



Rural Report

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Collaborative Research at RDI: Director Provides a View of the Landscape

In the orchestra of collaborative research, Robert Annis is a conductor.

His office, stacked with multi-coloured file folders, boxes with project labels and notes, indicates his involvement and dedication to collaborative work. Since taking on the position as director of the Rural Development Institute (RDI) in 1999, Annis has engaged RDI with students and faculty on over 30 projects in Northern and rural Manitoba communities.

In a recent interview, Annis said that collaborative work is challenging but practically important, especially when considering RDI's role in rural community development.

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RDI Works with Prairie Skills Inc. and Southwest Horizon School Division for Community-based Research Project

With RDI's assistance, two southwest Manitoba community-based organizations will begin work in early 2004 on a community research project exploring the link between educational planning and community economic development (CED).

Prairie Skills Inc., a not-for profit charitable organization committed to rural community development and the newly amalgamated Southwest Horizon School Division will be

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RDI Director Robert Annis speaks with Minnedosa MLA Leanne Rowat at meetings in Thompson.

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Collaborative Research at RDI: Director Provides a View of the Landscape

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RDI and Rural Development

"We're looking at coming to understand several of the roles RDI can have in the community research and development process," he says, adding that this is especially true when considering the learning experience for students and the communities interested in such development.

"From the university perspective, it is the development of young minds," says Annis. "It is not just about employment and I'm hoping that it makes a difference and that it does influence learning."

Students are an integral part of the institute's mandate to community development and resiliency through research and information on issues unique to rural areas.

In fact, RDI launched a new student internship program this fall to further demonstrate its commitment to student learning and practical experiences.

Four undergraduate and two master students are working under the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities* project; and one doctoral student is involved in the *Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy* project. Both projects are funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

In addition to these projects, RDI engages in a number of other research areas including community economic development, community leadership, environmental and agro-economic issues, information technology, rural policy development, rural adaptation and change, as well as rural health issues and tourism.

Annis admits that the details of the projects are not the most important thing; but it is rather the exchange of knowledge, experience and information between communities and the university.

"The question is do people in communities think they're well served by the interaction they have [with the university] and are they better for it?"

When asked if projects begin at RDI or in the community, Annis says it varies and laughs.

"Sometimes I don't even know the answer to that question. We often go to a community with a suggestion of what we might do. The reason we go often comes from a conversation over coffee [in informal places] and it naturally follows along."

"I like to view it as a mutual agenda setting that's always open for negotiation."

“ “ **There are very few issues that come from communities that have simple solutions. When solutions and problems are complex, if you can come up with different perspectives from different disciplines, you develop a richer understanding and move toward more effective and powerful solutions.** ” ”

RDI and Collaborative Research

RDI prides itself on a collaborative approach. In fact, Annis had been emphasizing this approach long before national research efforts moved in that direction, first through his work as executive director of Brandon University's WESTARC, an applied research, training and consulting resource group, and then at RDI.

Commenting on a collaborative approach in the rural Canadian context, Annis says it just makes good common sense.

"There are very few issues that come from communities that have simple solutions. When solutions and problems are

complex, if you can come up with different perspectives from different disciplines, you develop a richer understanding and move toward more effective and powerful solutions."

Funding from national research granting bodies reflect this trend.

Annis points out that a recent article in *University Affairs* by McMaster University Sociologist Carl Cuneo reports that the number of strategic SSHRC grants awarded to five or more people has more than doubled since 1997. The average number of researchers on collaborative projects is now at 32, up from four in 1996, and the average number of disciplines represented on Major Collaborative Research Initiatives is nine. In 1996, it was just one.

Community University Research Alliance (CURA) projects, a new SSHRC funding initiative that began in 1999, also shows a commitment to collaborative work. These grants aim at encouraging community-university alliances and information sharing. To date, 37 CURAs have been awarded to universities across the country.

Annis believes the collaborative process is relevant and needed.

"It's the reaching for something you don't have. When you can struggle with people coming at something from different directions and there's an applied practical goal, it's a good thing," he says.

According to Annis, an understanding of this process, and the resources to support it, is needed.

RDI is one of those resources.

He says that the institute has had an evolution that will continue.

"I'd be very surprised if RDI looked the same in 5 years from now," says Annis. "I'd not only be surprised, I'd be disappointed."

For now, the important thing for Annis is to remain open to new collaborative opportunities and to ensure that all stakeholders including: community members, students, faculty, government and fundraisers, can bring their knowledge, skills and interests to the table.

And as conductor, he encourages creativity of all players, promotes a harmony of the group and ensures that everyone is playing from the same score.

Spotlight on Lifelong Learning: RDI Provides Professional Development Opportunities for Community Facilitators

Over the past two years, RDI developed and facilitated a series of professional development sessions focused on lifelong learning as a strategy for community and economic development in rural communities. Participants in the sessions were community leaders, economic development practitioners and community facilitators involved in the Learning for Life Project, a project of the Network of Community Enterprise Development Centres, a network of six rural Manitoba communities - Deloraine, Neepawa, Rossburn, Russell, Souris and Swan River.

The workshops, funded in part by Carleton University's Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP), included a session on understanding

the concept of lifelong learning and how to identify adult learning needs. Another session focused on the development of a decision-making process that the communities could use to determine the most appropriate lifelong learning activities in their community.

Darlis Collinge, Economic Development Manager from the Swan Valley Enterprise Centre in Swan River and board member of the NCEDC sees great value in the benefits of the sessions.

"The professional development sessions really helped us in two major ways. First - human capital is one of the fundamental building blocks for community economic development. These sessions helped us understand how encouraging a culture of lifelong learning could help us invest in the

human capital in our communities."

Collinge added that the second benefit was that the sessions provided professional development opportunities that helped bring the NCEDC community facilitators, board members and economic development practitioners together to develop new skills. "We're spread far apart geographically and don't often get the chance to learn new skills together and share related experiences. These sessions have brought us closer together and have helped us to develop even better learning opportunities in our communities."

Karen Rempel, a PhD student in community education at the University of Calgary, and an affiliate of RDI, developed and facilitated the professional development sessions.

RDI Works with Prairie Skills Inc. and Southwest Horizon School Division for Community-based Research Project

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focusing on community participation processes to plan a new multi-use school/ facility as well as develop a rural model of education for all residents and age groups in the community of Deloraine. A key component of these efforts is the involvement of the business community, service delivery agencies, and other industry sectors that have traditionally not been actively involved in education at the local level.

Laurie Crowe, from Prairie Skills Inc. says she is very excited at the opportunity for the organization to become involved in community research.

"Within our mission statement we have a commitment to enhance learning opportunities in our community," Crowe said. "We hope the outcomes of this project will help us validate the importance of lifelong learning to sustainable community development."

Rural demographic changes, declining

enrollments and school closures are some of the most visible signs of rural change. Strong historical and contextual evidence also indicates that rural communities experience considerable discomfort and anxiety as they respond to a reconfiguration of education as one of the cornerstones in their community. Dale Peake, Superintendent of the South West Horizon School Division, commented on the value of the research to the community.

"The findings from the research will help the community develop an understanding of the value of education and how rural communities might look at ways to respond and adapt to change in newly amalgamated school divisions such as ours," said Peake.

The research is supported by funding from a Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) project called the *Manitoba Research Alliance on CED in the New Economy*. The objectives of the project are to examine how community-based organizations have tried to

increase the perceived value of education and learning and recommend actions for other community-based organizations. The research project will also examine how CED practices (local self-sufficiency, local decision-making and local ownership) manifest themselves in the community-based participatory practices of Prairie Skills Inc. and the Board of the South West Horizon School Division.

Karen Rempel from RDI will provide assistance to the organizations on various components of the project including preparation of the interview guide, instructions for and assistance with data analysis, and review of the research findings. The results of this community engagement process will provide valuable information and direct long term planning and sustainability for both Prairie Skills Inc. and for the Southwest Horizon School Division. Future programming will be directly guided by the results of the process.

Meeting Learning Needs: RDI Facilitates Workshops in Professional Development Series

Responding to Brandon University's Scope 20/20 strategic area of Communication within the Rural Development Institute's (RDI) Community Leadership domain, RDI is meeting communities', organizations' and development practitioners' learning needs with its Professional Development Series.

In March 2003, RDI partnered with Health Canada to facilitate *Understanding Project Evaluation*, a two-day workshop held in Winnipeg. The presenter, Dr. Janice Ristock, a community psychologist and professor of Women's Studies at the University of Manitoba, led the 32 participants through a num-

ence between goals and objectives, qualitative and quantitative, and output and outcomes. Thank you!"

In September 2003, RDI partnered with the Brandon Area Community Foundation to present *Telling the Story*, the first in a series of communications workshops for Environmental organizations.

The workshop, which was held in Brandon, attracted 28 people from western Manitoba communities to hear presenters from the Brandon Area Community Foundation, the Winnipeg Foundation, and Simplot Canada Limited shared communication stories and tips.

Workshop objectives included increas-



PD Series participants engage in March's Understanding Project Evaluation workshop in Winnipeg.

ber of "hands-on" exercises in small groups to plan evaluation components of their specific community projects.

When asked to provide feedback, the majority of the participants rated the workshop highly. One respondent commented that "our two project staff members were full of praise about the two day evaluation workshop they attended. They commented especially on the pleasant and relaxed atmosphere and the helpful information they acquired. Thank you so very much for providing this wonderful opportunity to us. We are looking forward to working with our evaluation consultant."

Another respondent noted the importance of understanding proposal writing.

"This was a most useful and informative workshop. Not only did it help me fully understand the evaluation process, it also clarified the language of proposal writing. At last I understand the differ-

ing organizations' capacity to network and communicate; assisting the organizations in enhancing their communications strategies, and conducting a needs assessment for future workshops. In the workshop evaluation, 80 per cent of the participants rated the workshop highly. Several participants indicated that what they liked most about the workshop was the diversity of group participants and the common concerns shared, the learning from the presenters and participants, as well as tips provided by presenters.

In November 2003, RDI sponsored two workshops on *Governing for Local and Regional Development*, one in Brandon and one in Selkirk with a total of 26 participants. Dr. Robert Greenwood, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Administration at the University of Regina, led a thought-provoking participatory workshop. His presentations led to lively discussion during break-out sessions.

BU Outreach Project Receives Praise from Community and Provincial Government

Once a year, the Brandon University Community Outreach Service puts out a call for proposals, with an objective to fund projects that will facilitate a greater collaboration and knowledge transfer between the resources of the University and the needs of the community.

As one of the successful applications for the 2002 Call for Proposals, Dr. Gerald Dueck's Manitoba Agricultural Museum Artifact Database has garnered some high praise and many fans.

In a letter to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum, David McGinnis, Manager for the Community Heritage Unit of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism of the Manitoba Government, complimented the museum on its partnership with Brandon University. Regarding the database, he notes: "This is impressive stuff, and I would encourage you to share this information with other special theme museums as good examples of partnerships."

The database was developed by Dr. Dueck and computer science student Tom Hart to meet the needs of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. Currently, the database is being used to track the volunteers involved with the museum.

The museum staff has noted the positive change the database has made in their operations.

"I am just thrilled with the database," says Chief Museum Officer Sandra Head. "When I started here in December of 2000, I had a list of 300 names and addresses.

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Manitoba Rural Health Research in Action: SSHRC Project Communities Form Steering Committees and Conduct Research



Health project discussion in Virden.

RDI's health and community research is being put into action in rural Manitoba.

The Rural Community Guide for Assessing Well-Being and Quality of Life workbook, developed by RDI researchers, partners and rural residents, is now being used in the pilot communities of Virden and Shoal Lake as a community development tool.

In fact, both communities have formed steering committees as part of the project.

The Community Assessment Team (CAT) in Shoal Lake, coordinated by **Brenda Edgeworth** and the Rural Lifestyle Assessment Program (RLAP), coordinated by **Leanne Kalynuk** in Virden, are active in gathering commu-

nity information. Both committees distributed community and business questionnaires in June 2003, and are working with RDI to create reports of their findings.

The *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities Research Project* is an innovative interdisciplinary research project funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) under the Strategic Theme "Society, Culture and the Health of Canadians." RDI is coordinating the research project (1999 – 2004). Community and government partners include rural communities, community development agencies,

regional health authorities, and government agencies with rural and health policy interests.

Since 1999, the RDI research team has been examining national surveys and databases to assess health status and factors that contribute to the health of rural populations. The workbook is the result of efforts to develop an effective framework and indicators to measure rural community health and well-being. In particular, it is designed to assist rural people to assess the health of their communities, identify goals for future planning and strategize to improve the health and well-being of individuals and the community as a whole.



Project participants in Shoal Lake.

The Community Collaboration Project: A Backgrounder

Initiated in 1999, the Community Collaboration Project (CCP) is an innovative approach to community economic development and capacity building in rural areas.

The vision of CCP is to encourage communities to explore and develop processes to increase their ability to address change and work toward becoming more sustainable. A sustainable development approach is based on the belief that citizens can work together to achieve social, economic and environmental balances that will ensure long-term community survival.

The CCP is a process. Community representatives come together to participate in regional round tables (RRTs) and work with the steering committee to identify regional socio-economic challenges, find common solutions, and implement programs and projects that address regional needs. Through its emphasis on a bottom-up approach to decision-making, the CCP has validated and strengthened the need for community-based initiatives. The CCP is building capacity at the local level.

To date, four RRTs have been identified in the CCP: Northern Vision, Southwest, Bayline and Hudson Bay Neighbours. The steering committee has grown to include Community Futures Partners of

Manitoba, Inc., Community Information Management Network (CIMnet), Community and Regional Development Initiative, Manitoba Intergovernmental

“ A sustainable development approach is based on the belief that citizens can work together to achieve social, economic and environmental balances that will ensure long-term community survival. ”

Affairs, Environment Canada, Health Canada, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba Community Connections, the Rural Secretariat (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Rural Development Institute.

The involvement of the steering committee and the communication exchange with the RRTs acts as a direct link to government departments, services and programs available to support the regions. While the CCP also provides financial

grants and facilitators for initial organization of the roundtable, a large component of the CCP process involves the use of information technology in community Web site development, Internet-based communication, and information sharing through the Community Information Management Network (CIMnet).

Funding for the CCP originated from the Community Animation Project, a jointly funded initiative of Health Canada's Healthy Environment Program and Environment Canada's EcoAction; and the Rural Dialogue component of the Rural Secretariat's Canadian Rural Partnership Program. Support for Information and Communication Technology used in the CCP has come through Manitoba's Community Connections and CIMnet. In-kind contributions have also been provided by Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs.

Northern Vision Regional Roundtable (NVRRT)

In October 1999, NVRRT became the first regional roundtable to be developed under the CCP. At that time, it included the communities of South Indian Lake, Leaf Rapids, and Lynn Lake but grew in 2000 with the addition of the Village of Granville Lake. Northern Vision's purpose "to strengthen our (Northern Region) by coordinating and implementing culturally sensitive goals that are identified through action oriented partnerships" is addressed through their emphasis on a regional approach, recognition of cultural diversity and an awareness of citizens' power to affect change and develop areas based on community-based decision making.

Over the course of the CCP, Northern Vision members have identified eight major goals for the region. They are focused on developing a youth initiative to bring youth together to discuss their common concerns, drafting a regional communication plan to address communication obstacles associated with distance in the region and lobbying to ensure that regional transportation infrastructures are maintained and upgraded, including rail lines and highways. With respect to regional industries, the NVRRT



Graphic courtesy of CIMnet.

has identified the importance of the fishing, mining and tourism industries to the area. Specific initiatives include the discussion of a fish processing plant, northwest Manitoba tourism development, and mineral exploration in the region. The NVRRT sees the establishment of an addiction treatment centre as one of the priorities for the region, as well as the need to be recognized under the Northern Development Strategy, a funding initiative of the Provincial Government, that addresses economic development, transportation, housing, employment and training, and health issues in Manitoba's north.

Southwest Regional Roundtable (SWRRT)

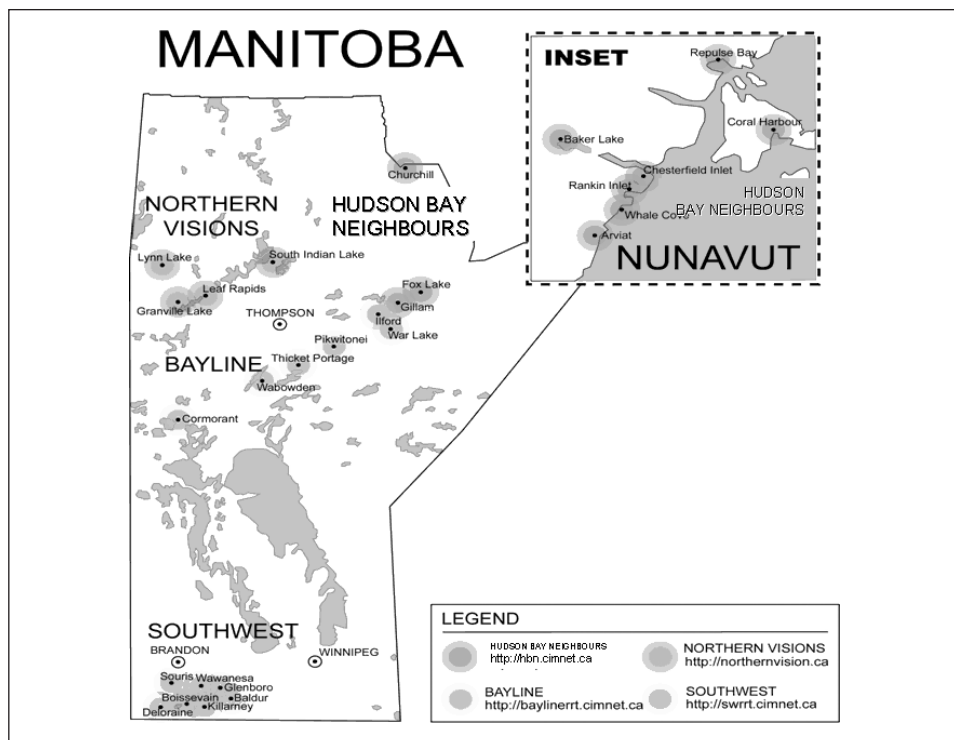
The SWRRT emerged as the agro-Manitoba RRT in April of 2000 with four original member communities including Boissevain, Deloraine, Killarney and Souris. Later that year, Baldur, Wawanesa and Glenboro joined the RRT, making it the second largest regional group in the CCP.

Early meetings of the SWRRT identified common goals among the member communities that focused on communication, community development processes, regional approaches and partnerships. The RRT members recognize housing, road quality, communication tools and private sector investment as major regional concerns and have established several initiatives to address these concerns.

A regional Web site highlights the SWRRT communities, the history of the RRT and its activities. Through research on consumer spending patterns in the region and youth out-migration, the RRT is exploring causes of changes in the region. Through a partnership with the Estey Centre, a Saskatoon based research and training centre for issues related to trade, as well as active involvement in Manitoba trade shows, SWRRT is building the region's reputation and potential for outside investment. Like other RRTs, the Southwest region is exploring ways to attract health care professions to the region.

Bayline Regional Roundtable

Bayline Regional Roundtable joined the CCP in November 2001 with four member communities, Pikwitonei, Ilford, Cormorant and Wabowden. In December, Thicket Portage joined the group and War Lake First Nation became part of the roundtable in 2002. The Bayline rail line, which is the primary mode of travel in



Graphic courtesy of CIMnet.

the wintertime, connects all of the communities and with the exception of War Lake First Nation, the communities are under the jurisdiction of Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Members of the Bayline RRT have expressed the benefits of the CCP. Given transportation obstacles, the RRT has become an important venue for communication among communities, government and non-government officials, as well as the private sector. While it is still in its growing stage, RRT members have identified 20 areas of concern common to the region. Foremost among them are healthcare, which has been addressed through the CCP process by bringing health officials together to address regional issues, and telecommunications. Currently, the BRRT is promoting the development of an Emergency Response Telecommunication System for the region and a proposal to bring upgraded Internet connectivity through the Bayline Communication Enhancement Project.

Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Roundtable (HBNRRT)

The youngest and largest RRT in the Community Collaboration Project, Hudson Bay Neighbours (originally known as the Northern Manitoba-Kivalliq RRT) is a unique partnership among three Northern Manitoba communities and seven communities in Nunavut that began in January 2002. Dedicated to

advancing issues of mutual concern and promoting the region, members of the HBNRRT have developed a vision statement "to become an active, sustainable group that will make a meaningful contribution to the health and prosperity of member communities and organizations."

Given the geographical, political, and cultural differences present in the region, and the fact that it must function with dispersed agencies of government based in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet, the HBNRRT strives to use the roundtable as a vehicle for coordinating regional priorities. The HBNRRT has taken a slightly different approach than the other roundtables participating in the project. Five working groups, based on priorities identified during the RRT's inaugural meeting, have been developed including: transportation, youth, energy, health and technology. Each working group is responsible for activities within that priority area and is expected to report back to the RRT at regular meetings. In fact, several working groups have already put forth resolutions for action in their priority area.

Milestones in the HBNRRT include accessing Web development tools for more efficient communication, meetings with provincial and territorial ministers and the development of objectives related to community-based planning, capacity building, and local approaches to local issues in the effort to promote the region's potential.

Youth Inclusion in Manitoba's Southwest: Over 200 Youth Participate in Research Project

Youth in southwestern Manitoba are having their say about community planning and decision making processes.

Since May 2003, 202 youth aged 19-29 from seven Southwest rural communities have participated in a Youth Inclusion Research Project. The project, which is facilitated through Function Four Ltd, a Winnipeg-based research and development company, aims to determine youth perceptions of their communities and opportunities available to them in the region, with a focus on local decision making.

Wayne Kelly, lead researcher for the project and research associate at Function Four Ltd., says that the research is an important step to understand the place of youth in rural areas, especially at a time when rural youth out-migration is such a big issue.

"Youth need to have a voice and role in the development of their communities if they are expected to remain in or to return to their community," Kelly says. "If communities are developing to improve the quality of life for future generations, then it is important to involve those generations in the development to ensure that the community develops in a direction that is attractive to them as well."

As a Master's of Rural Development student at Brandon University, this research is also contributing to Kelly's academic work on rural youth inclusion.

And it's adding to the work of the Community Collaboration Project (CCP), facilitated through RDI. In fact, participating youth are from the communities Boissevain, Deloraine, Killarney, Souris, Baldur, Wawanessa and Glenboro that joined in 2000 to form the CCP's Southwest Regional Roundtable.

As a rural agricultural region, the southwest is dealing with issues common to many rural areas across the country including rural depopulation, the industrialization of agriculture and resulting environmental pressures, and isolation from major services. The regional roundtable process of the CCP aids in identifying means to address these issues in partnership with provincial and federal government representatives.

Kelly first became involved in the South West Regional Round Table to assist them in developing a website through the Sustainable Resource Information System (SRMIS), a student working group originally housed in RDI. Now, Kelly's involvement comes through the Community Information Management Network (CIMnet), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the effective use of ICT in community development. CIMnet has partnered with RDI and Manitoba's Community Connections to provide ICT assistance to regions involved in the Community Collaboration Project.

“ Youth need to have a voice and role in the development of their communities if they are expected to remain in or to return to their community. ”

Through their work with CIMnet and the CCP, communities in the southwest now have a regional website, (<http://swrrt.cimnet.ca>) and have been using what's called CIM-Tools, or web-based resources, to assist with community development and regional communication.

Tyler King, project representative and Secretary/Treasurer for SWRRT, says that through working with Kelly and Function Four Ltd., the region has been

able to grow as a development organization. He adds that the CIM-Tools have made developing and maintaining a website quick, easy and affordable for the region.

In fact, the survey used to collect the youth data in the region is one of the online CIM-Tools available to communities through CIM-Net, which Kelly admits were instrumental to the project.

"The CIM-Tools enabled youth to participate in the survey online and to better understand the role and importance of the SWRRT. For the Board members of the SWRRT, the CIM-Tools enabled them to view and discuss the survey results online as they were compiled," Kelly says.

He adds that through the CIM-Tools, a forum has been established that allows the SWRRT board and stakeholders to review, discuss and incorporate the project results.

"In a broad geographic region like the SWRRT that includes seven participating communities and rural municipalities, the CIM-Tools have facilitated some of the logistics of conducting the research and disseminating the results in a larger area."

King says that the use of CIM-Tools, together with the youth inclusion project, made the region more innovative in getting youth to run a project that deals with their issues.

According to him, the outcomes will be important.

"This has allowed the SWRRT to establish a youth driven project that will create a youth voice for the region concerning youth issues and create a foundation for youth involvement in the region's development."

For Kelly, the youth inclusion project is part of a larger effort to assist the SWRRT with community development.

"This project creates a youth voice that consists of 10% of the region's youth, which is over 200 participants. This youth voice will provide the SWRRT and community serving organizations in the region with direction about what issues are important and need to be addressed from the perspective of youth," says Kelly.

Out of the Classroom and into the Field: RDI Interns Say Practical Experience is Key to Future Careers

Nicole Shirray hopes her student internship with the Rural Development Institute will give her an edge on her future plans.

Shirray, a fourth-year zoology student at BU with an interest in ecology, is referring to the application she made to the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) youth internship program that could lead to conservation work in Laos.

"If I hadn't have taken this internship, I probably wouldn't have even bothered applying," Shirray says.

Shirray wants to pursue a career in third world conservation work. The internship in Laos would involve environmental management and educational programming in one of the country's Northwest provinces.

And it's timely work. The area was just recently designated as a conservation area.

"It's caused some conflict, particularly among the people already living there," Shirray admits about the conservation designation. "Public education about why conservation areas are needed is important."

She says that the area is also very rural, so the RDI internship is a perfect learning experience, especially the practical aspect of the work.

Since beginning the internship, Shirray has been involved in a number of different aspects of the *Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities Project* working with community residents in the project communities and the data that has been collected through the research. She admits that the practical experience she is getting is her favourite part of the internship.

Katherine Pachkowski agrees that practicality is key.

As a fourth year psych nursing student on the verge of graduation, she's been thinking about her future career and the growing emphasis placed on nurses getting research experience.

"In nursing, there is a big focus on research," she says. Like Shirray, she also sees the internship as a way to link classroom learning to reality in the field.

"They teach in class about how to work with the community [and] the



RDI interns Katherine Pachkowski, Ryan Gibson and Nicole Shirray

community as consumer. It's hard to grasp the concept until you're actually working with it."

Pachkowski is also working on the health project. She is now doing research with Fran Racher, a faculty member in BU's School of Health Studies, examining consumer involvement in and perception of mental health services in rural areas.

"Working with the community really is helping to tie everything together," she says.

She admits that through the work, she has a better idea of where she wants to take her nursing career.

"Most of my nursing practicums have been in urban areas," she says. "Now that I am working with RDI, I do really want to work in rural areas."

The desire to take professional work to rural areas is a bonus to the vision of the internship program development.

Robert Annis, the RDI director and program innovator, says he developed the program to link academic and practical experience.

"This is another way in which students at Brandon University get a special education experience by combining applied, practical research work taking place in communities with their academic programs of learning," he says.

The internship program is based on a shared research and learning philosophy. Student interns devote two-thirds of their time to RDI projects and the

remaining time to guided individual study related to rural development issues.

While Ryan Gibson has not decided the focus of his individual work, he says the diversity of skill sets offered through internship is providing him with a lot of practical experience.

Currently, he is working on data analysis from community surveys, community presentations of research results and web site development and maintenance, all of which are applicable to his academic work as a Master's of Rural Development student.

"The internship aids in the practical aspect of [the MRD program]," he says. "There is a mutual benefit between the internship and some of the courses."

Like Shirray and Pachkowski, he says that the internship experience is assisting with his future career plans.

"I definitely want to do work with communities and apply the MRD program to an international scale initially, but I do foresee myself working within community development in rural Canada, especially rural Manitoba."

Gibson says it is great to see a program with a cooperative focus.

Shirray agrees.

"There is not a whole lot of job experience around Brandon in my field. This is a way to make money, but also get very valuable experience," she says.

And it may just be this experience that leads her to Laos.

Stakeholder Partners Battle Leafy Spurge

Three new stakeholders are partnering with the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group (LSSG) in the battle against leafy spurge.

Over the past year, the Mid-Assiniboine River (MARCD), West Souris River (WSRCD) and Little Saskatchewan River (LSRCD) Conservation Districts have partnered with the LSSG on a number of initiatives.

"Leafy spurge was identified as a priority by the LSRCD sub committee," said Myles Kopytko, manager of the LSRCD. "We have sites in the RM of Daly and we are looking at alternative methods of control for the spurge." The project, funded by the Covering New Ground program, established a bio-control / chemical control site, and a sheep grazing site, with the aim of looking at cost-effectiveness and other measures.

In the Little Souris River Watershed Management Plan process, the LSSG assisted with the land cover inventory by providing information and maps on leafy spurge infestation. This process is coordinated by the MARCD. The LSSG and the Rural Development Institute (RDI) also supplied placemats detailing leafy spurge issues and control methods for use at the Manitoba Conservation Districts Association annual convention, "Broadening Horizons".

"The information provided by the LSSG on spurge infestation within the Little Souris River basin will be integral to the land cover component of the resource

inventory and an issue in delivery of the watershed management plan for this basin." said Kim Poppel, manager of the MARCD.

In addition, the West Souris River Conservation District (WSRCD) provided financial support for the production of a fact sheet, now available on the LSSG Web site. The fact sheet is an outreach component of a field research project on bio-control in support of recovery of species at risk funded by the federal Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

Closer working relationships between agencies and other organizations have evolved, particularly through resource and information sharing.

Rural municipalities are also seeing the benefits of working with the LSSG. As part of this CNG project, RMs are looking to develop and implement integrated pest management (IPM) plans for the control of leafy spurge.

"It's a big issue in our area," said Kyle Currie, weed supervisor in the RM of North Cypress. "There's a fair bit of leafy spurge, especially along the highway." The problem will not go away unless action is taken, he says, so his municipality is focussing on the proper control methods that will lead to a long-term solution. "We're trying to establish IPM for the municipality."

Leafy spurge is an invasive noxious weed infesting an estimated 340,000 acres in Manitoba that costs the

Manitoba economy over \$19 million a year.

With the problem continuing to escalate, building collaborative relationships is a focus of the Leafy Spurge Stakeholders Group. The LSSG plans on assisting the RMs of North Cypress, South Cypress and Daly in the development of management plans for the control of leafy spurge.

"Leafy spurge is one of those noxious weeds that we would like to control in this municipality. It has gained quite a stranglehold in some areas and threatens others," says Don Bromley, a councillor with the RM of Daly. Bromley also chairs the LSSG.

Since its formation in 1998, the LSSG has assisted stakeholders with a general public awareness of the impact of leafy spurge, as well as a more extensive knowledge of the impact and management practices for individuals and agencies involved in agricultural production, native habitat and wildlife stewardship, land and water stewardship, municipal assessment and government. Knowledge allows for better decision-making in managing land and water resources in a sustainable way.

The LSSG is spearheaded by the Weed Supervisors Association of Manitoba and coordinated by RDI at Brandon University. Information on leafy spurge can be found on the Web at <http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/RDI/leafyspurge.html>



Covering New Ground team examines leafy spurge in the field.

Partnership with City of Brandon Community Services Proves to be Success

After partnering with RDI and BU last winter, the City of Brandon Community Services needs assessment results are in and being put into action.

Tanya-Angus Wharf, Community Program Supervisor, says now that the survey has been done, the City has a better idea of what Brandon residents want in their community services.

The objective of the project was to do a citywide telephone survey to find out what community services Brandonites are using, their satisfaction with the current services and any new services they might like to have.

"I would definitely say that one of the most important outcomes for us was the contact with the community to find out about program needs," Angus-Wharf says.

And she was impressed at the amount of people that participated.

Of the 2220 people randomly selected and contacted in Brandon's ten city wards last January, 43 percent answered the survey questions. The City now has feedback from 680 residents on Arts and Entertainment in the city, and pro-

grams related to sports, youth, family and adults, the Sportplex and beautification.

Angus-Wharf is happy to have the electronic database of information, housed at City Hall, since it acts as a quick reference point for programming needs.

"If there are any questions that we have, we can just use the database and just run it again," she says. "It's going to be very valuable."

While everything is up and running now, Angus-Wharf was at first unsure of who to contact for assistance with the project.

She called the Brandon University Community Outreach Service.

Deatra Walsh, who was the service's coordinator at the time, says that after consulting with Robert Annis, director of RDI, it was clear that the project was something RDI could undertake.

"The scale of the project and the urgency of the results for future programming needs made RDI a natural fit," Walsh says.

And the partnership began.

While Angus-Wharf admits that she was not too familiar with RDI at first, the expansion of the partnership from the Community Outreach Service to the Institute and then to the University as a whole was a good learning process.

"Everything just seemed to work out really well," she says, "The partnership was really good and we worked well together."

The experience has also provided an insight on university resources available to the community.

Angus-Wharf says this is an important realization because other organizations can now use the City's experience as a reference point for working with the University. In fact, she says that officials from the City of Portage la Prairie's Community Services have already contacted her about doing a similar survey.

Now that they have gone through the process, she says that they can do it again.

"We want to keep up to date with what people want."

BU Outreach Funded Project Receives Praise from Community and Provincial Government

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I knew they had paid for a membership in the museum and that was it. Well, as time has progressed, I discovered that there were a lot of people who volunteered but didn't pay memberships. I started talking to people and meeting people and encouraging volunteer participation, the number of names increased... dramatically. There are currently 1445 people listed in our database."

Prior to the development of the database, coordinating these volunteers and the various committees was a monumental task. However, with this, things are able to run more smoothly. Not

only does the software allow the museum to track its volunteers and committees more effectively, but tracking artifacts has also become easier.

"Some volunteers 'adopt' an artifact and maintain and display it," says Dueck, who is also a member of the Museum's Board of Directors. "The database allows us to track these artifacts, the work being done on them, the budgets and so on."

Tom Hart, who has since graduated from Brandon University and now attends the University of Toronto as a Master of Computer Science student, is appreciative of the opportunity to have worked on this project.

"It felt good to make something that I

knew would be used in the real world," comments Hart. "With academic stuff, you do your best, and you hope that it'll be useful someday. With this, I didn't have to wonder."

As a valuable new resource to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum and an applied learning tool for one of Brandon University's talented students, the success of Dr. Dueck's database is indicative of the important role Brandon University can play in the community.

For more information regarding the Brandon University Outreach Service, please contact the Outreach office at 571-8585, or e-mail outreach@brandonu.ca.

Community Collaboration Project (CCP) taken to International Stage

Manitoba and Nunavut's Community Collaboration Project (CCP) has reached the United Nations.

After speaking about the CCP's use of information and communication technology (ICT) at the World Summit of Cities and Local Authorities on the Information Society in Lyon, France in early December, project representatives Bruce Hardy, Robert Annis and Darren Ottaway were invited to share the CCP story at the United Nations first World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, Switzerland.

"This is a big step for communicating CCP at an international level. We were pleased with the feedback," says Robert Annis, who is also director of Brandon University's Rural Development Institute (RDI). RDI is the project facilitator.

The UN presentation is the most recent of three international CCP presentations. In early July, CCP steering committee members presented at the Building Information Commonwealth conference in St. Petersburg, Russia. The presentation went so well, they were invited to Lyon.

According to the conference presenters, the CCP's appeal comes from its integration of ICT in the community development process.

Since 1999, the CCP has brought community representatives together with a steering committee of provincial and federal government representatives, agencies and academic institutions in regional round tables (RRTs) to identify regional socio-economic challenge and work toward local solutions. To date, four regional round tables covering southwestern and northern Manitoba, and southern Nunavut, are active in the project and are using ICT to address needs in their regions.

"What sets the CCP apart from many other initiatives is its recognition of the relationship between the progress of RRTs in community development and the appropriate use of technology to get them to the next level," says Bruce Hardy



Town of Churchill CAO Darren Ottaway speaks to a group at the World Summit in Lyon.

who works on the CCP steering committee as part of the Community Information Management Network (CIMnet), a non-for-profit organization that enables ICT use among the CCP regions and communities.

Through CIMnet and Manitoba's Community Connections, CCP regions have established websites and use CIMtools, electronic data gathering and information sharing tools, to communicate.

One of these tools, an online survey, was developed by CIMnet and used to collect feedback from RRT community mayors on the relevance of the Lyon Declaration, a statement of three principles and twenty-three commitments from local authorities on the knowledge society, to northern, rural and remote issues. The Lyon Declaration was designed to contribute to the UN's declaration and global plan of action on the inclusion of citizens, governments, the private sector and the media in the knowledge society.

Darren Ottaway, Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Churchill represented CCP communities at both the Lyon and Geneva Summits.

"The communities of Manitoba and Nunavut that have been developing their regional roundtables should be extremely proud of their accomplishments particularly that fact that they are on the cutting edge of technology and economic development initiatives. It was great honour to represent these communities and they should be tremendously proud that their work is receiving international attention."

CCP mayors and RRT representatives will have a local opportunity to discuss their successes. In January, RRT representatives and the steering committee will gather for a meeting in Thompson to review project activities over the past year and plan for the future.

Funding for the CCP originated from the Community Animation Project, a jointly funded initiative of Health Canada's Healthy Environment Program and Environment Canada's EcoAction; and the Rural Dialogue component of the Rural Secretariat's Canadian Rural Partnership Program. Support for Information and Communication Technology used in the CCP has come through Manitoba's Community Connections and CIMnet. In-kind contributions have also been provided by Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs.

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