## To Our Speakers

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Hon. Ron Kostyshyn  
Joy Dornian, B.A. M.A.  
Robert Annis, Ph.D.  
Ray Bollman, Ph.D.

Lars K. Hallstrom, Ph.D.  
Ryan Gibson, Ph.D.  
Thomas G. Johnson, Ph.D.

## To the MAFRD and BU Agreement Steering Committee

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William (Bill) Ashton, RDI, BU  
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Mona Cornock, MAFRD  
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