

RDI: Research Activities Update

About RDI

Brandon University's Rural Development Institute (RDI) fosters community development and resiliency through Applied Research, Knowledge Dissemination, and Learning on issues and opportunities unique to rural, remote and northern communities.

Since 1989, RDI has conducted multi-disciplinary research and initiated the development of many community projects in the prairies and across rural areas in Canada, covering a range of issues, such as community economic development, community leadership, environment and agro-economic issues, information management and technology utilizations, policy and program research and development, rural adaptation and change, rural health, rural tourism, and others.

For over 20 years, research conducted by RDI has helped define issues and opportunities in rural areas, and often informed new public policies, clarified related implications, and suggested public programs.

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Applied Research...Community-Based Solutions

Welcome to Dr. Gervan Fearon, VP Academic and Provost

RDI works very closely with the staff from the VP's office to help facilitate the many applied research projects that are undertaken by RDI researchers, other members of the university and its community stakeholders. This coordination is especially true of the insight and leadership provided by the VP. RDI welcomes Dr. Fearon both to Brandon and Brandon University and looks forward to continuing with this tradition. Dr. Fearon's experience also includes work with agricultural economic policy which will be an asset to the work of RDI.



"The world-class applied research of RDI speaks to the accomplishment of the dedicated team and outstanding partners associated with Brandon University", Dr. Fearon said.

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Demonstration and Investigation into Shelterbelt Adoption

This year marks the completion of the second year of the project which aims to demonstrate that alley cropping systems, combined with proven winter feeding strategies, will reduce agricultural emissions, increase carbon levels in the soil, and enhance production efficiencies.

The project has achieved a number of milestones. First, the demonstration field scale alley cropping system continues to thrive in Kenton (Manitoba) under the care of participating beef producer, Douglas Caldwell. Second, three more producers in the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District have planted shelterbelts, where the main focus of the belts is livestock production. Third, building on the results from the first year's survey, the project's researchers conducted a second Baseline Survey at beef producer events in 14 communities across rural Manitoba from November 2012 to February 2013. Results from the over 250 completed surveys provided additional insights on the demographics and sustainability of the beef production sector as well as on beef pro-



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sector as well as on beef producers' knowledge and adoption of shelterbelts. Some of the most interesting details include:

- 33% of beef producers were older adults between 50-59 years and (17%) 60 years and older;
- 48% of respondents had over 31 years of experience in beef production and (60%) owned all the land on which they operate;
- Regarding shelter-belts, 72% of the beef producers used shelterbelts for beef production;
- 79% of the beef producers with shelterbelts were committed to shelterbelts for the future: 34% wanted to keep them, 17% had future plans to enlarge them, 10% wanted to improve them, and 8% planned to add new ones;
- The level of awareness of respondents about the role of shelterbelts was significant, even those without shelterbelts. Most agreed about their positive benefit yet a third of those with shelterbelts were unsure whether they attract animals that damage crops or improve soil nutrients.

Manitoba Immigration Settlement and Integration

This research will engage in discussions with experts in the field of EAL and settlement in order to determine best practices. RDI will consult with these experts in order to provide regional framework prototypes for the identified rural regions and Winnipeg. The project's key goals are to engage key informant stakeholders in Winnipeg and rural regions to review settlement, EAL, labour integration, refugee operations, priority setting, and to determine desired changes/improvements for priority setting and decision-making.

There are over 12 immigration settlements and 10

EAL or language training regions across the province. These regions include Central, Eastman, Interlake, Norman, Parkland, Pembina Valley, and Westman.

A series of 3-5 roundtables, each with 30-50 stakeholders that serve immigrants, will be held in Winnipeg to explore immigration related themes and issues that are to be determined in consultation with Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism (MIAM).

RDI has a funding agreement with Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism to conduct this project.



RDI Research Projects and Activities

Strengthening Rural Municipalities in Manitoba

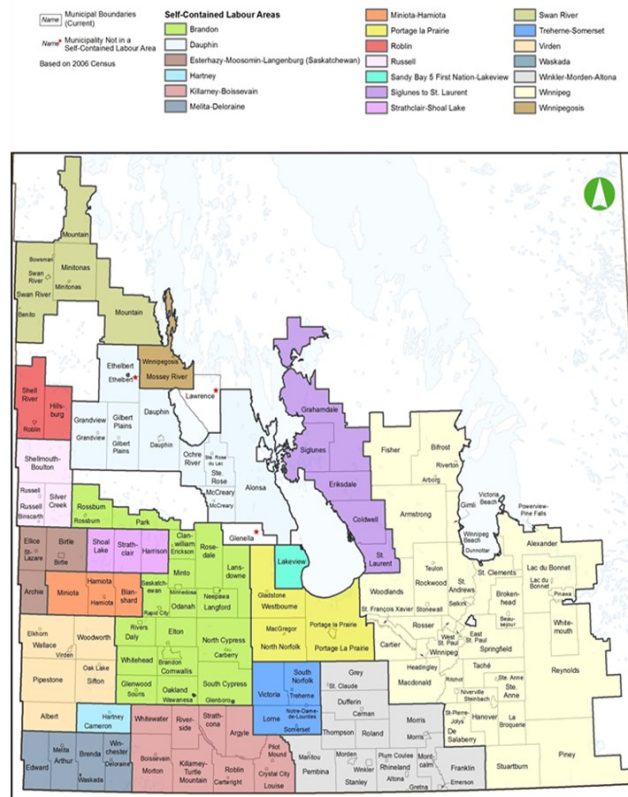
Rural amalgamation in Manitoba is a polarizing topic, especially since May 1st when the provincial government introduced legislation compelling 92 municipalities with less than a thousand residents to join together by January, 2015. In response, RDI initiated research to inform discussions about strong rural municipalities.

In this project, RDI explored two key questions: What are the geographical areas in which existing municipalities share common economic interests? What are the indicators of a strong municipality? Thirty municipalities were studied, five of which were selected by the provincial government, using census data to gauge the so-called health of these RMs.

The findings of these two questions are presented in two reports *Identifying and Explaining Self-contained Labour Areas in Rural Manitoba (2013)* and *Indicators and Criteria for Strong Rural Municipalities in Manitoba (2013)*. Both are available at <http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publications/rural-adaptation-and-change/>.

See "Amalgamation" p. 5

Southern Manitoba Municipalities and Self-Contained Labour Areas



Southwest Regional Development Corporation : Strategic Project for Investment

The mandate of the Southwest Regional Development Corporation (SRDC) is to foster economic development in the southwestern area of Manitoba. The Corporation supports various local and regional economic development initiatives, which demonstrate potential to strengthen small and medium-sized businesses, create jobs and prosperous communities. In total, 62 rural municipalities fall within the SRDC boundaries.

Government funding for regional development corporations was eliminated in provincial budget 2012. SRDC decided to carry on without annual financial support from government.

Since then, SRDC commissioned the Rural Development Institute (RDI) to create a range of rural economic development options tailored to address the economic needs of southwestern Manitoba. These options must foster economic growth and job creation as well as become a source of much needed income to sustain the long-term viability of the SRDC as a regional economic development agency. After careful deliberation, the SRDC identified two options. Both options will be pre-

sented to the SRDC Board for final consideration.

Rural Development Institute began work on this *Strategic Project of Investment: Strengthening Small and Medium-Sized Business in Southwestern Manitoba* in May 2013. The purpose of this project is to support start-up businesses, existing businesses, and entrepreneurs. One initiative addresses:

Rural Business Succession. Business succession is a complex process, not a simple event. Many small and medium-sized business owners avoid planning for business succession. Planning for succession establishes safeguards that protect the business transfer process from collapse, during and following sale of the business.

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Rural Policy Learning Commons

RDI is extremely encouraged by the strong positive response it received in June from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) about its successful Letter of Intent application, *Rural Policy Learning Commons: Building Rural Policy through International Comparative Analysis*. A full application will be submitted to SSHRC by November 1, 2013.

Central to this 7-year project proposal is the creation of the Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC) wherein multiple stakeholders can engage in activities to generate new policy insights, strengthen comparative research collaboration among faculty, students, practitioners, and policy-makers, so as to develop innovative initiatives and to advance policy that result in more prosperous communities and regions.

This proposal builds on the 25 years of collaboration among researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and citizens within the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF), the Rural Development Institute (RDI), and the International Comparative Rural Policy Studies program (ICRPS). At present, some 13 Canadian, US and European partners have committed to invest nearly \$1.3 million to the RPLC as cash and in-kind contributions.

Research and policy activities within the RPLC will be guided by systematically testing and advancing international comparative policy analyses applied to pressing rural and northern policy challenges and opportunities. The initial selection of policy themes include: Climate Change, Food Security, Immigration and Labour, Natural Resource Development, and Telecommunications, but over the duration of the project these themes may change to reflect the partners' interests.

The project's key activities include:

- Research and Exchanges among students and faculty, and in collaboration with public and private-sector partners.
- ICRPS Institutes for graduate students, faculty, and policy practitioners
- Policy Fora (workshops and conferences) held on themes and methods of particular relevance to policy-analysts, decision-makers, rural organizations

- Distance Learning Activities
- Publications (both traditional and electronic) to transfer the results of project research and inquiry
- Social Media tools (webinars, video clips, blogs) to facilitate collaboration among partners, explore critical issues, and seek new network members.

Building on the broad experience and collaboration among the project partners, the project envisions putting in place a number of strategies and plans to train the next generation of analysts, including the following activities:

- Creating a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) among the participating universities to recognize each other's academic credits toward graduate degree requirements.
- Developing a new Comparative Rural Policy Study Abroad program so students supervised by faculty members in both the host and home institutions can spend an academic term at a host institution in a partner country to study comparative rural policy.
- Developing a credit-based Graduate Certificate in Comparative Rural Policy, targeting professionals active in rural policy formation.
- Increasing cooperation and exchange among the partner researchers and academic institutions through comparative research projects
- Collaborating with national and international research centers, government and other agencies in the partner countries on rural policy analysis.

Currently the project team is actively pursuing strategic partners and co-applicants who can add strength to the project in terms of expertise in the policy themes or involvement RPLC activities. The Phase II SSHRC Application will be submitted in November 2013.

For more information on this initiative contact:

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RDI Research Projects and Activities

Amalgamation con't.

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Certificate in Social Media

RDI is pleased to announce the success of the first seminar in its professional development certificate “Social Media Engagement”. The first two modules *Our Modern Digital Landscape* and *Formulating Your Social Media Engagement Plan* were presented by Mike Kujawski from Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing (CEPSM) in Brandon on June 19 & 20. There were 24 participants from across the province who took part in the learning event.

Rural Development Institute, Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing, Digital Relay and Brandon University have partnered together to offer the innovative *Social Media Engagement Certificate*. The certificate includes both in-class and online learning. A repeat of the first two modules is scheduled for October 2 & 3, 2013 in Winnipeg. Online modules 3, 4, 5, and 6 on a range of topics such as assessing and mitigating the risks of using social media and crafting your message are scheduled for November 2013 and January 2014. The last 3 modules, culminating in the student project presentations, are set for March 2014.

The content of the Certificate is specifically developed for non-profits, NGOs, associations and public sector organizations.

Social media has revolutionized how these organizations can communicate and maintain their stakeholder and client relations.

Gaining insight into the use and deployment of social media tools is a valuable investment to assist in the promotion and growth of organizations.

For more information, check out:

<http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/social-media-engagement-training>





Pathways to Prosperity

Brandon University is a partner with other major Canadian Universities in a national research project on immigration—*Pathways to Prosperity: New policy directions and innovative local practices for newcomer integration and attraction*. This seven year study will offer immigrant service providers and policy-makers new insight into attracting, settling and integrating newcomers, especially into small and mid-sized communities. This study focuses on the many challenges of rural immigration, including language training, housing and a host of other factors which may not be present in big cities.

Principle Investigator, Dr. Victoria Esses at Western University initiated the study which involves dozens of partners; Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Waterloo, University of New Brunswick, Carleton University and York University; the cities of Calgary, Saskatoon, London, Moncton and Ottawa; the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Government of Canada Citizenship and Immigration, and Government of Manitoba Labour and Immigration. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is contributing \$2.5 million through a Partnership Grant. The project is Canada-wide with research nodes in British Columbia, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic regions.

The Director of Rural Development Institute, Dr. Bill Ashton, is chairing the Prairie node that includes institutions from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Bill Ashton offered his reflections on this project in a roundtable forum at the 15th Annual Metropolis conference in Ottawa on March 16, 2013. His presentation title was “Pathways to prosperity: Charting the course—Prairie node view.”

This projects affirms and strengthens RDI’s key strategic directive on rural immigration.

Rural Broadband: From Rural Divide to Rural Dividend

High numbers of people use broadband daily for a host of purposes, yet many do not recognize the disparity that exists between its use in urban centre and rural areas. Urban dwellers have access to numerous service provides while those in rural areas have limited or no access at all. This digital divide means rural areas are missing out on economic and social dividends.

On March 21, 2013, RDI hosted a Rural Broadband Webinar that brought together four presenters who shared their thoughts and experience on tackling some of the many challenges in rural broadband in Canada

ICRPS—2013 Institute & 10th-year Conference

The International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) 2013 Summer Institute brought students from Canada, United States, and Europe where they shared rural research interests, learned comparative methods, and examined food system practices in various regional sites around Bertinoro, Italy. This year’s institute was hosted by the University of Bologna.

Rural Development Institute sponsored the attendance of two Department of Rural Development Masters students—Immaculate Nabisere and Jack Lovell. Both students graduated from the program on June 28th. On day 12 of the institute one panel discussion examined the impact of economic crisis on rural areas. Bill Ashton, RDI Director, offered a presentation on the municipality amalgamation project, titled “Manitoba responds with stronger rural municipalities.”

This summer’s institute also served as the perfect occasion and location for hosting a 10th year anniversary ICRPS Conference. At this event, Bill Ashton, RDI Director, along side Bill Reimer, offered a comprehensive vision of the Rural Policy Learning Commons, titled “A Future Trajectory of ICRPS: A Long View.” The preparation of this presentation benefitted from the assistance of Wayne Kelly and Gary McNeely.



Program graduates

The presenters included:

- Lisa Severson, Communication and Stakeholder Relation Office, EOWC Eastern Ontario Regional Network Project
- Dr. Helen Hambly Odame, Capacity Development and Extension Program, University of Guelph
- Dr Samuel Trosow, Associate Professor, University of Western Ontario
- Wayne Kelly, Researcher, Rural Development Institute

RDI Research Projects and Activities

Knowledge Dissemination Profile

RDI has been very active in communicating with its research partners and community stakeholders over the last six months.

These activities include providing project fact sheets, publishing project research reports, and establishing project websites. In partnership with other centres and researchers, we also redistribute their research information. The reach of RDI has expanded to include:

- Linking with 23 Research Centre Hubs in Canada and U.S.A.
- Hosting Webinars—5 since January on the topics of the Social Media Engagement Certificate, Rural Broadband, and sustainable rural community development
- Expanding email and contact lists—1500 within Canada and 500 plus internationally
- Applying social media tools—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

Sign up for RDI Rural Research Updates at:
<http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/sign-up/>

RDI Research Affiliates

Robert C. Annis	Brandon University
Kenneth Beesley	Brandon University
Kenneth Bessant	Brandon University
Ray Bollman	Rural Development Institute
Jill Bucklaschuk	University of Manitoba
Tom Carter	University of Winnipeg
David Douglas	University of Guelph
Barbara Gfellner	Brandon University
Ryan Gibson	Memorial University
Terence McGonigle	Brandon University
Fran Racher	Brandon University
Doug Ramsey	Brandon University
Meir Serfaty	Brandon University
Ray Silvius	Carleton University
Balfour Spence	Brandon University

RDI Publications

RDI continues to take an active role in marketing the Journal of Rural and Community Development (JRCD) published by RDI and edited by Dr. Doug Ramsey, Chair of BU's Department of Rural Development.

The JRCD is pleased to announce that Volume 8, Issue 1 has just been released. Forthcoming is a special issue on Rural Broadband, co-edited by Bill Ashton, RDI Director, and Scott Carson, University of Queens, Director of The Monieson Centre.

For more information visit: www.jrcd.ca

RDI is also excited to announce the pending publication of a monograph authored by Lindsay Wiginton titled *Canada's Decentralized Immigration Policy Through A Local Lens: How small communities are attracting and welcoming immigrants*. This research provides detailed case study analyses of six small communities to examine the key drivers of small community immigrant attraction, the resulting challenges, and the key responses local actors—municipalities, employers and community members—provide to deal with the issues. A key finding is that while governments are instrumental in establishing immigration policy, the private sector is most often the central responding actor.

Fall Activities at RDI

Social Media Engagement Certificate: Modules 1 & 2

October 2 & 3, Winnipeg, MB

Instructor: Mike Kujawski, VP/Senior Consultant, Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing

Register deadline, September 18

<http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/social-media-engagement-training>

Pre-Conference Symposium on New Rural Economy

October 23, 2013, Thunder Bay, ON

During the CRRF annual conference, RDI is hosting a 1-day Symposium on the New Rural Economy that involves 32 rural communities from across Canada

<http://crrf.lakeheadu.ca/>

CRRF Conference: Rural Canada—Ready to Grow

October 24-27, 2013, Thunder Bay, ON

The 2013 annual conference is being co-hosted by the [Nishnawbe-Aski Nation](#) Economic and Resource Development Unit (NAN), [Lakehead University](#), School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks & Tourism and the [Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association](#) (NOMA).

Our Future: Our Vision...

With partners in communities, agencies, and among academics and students, RDI continues to initiate new outreach activities, research, and learning options, and contributes to addressing rural development issues and responding to opportunities. The Institute builds on a strong

history of collaborative activities while enhancing resource capabilities and programming. As a leading source of information on rural areas, RDI continues to deliver new knowledge of rural issues and helps create opportunities for vibrant rural communities and regions.

Strategic Research Direction

The process reflects RDI's mandates and a community-based approach of reaching out to key stakeholders in MB and elsewhere in Canada. This work gains further credibility by contracting Dr. Carter, a recognized scholar at the University of Winnipeg

and former director of the Urban Studies Institute (the 'urban' version of RDI). The final product will point to key research directions for RDI over the next 3-5 years.



Our Partners

Past and present RDI research and project partners include: The Rural and Co-operatives Secretariat; Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism and other government, university, community and corporate partners who support applied rural research.

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