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Message from Rural Development Institute’s Advisory Committee Chairperson

Scott Grills, PhD Vice-President (Academic and Research)  
Chairperson, RDI Advisory Committee

It is with great pleasure that we once again issue the Rural Development Institute’s (RDI) Annual Report. I have received commentary from rural researchers, community leaders and government representatives as to the important place RDI holds in Canada’s rural research endeavours. Congratulations to Robert Annis for his outstanding leadership and management of the Rural Development Institute, and to the entire RDI Team whose knowledge, skills and abilities enable RDI to be a leading rural research centre in Canada.

External funding, which is the majority of RDI’s funding, is critical to the Institute’s success as a rural research institute. In addition to the many project funders, Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives provides $100,000 per year to support RDI’s research, community development initiatives and knowledge mobilization. In 2008, RDI’s external funding was $826,932 which represented seventy-eight percent of the Institute’s total funding. Over the past five years the Rural Development Institute’s external funding totaled more than $3 million which represents seventy-five percent of the total funding for the five-year period. To our funders, thank you for your continued support.

Dr. Robert Annis will be retiring from his position as the Director of the Institute. Over the past ten years, Robert’s leadership and dedication have seen the Institute grow into a centre of excellence for rural research, policy and practice. Robert’s work has benefited communities and changed lives. He will be missed. Brandon University is committed to maintaining and sustaining the Rural Development Institute. We are currently conducting an international search for the next Director and I look forward to the prospect of a seamless transition in leadership. I look forward to 2009, as it promises to be a year of opportunities for research and community development activities.
Message from the Director

Robert C. Annis, PhD

I am pleased to present the 2008 Annual Report of the Rural Development Institute.

RDI’s mandate is to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. Strategies to accomplish this mandate include engaging communities, conducting research and informing policy using a participatory action research approach that ensures communities participate in and share control of the research agenda, processes, findings and outcomes.

2008 saw the completion of two multi-year projects, the Community Collaboration Model Project and the Health Care Access of Northern Residents projects. We also completed a study of youth mobility in selected regions of Manitoba on behalf of Rural Team Manitoba. In 2008, RDI actively worked to facilitate cooperation with other groups across Western Canada as they dealt with invasive plants species. RDI also undertook a project which aimed to increase the adoption of beneficial management practices to combat Leafy Spurge, an invasive plant. In 2008 the Rural Development Institute continued to study rural immigration, especially temporary foreign workers in Brandon and the western Manitoba area.

Fundamental to RDI is growing the field by assisting and developing new rural researchers by providing newly graduated individuals with opportunities to contribute to and lead projects. There were three “new” researchers, Ryan Gibson, Alison Moss, and Jill Bucklaschuk working on RDI projects in 2008.

Growing the field also means networking and providing support and resources to faculty members of Brandon University as well as colleagues at other universities and research centres.

In 2008, there were fifteen Rural Development Institute Research Affiliates who, as per Brandon University policy, were selected individuals who actively contributed to the ongoing development of the Rural Development Institute.

RDI’s research and community development activities are conducted by individuals from a variety of academic disciplines and by community development practitioners with skills and experience in rural research and community development. In 2008, there were seven such individuals engaged in RDI projects. Bev Lischka supports the operation and management of RDI and Sylvia Henry provides support for the projects.

Students are integral to the Institute. By assisting with projects and activities, students have opportunities to work in the field and to develop and present findings through discussion papers, reports and presentations. In 2008, Masters of Rural Development students Paige Rushton, Lonnie Patterson and Patience Skinner were engaged in RDI projects. Monika Sormova, third-year fine arts student is the current Brandon University Community Outreach Coordinator. In 2008, students earned approximately $30,000 and over the past six years, the total earnings for students have been approximately $300,000.

An important aspect of RDI’s mandate is mobilization of knowledge by communicating our projects’ activities and findings as well as contributing to policy discussions. For several years RDI has provided open-access through its website so that rural citizens, community and government leaders and other interested people are able to access discussion papers, reports, presentations etc.. We are especially proud of the two e-books launched this past year on our website. RDI representatives were also invited to present at twenty-eight conferences/workshops: three international, eighteen national, six provincial and one local.

This is the last Annual Report that I will issue. On June 30, 2009 I will step away from being RDI’s Director. I have been privileged in my ten years as Director to associate with many outstanding contributors to rural research and community development. To all of you, thank you for the opportunities and friendships. I will undoubtedly still encounter you from time to time. My best wishes to the next Director as you lead the Rural Development Institute in its endeavours for rural and northern Canada.
The Rural Development Institute’s involvement in multi-community regional collaborations began in 1999 when it facilitated the formation of the Northern Vision Regional Round Table in northern Manitoba. Over the next four years RDI facilitated the formation of two more regional round tables in Manitoba and a fourth regional round table that crossed the boundaries of Manitoba and Nunavut. RDI then articulated the community development practices and lessons learned that had emerged in Manitoba/Nunavut into a vision and model for the Community Collaboration Model Project. With funding from the Government of Canada’s Rural Secretariat, RDI facilitated the establishment of new regional round tables in Saskatchewan and the Yukon. This project also provided a unique opportunity to continue to interact with the Manitoba regional round tables to learn more about regional round table sustainability. Lessons emerged from this multi-community collaborative process with eighty-five communities, six regional round tables, three Rural Teams and four academic institutions participating in the project.

**Lessons Learned**

**Partnerships and Capacity Development**

What was demonstrated over the past nine years is that developing trusting and valued relationships and partnerships within and between communities, governments and academic institutions requires persistence, deliberate effort, time, resources, and committed skilled and sustained leadership. Communities need to overcome historic rivalries for attention and resources from government. Governments need to better manage files horizontally across departments and across governments. Academic institutions need to find new and creative ways to engage the human and capital resources of universities and colleges with communities.

**Resources**

Resources, both human and financial, were critical to the success of regional round tables’ formation and sustainability. The funding provided by the Rural Secretariat enabled regional round table members to meet face-to-face and to create the relationships and partnerships that were foundational to the collaborative process. The Rural Secretariat’s funding was an investment that allowed for flexibility and decision-making within each regional round table. The in-kind contributions of the regional round table communities were pivotal to the overall success of the project, not only from the hard dollar value, but also intrinsically because they quantified the trust, relationship, partnership and capacity building that occurred. This project illustrates that governments need to see that investing in community development processes is an appropriate use of public funds and move from funding deliverables to supporting capacity development.

**Community Development Practice, Research & Policy**

RDI’s collaborative research approach ensured that each regional round table determined its unique vision, and through the community collaboration process developed infrastructure and processes to achieve the goals and objectives. The regional round tables connected to governments and academic institutions in new and different ways and similarly, governments and academic institutions engaged with communities in ways that had not been initiated before. The WaterWolf Regional Round Table in Saskatchewan is able to dream large and go beyond the mandates of its founding organizations. The Yukon Regional Round Table is a first-ever inclusive community-based regional organization that includes First Nations, incorporated and non-incorporated communities. The Bayline Regional Round Table in northern Manitoba is a strong regional organization that has made a difference in food security for its member communities. However, the work is not completed; this project demonstrated the need for continuing the research to investigate multi-community collaborations and regional governance.
The Canadian Institutes of Health Research provided funding for RDI to conduct a multi-year project in Manitoba and Saskatchewan examining how community health and wellness is directly linked with the availability of health services and the capacity to access those services. Accessing health services in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan can be fraught with difficulty, often owing to large distances, with sparse populations distributed over vast geography. Challenges related to accessing health services can occur on a number of levels: locally, regionally and provincially. Understanding difficulties associated with navigating the health care system from a community perspective enhances the potential to generate meaningful and appropriate solutions.

Manitoba Issues Explored

This project evolved from a multi-community collaborative effort to address regional needs as identified by the Bayline Regional Round Table (BRRT). The BRRT is composed of 6 communities situated along the Hudson Bay rail line, including Cormorant, Wabowden, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Ilford and War Lake. The BRRT was established in 2001 as these communities identified many shared similarities and issues related to factors of distance, geography and isolation.

Concern about the quality of access to health services within BRRT communities locally, regionally and provincially sparked interest in conducting a multi-year participatory action research (PAR) project engaging a variety of stakeholders. Conversations, interviews and focus groups were conducted with community members, service providers (itinerant, local, regional and provincial), and government representatives. Inclusion of personal experiences and community knowledge to empower participants is fundamental in PAR. This type of research activity values the process through which awareness and consciousness of issues is raised. Creative solutions and education at all levels are important outcomes of this project. In keeping with the inherent principles of community development, community members actively engaged in the process, gaining skills and knowledge necessary to take charge of their own destiny and build partnerships to improve access to northern health.

Research findings from this endeavor include broad system wide concerns, which are viewed as issues that underpin the entire provincial health care system. Emphasis is on understanding the unique needs of isolated communities in the north; policies developed in the south often are not a good ‘fit’ in the north. Accessing health services can be challenging locally, regionally and provincially. The ability to provide necessary services in small remote communities is difficult. It is difficult to build trusting relationships when staff turnover is high and resources are thinly spread. Emergency response, dental care and home care often were flagged as needing improvement. On a regional scale difficulty with long waiting periods, a lack of physicians, and a lack of coordination of services were identified. On a provincial scale, travel to Winnipeg for specialized services is complicated at best, but distance compounds the need for better coordination of services and appointments. Navigation of a complex system and the provision of more information about options were identified as needs by both residents and providers.

Issues related to distance and transportation weave through many of the concerns. Two of the six Bayline communities have all weather road access, while the other four depend upon rail and air travel complimented by winter ice roads. Travel to regional and provincial centres is expensive and time consuming, plus there are issues of reliability. Leaving home to get to an appointment can mean significant time away from family and other commitments. Understanding challenges associated with living in northern isolated communities is essential in generating future solutions.
Saskatchewan Issues Explored

From its inception the project goals were to explore barriers to health care access for northern residents, and find ways to dialogue with policy makers to effect change. To understand the broadest range of issues and solutions, northern Saskatchewan communities were included as part of the project, allowing the sharing of issues and solutions between the two provinces. Five communities under the jurisdiction of the Athabasca Health Authority (AHA) in Saskatchewan’s far north, and two communities from the Mamawetan Churchill River Regional Health Authority (MCRRHA) in the near north were included as part of the study. Residents and health care providers from these communities identified access issues related to distance, geography, funding models and jurisdictional fragmentation. As in Manitoba, interviews and focus groups with residents and service providers took place in the communities.

Research findings from Saskatchewan highlight concerns related to transportation policy, funding models and local availability of services and health care professionals. As in Manitoba, the ability to provide necessary services in small remote communities is difficult, and residents in both the near and far north expressed concerns with their ability to access many services. At the same time, the value of local and regional facilities and services was recognized and many community members spoke of their appreciation of local staff.

In both the AHA and MCRRHA regions transportation issues are of primary concern. Three of the AHA communities are accessible only by air and the remaining two have only seasonal road access. The MCRRHA communities both have road access to the south. Participants spoke of hardships experienced when traveling great distances at personal expense to obtain service. These hardships are often compounded by a lack of awareness on the part of service providers and support staff in the south, who may not be cognizant of travel and cost issues when scheduling treatment. Communication between patients and service providers is also an area where improvements are required. Ways to address language and information barriers are needed to ensure that patients can understand and manage their own health issues. Only by understanding their conditions can patients properly take medications, obtain appropriate follow-up and advocate for themselves.

Expansion of locally provided services such as dental, home care and mental health services and increased specialist visits was cited as a way of reducing the transportation burden on residents. However, health care providers highlighted the need to have long term staff in place to take advantage of the technology, citing restrictions in staff training availability and scope of practice standards as barriers that prevent technologies such as Tele-health and local specialized equipment from being used to their full potential. The degree to which there is coordination of services between federal and provincial health care systems was identified by service providers as affecting both the quality of health care and the availability of local services, and an eagerness to address these jurisdictional barriers was expressed.

Manitoba/Saskatchewan Workshop

The Rural Development Institute and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit, University of Regina co-hosted a cross-jurisdictional workshop April 16 and 17, 2008 to bring community members, provincial government representatives from Manitoba and Saskatchewan and federal government representatives together to discuss research findings and seek ways to further develop and implement creative solutions. This workshop presented a unique opportunity to share and learn from neighbours drawing on one another’s successes and challenges as well as generating some new and creative ideas for improving access to health services in the north.

Dissemination

In an effort to broadly disseminate research findings, a number of creative tools and venues are being utilized. Reports and articles are being developed for publication and distribution; case studies have been written based on community members’ experiences accessing health services and will be used as teaching tools in professional programs to educate health professionals. Look for an upcoming chapter Transcending boundaries: Collaborating to improve northern access to health services in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in Rural health: A Canadian perspective. Presentations have been made at national conferences, most recently at the annual Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) conference held in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, June 2008. Findings and potential solutions have been shared at workshops and meetings over the past two years.
Indicators of Northern Health:  
A Resource for Northern Manitobans and theBayline Regional Round Table

A resource document identifying health indicators and differences across geographic regions of Manitoba will be released winter 2009. The report compared demographic statistics and health indicators, within Manitoba and across Canada. Manitoba’s relatively poor health status when compared to other provinces suggests a substantive need for change and improvement.

Substantive differences between the health of northern residents and other Manitobans were noted. Life expectancy is considered one of the most important indicators of the health of a population. Canada boasts one of the best average life expectancies in the world; however, the Burntwood and Nor-Man regions (Peer Group C and F) in northern Manitoba had the lowest life expectancy of all Peer Groups for the nation. Both were significantly lower than the national average; results suggested that the farther north people live in Manitoba, the shorter their life expectancy. Health behaviors often noted in northern Manitoba reflected the overall low health status of the region.

The report examined the health of First Nations people living in Manitoba, with specific emphasis on the north. Understanding the complexities of jurisdictional ambiguity is central to problem solving and resolution.
Youth Migration in Rural & Northern Manitoba

Many factors contribute to youth migration in Manitoba. Youth mobility patterns vary widely and change often. Debate about whether young people should stay, leave, and/or return exists. The desire to understand population and demographic change in rural and northern communities inspired a Manitoba-focused youth migration study undertaken by Rural Team Manitoba’s Youth Standing Committee. This project was coordinated by the Rural Development Institute and a partnership was established with le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM) to facilitate research in the Francophone region. This research project was financially supported by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and the Government of Canada’s Rural Secretariat.

A key goal of this research was to speak with Manitoba rural/northern youth from a selection of regions to develop a nuanced and multi-perspective understanding of their experiences in rural/northern communities, their intentions to leave or stay, and the motivations for leaving, staying, or returning to these smaller communities. A case study approach was adopted to focus on three regions of Manitoba: Francophone communities, Northern communities, and Parkland communities.

The research project had three key objectives:
1. Investigate the extent of youth migration from rural/northern communities;
2. Explore reasons for migration; and
3. Provide data to assist communities, regions, government departments and others to identify opportunities to keep youth in Manitoba and to attract youth back to rural/northern communities.

The project was conducted in two phases. Phase one (December 2007 – March 2008) included a literature review, secondary data analysis, as well as interviews and focus groups in the Francophone communities of St. Laurent, La Broquerie, and Notre Dame. Phase 2 (April 2008 – December 2008) included data collection and analysis in the Parkland communities of Dauphin and Grandview and Northern Manitoba communities of Wabowden, Thicket Portage and Thompson.

Findings of this research project include:
- The overarching theme arising from the project was the role and importance of learning opportunities. Education and learning opportunities were keys to attracting and retaining youth.
- Youth need to feel valued by their community to become engaged in their community.
- Manitoba’s Aboriginal population is young and growing. Particular attention needs to be paid to their unique circumstances and needs.
- The availability of meaningful and diverse employment opportunities were inherent to youth’s desire to reside in rural and northern communities.
- Long-term vision for fulfilling personal growth and development was essential to ensure young people and their families choose their ‘path’ deliberately. Meaningful employment opportunities were essential to leading a fulfilling life.
- Entrepreneurship and small business training and support that actively engage youth would benefit the local population and economy. Resourcefulness and creativity were highlighted as potential ways to enhance income generating opportunities.
- Effective communication within and outside of communities was identified as necessary for local vitality.
- A promotional campaign articulating Manitoba’s rural and northern advantage should be undertaken.

RDI Research Team
The Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group (LSSG) is a broad coalition of agricultural and conservation groups and all three levels of government. The group was formed in the fall of 1998 to examine the issues and impacts of leafy spurge. The Rural Development Institute of Brandon University provides coordination and project management to the LSSG. The LSSG strives to increase awareness of leafy spurge among the general public, landowners/managers and governments. The goals of the LSSG are:

- to design a process whereby an integrated and comprehensive approach to a province-wide strategy can be effectively and efficiently implemented. It is hoped that the Rural Development Institute / LSSG partnership will result in the establishment of a centre of excellence for leafy spurge issues and research in the Province of Manitoba; and

- to design a strategy or strategies to reduce levels of leafy spurge infestation in those areas of the province most severely affected.

**Leafy Spurge in Manitoba**

Leafy spurge is an invasive weed species that threatens an estimated 340,000 acres (information based on the LSSG Economic Impact Assessment, 1999). The study estimates that the net economic impacts associated with the leafy spurge infestation in Manitoba may be approaching **$20 million** per year.

The total annual economic impact on pasture land is estimated at **$16 million**. An estimated 225,000 acres of grazing land is infested in Manitoba with a potential impact of a reduced herd size of 16,540 head. Leafy spurge costs Manitobans more than **$5 million per year** in reduced producer income ($1,940,040 per year) and reduced production expenditures ($3,104,044).

Potential secondary economic impacts on other business sectors are estimated at **$11 million** per year. Additionally, land values are potentially reduced by over $30 million. This brings potential property tax implications for owners of croplands. While taxes on infested acres may reduce, other lands will have to make up the lost revenue.

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**Total Direct and Indirect Economic Impacts**

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<td><strong>Total Annual Impacts</strong></td>
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![Over $19 M per year](image)
Leafy Spurge Rangeland Control and Management

Leafy spurge (Euphorbia esula L.) is a threat to biodiversity in nature lands and agricultural lands, and costs Manitobans in excess of $20 million per year. Listed on the World Conservation Union’s list of 100 worst invasive species, it is estimated that 340,000 acres were infested in Manitoba in 1999. The goal of this project is to increase the adoption of beneficial management practices among producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry for the prevention and management of leafy spurge.

This one year project, coordinated by the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group, increased the adoption of beneficial management practices among producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry. The objectives of the project were:

- to provide producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry with information on beneficial management practices of leafy spurge to increase rangeland conditions;
- to increase the awareness of leafy spurge among producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry; and
- to facilitate knowledge transfer from researchers and practitioners to producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry.

The project created and distributed leafy spurge beneficial management practices knowledge among producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry. Materials focused on rangeland control and management of leafy spurge. Radio advertisements broadcasting leafy spurge beneficial management practices on a local radio station targeted producers, land managers, municipalities, and industry.
The threat of invasive species is continuing to grow at an alarming rate. The impacts of these foreign species include the loss of native plant and animal species, high economic costs to eradicate or control the spread, the degradation of riparian or terrestrial habitats and increased risk of environmental hazards including fire and loss of water quality. For nearly a decade the RDI has helped coordinate and facilitate collaborative efforts aimed at helping to manage or prevent the spread of invasive species.

In 2008, RDI actively worked to facilitate cooperation with other groups across Western Canada. The most visible outcomes of these efforts were the Breaking Down Borders Forum and the Prairie Region Invasive Plant Species inventory and map display website.

The Breaking Down Borders Forum was held in February in Winnipeg. The forum brought together over 50 key individuals from each of the Western Provinces and Ontario to discuss common issues, establish networks and identify potential opportunities for collaboration. Participants came from government, universities, non-profit organizations, municipal agencies and professional organizations.

A program committee, comprised of representatives from across Western Canada, developed an agenda of presentations and discussions that examined current research efforts, policies and programs, and examples of local practice.

After listening to key presentations, the participants discussed issues and actions in break out and plenary sessions. The overall conclusion from these sessions was that there was significant merit in and need to collaborate across the Western Region of Canada on several key priorities. Some of these priorities were the development of common messages for education and awareness efforts, sharing data and information, encouraging more research on invasive species, examining regulations, and more training on invasive species management and control.

Funding for the Breaking Down Borders Forum was provided through the Greencover Canada Regional Technical Assistance Program of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and by the Invasive Species Council of Manitoba. As well, many agencies and organizations from across Western Canada and Ontario contributed considerable in-kind resources.

The major outcome of the Forum was the decision to move forward on the development of a Western Regional network for collaboration on invasive species. In July 2008, an interim steering committee comprised of individuals from across the Prairies agreed to an organizational framework for the network. The committee is being co-chaired by Brian Haddow, (BC) from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Cheryl Heming (MB) Invasive Species Council of Manitoba, and Chet Neufeld (SK) from the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan. RDI is providing the secretariat function for the network including the development of a proposal to seek funding support for the network.

The Prairie Region Invasive Plant Species inventory and map display website is a comprehensive and standardized database that encourages mapping and monitoring the spread of invasive plant species. These activities are critical for agencies and organizations to develop, implement and evaluate weed management plans. Karen Rempel has coordinated the development of the database with input from various agencies across Western Canada. GIServices at the University of Saskatchewan houses and maintains the infrastructure of the site and provides technical support. In 2008, more than 44 individuals and organizations had made over 3,400 data entries for invasive species. Perhaps most notable for the 2008 growing season was the rapid spread of downy and Japanese brome as well as the continued spread of leafy spurge. Downy and Japanese brome are grass species that are highly invasive and threaten winter annuals, forage crops as well as range and pasture. Over time, and without control, these species also become a significant source of flammable plant material during the summer months.
Karen Rempel, Research Affiliate with the RDI as well as RDI staff members Sylvia Henry, Bev Lischka, and Rural Development graduate student, Paige Rushton, helped organize the forum and contribute to data entry and maintenance of the PRIPS website. Karen Rempel is also leading the coordination of network and the development of the funding proposal.

Example of map display available to the public

Plenary sessions at the Breaking Down Borders Forum
Rural Immigration: Exploring Demographics and Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon and Area

Overview
Regulated and managed by the federal government, the Low-Skilled Temporary Foreign Worker program offers an expedited process by which employers can recruit and hire foreign workers with lower skill levels, on a temporary basis. In Brandon and area, labour shortages and expanding operations at industries such as Maple Leaf Foods have resulted in the need to re-evaluate recruiting and hiring practices, extending employee searches beyond local labour pools to overseas countries. In Manitoba, a province that actively supports immigration, temporary foreign workers have the opportunity to apply to the Provincial Nominee Program following six months of employment in the province. This option presents a pathway to permanent immigrant status, thus fundamentally altering the principles of temporary foreign worker programs. ‘Temporary’ is not always ‘temporary’ as these foreign workers transition to become permanent immigrants and bring their families to live in Canada.

At present there are 939 international recruits employed at the Brandon Maple Leaf Foods plant, which equals 60% of the plant’s total employees. It is estimated that more than half of the international recruits have been approved for Provincial Nominee status while the other half is in the process of applying. Upon receiving Provincial Nominee status, foreign workers can initiate family reunification and it is anticipated that more than 1,800 family members will arrive over the next year. By 2011, approximately 3,400 family members (children and spouses) will arrive in Brandon. In light of these estimates, the City of Brandon can anticipate 5,140 new residents by 2011, representing nearly 12% of Brandon’s current population (41,511).

Demographic analyses and population projections are the foundation of the project, providing pertinent data to community leaders, service providers, and government policy makers regarding anticipated community changes. This research also seeks to identify the implications and impacts of rapid demographic change on rural communities, service providers, and public infrastructure.

On the whole, the project will provide a better understanding of the existing temporary foreign worker population in Brandon and rural southwestern Manitoba as well as an illustration of the impacts of temporary foreign worker programs on communities.

Research Objectives
- Explore the scope and impact of temporary foreign workers on Brandon and area by contributing to collaborative, community-based research.
- Present the perspectives and experiences of temporary foreign workers.
- Investigate temporary foreign workers’ use of the Provincial Nominee Program and the process of family reunification.
- Further develop the concept of ‘transitional’ foreign workers, rather than ‘temporary’ foreign workers.
- Understand long-term retention rates of temporary foreign workers in Brandon and area.
- Clarify and elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of government, community, and employers.
- Provide population projections and demographic analysis to inform policies and programs.
- Examine what steps are needed to become a ‘welcoming community’.
- Bridge communication and knowledge gaps amongst policy makers, service providers, local government, and researchers.

Jill Bucklaschuk (left) & Alison Moss (right) present findings
RDI’s Temporary Foreign Workers Dialogue Group

The desire to better understand the impacts associated with the flow of temporary foreign workers into Brandon, Manitoba and area has been expressed by various stakeholders locally, provincially and federally. Immigration and associated community changes have become a topic of local interest with the growth of various industries and subsequent labour demands. Many employers in the area have begun to rely on temporary foreign workers as local labour shortages persist. As a result of formal and informal discussions regarding knowledge gaps related to this recent phenomenon and community implications, a dialogue group was formed to open communication and seek clarification on related issues.

The RDI Temporary Foreign Worker Dialogue Group represents various perspectives and will serve as a mechanism to better understand the process of hiring and settling temporary foreign workers and develop a network to promote and assist further related work.

Vision for the dialogue group includes the capacity to choose and discuss pertinent topics, potentially engaging guest speakers, and informing policy, programming, planning and research. The purpose of the group is to encourage the dynamic exchange of information, share varied expertise, and provide an opportunity to identify and discuss current issues. A multitude of lessons and knowledge can come from the sharing of information across governmental departments and among various stakeholders.

Meeting topics will be chosen reflecting the needs and interests of group members. Overall, this group consists of two parallel processes: (a) discussion, debate, knowledge transfer and learning; and (b) informing research that will subsequently inform future group dialogue.

Based on the topics of the dialogue group meetings, a discussion paper series will be publicly distributed. By synthesizing group discussions and related literature and research, these papers will share lessons learned, foster clarity on specific topics, and will contribute to an understanding of how federal immigration policies and programs are utilized in local settings. Each meeting will result in a new paper, summarizing information, raising questions and areas for further research, and providing pertinent literature on the topic.

An inaugural meeting was hosted by RDI in September 2007 and focused on developing a vision, goal, and plan for subsequent meetings. A second meeting, held in November 2007, focused on discussing the expectations, roles and perspectives of key stakeholders involved in the temporary foreign worker process. A third (January 2008) and fourth (May 2008) meeting explored the topic of settlement and related considerations for temporary foreign workers in Brandon and area. Maple Leaf Foods hosted the most recent dialogue group meeting at the Brandon plant; participants toured the facilities and began exploring the topic of family reunification. Two guest speakers shared their experiences as temporary foreign workers focused on reuniting with their families. The topic of family reunification will be further elaborated upon in the next dialogue group meeting.
Ethnocultural Communities and Organizations
in Brandon and Steinbach

In January the Rural Development Institute embarked on a new research project that explores ethnocultural communities and organizations in rural Manitoba. With support from Manitoba Labour and Immigration and the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance, the purpose of this project is to develop an understanding of ethnocultural groups in rural Manitoba, what they need to be vibrant and successful, and the challenges they face as a community. Rural communities are becoming increasingly diverse as rural immigration continues to be an important strategy in addressing demographic challenges and labour shortages throughout the province of Manitoba. Developing strong, resourceful ethnocultural communities contributes to successful settlement of newcomers and leads to more inclusive, active communities. Ethnocultural groups, communities, and organizations should be encouraged to build capacity as they have important roles to play in welcoming newcomers and building a stronger community.

This project is multi-phased and adopts a case study and comparative approach. The first phase explored ethnocultural organizations and related non-government organizations in Brandon. It was observed that in rural areas many ethnocultural groups have not formed official organizations, but rather organize and meet as an informal community. These groups face a number of challenges including volunteer burn-out, limited financial and human resources, and an aging membership.

Now in the second phase, research is focusing on Steinbach, which is one of the top destinations for immigrants coming to Manitoba. Following data collection in Steinbach, the results from Brandon and Steinbach will be compared to develop a comprehensive analysis of what is needed for ethnocultural organizations and communities to become or remain vibrant and active elements of Manitoba’s increasingly diverse rural communities.

Research Goals and Objectives

- To inform and increase understandings of ethnocultural organizations and communities in rural centres, including what factors contribute to the successful development of ethnocultural organizations as well as what barriers hinder the establishment of such organizations.
- The purpose is to delve into grassroots information to provide a clear understanding of what ethnocultural groups need to establish successful and engaged communities and organizations.

Research Questions

- Are ethnocultural organizations and communities forming in rural Manitoba?
- What conditions are necessary for the successful development of ethnocultural organizations?
- What can the provincial government do to help foster such organizations?
- How do regional dynamics impact the development of ethnocultural organizations and communities?

Upcoming Activities

Enhancing and Linking Ethnocultural Communities: A Discussion Session - Targeting a small group of key individuals, this discussion session will present an opportunity for ethnocultural groups, non-government organizations, and service providers to discuss challenges faced by Brandon’s ethnocultural communities. The purpose is to discuss how ethnocultural organizations and communities can become or remain active contributors to the cultural diversity of Brandon.
In June, RDI co-hosted, with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the 2008 Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation-National Rural Research Network Annual Policy Conference in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The conference format was designed by a group of dedicated individuals from across Canada. This event represented the first Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation-National Rural Research Network conference hosted in Canada’s northern territories. The conference celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, the 50th anniversary of Inuvik, and National Aboriginal Day. The conference attracted 120 delegates from across Canada and internationally.

The theme, Boom Bust Economies: Impacts on Rural and Remote Communities reflected important issues among rural and northern communities across Canada. This conference provided a rural and northern policy forum in which community/First Nation leaders, post-secondary students, researchers, and government representatives discussed rural development issues, opportunities, challenges, and network.

The conference consisted of four plenary sessions, three breakout time-slots with two concurrent sessions in each time-slot where a total of eighteen research papers were presented, and one afternoon of community visits where delegates chose one of five activities in the local communities. The mix of plenary sessions, community tours, and concurrent sessions worked well, particularly the community tours which were an excellent way of providing networking opportunities and ensuring a local experience.

The conference would not have been possible without the generous financial contributions provided by: Canadian Heritage, Canadian North, Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, First Air, Health Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Government of the Northwest Territories, National Rural Research Network, Rural Development Institute/Brandon University, and the Rural Secretariat.

**Conference Highlights**

- **120 participants** from eleven Canadian provinces and territories and Australia representing community-based organizations; municipal, Aboriginal and Inuit leaders; post-secondary students; researchers, provincial territorial and governments; and industry representatives.


- **Sixteen in-kind supporters**: NRRN, CRRF, Rural Development Institute, Northwest Territories Department of the Executive, Town of Inuvik, Towns of Tuktoyaktuk and Aklavik, Village of Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories Industry, Tourism, and Investment, Northwest Territories Municipal and Community Affairs, Legislature of the Northwest Territories, Canadian North, First Air, Gwitch’in Tribal Council, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Aurora College.

**Conference participants**
RDI and the Department of Rural Development have been actively engaged in an international consortium on comparative rural policy since 2004. Lonnie Patterson, MRD student, had the opportunity to participate in the 2008 ICRPS summer institute hosted by the University of Missouri-Columbia. Lonnie spent two weeks learning with and from graduate students, professionals and faculty from more than 10 countries.

Lonnie’s experience included classroom presentations, field-trips and hands-on activities exploring issues such as sustainability, economic development and service delivery in a rural context. One of the highlights of the 2008 program was a community development project. Students worked in teams with local leaders from rural Missouri to explore their community’s opportunities and challenges, and generate development recommendations.

In November 2008, RDI participated in an international rural policy forum in Puebla, Mexico co-hosted by Colegio México, Colegio Postgraduados-Campus Puebla (Mexico), and the University of Missouri (United States). The meetings brought representatives together from Canada, and the United States. Discussions focused on developing multilateral comparative research projects, engagement in the International Comparative Rural Policies Studies (ICRPS) Summer Institutes, and building a memorandum of understanding between the universities to encourage faculty and student mobility.

The 2009 ICRPS Summer Institute will be hosted by the University of Highlands and Islands (Inverness, Scotland). Further information on ICRPS is available at www.icrps.com.
An important aspect of RDI’s mandate is knowledge translation and mobilization of RDI research and communities engagement findings and activities. In 2008, RDI mobilized knowledge through publications and presentations. Several project reports, discussion papers and a book chapter were written. In 2005, RDI began open-source electronic publishing with the launch of the Journal of Rural and Community Development which published two issues in 2008. In addition, two open-source books were launched.

**Reports & Discussion Papers**


Bucklaschuk, J. (March). *Mapping ethnocultural communities and organizations in Brandon and the westman region*.

Bucklaschuk, J., & Moss, A. (November). *Settlement: Considerations for temporary foreign workers and their families in Brandon, Manitoba: Discussion paper #3*.

Bucklaschuk, J., & Moss, A. (October). *Settlement: Considerations for temporary foreign workers in Brandon and area: Discussion paper #2*.


Gibson, R. (October). *Overview of rural research centres in Canada*.


Gibson, R. (September). *Boom bust communities impact on rural and remote communities conference report*.

Gibson, R., & Annis, R. (February). *The future may not unfold as an extrapolation of the past: Manitoba’s changing demographics*.


Racher, F., Moss, A., & Pachkowski, K. (December). *Community collaboration to improve the health care access of northern residents final report*.


**Journals**


**Books and Book Chapter**


Beesley, K. Editor. (forthcoming). *The rural-urban fringe in Canada: Conflict and controversy*.


Over a period of 40 years, Dr. John Welsted (Professor Emeritus, Department of Geography, Brandon University) has assembled a collection of images (aerial and remote sensed) that depict the geography of Manitoba. About 550 of these images have been selected for presentation in an electronic book (e-book) titled *Manitoba from the Air: A Geographical Interpretation*. The “remoteness” of the sensing varies from a few tens of metres (from building tops) to hundreds of kilometres (from satellites) with multiple image types.

The collection is intended as a companion to the book *The Geography of Manitoba: Its Land and Its People* (Edited by John Welsted, John Everitt, & Christoph Stadel, 1997) and the topics are presented in the same order as in that book. Welsted’s collection is the basis of the e-book, however, it was supplemented by other images obtained specifically for the purpose. Whereas some aspects of the province’s geography such as landforms, settlement patterns, and transport routes (past and present), are well displayed on remotely sensed images, others, such as climate and prehistoric settlements, are not. The e-book includes two chapters that were not in the original book: transport is given separate treatment whereas it was subsumed under other headings in the book and there is a short section about legal issues.

The aim was to use remotely sensed images to display and describe the geography of Manitoba: this would be made readily and freely available to all interested people. The electronic format of the e-book also provides a dynamic and interactive environment for the reader. A major advantage of this e-book is that it can be continually edited and updated and is freely available to all.

[http://mbair.brandonu.ca/](http://mbair.brandonu.ca/)
Electronic Book: Edited by Leonard P. Apedaile and Nobuhiro Tsuboi

Revitalization: Fate and Choice is the outcome of five years of joint research by Canadian and Japanese social researchers, working on rural revitalization in the Canada-Japan Project. This book is for rural activists, policy makers, bureaucrats and most of all for students of the co-evolution of rural and urban interests globally. The book is an investigation of concrete matters of investment, social capital, effectiveness of volunteering, the rural household economy, governance and policy issues.

The diversity of subject matter is an outcome of the synergies of the collaborative model of the Canada-Japan Project and of a comparative household survey carried out for a random sample across four research sites in Canada and two in Japan.

Three fundamental themes emerge in this book. First, the real differences in factors characterizing rural devitalization and influencing the likelihood of revitalization in the future were not as great as expected, despite the apparent and definite historical differences between Japan and Canada. Rural Canada and rural Japan share a common experience with depopulation, aging, wealth extraction, affirmative action, and the failure of agricultural policy as an instrument of rural development and alleviation of rural poverty. The main difference between Canada and Japan lies in the time available for adjustment to industrialization, about 100 years for Canada and about 50 years for rural Japan.

Second, revitalization is a choice; continuing devitalization is not fate. This is not to say that various forces and events do not devitalize a rural community or household, but rather that devitalization may be anticipated and met with strategies and activities that add and renew vitality.

Third, revitalization seems to be mostly about reorganization of rural assets and human energies to increase productivity and therefore to strengthen rural claims on global income and wealth. Reorganization involves a range of issues, including production, social capital, property rights, equity and technology joint ventures, risk management, forms of social cohesion, and governance.

This electronic book edited by Leonard P. Apedaile, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta and Nobuhiro Tsuboi, Professor of Agricultural Economics (retired), Tsukuba University, Japan, was sponsored through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Japanese Institute for Rural Revitalization in the 21st Century and the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, signed in January 1999. This e-book is published by the Rural Development Institute in collaboration with the Canada Japan Project, Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, and the New Rural Economy project.

http://revitalization.brandonu.ca/
Journal of Rural and Community Development

Editor: Dr. Doug Ramsey

Rationale for the Journal
Beyond the demographic trends toward urban, there are issues of remoteness, regional differences, resource dependency and restructuring, environmental degradation, unemployment and depopulation, urban influence/dominance, etc. that need to be addressed. Connections can be made to a variety of traditional (e.g. Geography, Sociology, Political Science, Economics) and non-traditional (e.g. Rural Development, Health Studies, Environmental Studies) disciplines, as well as research areas and perspectives (e.g. resource analysis, political economy, community action theory, community development).

Format
The format of the JRCD includes:
- Regular Refereed Articles
- Community/Regional/Rural region Case Studies
- Policy Section: Shorter papers summarizing/evaluating policies and programs

Subject Areas of Interest
A range of subject areas have been identified for publication in the JRCD:
- Economic restructuring and diversification
- Social capital, capacity and cohesion
- Resource development and environmental condition
- Community and regional development
- Local economic development
- Condition (health, well-being, quality of life, sustainability)
- Gender issues in development
- Land-use, environmental and community planning
- Rural governance and service provision

Current Issue, Volume 3, Issue 2 (July 2008)
A Special Issue: “Rural Adaptation and Climate and Environmental Change”
Guest Editor: Dr. Ellen Wall, University of Guelph

www.jrcd.ca
Presentations

During 2008, RDI was invited to present information and findings at several conferences and workshops. RDI representatives presented at three international, eighteen national, six provincial and one local conferences/workshops. In addition, four posters were presented at a national conference.

Albisser, S. (July). *The Yukon regional round table advisory council*. Presented at Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities in Edmonton, AB.

Annis, R. C. (October). *The role of key institutions that successfully facilitate revitalization*. Presented at Reversing the Tide: Strategies for Successful Rural Revitalization, Prince George BC.

Annis, R. C. (October). *University institutes partnering for rural research and community development*. Presented at Reversing the Tide: Strategies for Successful Rural Revitalization, Prince George BC.


Annis, R. C. (May). *Community-university-government partnerships*. Presented at Rural Vitality-From Surviving to Thriving-An Eastern Ontario Perspective in Kingston, ON.


Annis, R. C., Beattie, M., & Gibson, R. (July). *Collaborative partnerships: The community collaboration story*. Presented at Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities in Edmonton, AB.


Annis, R. C., Chan, Y., Gibson, R., Greenwood, R., Reimer, B., & Ryser, L. (October). *Exploring the role of rural development research centres in knowledge translation, mobilization and community engagement*. Presented at the Knowledge in Motion Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland.


Annis, R., & Patterson, L. (July). *Rural poverty in Canada*. Presented at the 2008 International Comparative Rural Policy Summer Institute in Columbia, USA.

Bucklaschuk, J. (July). *A collaborative approach to understanding temporary foreign workers in a rural community*. Presented at Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities in Edmonton, AB.


Digby, W., Catton, H., Johnston, J., & Gibson, R. (April). *The economic impact for municipalities of invasive species*. Presented at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities Officials Seminar, Brandon, MB.


McPherson, R. (July). *Waterwolf regional round table*. Presented at Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities in Edmonton, AB.
Presentations (continued)


Moss, A., DeLorande-Colombe, D., & Racher, F. (April). Community collaboration to improve health care access of northern residents: Manitoba research findings. Presented at the Manitoba/Saskatchewan Cross-Border Workshop on Northern Health Access in Saskatoon, SK.


Moss, A., Patterson, L., & Rushton, P. (January). Rural youth migration. Presented to RDI Advisory Committee in Brandon, MB.


Unrau, L., & Annis, R. C. (March). Rural youth migration. Presented to Rural Team Advance in Gimli, MB.


Wirth, W. (July). Yukon regional round table community leaders sharing ideas and creating change. Presented at Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities in Edmonton, AB.


Posters

Annis, R. C., Beattie, M., & Gibson, R. (June). Regional round tables: The power of collaboration. Poster presented at the Boom Bust Economies: Impact on Rural and Remote Communities Conference in Inuvik, NT.


Research Affiliates

The Research Affiliate designation was established in 2002 by Brandon University. A Research Affiliate is a selected individual who actively contributes to the ongoing development of the Rural Development Institute. Research Affiliates hold affiliations as faculty members of Brandon University or other universities. They also come from community organizations, the private sector, government and non-government organizations. In 2008, there were fifteen Research Affiliates. Information about each of the Research Affiliates is on the RDI Website.

Profile of a Research Affiliate: Karen Rempel

For almost a decade, Karen Rempel, Ph.D (cand.) has been actively involved in a number of RDI’s research and project activities. Karen began her professional career as a teacher in rural Saskatchewan. From her teaching experiences, Karen developed her strong belief in the importance of education and learning for rural sustainability. Karen has also been closely involved in agriculture. As a partner in a large ranch and feedlot operation in Saskatchewan, Karen became involved in rangeland management, eventually completing a rangeland technician program. These two areas of interests – education and learning and rangeland management – are echoed in Karen’s activities in RDI.

Karen’s knowledge of rangeland management has contributed to RDI’s activities in support of the management and control of invasive plant species such as leafy spurge. Over the past four years, she has helped establish a Western Canadian network on invasive plant species. This network includes all levels of government as well as stakeholders from private organizations and practitioners. One of the most notable outcomes of this network is the Prairie Region Invasive Species (PRIPS) plant inventory and map display website. This website is the first accessible public database in Canada to help track invasive plant species. Through RDI, Karen is seeking external funding support to help the collaborative network establish a research network and develop an extensive communications plan.

In the area of education and learning, Karen’s activities included the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment study and report, evaluation of the Learning for Life project and the development of the Manitoba Community Adjustment Handbook. In 2007, she was selected by the Canadian Council on Learning as one of thirteen Principal Investigators under the Researcher-in-Residence program to develop local research capacity. The project is in partnership with the Southwest Horizon School Division. Karen’s involvement includes extensive coordination of a community-based research team as well as research design, data analysis and preparation of findings.

Karen is completing her doctoral dissertation which examines the linkage between human and social capital aimed at economic growth in rural and northern communities. Her research includes the analysis of relational networks and the identification of key intervention points for change and adaptation.

Karen was appointed as a Research Affiliate of the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University in 2002. Karen also enjoys teaching and working with students. In 2007 she was the Royal Bank of Canada Visiting Scholar in Brandon University’s Department of Rural Development. Late in the fall of 2008, she accepted a part-time position with Brandon University’s Faculty of Education to coordinate the Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies, a new centre for education field research. She also hopes to continue to contribute to RDI’s activities. Karen was recently appointed by Order in Council as a Public Representative to the Manitoba Conservation Districts Commission. In her spare time, Karen and her husband Nick have a small farm outside of Brandon where they raise commercial beef cattle and warmblood horses.
Brandon University Community Outreach Service

The Brandon University Community Outreach Service assists in matching the needs of community organizations in Brandon and rural Manitoba with the learning and research interests of Brandon University Students and faculty. The Outreach Service facilitates two main programs, Annual Calls for Proposals, and Service Learning program for students.

Service Learning program encourages community volunteer participation of Brandon University students in the areas of their study. The program acknowledges the value of student activities beyond academic setting, and provides a valuable opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skills to the benefit of the community. Once students successfully complete Service Learning program, they will receive an official recognition of their activities on their Brandon University transcripts.

A number of students participated in Service Learning activities in the past year, volunteering with community organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society, Manitoba Suicide Line, Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba, BU Student Leader Program, the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre, and other groups.

There were two annual Calls for Proposals held in 2008, one in February and another one in October. The projects funded in 2008 initiated new partnerships between the University and community organizations in the region.

With special funding provided by Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives, four new projects were initiated in 2008.

Habitat Use of Northern Pike in the Little Saskatchewan River Using VHF Telemetry

Project Partners: Brandon Wildlife Association, Rivers and Area Game & Fish Association, and Dr. Chris Malcolm, Geography Department, Brandon University. Funding Received: $3,000

The reservoirs along the Little Saskatchewan River support important recreational sport fisheries, with pool-and-riffle fish ways connecting the entire river system from its headquarters to Lake Wahtopanah. While there is considerable evidence that several species of fish use the fish ways, there is no knowledge as to where the migrating fish move to, or how they use the upstream habitat over long term.

In spring 2008, a total of 60 Northern Pike will be tagged with VHF transmitters along the length of the Little Saskatchewan River. Pike tracking will be accomplished by air and boat, followed by regular surveys undertaken for a period of one year to obtain single-day snapshots of all pike locations following tagging.

A Brandon University Geography student will work in the capacity of research assistant to interact with provincial fisheries management and local fish and game association members, and to conduct wildlife field research and data collection as part of his honours thesis project. The results of the project will inform management of the participating organizations on sustainable recreational fishing, river and reservoir level management, and habitat conservation.
**Ecopoetic Project**

**Project Partners:** Manitoba Beekeepers’ Association and Dr. Di Brandt, Canada Research Chair, Department of English and Creative Writing, Brandon University. **Funding Received:** $2,500

Ecopoetic Project expands on Di Brandt’s interdisciplinary experiments with ways to enlarge the public venue of poetry as a multidimensional language, a language that could help address some of the current environmental issues in holistic ways.

In collaboration with local and regional chapters of the Manitoba Beekeepers’ Association, the faculty member and a student assistant will conduct research on honeybees and beekeeping practices and keep a journal of their experiences. Their findings will be recorded in a Reader of writings and information relevant to beekeeping.

Also, an anthology of poetry about bees throughout the ages will be compiled as a result of this interdisciplinary project. The project will address the blind spot in Canadian literary studies in relation to rural and farm living and interests, and open a public forum for beekeepers to communicate their knowledge and concerns about issues like the Colony Collapse Disorder to an audience outside their usual sphere.

**Just in Case: Personal Emergency Preparedness for Isolated and Older Adults**

**Project Partners:** Canadian Red Cross Society – Manitoba Region and John Lindsay, Applied Disaster and Emergency Studies (ADES), Brandon University. **Funding Approved:** $2,840

Brandon is a community that, like most others in Canada, has a variety of risks including severe summer and winter weather, flooding, hazardous material incidents, and critical infrastructure failures. Currently Brandon and surrounding communities have no specific education around emergency preparedness for older adults. With an increasing number of older adults remaining in their homes and apartments for longer periods of time due to an increase in support services, there is a need to educate and prepare seniors to deal with an emergency situation if one was to arise.

The Canadian Red Cross is committed to providing effective emergency training to older adults with the goal of engaging these seniors in the education process as volunteer instructors. Brandon University students, with the support and supervision of the ADES faculty members, will assist the Red Cross volunteers to research and develop the training materials needed for presentations, and work with Red Cross members to conduct the initial recruitment oriented training and the subsequent ‘train the trainer’ step. This project promotes intergenerational community building and acknowledges the contribution both students and seniors can make to community readiness.

**Opportunity Assessment Database for Downtown Brandon**

**Project Partners:** Brandon Downtown Development Corporation (BDDC)/ Renaissance Brandon and Dr. Derrek Eberts, Geography Department, Brandon University. **Funding Approved:** $3,000

The Brandon Downtown Development Corporation focuses on activities that bring greater numbers of people and commerce to downtown Brandon. Their initiatives include the redevelopment of property, improving safety, renewal of public spaces, and the establishment of incentive programs that create unique partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The Opportunity Assessment Database, developed in collaboration with a Brandon University student and faculty, will build toward a quantifiable understanding of the opportunities in Brandon’s downtown. A set of data will be collected to provide an inventory of downtown’s buildings to better understand and restructure the economy of the area. The database will report data interactively through maps and reports, and include information on each building in the downtown area including assessed value and taxes, square footage, amenities, historic status, and building condition. The database will be an invaluable resource for the BDDC to offer real potential for meaningful progress in addressing the problems faced by the downtown area.
Looking Ahead to 2009

Exploring Welcoming Communities
The primary goal of this new project is to create the opportunity to enhance the capacity and partnership development among rural communities, their leaders, and rural community-based organizations. In particular, the project will identify opportunities and challenges related to rural immigration, develop new partnerships, strengthen existing partnerships, and develop strategies for future action. Activities will include:

- building a multi-sector collaboration and partnership among community leaders, community-based organizations, three levels of government, and industry;
- determining characteristics of a welcoming rural, northern, or rural-region center;
- creating an inventory of welcoming community tools and resources from across Canada and internationally;
- creating a tool to benchmark the welcoming community progress;
- facilitating a participatory evaluation reflect lessons learned through the process; and
- disseminating findings, results, and lessons learned.

Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies
The Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS) is an international collaborative project to build an understanding of intercultural relations. The project began with a focus on large multi-ethnic societies such as Australia, Canada, China, India and Russia. RDI will be the first researchers to undertake the MIRIPS project in Canada. In 2009, interviews will be conducted with two groups of people in Brandon: recent immigrants and their families and community members. The results from the surveys will be useful to build an understanding of intercultural relations within Brandon.

International Comparative Rural Policy Studies Summer Institute
The Rural Development Institute and the Department of Rural Development will be engaged in the designing the program and delivering sessions at the 2009 International Comparative Rural Policy Summer Institute. The University of Highlands and Islands (Inverness, Scotland) will host the 2009 Summer Institute. Students in Brandon University’s Masters of Rural Development program will have the opportunity to participate in this two week summer institute.