



Rural Report

Editor's Message

Welcome to the Winter 2006 edition of the RDI Rural Report. I am pleased to be able to provide an update of our projects and people at RDI.

The Institute has been involved in a wide variety of research projects in communities throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the Yukon. Researchers and students have been engaged in working with research focusing on leafy spurge, access to health care for northern Manitoban residents, and rural immigration. Over the past months, RDI has been busy working with communities in facilitating the development of new regional round tables throughout western Canada. Regional round tables have been initiated in central Saskatchewan and northeastern British Columbia and we are in feasibility discussions with communities in the Yukon. RDI has been involved

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Regional Round Tables — Looking to the Future

Earlier this year, a group of communities in Saskatchewan that lie between that province's two major urban centres — Saskatoon and Regina — formed the first Community Collaboration Project (CCP) regional round table — Water Wolf Regional Round Table (WWRRT) — outside of Manitoba and Nunavut. The need for the regional round table (RRT) model was recognized and the foundation for this project is in the process of being laid. This fall, two other sites were identified and discussions are on going in an attempt to establish RRTs in Northeastern British Columbia and the Yukon. However, these three sites are not the first to follow this model.

Previously, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) helped establish a successful five-year CCP with four Manitoba/Nunavut-based RRTs — Hudson Bay Neighbours, Bayline, Northern Vision and Southwest — in which isolated communities not only created priceless linkages, but commonalities were established, barriers to development were identified and problems solved together. During this initiative, RDI's role was one of facilitation and support, both of which came to end in 2004.

With the support, in part, from the Government of Canada's Rural Secretariat, the community economic development and capacity building lessons learned will be applied and expanded upon in the three new RRTs as well as in future sites. As was hypothesized in 1999, at the outset of the initial RRT project, each RRT has proven that because concerns, issues, challenges and realities are unique in each of the regions where they were established, there have been different and unique outcomes and solutions. However, invaluable lessons have been learned from each situation.

"Once the communities started the process of 'roundtabling', then there's less reliance upon government to keep the process going. The communities are seeing the benefits of working together on projects and government remains involved in the process as a partner, certainly, but

its role has changed from the beginning of the project," says Darell Pack, Senior Policy Adviser with the Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, one of the original RRT funding partners. He adds that this project enabled his office to work with communities on a new and distinctive level.

It is a reality that within rural areas across the country, there are issues shared by the communities in those regions. The original RRTs have shown that when energies and funding are combined, shared challenges can be overcome, thus proving that this model can make positive and long-lasting changes to entities involved in RRTs.

Somewhat mirroring the phases here, in Saskatchewan the association with that province's rural team is being established. Across Canada, there exist these rural teams, groups comprised of federal and provincial representatives and community-serving organizations, like Community Futures Partners of Manitoba, whose focus is on rural and northern issues. They explore ways to better dialogue with communities, thus enabling them to connect with various levels of

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Economic Impact Study of Broadband in Rural Communities

The 'digital divide', a discrepancy in information and communications technology (ICT) use and capability between urban and rural areas, has been a challenge for both communities and governments across Canada. To assist in bridging the 'digital divide', various government programs have been established, such as Broadband for Rural and Northern Development (BRAND), Community Access Programs (CAP), and Smart Communities Programs. The Broadband Economic Impacts study's goal was to assess the benefits of broadband connectivity in two rural communities in Canada. Specifically, the project aimed to identify and quantify the impacts of broadband connectivity on the local economy through jobs, revenues and cost reductions.

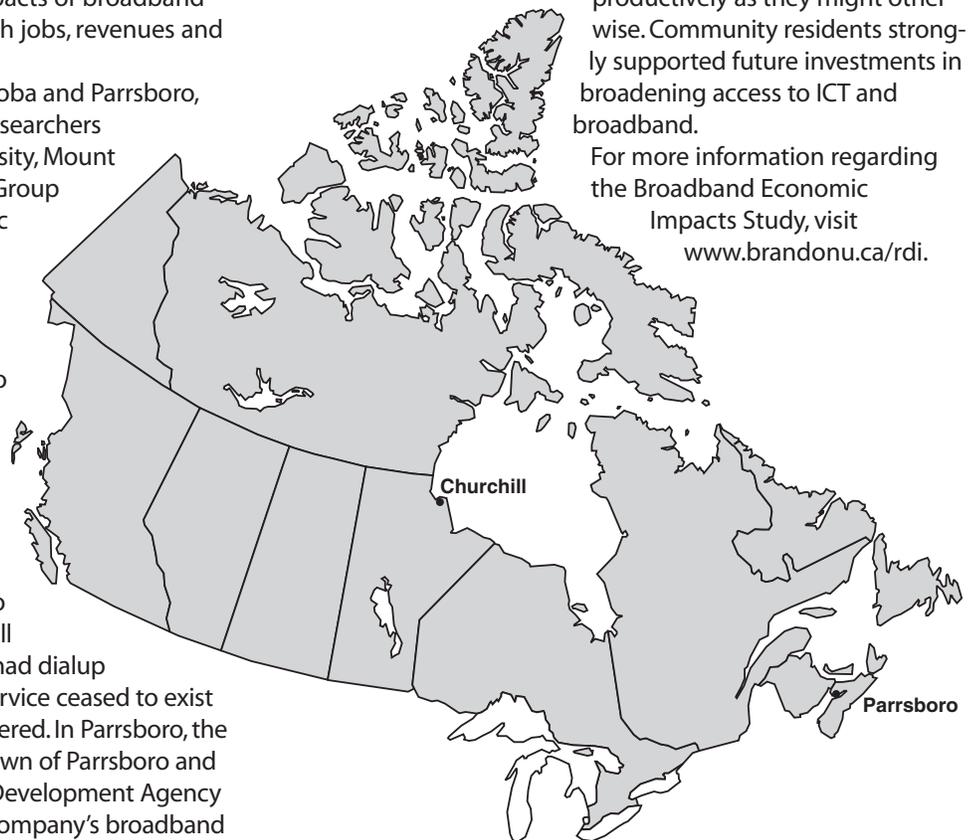
This study, conducted in Churchill Manitoba and Parrsboro, Nova Scotia from June - August 2005 by researchers from Brandon University, Dalhousie University, Mount Allison University and Strategic Networks Group Inc., provided information on the economic impacts of broadband access and usage. The information was gathered primarily from telephone surveys followed up by a second set of detailed one-on-one interviews. A workshop was held in Parrsboro to gain greater understanding into the community and business impacts of acquiring broadband access. Remoteness and cost prevented a similar workshop from occurring in Churchill.

The situation differed greatly between how the two communities gained access to broadband. A community group in Churchill obtained broadband in 2003, after having had dialup access for a number of years. Broadband service ceased to exist in May 2005, after difficulties were encountered. In Parrsboro, the BRAND program at Industry Canada, the Town of Parrsboro and the local Cumberland Regional Economic Development Agency collaborated to bring the local telephone company's broadband

service into the community in November 2004.

Overall, the return on investment of broadband in Churchill and Parrsboro was positive. The critical impacts that came through the research in Churchill and Parrsboro was that of employee, employer and community resident retention. Whether it was the family farm operator that could not deal with e-government files and forms or the Bed and Breakfast operator that lost customers because there was no broadband access for them or the tour or theatre company that could not sell efficiently over the Internet, all were kept from operating as productively as they might otherwise. Community residents strongly supported future investments in broadening access to ICT and broadband.

For more information regarding the Broadband Economic Impacts Study, visit www.brandonu.ca/rdi.



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with two projects that have examined Internet connectivity and rural communities. The Churchill Connectivity Story and the Economic Impacts of Broadband provide insight into the opportunities and challenges of rural/northern connectivity.

We are appreciative of the recent announcement by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) that the Province will give Brandon University's Endowment Fund \$250,000 for support of scholarships

and research in Rural Development and Rural Studies. New provincial scholarships will benefit both undergraduate students in the Rural and Community Studies Program, and graduate students in the Department of Rural Development's Graduate Diploma and Master of Rural Development programs. Since 1989, Brandon University and the Government of Manitoba have an established history of co-operating on rural activities formalized through a series of Memoranda of Agreement with the Rural Development Institute.

I have been on Administrative Leave for the past few months, and in my absence, the RDI team took the opportunity to write about me. Is it a case of when the cat's away the mice will play???

It has been an eventful time at RDI over the past months and we are excited about the research that lies ahead. Enjoy reading this issue. For more in-depth information about any of our research projects, please visit our website at www.brandonu.ca/rdi.

Robert Annis, Ph.D.
Director, RDI

Regional Round Tables: Looking to the Future

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government in a less-structured, more diversified manner as well as find suitable governmental assistance.

Though Health Canada, Environment Canada and the Rural Secretariat were the original partners in the initial RRTs, as the project evolved, it was the rural team in Manitoba that became connected to the RRTs. Now, in Saskatchewan, this link between the rural team in that province is a key piece in the model.

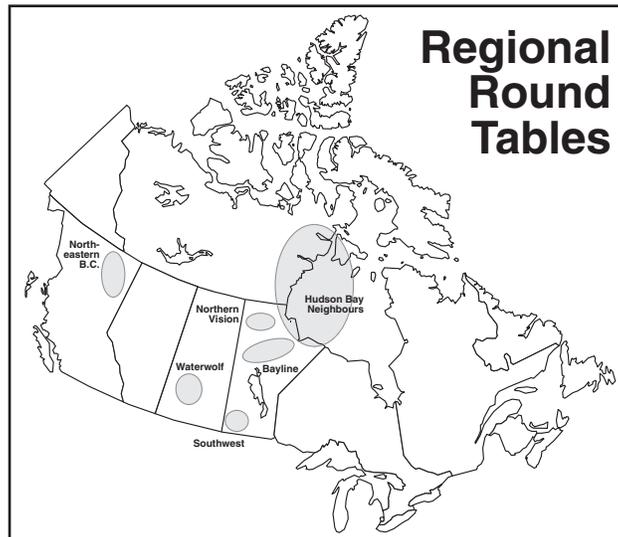
The WWRRT is different in composition from its neighbouring predecessors. It is not simply a convergence of individuals representing municipalities or towns. It is a weaving of the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) — a federal program — and a Regional Economic Development Association (REDA) — a provincial initiative. Despite the pre-existence of this structured group, it will greatly benefit from access to the rural team as well as the RDI.

“It was an excellent fit for us. One of the problems in rural areas in Saskatchewan — it looks somewhat similar to Manitoba — is our governance units. Our municipalities are all quite small. We have 800 tiny governments in rural Saskatchewan. And so, what that leads to is a lack of capacity. For most of them, the capacity that exists is collecting land taxes and paying out money, on behalf of councils, for the grader and graveling,” says Russ McPherson, the Business Development Officer for the Mid-Sask Community Futures Development Corporation, who is involved in the WWRRT.

“Over the last 40 years, a lot of the other functions of local government have been swallowed up by the province,” he continues. “Now, the province has decided that maybe it wasn’t such a great idea and they’re trying to recharge the rural areas to take more ownership in their own future. So, there’s a huge lack of capacity out there and we are less diversified than either of the other two Prairie economies in the rural areas.”

Thanks to the coalescence of CFDC and REDA, there already exists an administrative structure — something that did not exist in the original RRTs. The WWRRT’s

membership is already made up of a blend of business people and municipal representatives. Fiscal support has already been sought from Western Economic Diversification Canada and a non-profit corporation has been set up. And though still in the formative stage, the WWRRT has already isolated some



joint issues and has begun developing ideas to raise shared capacity through tourism. At this early stage in the WWRRT, RDI plays an important role.

“The biggest thing that RDI brings to the table, in my mind, is that they are a neutral third party. They don’t come in being perceived as having an agenda and they don’t,” says Darell Pack. “And they have an expertise in facilitation. They have an understanding of rural and northern issues and they also have a resource — students, particularly in the Master’s program, who benefit from real life experiences in rural and northern communities. By working with a credible organization like the Rural Development Institute, we are able to be there as active partners and hopefully, be seen as not having an agenda, except to say that we want to support the communities.”

In Saskatchewan, the WWRRT has established several priorities. They include the need for a river valley authority to establish commonality between all the financially stretched small villages and municipalities and undertake sustainable development, while maintaining the integrity of the river. Also, a template will be created to share investment in

projects within the greater region of the WWRRT and to reflect back out the taxes accrued in the development — a lesson they learned from the Manitoba RRTs. The group is also considering a regional solution to water quality issues, including the retention of a water specialist.

“We also want to do a land use planning exercise through this whole river valley and central Saskatchewan region, so that when intensive livestock operations want to come or people who want to do country residential or recreational housing on lakefront or riverfront, we’ve identified areas where that can take place and what the rules are going to be,” says Russ McPherson, who adds that out of that priority, a Geographic Information System (GIS) department has evolved.

“Because we had an administrative structure and a board that had developed over a number of years a sense of needing to move forward in a non-ag direction, the

round table gave us a way to improve the reporting so we’re getting the message back out,” says Russ McPherson. “So, RDI’s round table concept is giving us a much better template for communication and for sharing ideas and for getting input from community. That’s been a big help.”

Though Darell Pack hopes that the original round tables, and one day, the new RRTs continue to work into the future that will depend on the communities and groups themselves. “They need to decide if this process is beneficial for them or not. Our commitment is simply to be there in whatever capacity those communities feel best serves their interest,” he says.

As this new phase in RRTs develops, the sustainability of the original four in Manitoba/Nunavut will be observed and annually, a meeting will bring together all RRT participants — new and old — to communicate, share their experiences and learn from each other, perhaps inspiring other regions of Canada to embrace the possibilities of the Community Collaboration Project’s Regional Round Table model.

For more information about the Regional Round Tables projects, visit: www.brandonu.ca/rdi.

Rural Immigration — A Promising Solution

Immigration is what makes Canada what it is today — a thriving, culturally rich and diverse country. However, the majority of people coming to this country settle in large urban centres. If it is done with forethought, planning and on-going support, rural communities, especially those who are facing manpower shortages and other population concerns, could very well benefit from attracting — and retaining — immigrants into their citizenry.

In April 2005, the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and the Rural Development Institute held a National Rural Think Tank in Brandon to address immigration programs and their impact on rural areas. Then, in October, RDI Director Dr. Robert Annis and Researcher Ray Silvius delivered a presentation with recommendations regarding rural immigration at *An Overview of Canadian Rural Research* in Twillingate, NL.

While examining this issue, Silvius studied four particular cases and delved into the question at length. His work was sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and focused on communities chosen by Manitoba Labour and Immigration. These were Parkland Region, Portage la Prairie, Steinbach and Winkler.

“Generally, in the cases that we saw, there was a series of connections with the communities in question already that led to their knowledge of the existence of these communities. The immigrants had perhaps family or friends or some prior contact with these communities and a desire to go there because of that and this sustained greater numbers of arrivals in any given year than some of the other rural communities have witnessed,” says Silvius. “In Steinbach and Winkler, a number of people had originally arrived there for a variety of purposes, but that’s creating a widening of the reasons why people will go there.”

Beyond the settlers who first arrived in this part of the country, there have been waves of immigrants in the last 20 or so years who have settled in rural areas of Manitoba. For example, in the late '70s, a large number of Laotian refugees settled in Portage while there has been a continual arrival of Mennonite immigrants in Winkler and Steinbach.

“There’s a tendency to speak of rural immigration in really contemporary terms, within the last year or two, and of being a new phenomenon,” says Silvius, “but it has happened within the last 20 years or so, but perhaps not with the same objective towards some form of community development that is now being placed on it.”

Through his study, Silvius raised many valuable points. The prospect of immigration to rural communities is an exciting one as it could lead to possible economic growth, development and sustainability. However, it is vital that certain steps, certain services be taken into consideration. Planning is not the least of these if this is to be a long-term endeavour.

“What I found was very important is to go from general enthusiasm, intrigue about these things happening to real, solid thinking as to how that may or may not happen in one’s own community and for those involved with community development and those who have a stake in a number of community affairs, this is the important next step,” he says.

It is crucial to determine if enabling and sustaining wide immigration streams is appropriate for the community in question, to examine the availability of supporting resources and the relevancy to a community and to weigh the opportunities and challenges.

“Some of the rural communities who have done the digging already or that have had some immigration arrivals in the last few years understand just what it takes to first of all make the connection to immigrants who will come,” says Silvius, “but also what it takes to ensure that they’ll stick around and be active members of the community, and simply, what it takes to make a human being feel comfortable in a new locale. I think that initially this can be a real eye opener the movement of human beings requires a lot of social support and active involvement of the wider community.”

Of course, consideration of the challenges immigrants face when arriving in a new country is vital. A multitude of concerns awaits them, from every day life practices to language issues to isolation to credentials recognition to finding employment for other family

members. Also, the community’s attitude, general involvement from the outset and pre-existing services will determine the success of attracting and retaining immigrants.

“I think the overall message is the more that a community is involved and the more members of that community are involved from the onset, the less the chance for misunderstanding and for the less-than-flattering notions to exist when immigrants arrive. Some communities have shown a remarkable amount of success in that regard,” says Silvius, who adds that in most of those cases, these communities had existing settlement services in place.

Despite the inherent challenges and sometimes less-than-flattering portrayals in the media, there are overwhelming benefits to communities who manage this issue. In Manitoba, the two larger cases in the last decade have been Winkler and Steinbach.

“There have been profound impacts on the community and many of them are very positive for all concerned — that’s the impression I got,” Silvius, who notes that communities must also be aware of and manage the reasons behind possible out migration of original community members as this may also happen with immigrants. “In many cases, the arrival of large numbers of people increases the amount of services that different service providers can offer in the community.”

For example, integrating large numbers of children in the school system may involve certain challenges, but it also calls for more classrooms, more teachers, more related services and therefore, this equals growth.

“This is not the case in many communities that are witnessing a shrinking population base and seeing their classroom numbers shrink,” says Silvius, who adds that this is also a boon for employers. “The ability to fill human resource needs is a positive and in terms of generating a new social, cultural aspect in some communities, this can be seen as very positive as well.”

These are just some of the reasons why the rural communities in question have been pursuing and implementing this means of growing economically, of

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enriching its cultural landscape and of ensuring the town's future. However, long-range forecasts are still impossible to make, as more study is required in this matter.

"I really can't stress enough that the type of experience that a community will have will depend on some of the particular factors of that community and what

they're hoping to accomplish, the numbers that they hope to receive, the number that they may receive and how they respond as a community to these things," says Silvius, who stresses that through the research done, it has been recognized that there needs to be a reorientation of the focus to a community-based perspective. "Sometimes, we get asked: 'What are the best practices? What are some of the

lessons?' These are important, but we stress that communities can and will probably have very particular experiences and there are ways that each community can facilitate those experiences based on their own expectations and their own resources. It's going to differ."

For more information about rural immigration, visit: www.brandonu.ca/organizations/RDI.

Understanding Access to Health in Northern Manitoba

To build an understanding of the challenges experienced by northerners in accessing health services, residents of northern communities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are sharing their stories with researchers from Brandon University and the University of Regina. Northern residents are identifying barriers and offering their perspectives for potential solutions. These stories will be used to demonstrate the complex factors that must be managed within and beyond communities, if access is to be improved.

Residents of Pikwitonei, Thicket Portage, Ilford/War Lake and Wabowden are member communities of the Bayline Regional Roundtable (BRRT) who have begun sharing their stories. Researchers are planning a trip to the community of Cormorant in the new year. Residents of Bayline communities with the exception of Wabowden, which has an all weather road, rely on the railway as a primary means of transportation into and out of their communities. Winter roads of ice over the lakes, rivers and muskeg offer an additional mode of transportation for three months during the winter. Air strips in the communities accommodate small planes but flight costs grow increasingly prohibitive for community residents. Air service is used for emergency medical evacuations and to bring public health nurses and staff from health programs to the communities on twice monthly rotations; air service at the mercy of variable weather conditions.

In Manitoba RDI is partnering with the BRRT and the Burntwood and Nor-man Regional Health Authorities. Workshops to discuss issues with program planners and policy makers across jurisdictions



are being organized for later phases of the project. Residents in northern Saskatchewan will be sharing their stories with researchers from the University of Regina (Prince Albert site).

By having their voices heard and their ideas valued, northern community residents and their providers hope to influence future program planning, service delivery and health policy development.

Dr. Robert Annis of the Rural Development Institute and co-applicants, Dr. Fran Racher of the School of

Health Studies, Brandon University, and Dr. Bonnie Jeffery of the Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina (Prince Albert site) received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) grant to support this research with northern residents. The project, *Community Collaboration to Improve Health Care Access of Northern Residents*, will continue until 2007.

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Churchill's Internet Connectivity Story

Prior to the establishment of federal broadband (high-speed) Internet programs and initiatives to promote broadband connectivity in rural and remote areas of Canada, a small group of citizens in Churchill Manitoba started their own community-based Internet business. Researchers from Brandon University's Rural Development Institute and Department of Geography captured the story of this voluntary non-profit group to gain an understanding of the opportunities and challenges that they encountered. The impacts of initiating dial-up Internet services were identified as strengthening local enterprises, strengthening the tourism sector, facilitating Arctic research and education, and overcoming the remote location and geography.

In 1997, at a time when Internet connectivity was just gaining momentum, a group of local community residents formed the Churchill Community Network Inc. (CCNet). The group, all volunteers, worked tirelessly to research the business start up, seek funding, organize training sessions for other community members, and ensure community access to the Internet through computers in the public school and library.

Through the start up period, the volunteer group faced huge barriers such as lack of trained computer technicians in Churchill, the need to generate funds to start the business, and the task of researching and purchasing appropriate technologies. They managed to overcome these challenges and made dial-up Internet service available to citizens and businesses in Churchill. The members of the CCNet were proud of their accomplishments and empowered to learn about new technologies. Dial-up Internet service brought economic benefits to local businesses in Churchill because they had a new tool to use to market their products, attract tourists and communicate economically with businesses and customers in other parts of Canada. Also, citizens in Churchill were able to access email and the Internet for research, educational and entertainment purposes. The community-based business paid back its start up loans and broke even after three years, which is an accomplishment for any business. From a community economic development perspective, CCNet was not only economically viable but was able to stimulate both social and economic returns for the individuals and businesses in Churchill.

In 2001, members of CCNet decided to bring high-speed Internet service to Churchill. The implementation of this service led to higher expenses and the need to update equipment due to rapid technology changes. As CCNet switched its operations from dial-up to high-speed, a competing company came to Churchill and offered cheaper dial-up service. Churchill town council and residents had identified potential new Internet applications, but because CCNet was no longer turning a profit, it was difficult to pursue new business ventures. In 2005, rather than feeling empowered, CCNet's core group of volunteers felt frustrated. While the citizens of Churchill continued to reap social and economic benefits from CCNet's high-speed Internet service, the community-based busi-

ness was not sustainable. As anticipated, high-speed Internet connectivity did bring new opportunities for economic competitiveness and social development in Churchill. However, providing high-speed service on a sustainable basis to a remote location such as Churchill was difficult. As a community economic development strategy, CCNet faltered and in the fall of 2005, CCNet dissolved due to low member support and unreliability of their broadband network.

Since the time of the research project, Churchill has once again re-established a high-speed Internet service. As of November 2005, Manitoba Telecom Service is providing high-speed Internet service to Churchill. For further information please see: www.manitobaresearchallianceced.ca.

Managing Invasive Species: Leafy Spurge Control Project

Managing Invasive Species: Leafy Spurge Control is an eighteen month project that aims to enhance control of leafy spurge in Manitoba by increasing awareness, encouraging the adoption of integrated pest management (IPM) plans and establishing nurse/harvest sites in southern Manitoba.

There are five major components, one of which is **Awareness and Prevention Strategies**. The goal is to create a broad awareness of leafy spurge and provide information on controlling its spread in areas of low to no infestation. Project personnel developed and distributed several promotional materials throughout the summer. In July, they organized and hosted a field tour to promote leafy spurge control mechanisms.

A second component involves collaborating with six producers in moderate and high infestation areas to assess their leafy spurge infestation and to develop specific site-based **IPM plans** for control and containment. Participating producers also received **Producer Assistance** for control and management of leafy spurge.

The focus of the **Biocontrol** component is on collecting beetles from North Dakota and distributing them in

Manitoba to establish two nurse/harvest sites for future use. Beetles were also distributed to participating project landowners to assist with their integrated pest management (IPM) plans.

Finally, ongoing monitoring and **Evaluation** will be undertaken to assess the impact and success of program activities. Feedback from project participants and partners will be used to make ongoing improvements to project activities.

Beth Peers, Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group Coordinator, is managing this project. Two Brandon University students, Laine Mosset and April Peers conducted fieldwork, attended events to raise awareness of leafy spurge, organized and hosted a field tour and worked with six producers to develop IPM plans. Pamela McTavish and Ryan Gibson provided additional assistance.

Managing Invasive Species: Leafy Spurge Control is supported by the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative (ARDI) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives provides advice to the project, and member agencies of the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group provide expertise and assistance.

Dr. Robert Annis – Recipient of the 2005 President’s Medal

Though Dr. Robert Annis has been on administrative leave this fall, his schedule has been as busy as ever, traveling to conferences and meetings on three continents. Along with visiting project sites, he attended meetings and presented papers in Twillingate, Newfoundland, in Québec City, in Vienna and at the United Nations’ World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia. Prior to his return in the New Year, he will have been on the West Coast, taking part in yet other meetings.

“In the context of rural Manitoba and rural studies in Canada, Bob is a real ambassador for this University,” says Dean of Arts and Graduate Studies, Dr. Scott Grills. “He’s very well-known and very well respected. Sometimes it’s easy for people in a smaller community like Brandon to forget how far reaching the reputation of some of our good people are and Bob is one of those folks. Bob has a significant international presence.”

When the announcement was made that Dr. Annis, who has endlessly demonstrated his dedication to the University and the Institute, had been chosen as one of two 2005 President’s Medal recipients, it seemed most appropriate. However, he was completely taken by surprise. In his reaction about the Medal, it is his modesty and his sense of collaboration that shine through.

“That was a very pleasant experience,” says Dr. Annis. “The medal is awarded to me, but it really is for the work that the Rural Development Institute — as a whole — is doing, and there’re a lot of people involved in that.”

A native of Ottawa, Dr. Annis began his post-secondary studies at Carleton University before obtaining his Honours Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Psychology at Queen’s University. In 1974, he then embarked on a doctoral program at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow Scotland from which a Doctorate of Psychology was bestowed upon him. He then commenced his first academic appointment in the Department of Psychology at what

is now Caledonia University in Glasgow where he taught for six years before returning to Canada and joining Brandon University .

A Brandon University faculty member



since 1983, the executive director of the WESTARC Group Inc., and most recently, the director of the Rural Development Institute since 1999, Dr. Annis has always been interested in the interface between academia and community interests. Furthermore, he appreciates the collaborative spirit of his field.

“What I find is that things rural aren’t simple. You work from an issue-level out, and in academia, often people are kind of channelled into a silo of expertise that is intense and vigorous, and people challenge and debate within that sphere. But when you come to wrestle with rural issues, you need to bring a lot of different perspectives and no one set of expertise leads you to a complete answer,” says Dr. Annis. “And so, it’s through collaboration and trying to knit different perspectives and different skill sets that you get a richer project. I enjoy doing that kind of knitting I guess.”

Since his own arrival at Brandon University in 2000 and through their close working relationship, Dr. Grills has come to know Dr. Annis. It did not surprise him that one of the two 2005 President’s Medals was awarded to Dr. Annis.

“The President’s Medal is an award for people who make a real range of contributions to the University. We have some members of faculty who are excellent teachers and their work is recognized by

a Senate Award for teaching. Likewise, there is a separate Senate award for excellence in research” says Dr. Grills. “But, the President’s Medal is for that person who influences service and research and teaching — it’s the all-rounder award. There are only a few people who are truly exceptional in all those different areas and Bob is one of them.”

When asked to describe his colleague, one of the first comments Dr. Grills makes about Dr. Annis is his generosity with his time.

“He will take on and assist with projects where the mandate of the Rural Development Institute may not be directly related. But researchers looking for help in developing proposals and community partners seeking practical advice will

find in Bob someone who will give them a hand,” says Dr. Grills.

The author, co-author and editor of countless grant proposals, reports, journal articles and books, Dr. Annis has been successful in obtaining funding from a variety of governmental and private sector supporters for RDI research projects. He has also made an impact as a volunteer in various national organizations. He is currently the Vice President of the Canadian Consortium for Health Promotion, a Co-Chair of the Pan-West Community Futures Network, and the Chair of the Community Futures Partners of Manitoba. And through his work, he has made connections around the globe.

“What I’ve found is that Bob has a real ability to make the Rural Development Institute a research institute of the University. When you look at the range of projects that that Institute has taken up, it’s clear that it does not pander to the interests of the individual heading up the Institute and that’s a real compliment to his ability to build research capacity,” says Dr. Grills. “Bob’s ability to support research on leafy spurge, the rural economy, information technology and health studies benefits the people of Manitoba.”

To find out more about Dr. Annis, visit: [http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/RDI/RDI Team/Annis.html](http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/RDI/RDI%20Team/Annis.html).

Greencover Canada Prairie Region Leafy Spurge Project

Invasive weed species such as leafy spurge have extensive ramifications involving complex circumstances and competing demands across local communities, individuals, and conservation and agricultural non-governmental organizations. These same ramifications and complexities also cross through federal and provincial government departments. For several years, RDI has been involved in a number of projects focused on leafy spurge. In 2004, RDI began a three-year project focused on encouraging coordinated efforts on leafy spurge across the Prairie Region. The project, officially called the *Integrated Pest Management – Biocontrol Regional Leafy Spurge Project*, is funded through the Greencover Canada Technical Assistance Program, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Karen Rempel, Research Affiliate of the Rural Development Institute is the project coordinator assisted by Alex Martin, MRD graduate student and Jennifer McKinnon, undergraduate student in the Faculty of Science.

A primary aim of the project is to encourage prairie wide cooperation and collaboration to help control the spread of leafy spurge and to re-distribute spurge beetles for biocontrol. In 2005, RDI began work on one of the most important first steps toward this aim: the development of a prairie region database

framework that will manage, display, and analyze geographic information relating to leafy spurge. The Canada Rural Economy Research Lab (C-RERL), a Geographic Information System (GIS) lab at the College of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan, is assisting with the development of the data base. Brandon University faculty members, Dr. Dion Wiseman and Ms. Wenonah Fraser, are called upon frequently to provide technical assistance. As well, a number of organizations and individuals across the Prairies have contributed data. These organizations include the Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Weed Supervisors Association, the Rural Municipalities of Cornwallis and Whitehead, and Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. Karen Rempel and Alex Martin also worked with the Grasslands National Park in southwestern Saskatchewan to encourage rural municipalities around the park to map areas of infestation. These efforts helped encourage a cooperative effort between the Park and local rural municipalities to coordinate efforts across the region on controlling the spread of leafy spurge.

Another component of the project is a plot and demonstration site near Brandon located on land leased from John and Marge Nichol. The main objec-

tive of this work is to demonstrate how various integrated pest management (IPM) strategies influence spurge beetle populations. The demonstration site involves multiple control methods including spraying, mowing, spurge beetles fertilization, herbicide, and burning. Clayton Robbins, technician from the Brandon Research Station, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Robin Hamilton, Ducks Unlimited, Brandon, contributed a considerable amount of time and effort during the 2005 spring and summer months. To date, there have been some significant 'lessons learned' based on the efforts of this project. First, across the Prairie Region, the number of acres of land infested with leafy spurge has increased dramatically to more than 750,000 acres. Second, there needs to be a greater understanding and appreciation of the social aspects of integrated pest management of invasive weeds.

In 2006, work on the database across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta will continue. Project team members will also look for opportunities to share resources with other organizations in the Prairie Region involved with invasive noxious weeds. As well, landowners and managers will have the opportunity to visit the plot and demonstration site and attend field days during the spring and summer months.

Research Affiliate Brings Wealth of Experience to RDI

The Rural Development Institute is pleased to announce that Susannah Cameron has been confirmed as a Research Affiliate. Susannah is the Executive Director of the Canadian Community Investment Network, a national co-operative of community loan funds, social enterprise funds, co-op funds, micro-loan funds and financial institutions with community financing programs. www.communityinvestment.ca

At RDI, Susannah contributes to research teams working on the Community Collaboration Project, the Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development

project and the Joint Co-operative Development project. She also co-taught a course in Brandon University's Department of Rural Development.

Before moving to Brandon, Susannah was employed by a community development organization in the east end of Toronto coordinating a community loan fund. She has also worked at Calmeadow, a non-governmental organization specializing in micro-finance. Her research interests include community investment, community lending models, knowledge networks and community economic development.

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