Community Collaboration Project:
Empowering Communities & Building Capacity
2005 – 2008

The Community Collaboration Story

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The RDI Team
"On the Road"

Executive Summary

Rural communities in western and northern Canada are very diverse yet they face many similar problems. Their geographical location itself poses challenges to transportation, communication and service delivery. Dependence on primary industries places limits on economic opportunities and can have unsustainable environmental impacts. The absence or reduction of public and private investment has resulted in problems with food and water security; limited access to education, health care and other important social services; and either a young, rapidly growing population or an aging, shrinking population (Troughton 2003). The impact and importance of each of these complex and interrelated problems on a particular community is dependant upon its history and current context. It is the unique nature of individual communities that underscores the importance of collaborative, multi-stakeholder development in articulating and acting on problems of common concern.

The Rural Development Institute's (RDI) role in multi-community collaborations began in 1999 when it facilitated the formation of the Manitoba steering committee and the Northern Vision Regional Round Table. 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. The Rural Development Institute then articulated the community development practices and lessons learned that had emerged in Manitoba and Nunavut into a vision and model for the *Community Collaboration Project: Empowering Communities and Building Capacity 2005-2008* project (Community Collaboration Model Project). Throughout this project, eighty-five communities, three Rural Team, and four academic institutions participated in six regional round tables. This report highlights the activities, successes, opportunities, challenges and lessons learned from the regional round tables, Rural Team advisory groups and academic institutions.

In collaboration with the Rural Secretariat, community stakeholders and the Rural Teams, the Rural Development Institute facilitated the establishment of regional round tables in Saskatchewan and the Yukon and attempted to form a regional round table in British Columbia. The Community Collaboration Model Project also provided a unique opportunity to continue to interact with the Manitoba regional round tables and steering committee to learn about regional round table sustainability as the Manitoba regional round tables moved from external funding and support to self-sufficiency. Integral to the project was continuously evaluating the community collaboration process. As the Rural Development Institute began facilitating the evaluation, it became clear that evaluation needed to be more than a process in which the members merely participated. The regional round tables and advisory groups needed to decide what "success" meant for them. Thus the evaluation process became a collaborative process that included all stakeholders in deciding what constituted success and how success would be measured.

What was demonstrated over the eight years of the project was that developing trusting and valued relationships and partnerships within and between communities, governments and academic institutions took persistence, deliberate effort, time, resources, and committed skilled and sustained leadership. In each of the regional round tables, communities needed to overcome historical rivalries; moving from rivals for attention and resources from governments took deliberate effort and visionary leadership. The persistence to organize and hold meetings over large geographic distances and to seek funding and leverage those funds to achieve additional goals is evidence of the committed and skilled leadership.

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Lessons Learned: Regional Round Tables

Regional round tables need to develop organizational infrastructures to be sustainable over the long term. They need visions, goals and objectives, which should to be revisited from time to time and revised as needed. Terms of references need to be in place that define membership criteria and decision-making processes. There should be clearly defined roles and expectations for the executive and for those who carry out the coordination and administration functions. There also needs to be continuous communication using a variety of media and technologies that are appropriate and accessible. Absence of organizational infrastructure can lead to misunderstandings, tensions, and ultimately the failure of the regional round table to achieve its goals. Member communities need to contribute both cash and in-kind resources to the regional round tables.

Lessons Learned: Academic Institutions

The Community Collaboration Model Project was intentionally designed to include post-secondary academic institution partners such as universities and colleges. This included partnering to provide facilitation and evaluation as well as fostering regional round table-academic institution partnerships that may have not previously existed. A primary objective of the project was to provide opportunities for students to build capacity in community development research and practices, and to participate in community development processes with communities. Masters of Rural Development students from Brandon University and students from the University of Saskatchewan actively participated in the project. In addition, two recent graduates of the Masters of Rural Development program actively coordinated components of the project.

To effectively participate in multi-community collaborations, academic institutions need to find new and creative ways to engage the human and capital resources of universities and colleges in communities to be more engaged in community development processes. Academic institutions need to view communities as something more than research laboratories and communities should be able to view academic institutions as resources for their efforts. Academic institutions also need to better understand and value community service by refining understanding of how community service is defined when individuals are "judged" for advancement purposes.

Lessons Learned: Governments

Requiring participation of the Rural Teams was intended to ensure that there was government "buy-in" to the process, as well as putting forth the concept and practice of "partnering" with communities. Where there was a commitment of the advisory groups to attend and participate in the regional round table meetings, the relationships and partnerships developed and grew. When the advisory group members were less able to attend and participate in regional round table meetings, the partnerships appeared to be more tentative. For the most part, the advisory group members participation in the community collaboration process appeared to be conducted "off the side of their desks", adding to their already-busy working environment.

Governments need to see that investing in community development processes in an appropriate use of public funds. Governments need to move from funding deliverables to supporting capacity development in the ways similar to that demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project. For community/region-government partnerships to be sustained and effective, government representatives need to have mandates and reporting structures that are flexible enough to work with communities and regions in non-traditional ways and to move them from working "under the radar" to working "within the radar". The Community Collaboration Model Project demonstrated that investing in community development processes yielded increased partnership and capacity development and produced tangible benefits to the regions involved. As well, governments need to better manage their complex accountability structures. They also need to better manage files horizontally across government departments and across governments. The membership and activities of the Rural Team advisory groups demonstrated that this is possible and can produce synergistic results.

Resources

Resources, both human and financial, were critical to the success of regional round tables' formation and sustainability. It was evident in the Community Collaboration Model Project, that formation of regional round tables required resources for collaborative processes. The project was very innovative in that regard, because the funding provided by the Rural Secretariat was for *processes.* This allowed for flexibility and individual decision-making by the regional round tables as to how their collaborative processes would unfold and go forward.

> *Hopefully the flexible funding model demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project is the beginning of a paradigm shift for government, in which financial resources are invested in partnership and capacity development processes in communities and regions of rural and northern Canada.*

This flexible funding model provided the much-needed resources for regional round table members to meet face-to-face, enabling them to form the valued relationships and partnerships that were foundational to the collaborative process. Funding for the collaborative processes of the Community Collaboration Model Project was an investment that yielded benefits and will continue to yield additional benefits over time. Resources are still needed to maintain and grow the regional round tables to realize their full potential. Hopefully the flexible funding model demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project is the beginning of a paradigm shift for government, in which financial resources are invested in partnership and capacity development processes in communities and regions of rural and northern Canada. The dividends/returns on investing in the communities and regions within the Community Collaboration Model Project are already being realized and have the potential to grow, however, it takes considerable time, perhaps as long as ten years (Baker, 1993).

Regional Governance

The exploration of rural regional governance is an issue affecting many communities, regions, and governments. There is a growing body of discussion internationally around regional governance which is different from regional government: it is not necessarily about replacing legacy governments but evolving to have additional forums for planning and decision making. The Community Collaboration Model Project demonstrated the need for more research to investigate multi-community collaborations and regional governance; the Governance and Collaboration Study Group, through their meetings and deliberations raised a number of research themes and questions.

Role of Information and Communication Technologies

The role of information and communication technologies in supporting social networks for community development and in supporting universities, research institutes, and governments engaged in community research processes was also examined. Information and communication technology was a part of each regional round table and advisory group process. Low-technology tools such as telephone conference calls were employed during the course of the project. Emails were constantly flying around the country and web-based technologies were used. Successful use of these technologies depended on the individual's awareness, access and skill level. There were still some communities in the project that did not have Internet access, or if they did, it was the slower dial-up access. Even when Internet access was available sometimes there wasn't the appropriate hardware to access it; or if there was the hardware, the cost of Internet access was too high. Another limiting factor was that even when there was access, hardware, and affordability, regional round table members may not have had the skills and/or the time to maintain their online presence. This was the case for three of the Manitoba regional round tables where websites were developed, and initially there were skilled people to maintain and update the sites, however, as time went by those skills disappeared.

Information and communication technology was useful and appropriate for meeting planning and follow-up, however, it couldn't replace the face-to-face interactions that occurred during the meetings. Because relationship-building was foundational to the regional round tables' and advisory groups' development, face-to-face meetings, especially in the forming phase were critical. Being able to not only have formal discussions, but also to have informal and personal conversations enabled people to connect with each other at a personal level. Community, government and academic representatives found common ground, formally, through meetings and informally through the informal components of each meeting, such as hikes up mountains, and walks through the woods.

Replicability and Transferability

An objective of the Community Collaboration Model Project was testing transferability and replicability to other areas of rural and northern Canada. Did that occur? The answer is "yes" and "no". The Community Collaboration Model processes were successfully initiated in other areas of rural and northern Canada; however, the Model could not be replicated from province to province to territory because the community collaboration processes are not "one-size-fits-all" processes nor is it a cookie-cutter approach. What was demonstrated is that the Community

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Collaboration Model can be initiated elsewhere, providing there is deliberate effort; time; financial resources for community collaboration processes; and skilled, committed and sustained leadership. Where one or more of those conditions are not present, it is unlikely that a regional round table and advisory group can be formed.

Reflections and Suggestions for Policy, Practice and Research

As a component of the collaborative evaluation process, RDI facilitated annual workshops to enable the regional round tables and advisory groups to reflect on the past year, tell their stories and share what they had learned. There is a need for a similar mechanism to reflect on the lessons learned from the Community Collaboration Model Project that would develop suggestions and recommendations for policies, practices and research from a rural and northern perspective. Perhaps this type of reflective study would also benefit the Rural Secretariat's Models for Rural Development Program by reviewing and reflecting on three or four of the models within the program. This could be accomplished through a facilitated discussion/symposium of community, government and academic participants that could yield recommendations for rural and northern community development policies, practices and research.

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Increased interest in collaborative, regional development by academics, practitioners and policy-makers along with technological advancements that have changed how information is exchanged and business is conducted hold many opportunities for rural and remote northern communities. In a Western Canadian context, the Community Collaboration Model Project was an example of how people from different communities, businesses, researchers and all levels of government worked together to take advantage of opportunities and face challenges in their region. Making use of academic research on the various aspects of community-based development and with government funding support, community members became more capable and empowered to collectively identify and act on the myriad of problems facing their communities. As with any human endeavour, there were successes and challenges, however, evaluation indicates that the community-based development model used had an overall positive impact on the individuals, communities, governments and academic institutions involved.

Community Collaboration
Model Project
2005 - 2008

Strengthening Community

Partnership Building

Strengthening Community Capacity

Partnership Building

Strengthening

Community Capacity Building

Partnership Building

Trusting and Valued Relationships
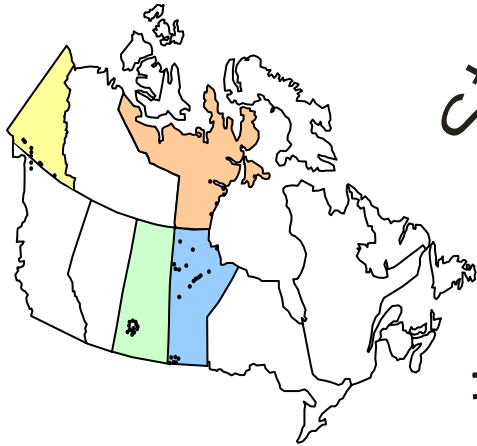
Community Partners
WaterWolf (SK), Yukon and Manitoba/Nunavut Regional Round Tables

Academic Partners
Brandon University, University of Saskatchewan, Malaspina University-College and Yukon College

Government Partners
Rural Team Advisory Groups in Saskatchewan, Yukon and Manitoba

The Community Collaboration Story

rdi
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Eighty-five Communities
Three Rural Teams
Four Academic Institutions
Six Regional Round Tables

Multi-Community Collaborations: An Overview

Rural and remote communities are very diverse yet they face many similar problems. Evidence from around the world demonstrates that rural and remote poverty is a problem. Their geographical location itself poses challenges to transportation, communication and service delivery. Dependence on primary industries places limits on economic opportunities and can have unsustainable environmental impacts. The absence or reduction of public and private investment has resulted in problems with food and water security; limited access to education, health care and other important social services; and either a young, rapidly growing population or an aging, shrinking population (Troughton 2003). The impact and importance of these complex and interrelated problems on a particular community is dependant upon its history and current context.

Rural and northern communities throughout Canada are not homogeneous. Trends in population, employment, and income can greatly vary from region to region. According to the 2006 Census, one in five (20%) Canadians lives in a rural or northern[1] community (Statistics Canada, 2007a). In 2006, the total population living in rural and northern communities was approximately six million (Statistics Canada, 2007b). From 2001-2006, the population of rural and northern Canada increased by 1%; however, urban Canada increased by 5.4% (Statistics Canada, 2007c). Rural and northern communities within close proximity to large urban centre experienced higher growth rates than remote or isolated communities. The percent of Canadians living in rural and northern communities has continually declined since 1931.
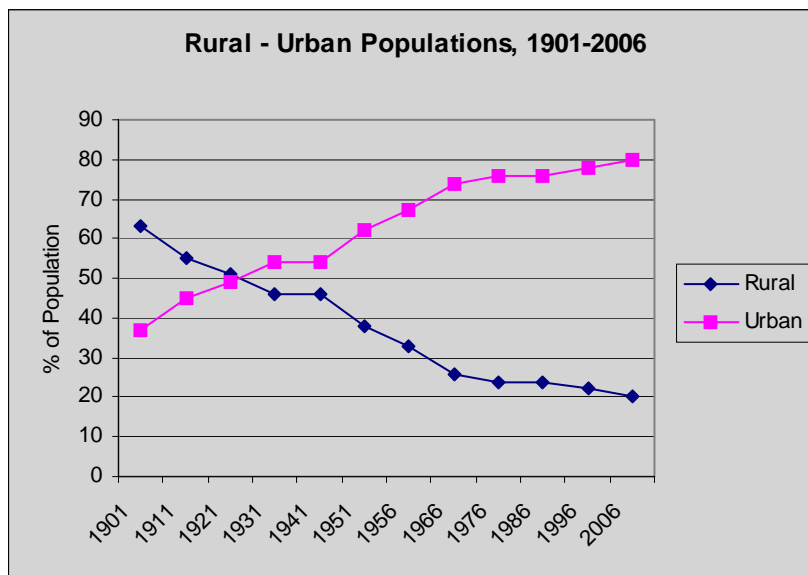
Source: Statistics Canada, 2007a

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[1] Rural and northern defined as areas located outside urban centers with a population of at least 10,000 (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

Increased global commerce, information exchange and environmental concern have been catalysts for change in rural and remote areas. These changes have led to increased attention to multi-stakeholder collaboration and action as a means of seizing new opportunities and dealing with new or longstanding challenges (Apedaile 2004). An understanding of the processes associated with people working together to articulate and act on problems of common concern is important for successful collaborative development.

In 2004, Deatra Walsh and Robert Annis published a report, *Reflections on Manitoba's Community Collaboration Project 1999-2004*. In this report Walsh and Annis reflected on rural and northern Canada. The following is an excerpt from that report:

> Rural, remote and northern Canadian communities face significant challenges and opportunities in the dynamic context of a globalizing world. The presence of change, as is acknowledged in the literature, is not unique to today. Communities are not stagnant and the forces of change have always been a part of rural, remote and northern reality. The future of these communities, however, is a topic that academics, governments, residents and other community stakeholders continue to explore and discuss. Examples of these discussions are numerous in community, political, public and academic spheres. In some instances, it has been asked whether such communities will persist as Canada's economic engine or lag behind the rest of the country, doomed to a slow death. Similarly, academics have asked if rural communities will be part of Canada's future.
>
> While outsiders may question whether or not these communities will survive under these often challenging circumstances, for community residents, it is more a question of how to collectively meet these challenges and address change. Furthermore, what are the respective roles of all stakeholders including: community residents, governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academics alike, in the future of rural, remote and northern communities?
>
> Rural, remote and northern communities are alive in Canada. Despite the discourse cited above, they are one of the many engines contributing to this country's economy. In fact, primary industrial activities in 2003, most of which occur in rural areas, accounted for almost 6% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product and natural resource products comprised over 31% of Canadian exports. The nature of the Canadian and global economy has shifted however, relying more on technological capital rather than human capital (i.e. labour) thereby changing the way in which traditionally labour intensive, predominantly rural, economic activities have operated. As a result, rural demographic changes including youth out-migration and aging populations have occurred and sometimes resulted in service reduction. In addition, these demographic shifts have placed new and different strains for residents who remain in these communities. Likewise, industry shifts favouring the service economy and ideological shifts promoting rural lifestyles have led to other demographic and community change including: urbanite in-migration and seasonal swelling tourist populations. These also lead to other strains on communities and full-time residents living there.
>
> Often, the challenges that many communities face, and the conscious efforts by governments and wider society to address these challenges, has led to a political discourse that sees addressing rural issues as more of a "relief operation" based upon humanitarian aid, rather than as a useful exercise to strengthen the nation as a whole...Rather than

discard Canada's "rural" communities based on the discourses that question its utility, it is necessary to understand the rural experience and work within its parameters (p. 5-6).

Reflecting on rural governance, Walsh and Annis go on to state:

The [Rural Development Institute's] Community Collaboration Project was an attempt at this dialogue and process. It was also an example of bureaucratic awareness that previous methods of governing are no longer applicable to the current rural Canadian context. Since the post-war period, power in decision-making has largely been held within the hands of the central state. This is a result of the rise of the welfare state in the aftermath of the Great Depression and the need for interventionist strategies for income redistribution. In the case of Canada's rural communities, the welfare state philosophy is especially relevant to a power discussion. In the context of economic development, diversification and industrialization, rural communities, particularly those dependent on resources exploitation, were also seen as lagging behind their urban counterparts and were, in many respects, viewed as backward. As a result, efforts to address rural-urban inequalities were delivered in what many authors refer to as top-down policy based on central tendencies and development models incompatible with rural reality.

Through nationwide initiatives such as the Canadian Rural Dialogue[2], which began in 1998, rural, remote and northern people have voiced their desire to change these traditional approaches. Likewise, academic discourse has denounced the top-down approach in favour of more bottom-up approaches to decision making. Responding to the realization that working from the top-down has not adequately addressed rural issues, federal policy in rural areas has moved away from large funding programs aimed at attracting industrial growth and encouraging large-scale development to a predominantly endogenous development approach that places emphasis on community self-reliance. One of the key conclusions from the Conference on Economic Transformation in Western Canada is that Ottawa should consider ways to improve collaboration and consultation processes with the provinces (p. 6-7).

In 2002, Dr. Trevor Hancock published a report, *From Governing to Governance: Reflections on the Community Collaboration Project*. In his report, Dr. Hancock conveyed a fundamental shift in organizational philosophy and arrangements in community-government relationships. The following is excerpted from Hancock's report:

The "Healthy Communities" movement, now a global phenomenon involving several thousand cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods and communities on all five continents, is but one manifestation of a world-wide interest in building, regenerating or otherwise developing community capacity…Central to this rediscovery of community and its assets is a fundamental shift in our relationship to government, coupled with a growing sense that re-localization is a necessary counter balance to the growing globalization of our economy and culture. The shift in our relationship to government means that we are no longer

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[2] Through regular contact and conversations with rural, remote and northern Canadians, the Rural Dialogue was designed to established a common understanding of challenges and priorities in these areas, to understand what these residents expect of the federal government and identify better ways for the government to respond to rural, remote and northern needs.

content to let government make all the decisions, rather we want to be more active participants in the process of governance, which involves all the key stakeholders in making decisions about factors which affect the wellbeing and quality of life of our communities and our society.

The growing emphasis on community-level action may perhaps be traced to two inter-related phenomenon. First, a growing recognition of the validity of Rene Dubos' dictum that to address environmental (and other) concerns, we have to think globally but act locally. Coupled with this is a growing sense of our relative powerlessness to affect supra-national and global issues such as NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement], the European community, the World Trade Organization and trans-national corporations which leads us to try to focus our energies where we can make a difference.

But at the same time, access to information and data through information technology infrastructure provides a mechanism to move knowledge resident in government and academic institutions to community-level processes. As digitally literate populations emerge and knowledge and the power that goes with it becomes increasingly distributed across a society the relationship between a state and its citizens may fundamentally change.

For these and many other reasons, the task of (re)building community capacity and a more civil society has emerged as a major concern at the end of the 20th century and as a major challenge for the 21st century. Over the past decade or two, a large number of different "movements" have emerged that, while starting from different perspectives, share a common goal - to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of people in the physical communities in which they live - and common strategies include: involving community members in a participatory process of community action; building the capacity of community members to take action to improve their community's wellbeing and quality of life; forging partnerships among many different stakeholders from the public, voluntary and private sectors; changing local policies and conditions so as to improve wellbeing and the quality of life; advocating and working for supportive policies and programs from higher levels of government; and creating provincial, national and international networks for mutual learning and support (p. 3-4).

Hancock goes on to state:
Communities are usually interested in being one or more of the following: clean, safe, green, healthy, livable, sustainable and prosperous. They are interested in multiple forms of development: social development, community development, economic development, sustainable development, human development, and rural development, among others. But they are normally not interested in all of them at once, nor are they interested in them in equal degrees. On the other hand, they generally don't want to have to deal with each of these as separate issues, partly because in their own lived experience these issues are all inter-related, and partly because it is too cumbersome and too exhausting - particularly in smaller communities - to have to respond to multiple federal and provincial programs using separate forms, with separate criteria, to meet separate deadlines.

One of the things communities want most of all, therefore, is to be able to simplify and rationalize the various funding "pipes" that potentially funnel program resources into their communities. They really don't want to have to deal with multiple bureaucratic systems to address what they see as a single or a smaller number of inter-related set of issues. Moreover, they don't want to have to respond to provincial or federal programs that define an issue and an approach to it in such a way that the communities have to adapt to the provincial and federal issue or need. From the communities' point of view - and it is the communities that governments are trying to serve - they want a provincial or federal program or policy to be flexible enough to adapt to their more local needs.

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So how might this be accomplished? First, it is unrealistic to expect that all federal and provincial programs can change their modus operandi either over night or even at all. But if only a small proportion - say 5-10 percent - of provincial or federal funding directed at communities was freed up to be pooled and applied in a more flexible and responsible way, that would be a tremendous step in the right direction, particularly if allied to a process that allowed issues to be combined and integrated rather than dealt with as separate issues (p.13).

Hancock proposed a new type of community-government partnership in which the partnership were "owned" and managed by community organizations which were autonomous from government. He suggested that no direct funding be provided to the communities, however facilitation and support for skills development and other capacity-building services should be provided. Because of the high cost of travel in rural, remote and northern communities, he suggested that some direct funding for travel costs be provided.

Hancock stated that there were two key elements of this new approach:

- *a community-led partnership organization*, which is a coalition of community-level organizations (e.g. local governments, local community organizations, regional round tables, regional economic development organizations etc.), as well as provincial organizations engaged in one way or another in community capacity building/social development/sustainable development, healthy communities, rural development, etc., together with federal and provincial departments.

- *a government liaison and support group*, which is a work group of provincial and federal agencies and departments whose task it would be to support the partnership and its community members by identifying suitable programs, funds and other resources that could be made available to communities (p.16).

In 1993, Harold Baker presented findings and conclusions from a study of multi-community collaborations in the United States, Ireland, France and Spain. This study examined the structure and processes of creating and sustaining multi-community collaborations. Baker (1993) defined collaboration as:

> Work[ing] together, especially to produce something. Specifically, collaboration may be defined as process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (p. 36).

Baker states that there are a number of key elements that are important for multi-community collaborative efforts. They include:

- the people must come to recognize that they have mutual interests, a conceptual framework that includes justice for all, and a shared vision of the future;
- the people develop commitment to work together over an extended period of time, because it will take time to develop the trust required;
- the people must effectively be able to work out their differences. This implies that the interests of each stakeholder must be represented;
- diversity of the group helps to expand the vision of each stakeholder and provides broader appreciation of the situation than would be the case if they worked alone;
- something worthwhile will result from their mutual efforts; and
- the potential advantages of continuing to work together are recognized (p. 36).

Baker formulated twelve guiding principles for multi-community collaborations which include:

- there is a clear and important reason for communities to become partners in collaboration;
- benefits from collaboration are identified and appreciated by all community partners;
- there is adequate orientation and time for planning the collaborative arrangement and the related development program;
- there are reasonable boundaries relating to the development interests in the area.
- there is a sound funding base;
- support from local government officials is established early in the multi-community collaboration;
- there is a concerted effort to share leadership among the community partners;
- there is adequate arrangement for staff support;
- leadership training is viewed as an essential and ongoing part of the collaborative effort;
- external support systems (governments, educational institutions, consultants, etc) plan an essential but temporary or periodic role;
- "win/win" strategies/results are emphasized in dealing with issues, problems, needs or opportunities; and
- following evaluation, successes are celebrated and failures are a source of learning (p. 37-39).

In his typology of multi-community efforts, Baker (1993) observed that the emerging phase of multi-community collaborations took less than two years and was relatively easy and usually exciting. Everyone is enthusiastic with high expectations. External start-up money has either been provided or obtained. Organizational structures and mandates are being formulated. The second to tenth year, which is the formation stage, seemed to be the most difficult phase in creating viable relationships among the communities. Volunteers may become fatigued, and the patience or impatience of the expected results is experienced. In this phase, new leaders, and new kinds of expertise are needed, and failures are experienced. The third phase, following about the tenth year is one in which stability and sustainability are more likely to emerge.

Community Collaboration Phases and Characteristics (Baker, 1993)

| Emergence	Formation	Established
Exciting	*Difficult*	*Stable*
Takes less than 2 years	Lasts 2 – 10 years	Established for 10+ years
Works on a specific project	Has short-term programs	Has a long-term program
Guided by a steering group		Has a representative board
Has no meaningful ties to government		Local government is a partner
Has no employed staff		Employs professional staff
Has an informal arrangement		Organization is guided by a vision, mission statement, objectives, constitution, bylaws
There is no documented agreement		Members have signed legal agreements
There is provisional short-term external funding	Joint internal/external funding	Long-term/permanent internal funding in place

Community Collaboration Model Project Landscape

Multi-Community Collaboration:

From an Idea to a Model

For more than one hundred years Brandon University has been a cornerstone of the City of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba. Throughout this time, Brandon University has maintained its foundation as a rurally-based university with strong national and international links. Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research center and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural and northern communities.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural and northern issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders. The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI translates and transfers information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or on its website or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences. Led by Dr. Robert Annis, RDI is a collective group of academics, community development professionals and students whose knowledge, skills and abilities are complementary enabling RDI to be a centre of excellence in rural development research, policy and practice.
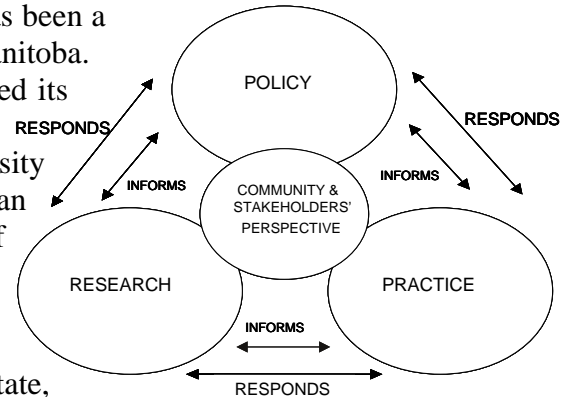
The Community Collaboration Project 1999-2004

In 1994, Health Canada and Environment Canada collaborated to establish the Community Animation Program[3], based on their respective Healthy Environment Program and EcoAction[4] 2000 programs. The Community Animation Program was designed to provide a link between human health and sustainable environments. The Community Animation Program activities were required to have health as well as an environmental dimension, build on community talent and

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[3] The Community Animation Program emerged in 1994 from a partnership between Health and Environment Canada's Healthy Environment and EcoAction 2000 Programs and officially ended March 31, 2004. Its goal was to work with communities to strengthen community capacity to take action on issues related to health and the environment and to take action on issues in which health and the environment were linked.

[4] The EcoAction Community Funding Program was an Environment Canada program that provided financial support to community, environmental, and aboriginal groups, First Nations Councils, service clubs, associations and youth and seniors' organizations for projects that addressed clean air, climate change, clean water and nature. EcoAction encouraged projects that protected, rehabilitated or enhanced the natural environment, and built the capacity of communities to sustain these activities *i*nto the future.

resources, be driven by community needs as defined by the community and be consistent with the principles of sustainability.

The Community Animation Program was instrumental to the Community Collaboration Project's development as it provided the project with core administrative funding. At the same time as the Community Animation Program, Manitoba's provincial activities in community development were focusing on round tables through the Community Choices Program. From 1991-1999, the Manitoban Department of Intergovernmental Affairs established about one hundred community round tables to facilitate community visioning processes and assist communities with goal setting and action plans to address social, environmental and economic issues and opportunities. Like the Community Animation Program, local control, consensus building, and sustainability were all part of the program's objectives. A third piece that contributed to the Community Collaboration Project was the Rural Secretariat's Rural Dialogue process of the Canadian Rural Partnership. This initiative was based on the need to develop stronger linkages and relationships between rural citizens and the federal government, as well as engage citizens in matters relevant to their communities. In *Reflections on Manitoba's Community Collaboration Project, 1999-2004*, Walsh and Annis observed:

> There was a desire on the part of the Rural Secretariat to continue the Rural Dialogue process. Health Canada and Environment Canada had the Community Animation Program. The Province of Manitoba was looking for ways to evolve its community round table process. Since these parties all wanted to investigate a new process for community engagement, the opportunity was there to try something new (p.10).

The Community Collaboration Project was born out of the belief that in changing times, providing access to appropriate tools, resources and information would enable individuals living in rural and northern communities to engage in informed and meaningful dialogue and decision-making with other communities in their region, with local community-serving organizations and with governments. The Community Collaboration Project was intended to be a process for developing linkages among project partners, and a means for exploring alternate governing relationships and new forms of governance. The overall goal of the Community Collaboration Project was to design and facilitate a multi-community, multi-agency cooperative approach for initiating joint planning and project development activities for regional social, environmental and economic community development in rural and northern Manitoba. Objectives included facilitating processes for communities and governments to work together collaboratively and looking at ways for governments to better serve these communities.

The dialogue between communities and other stakeholders occurred through a regional round table structure with a steering committee providing linkages between the regional round table and governments. The Rural Development Institute, provided facilitation for the regional round table development, initially organizing, facilitating and recording the meetings. The use of information and communication technology was integral to regional round table evolution and capacity building from the onset. The regional round tables used a variety of traditional and Internet-based tools, as the project unfolded to meet the various regional round table needs, with unique knowledge management tools being developed.

Manitoba Steering Committee's Role

Founding members of the steering committee included Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Rural Secretariat, Health Canada, Environment Canada, Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs, Community Futures Partners of Manitoba and the Rural Development Institute. In it's third year membership expanded to include Manitoba Community Connections, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and the Community Information Management Network.

The steering committee's goal was to assist groups of rural and northern communities address common concerns and opportunities, particularly as they related to working with government departments and agencies. Its purpose was to better serve rural, northern and remote groups of communities. The steering committee's first role was that of a management committee.

The steering committee endeavoured to have representatives attend each regional round table meeting, usually one federal and one provincial member. These members provided support to the regional round tables. In 2001, the steering committee became a sub-committee of Rural Team Manitoba (Rural Team Manitoba, 2008). The steering committee's direct connections with the regional round tables facilitated linkages to the Rural Team because most of the steering committee members were also Rural Team members. These linkages provided information and pathways to and from other government departments and agencies, which were often funding sources for the regional round tables.

Rural Development Institute's Role

RDI was the project sponsor and facilitator, and stayed connected to the regional round tables and steering committee throughout the five years of the project. As each regional round table became more organized and independent, RDI moved from the organizing, facilitating and recording roles, to only the recording role, then to invited guest and finally to not being present at the meetings at all. In addition to the above-mentioned roles, RDI conducted annual reviews.

Manitoba Regional Round Tables' Formation

During the five years of the Community Collaboration Project, twenty-eight communities organized into four regional round tables. Two regional round tables were in northern Manitoba, one was in northern Manitoba and the Kivalliq region of Nunavut and one was in southwestern Manitoba. Twenty-one of the communities were in southern and northern Manitoba, while seven Nunavut communities joined the Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table.

Northern Vision Regional Round Table

In 1999, representatives from the northern Manitoba communities of Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake and South Indian Lake met to discuss common issues. This led to the formation of Northern Vision Regional Round Table. In 2000, the regional round table's membership expanded to include Granville Lake.

Northern Vision's purpose was to strengthen their region by coordinating and implementing culturally sensitive goals identified through action-oriented partnerships. Each community recognizing the need for improved regional cooperation to address issues of mutual concern and agreed to work on blueprints for their future. Community representation on the regional round table, were Economic Development Officers and/or elected municipal councilors.

The regional round table met periodically until the fall of 2005. At their last meeting, members discussed revisions to the regional round table's purpose, membership, and potential activities. Community and community-serving organizations agreed to a follow-up meeting. An attempt to schedule that follow-up meeting was made, however the meeting did not occur.
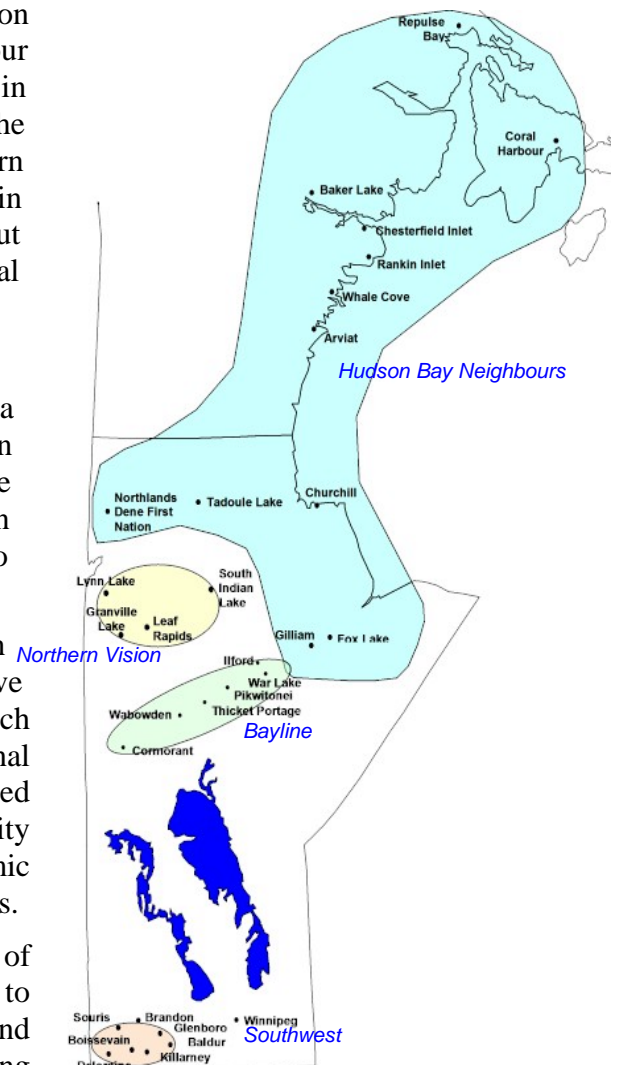
Mark Matiasek presenting a list of their activities.

Southwest Regional Round Table

The Southwest Regional Round Table formed in 2000. Southwest's vision was that of a non-profit, regional development organization that facilitated regional projects. Founding members included the southwestern Manitoba communities of Boissevain, Deloraine, Killarney, and Souris. In late 2000 Baldur, Wawanesa, and Glenboro joined the regional round table and Cartwright joined in 2006. Wawanesa subsequently withdrew from the regional round table because it was unable to sustain its membership. Community representatives

Laurie Crowe & Joy Dornian presenting their mission statement.

who participated on the Southwest Regional Round Table were Community Development and Economic Development Officers. Its focus was on projects related to youth inclusion, business retention and expansion, and value-added agricultural opportunities.

The regional round table met monthly throughout each year from September to June. The regional round table continued on after the Community Collaboration Project ended in 2004. In 2007 the regional round table underwent several changes in membership. This has caused them to pause and re-evaluate the regional round table.

Bayline Regional Round Table

In 2001, the northern Manitoba communities of Cormorant, Ilford, Pikwitonei, and Wabowden created the Bayline Regional Round Table. Thicket Portage joined in 2001 and War Lake First Nation joined in 2002. The communities' common link was the Hudson Bay rail line, which connected all six communities and was the only year-round mode of transportation for four of the communities. Bayline's

Bayline members discussing the Food Security project.

vision was to work cohesively together around areas of common concern and to collectively have a stronger voice. Membership in Bayline consisted of two representatives from each community with at least one of the two representatives being a member of each community's council. Bayline met three to five times each year. The regional round table continued on after the Community Collaboration Project ended in 2004, and continues to meet.

Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table

The Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table was established in 2002. The membership was unique because it included communities and First Nations in Manitoba and Nunavut. Founding members included Arviat, Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Coral Harbour, Rankin Inlet, Repulse Bay, and Whale Cove in Nunavut and Fox Lake First Nation, Gillam and Churchill in Manitoba. Northlands Dene First Nation (Manitoba) and Tadoule Lake (Manitoba) joined the regional round table later. Its vision was to establish a viable regional round table to promote the communities of northern Manitoba and the Kivilliq region of

Members at a regional round table meeting in Rankin Inlet NU.

Nunavut, to coordinate efforts and to advance issues of mutual consideration. Each regional round table community had two representatives, usually the Mayor and the Chief/Senior Administrative Officer. Meetings of the regional round table were attempted twice a year, with the last meeting in Gillam Manitoba in October 2005.

Canadian Rural Partnership Models Program

In 2004, the Rural Secretariat invited RDI to submit a proposal to the *Models for Rural Development Research Initiative* based on the work that RDI had been doing with the regional round tables and the steering committee in Manitoba. The research and analysis activities that the Rural Secretariat undertook under this program were intended to contribute to the understanding of what approaches to community development and capacity building worked in rural, remote and northern communities. The Rural Secretariat intended to use the information gained from the research initiative to inform all levels of government in decision-making for policies and programs (Rural Secretariat , 2007).

Annual Workshop in Thompson Manitoba May 2005

The Community Collaboration Story

The Community Collaboration Model Project

The Rural Development Institute articulated the community development practices and lessons learned that had emerged in Manitoba from 1999-2004 into a vision and model for the Community Collaboration Model Project. Foundational to the Community Collaboration Model Project was the building and sustaining of trusting and valued relationships and collaborative partnerships between and among the partners.

Structure and Processes

The Community Collaboration Model Project vision's was to encourage communities to explore and develop processes to increase their ability to address change and work toward becoming more sustainable. The overall goal of the Community Collaboration Model Project was to test whether the Community Collaboration Model, as developed in Manitoba, was applicable and able to be replicated in other areas of rural/northern Canada. Objectives included determining what conditions and circumstances were needed to bring communities together to form regional round tables and advisory groups. Other objectives including determining the role of information and communication technologies in supporting social networks for community development and in supporting universities, research institutes, and governments engaged in community research processes.

Strengthening Community Capacity

Partnership Building

Group of Communities - form a Regional Round Table

Trusting Relationships

Rural Team Advisory Group

Academic Institution

Building and strengthening trusting relationships between and among the partners is essential to the process.

©Rural Development Institute, Brandon University, 2007

The community collaboration process involved a group of communities forming a regional round table and partnering with the Rural Team in their province/territory through a subcommittee called an advisory group and also partnering with an academic institution. For the Rural Development Institute to enter into an agreement to facilitate the development of a regional round table all of the aforementioned partners needed to embrace the process and the partnership requirements.

The roles and responsibilities of the communities included forming a regional round table of diverse stakeholders who had the desire and commitment to work together to achieve common goals. Responsibilities also included working with RDI to evaluate the progress, sharing lessons learned, contributing resources (in-kind and/or cash) and providing a financial accounting of the expenditures of funds and contributions.

The roles and responsibilities of the members of the advisory groups included providing advice and guidance for implementing the regional round tables; maintaining channels of communication with the regional round tables; serving as conduits for communication between

members of the Rural Teams and the regional round tables; establishing lines of communication with other provincial/territorial Rural Team advisory groups engaged in similar processes and assisting the regional round tables to access information, human and financial resources.

The academic institution's roles and responsibilities included liaising with the advisory groups and the regional round tables; attending any regional round table meetings deemed critical to the Community Collaboration processes and assisting in strengthening the collaboration processes at the regional round tables.

The Rural Development Institute also committed to strengthening and supporting regional round tables by:

- facilitating the early formation and structure of the regional round tables and dialogues of cross-community and/or government representatives;
- attending, when appropriate, regional round table meetings to facilitate, document, and share information and lessons learned across all regional round tables and advisory groups engaged in the project;
- making cash contributions to support each regional round table. The exact amount of the contribution depended on the regional round tables' ability to leverage cash and/or in-kind contributions and was based upon need and value;
- facilitating participatory evaluation processes; and
- convening annual meetings of representatives of regional round tables and advisory groups to share experiences and lessons learned, documenting and reporting on the Community Collaboration process.

The Community Collaboration Story
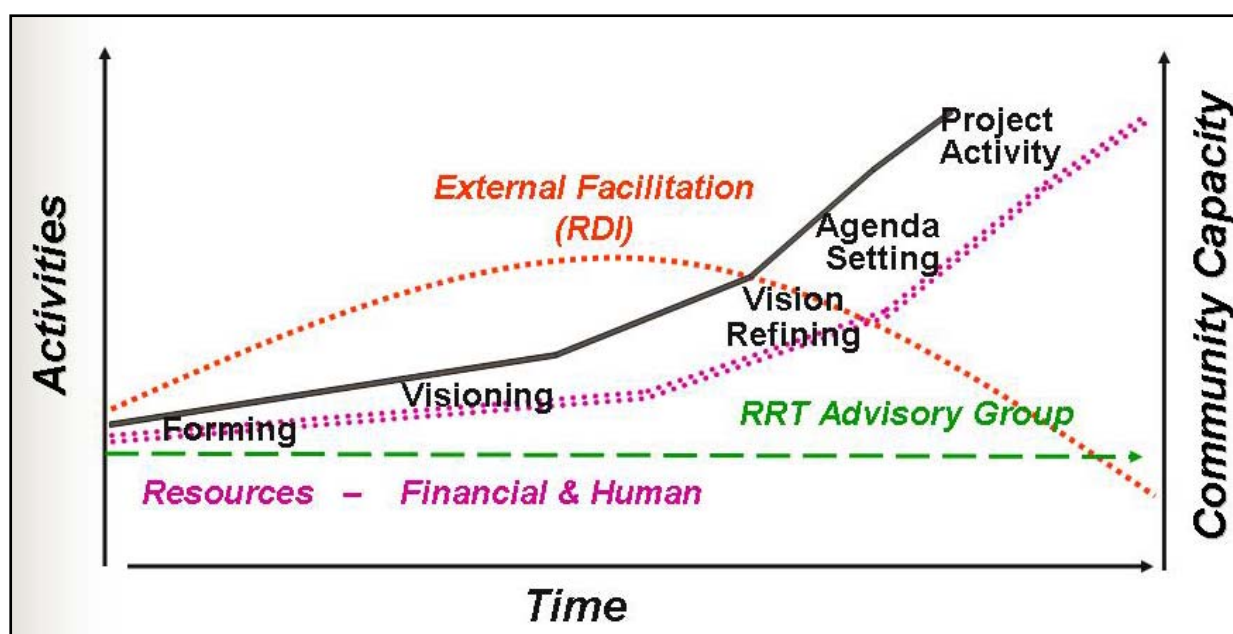
Application

Longitudinal Study

The Community Collaboration Model Project provided a unique opportunity to continue to interact with the Manitoba regional round tables and steering committee to learn about regional round table sustainability as the Manitoba regional round tables moved from external funding and support to self-sufficiency. Concurrent with the creation of new regional round tables, the Rural Development Institute undertook a longitudinal study of the regional round tables in Manitoba/Nunavut. All four regional round tables were still functioning at the start of the Community Collaboration Model Project, which provided the opportunity to institute an evaluation process with the Manitoba regional round tables and steering committee to look at their successes and challenges, especially their partnerships and relationships, capacity development, influence and advocacy, resiliency and sustainability. Because the regional round table development process takes considerable time, the opportunity to evaluate these processes over an eight-year period was invaluable.

Feasibility Investigation

In collaboration with the Rural Secretariat, community stakeholders and the Rural Teams, RDI facilitated the establishment of regional round tables in Saskatchewan and the Yukon and attempted to form a regional round table in British Columbia.

Early in 2005, RDI met with Rural Team Saskatchewan to discuss the feasibility of establishing a regional round table in central Saskatchewan. The MidSask Community Futures Development Corporation/Regional Economic Development Authority presented a proposal to create a regional round table as a regional services delivery model. MidSask provided a broad range of services in economic development and by forming a regional round table they intended to collaborate with additional stakeholders in the region to increase capacity to assess needs and deliver services from a community-led approach. RDI also met with members of Rural Team Saskatchewan to explore the formation of an advisory group for this regional round table. The group would maintain the Rural Team's liaison with the regional round table. MidSask signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RDI in January 2005 and shortly thereafter, Rural Team Saskatchewan established the Saskatchewan

Jock Witkowski & Ed Reimer of Rural Team Saskatchewan

Community Collaboration Advisory group to partner with newly-formed WaterWolf Regional Round Table and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RDI.

The Rural Development Institute was invited by Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association to attend their annual meeting in September 2005 in Taylor British Columbia. At this meeting RDI representatives explained the Community Collaboration Model Project and the partnership requirements. The Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association Board expressed interest in principle, and then submitted an expression of interest letter to RDI on September 30, 2005. In November 2005 in Vancouver British Columbia, RDI met with representatives of Rural Team British Columbia and Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association. At that time Rural Team British Columbia agreed to create an advisory group from

their membership to support the formation of a regional round table. RDI then signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association and Rural Team British Columbia to initiate a regional round table and advisory group in northeastern British Columbia.

In November 2005, Rural Team Yukon formed an advisory group and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RDI to support the formation of a regional round table in the Yukon. In December 2005, Yukon Rural Team facilitated a meeting in Whitehorse between RDI and interested communities who were Yukon signatories of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association Alaska Highway Community Initiative. The community representatives indicated an interest in the Community Collaboration Model Project and a second meeting was held in Whitehorse in February 2006, inviting additional communities and First Nations. At the February 2006 meeting, it was decided to continue exploring this collaborative model and at a meeting held in Teslin on April 4th 2006, the Yukon Regional Round Table was officially established and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with RDI.

Model Implementation

WaterWolf Regional Round Table

In 2004, the MidSask strategic planning session centered around focusing on regional goals and a general shift away from agricultural related primary production to a more diverse regional economy. The leadership of MidSask had already formed ideas about the need for a regional approach to the problems identified. The opportunity to become part of the Community Collaboration Model Project fit well with these ideas and provided a way to move them forward.

> We did not abandon our original mandate however in the creation of WaterWolf we had a vehicle that was able to work regionally with separate project funding. (Martz, 2008).

During WaterWolf's first year, the participating communities incorporated WaterWolf into a non-profit company; signed a two-year funding agreement with Western Economic Diversification Canada for $176,000; contracted with a project coordinator and half-time technician; and identified a number of projects it wanted to pursue. In 2008, WaterWolf Regional Round Table grew to more than forty-three towns, villages and rural municipalities. The advisory group members who represented provincial and federal government departments and agencies participated in the earlier meetings, however, as time went by their participation diminished somewhat.
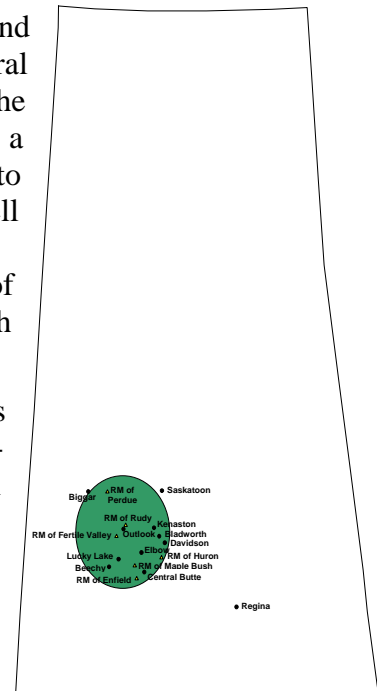
WaterWolf members at a regional round table meeting

Yukon Regional Round Table

Members at regional round table meeting in Watson Lake

The Yukon Regional Round Table became the first regional non-political forum in the Yukon that included communities and First Nations. The opportunity to form this inclusive regional association and partner with Rural Team Yukon was a key reason for the creation of the regional round table. In April 2006, in Teslin Yukon, community representatives signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RDI to create the Yukon Regional Round Table.

Over the past two and a half years, communities, First Nations, and government departments from across the Yukon[5] committed to working together on regional opportunities, issues, and challenges. Since its creation, the regional round table developed a membership of eight communities and six First Nations. In addition, the advisory group consists of representatives from three federal departments and four territorial departments.

The regional round table held ten meetings and undertook a number of activities, such as an asset mapping pilot project and influencing an online tourism initiative. At each meeting, Yukon Regional Round Table members incorporated a training and capacity building session.

Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation

Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation
Carmacks
Faro

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
Haines Junction
Whitehorse
Mount Lorne
Teslin
Carcross Tagish First Nation
Teslin Tlingit Council
Watson Lake
Atlin
Taku River Tlingit First Nation

Members at regional round table meeting in Haines Junction

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[5] The Yukon RRT includes two communities located in northern British Columbia: Atlin and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table
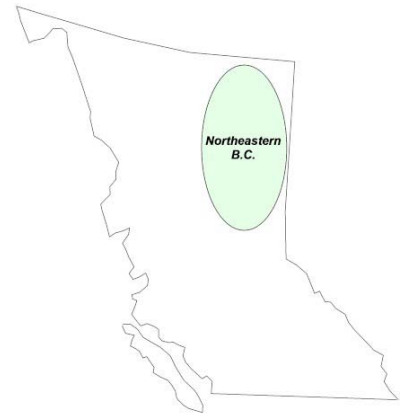
For the northeast region of British Columbia, the project was viewed as an opportunity to bring the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the region to the same table to advance common goals, one being the development of tourism along the Alaska Highway corridor. The opportunity to become involved in the project arose at a time when groups such as the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association and the Northeast Native Advancing Society had formed partnerships, undertook research and were poised for regional collaboration.

Membership in the Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table included Aboriginal, local government elected officials, representation from local industry, and Economic Development Officers (as ex officio). The regional round table was administered by the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association who coordinated six regional meetings, which were well attended and resulted in creating the mandate of the regional round table, which was to serve as a sounding board for multi partnership community controlled and administered projects that enhanced and balanced the quality of life for both Aboriginal and local governments.

The Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table functioned as a component of the Community Collaboration Model Project for approximately one year. During this period in 2006, the various partners established that the Community Collaboration Model Project and the region in northeastern British Columbia were not necessarily a strong fit. There were differences amongst the three partners on how to initiate the regional round table and advisory group, including viewpoints and requirements of data ownership and evaluation, as well as the design of the regional round table and advisory group. While it was clear that a dynamic regional round table emerged, and it was believed that it would continue to grow and move forward, the three partners mutually agreed that the design characteristics of the regional round table and advisory group and the relationships of the partners were sufficiently different from those expected of the Community Collaboration Model Project. Therefore, on November 1, 2006, Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association, the Rural Team British Columbia and Rural Development Institute agreed that the regional round table would transition to a new format of regional round table. RDI provided transition resources to the end of March 2007 and RDI's role during the transition period was to gather an understanding of the processes used for the transition.

Members at regional round table meeting in Fort St. John

The transition process took place from November 2006 to the end of March 2007. During the transition, two meetings of the regional round table took place and additional activities to secure partnerships and funding by the administering body were pursued.

Evaluation

Integral to the project was continuously evaluating the community collaboration processes. As the Rural Development Institute began facilitating the evaluation, it became clear that the evaluation needed to be more than a process in which the members merely participated. The regional round tables and advisory groups needed to decide what "success" meant for them. Thus the evaluation process became a collaborative process which was *an assessment process that included all stakeholders in deciding what constituted success and how success would be measured.*

> *Collaborative Evaluation Principles:*
> *Inclusion*
> *Equal Partnership*
> *Shared Responsibility*
> *Empowerment*
> *Cooperation*

Principles of this collaborative evaluation process included: *inclusion* of representatives of all groups who were involved in the evaluation; *equal partnership* - recognizing that every group had skills, abilities and equal right to participate in the process; *transparency* that created a climate conducive to open communication and building dialogue; *shared power* with authority and power evenly balanced between all partners; *shared responsibility* with all partners having equal responsibility for decision-making, and each having clear responsibilities within the process; *empowerment* for participants with special skills who were encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their specialty, yet also encouraging others to be involved and *cooperation* by sharing everybody's strengths. This meant that regional round tables and advisory groups were involved in determining the evaluation frameworks, the selection of indicators, data collection and analysis of findings. Another important distinction was that the Community Collaboration Model Project evaluation was a ***process evaluation***, which was not linear. Evaluating outcomes as they occurred provided opportunities to adjust the processes as needed, modifying the goals, objectives and actions and creating new ones.

Before commencing the collaborative evaluation process, all stakeholders needed to have clear understanding of the ethical principles that guided the collaborative evaluation process. These principles provided clarity on the rights and responsibilities associated with collecting, disseminating, accessing, and protecting information that was collected. The Rural Development Institute submitted details of the collaborative evaluations to the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee, which reviewed the submission to ensure that all participants involved in the process understood their rights and obligations. A research ethics certificate for the Community Collaboration Model Project was granted to the Rural Development Institute in October 2006.

COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION
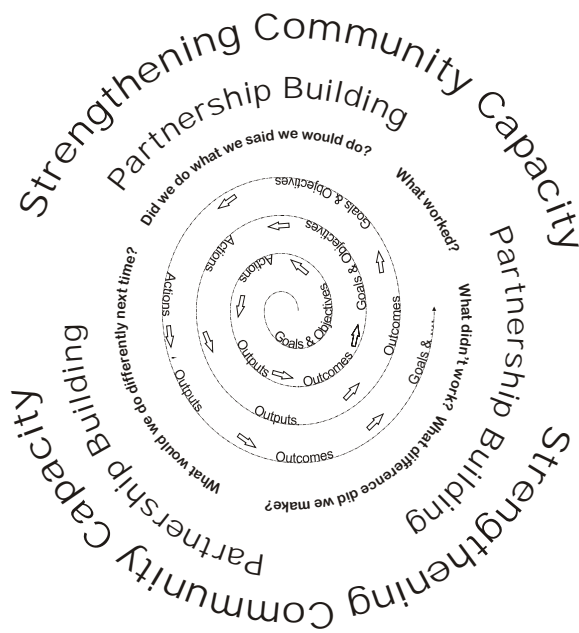
The Rural Development Institute invited regional round table and advisory group representatives to evaluation-planning workshops in Atlin British Columbia in August 2006 and in Winnipeg, Manitoba in September 2006. During these workshops, the representatives developed their regional round tables' and advisory groups' evaluation frameworks and plans, with their academic partners providing facilitation, guidance and resources. These frameworks and plans were then taken back to the respective organizations for input and acceptance. Following that, data were gathered by reviewing meeting minutes, reports and other documents and by interviewing members of the regional round tables and advisory groups. The academic partners facilitated the data gathering and analysis and drafted the evaluation reports, seeking input and feedback from the members.

The Rural Development Institute also facilitated annual workshops that enabled the regional round tables and advisory groups to tell their stories and share what they had learned. The first workshop was held in Thompson Manitoba in May 2005, the second workshop was held at Cedar Lodge Saskatchewan in April 2006 and the third workshop was held in Haines Junction Yukon in May 2007.

Thompson MB, May 2005

Haines Junction YT, May 2007

Cedar Lodge SK, April 2006

The Community Collaboration Story

The Rural Development Institute partnered with Dr. Diane Martz of the Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment, University of Saskatchewan to evaluate the WaterWolf Regional Round Table processes. The partnership moved with Dr. Martz when she assumed other responsibilities at the University of Saskatchewan. Ryan Gibson, an RDI Research Affiliate worked with the Yukon and Manitoba regional round tables to evaluate their processes. RDI partnered with Dr. Nicole Vaugeois of Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo British Columbia to provide an evaluation of the transition that the Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table underwent after the devolution of its relationship with the Community Collaboration Model Project.

Nicole Vaugeois leading an evaluation discussion

Diane Martz leading an evaluation discussion

Community Collaboration Governance and Collaboration Study Group

An outcome of the Community Collaboration Model Project was the opportunity to engage additional researchers with interests in multi-community collaborations and regional governance models. This resulted in the creation of the Community Collaboration Model Project Governance and Collaboration Study Group. (See Appendix A for membership).

RDI hosted three meetings of researchers from across Canada and the mid-west USA. During these meetings, researchers were introduced to the Community Collaboration Model Project and the model sites in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, the Yukon and Manitoba. The study group identified four objectives which were to: create opportunities for researchers to provide feedback on the evaluation processes that were developed by regional round tables and advisory groups; provide feedback on the Community Collaboration Model Project evaluation processes; explore linkages to existing and future research in multi-community collaboration and regional governance; and develop a forum for researchers

Community Collaboration Governance and Collaboration Study Group

to discuss multi-community collaboration and regional governance. Through the term of the project, the Community Collaboration Model Project Study Group continued the dialogue on multi-community collaboration and regional governance. Through discussions, a number of potential research themes and questions were identified, which are discussed in a later section. The Study Group also submitted a proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to further their dialogue and networking endeavours.

Project Management and Financial Administration

As the Rural Development Institute entered into a Contribution Agreement with the Rural Secretariat, it became clear that the project would benefit by RDI partnering with a steering committee comprised of representatives of the Rural Secretariat. This Community Collaboration Model Project steering committee whose members included the Senior Policy Advisory, Regional Advisor and Program Officer, provided advice and assistance during the Feasibility Investigation and Model Implementation phases, as well as project reporting requirements. RDI set up an administrative structure to manage the project and meet the Rural Secretariat's requirements for the quarterly and annual reporting of its activities, evaluation and financial accounting. Robert Annis provided overall administrative direction and guidance; Marian Beattie provided project management and coordination and Ryan Gibson assisted in the financial tracking and documentation especially for the Manitoba and Yukon regional round tables.

Quarterly, RDI submitted, on Rural Secretariat-generated documents, cash-flow spreadsheets detailing cash and in-kind expenditures and contributions, progress reports of the just-completed quarters, and work-plans for the next quarter. RDI also submitted annual audited financial statements, annual budgets, annual work-plans and annual evaluation reports. This tracking and reporting required a lot of time and attention to detail as it meant working with up to seven regional round tables' administrative personal every quarter. Having the capacity and flexibility to carry the cash flow into the next fiscal year without constraints was very beneficial. This flexibility enabled RDI to design and carry out the work-plan according to the project objectives rather than to fiscal year-end constraints.

Contributions

The terms of the Contribution Agreement between RDI and the Rural Secretariat indicated that the Rural Secretariat would provide up to 50% of the total eligible costs, with the other 50% coming from other sources. As is evidenced by the graph below, the contributions from other sources comprised the majority of the financial contributions to the Community Collaboration Model Project, with the Rural Secretariat's contribution being 37% of the total cost.
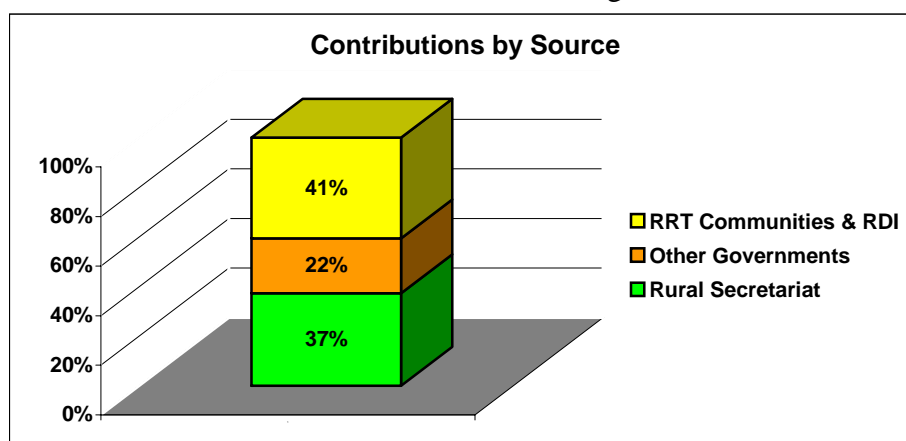
Source: Rural Secretariat 4th Quarter (2008) Cashflow Report

Contributions by Type & Activity
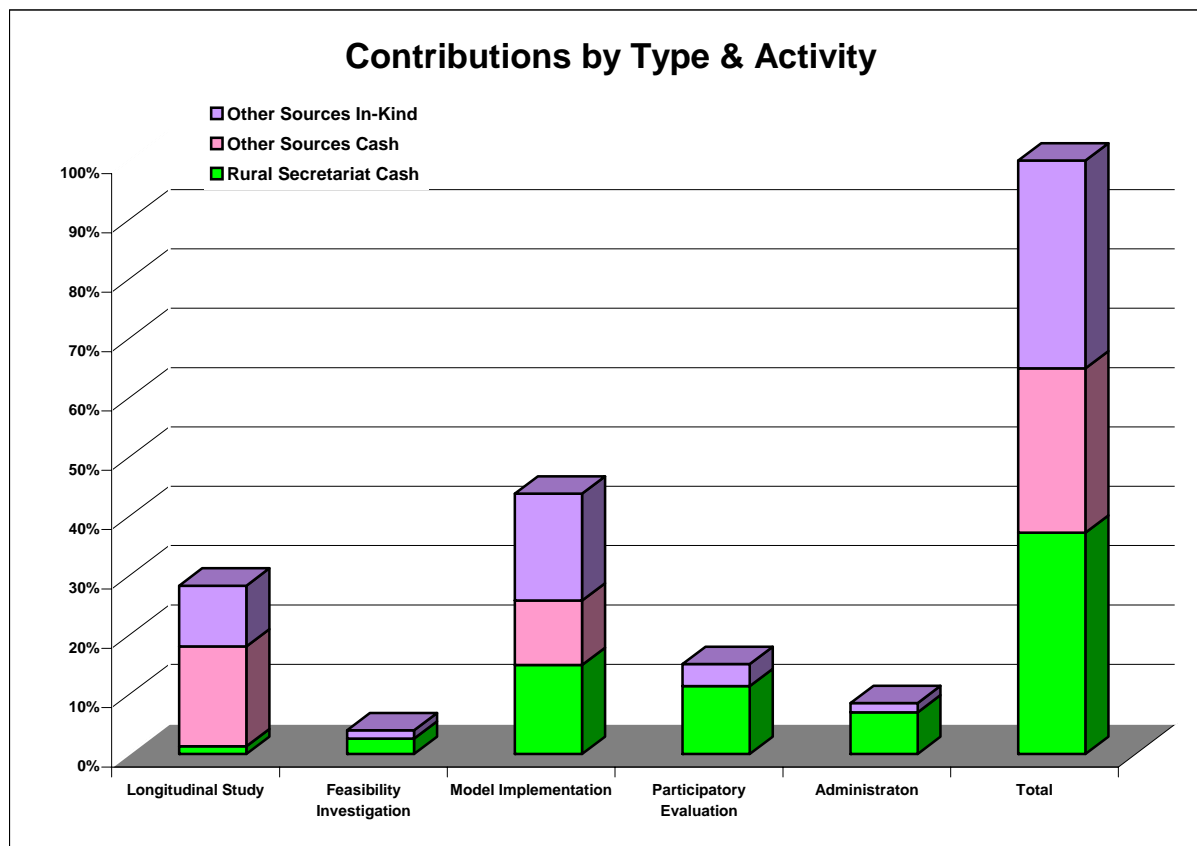
Source: Rural Secretariat 4th Quarter (2008) Cashflow Report

In-Kind Contributions

Based on RDI's experiences with the Community Collaboration Project in Manitoba, it was acknowledged that there would be significant in-kind contributions. At the outset of the project, RDI and the Community Collaboration Model Project steering committee determined a fair value for these contributions. Because of the collaborative nature of the project, no distinction in value was made among the contribution sources. That meant that regional round table community members, advisory group members and academics were valued equally. RDI and the Community Collaboration Model Project steering committee also acknowledged the reality in rural and northern communities that traveling to and from meetings consumed considerable amount of time during which individuals were not contributing elsewhere. Thus it was decided to include travel time in the in-kind contributions. It was also decided by RDI and the Community Collaboration Model Project steering committee at the outset, that there would not be a variation in value between provinces/territories in which the regional round tables were formed. The value for participants' time was agreed upon as $37.50 per hour or $300 for an eight-hour day. In addition, contributions by governments, including the Rural Secretariat, could be no higher than 80% of the total cost.

RDI set up a tracking and reporting system and established parameters of what should be reported as in-kind contributions. The regional round tables, in their Memoranda of Understanding, agreed to provide in-kind contribution information according to these parameters. The Rural Secretariat staff's and RDI Team's time were not included in the in-kind

documentation. The Longitudinal Study activity of the project necessitated that this study be a major agenda item at the Manitoba regional round table and steering committee meetings, and that RDI representatives be in attendance whenever possible. Therefore the travel and meeting attendance time for Manitoba regional round table and steering committee representatives were in-kind contributions to the Community Collaboration Model Project whenever the Longitudinal Study was on the agenda and RDI representatives were in attendance at the meetings. As was the project design, over time, RDI moved away from the facilitation role in the new regional round tables, and in fact did not attend some of the later meetings, particularly the WaterWolf Regional Round Table meetings. Regardless of RDI's attendance at meetings, all participants' (with the exception of Rural Secretariat staff and RDI Team) travel and meeting attendance times were in-kind contributions for the Feasibility Investigation, Model Implementation and Evaluation activities. RDI also provided in-kind contributions to the Administration activity.

It is likely that the in-kind contributions that were tracked and reported are lower than what actually occurred. For example, with the benefit of hindsight, RDI realized that the financial and other administrative functions that member communities provided, such as in the case of Wabowden in Bayline Regional Round Table, and Haines Junction and Teslin in the Yukon Regional Round Table were not valued or tracked. Had those contributions been included, the in-kind contributions would have been considerably higher.

Cash Contributions
As was stated earlier, the Rural Secretariat's cash contribution to the project represented 37% of the total contributions. Other major cash contributions included leveraged contributions for the Hudson Bay Neighbours, Bayline and WaterWolf Regional Round Tables. In the Hudson Bay Neigbours Regional Round Table, each of the Nunavut member communities received grants from the territorial government to be used at their discretion. Each Nunavut member community contributed a portion of this grant directly to the regional round table. The Bayline Regional Round Table leveraged funds from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for a food security project. WaterWolf Regional Round Table leveraged monies from Western Economic Diversification Canada to use to accomplish their goals and objectives.

Lessons Learned:
Regional Round Tables & Advisory Groups

Over the course of the three and one-quarter years of the Community Collaboration Model Project, and then extending back to 1999 when the Community Collaboration Project was initiated, all participants in the community collaboration process experienced successes and challenges, both collectively and individually. These are the lessons learned from these experiences, particularly as they related to *partnership development*, *capacity building* and *sustainability*.

A partnership is an agreement to combine resources, ideas and talents to do something together that will benefit all involved. The partnership adds value to each partner's respective situation and there is give and take with shared decision-making, risks, resources, investment, power, benefits, burdens and accountability. Successful partnerships have: a *reason* to come together; a common vision and goal; *rules* – ways of doing business together; *responsibilities* – every partner is responsible for and contributes to the outcomes; *respect* – every partner is respected and valued; *reward* – every partner understands their gain*;* a trusting *relationship* – partners have developed a trusting relationship between and amongst themselves; *results* – the partnership accomplishes its collective vision and goals; *rejuvenated* – the partnership is evaluated, successes are celebrated and reflected upon: and *re-tooled* **-** the partnership is adjusted as needed (Annis, *et al.,* 2006).

The Rural Development Institute's approach to capacity development is through community development. Community development has been defined as *a philosophy, a process, a project, or an outcome, and perhaps all four at once*. As a philosophy, community development entails the fundamental belief that *people can identify and solve their problems*. As a process, it *supports citizens as they find their power to effect change*. As a project or an outcome, it *involves working with citizens to bring about change in their community*. The community development process involves engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. While this circular process may become convoluted at times, it remains continuous. Throughout community development processes, products for communication and mobilization regenerated and disseminated first within the community and eventually beyond the community for research, practice, and policy purposes (Healy & Racher, 2008). "Community Development is community-based and people-centred: is inclusive; promotes good practice; builds on strengths; ensures the decision-making comes from the community; recognizes and develops expertise of community residents; requires assessment and does not rely on assumptions; and is understood by those involved" (Frank, 2001).

> *Community development has been defined as a philosophy, a process, a project, or an outcome, and perhaps all four at once.*

WaterWolf Regional Round Table

Processes and Infrastructure

Vision, Goals and Objectives

WaterWolf's vision was to redefine the economy of the region. During the evaluation process in 2007 and again in 2008, Diane Martz stated that:

The staff and board members are responding to the decline in the area in the traditional resource industry, agriculture. The analysis of the situation in the region by the project coordinator is as follows:

> *We need to look at a different model, although it's a hard thing for people to get their heads around, the things we have done for fifty years are not working.*

As agriculture related business continued to suffer down turns in prices, markets and high input costs, the region was continuing to decline in almost every respect. The majority of farm family members are working off the farm because agriculture is not driving the economy any more. Much of the grocery business goes to Saskatoon, businesses are declining and collapsing, in some towns the last business in town is closing, population has declined, schools are closing and the region is increasingly becoming a residential area. We need to look at a different model, although it's a hard thing for people to get their heads around, the things we have done for fifty years are not working.

The WaterWolf board and staff based the analysis of their situation on their personal experiences as elected municipal representatives as well as studies of the region by the local community college; Statistics Canada Census data; analysis of Rural Saskatchewan by Stabler and Olfert (various years); Sask Trends Monitor. They are looking for solutions. Rural Saskatchewan has had a hard time adjusting to the change. So a lot of our stuff is aimed at getting them to think about long term strategies.

> *Rural Saskatchewan has had a hard time adjusting to the change. So a lot of our stuff is aimed at getting them to think about long term strategies.*

The regional round table established committees to work on:

- a governance model to provide good stewardship and oversight of development in the South Saskatchewan River valley South of Beaver Creek;
- potential solutions to the issue of long term stability and sustainability in providing technical oversight for water quality to small communities in accordance with provincial regulations;
- a process and time table for development at or near Danielson Park as a demonstration pilot for tax and investment sharing;
- recommendations for priorities in the development of data layers within the region - what the priorities for GIS digitization in the region should be; and
- a framework for municipal sharing of the cost of infrastructure development and sharing taxes on new regional developments.

Membership

The goal was to create a regional development structure that would have the capacity to do more than the existing provincial Regional Economic Development Authority and federal Community Futures Development Corporation structures had achieved. One of the first steps toward this goal was the incorporation of a non-profit corporation. This corporate structure allowed for the creation of a reporting mechanism separate from the existing provincial and federal community development structures which improved transparency and allowed access to a broader range of funding. WaterWolf became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Community Futures Development Corporation/Regional Economic Development Authority; however they are a separate corporation with its own Board of Directors made up of municipal government representatives of the rural municipalities, towns and villages in the region. The organizational structure of WaterWolf built on the already successful and innovative organizations in the region. This group had innovative ideas about the value of regional collaboration and needed a way to move these ideas forward. The Community Collaboration Model Project allowed a new non-profit corporation to be created that was able to accomplish goals the original organizations could not. WaterWolf was able to move forward and benefit from groundwork that had already been laid by the predecessor organizations and the skills and capacity already present.

Coordination and Administration

WaterWolf benefited from the very strong and skilled leadership of the project coordinator along with the elected municipal representatives who provided leadership as members of the Board of Directors. The staff and the board members have lived in the region for many years and this has likely contributed to the acceptance of their ideas and initiatives. The staff supported the regional round table process and structure by providing support to meetings, handling financial and reporting requirements, providing information, keeping websites up to date and assisting in presentations and public events. Even with skilled staff in place, board members noted the project faced limitations on what could be accomplished due to the small staff, limited budget and reliance on volunteers (Martz, 2008).

Resources

The Community Collaboration Model Project funding increased the capacity of the overall project by providing resources and staff to work at the regional round table process of building community collaboration as well as enabling WaterWolf to undertake projects that provided tangible benefit to the communities in the region.

In WaterWolf's first year, in addition to the funding available from the Community Collaboration Model Project, WaterWolf obtained a two-year funding agreement for $176,000 with Western Economic Diversification based on the objectives and goals outlined under Water, Tourism and GIS segments of the project. Throughout the project, revenue was successfully obtained from other government programs including:

- Community Investment Support Program (provincial);
- Saskatchewan Highways (provincial);
- Saskatchewan Watershed Authority(provincial); and
- Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada Community Investment Support Program to support the development of the regional GIS system (federal).

WaterWolf accessed resources through the provincial Regional Economic Development Authority Enhancement Fund and the provincial Regional Economic Development Authority Youth Apprentice Fund. The Municipal Capacity Development Program provided access to two planners and planning staff which has been instrumental in WaterWolf developing an organized sustainable approach to land use planning in the region.

Communication

Central to WaterWolf's communication strategy was branding the organization and developing the WaterWolf logo, which is that of the northern pike, or in local vernacular, the *water wolf*. Another important communication vehicle was developing a website. Minutes of board and committee meetings were posted soon after the meetings as well as news releases and other items of interest to the region. WaterWolf staff also posted servicing agreements, bylaw examples, planning commission examples, contact information and notes taken at workshops.

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>
> *WaterWolf*

Partnerships and Relationships

With Rural Team Saskatchewan and Other Government Departments and Agencies

The project was designed to include Rural Team Saskatchewan as a major player whose role was to provide a connection to governments that could be a resource in accessing money and expertise. The role of the Rural Team was pivotal in the early part of the project. One Rural Team member facilitated an inter-departmental group of provincial officials, (including representatives from the Crown corporations), to meet with WaterWolf staff and board members to hear their presentation and to discuss regional issues. Rural Team Saskatchewan members' involvement in the project diminished over time; the provincial representative resigned and was not replaced and one federal representative retired and was not replaced. Two members of the Rural Team are still engaged with WaterWolf. Although one has just retired, plans are to replace that person with another Rural Team representative to WaterWolf. WaterWolf board members and staff feel that Rural Team members were invaluable assets to the WaterWolf Regional Round Table (Martz, 2008).

Although the provincial government appears to be slow to recognize the value of WaterWolf as it relates to provincial objectives in managing and developing regional economies, the relationship of WaterWolf with the provincial government expanded during the past year as more provincial government departments became interested and involved with the project (Martz, 2008).

With Local Governments and Other Regional Groups

All of the five projects associated with WaterWolf involved partnerships among the communities in the region. Communities became involved in these projects according to their needs and interests. The intent of WaterWolf was to support the development of these partnerships in all of their activities. As a result of WaterWolf, new partnerships formed among communities in the region. Better relations and better communication were evident between the towns, villages and rural municipalities in the region than were present in the past. There are new partnerships with the West-side Irrigation Producers Groups; Lake Diefenbaker Tourism/West Central Tourism; and the City of Saskatoon (Martz, 2008).

The initial focus of the land use planning committee was with rural municipalities, towns and villages along the South Saskatchewan River and Lake Diefenbaker, however, the project boundaries expanded as more municipalities became interested in the concept of land use planning at a regional level. A partnership was also formed with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. WaterWolf and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority have similar goals and objectives for land use along the river and lake; including water quality and safe development of water based commerce and developments.

WaterWolf Regional Round Table has grown the Community Futures Development Corporation/Regional Economic Development Authority's capacity and ability to make a difference in the planning and prioritization of programs in the region. Early in the discussions of the River Valley Authority Project, the project coordinator approached the Chief Executive Officer of Meewasin Valley Authority for information and advice. This relationship yielded valuable insights over the life of the project and was a key influence in the direction of WaterWolf. Partnerships have also been formed with South Saskatchewan River Water Stewards; Heritage River Designation; Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the Saskatchwan Association of Rural Municipalities.

> *We cannot change our past, but we can change our future.*

With First Nations Communities

An important accomplishment that WaterWolf was part of, and speaks to the partnership building capacity of WaterWolf and its staff, is the designation of Highway #219 as a tourism corridor:

> October 23, 2006 saw the announcement of the #219 highway partnership. Under this groundbreaking agreement, a First Nation Community, rural municipalities and the provincial Department of Highways have come together with resources in common cause to fund the redevelopment of #219 highway as a tourism corridor between Saskatoon and Lake Diefenbaker. The process is underway to rename the highway Whitecap Trail, in honor of the first Chief of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation when they located at their present site…This corridor partnership opens the opportunity for our board and communities to dream large…The success of the first leg from Saskatoon to #15 highway shows that there is an appetite to diversify our rural economy beyond a dependence on agriculture alone. We cannot change our past, but we can change our future. (MidSask, Fall 2006).

With Universities and Colleges

WaterWolf staff also noted that the relationship with the Rural Development Institute was a valuable asset (Martz, 2008). The workshops, the reporting model and in kind teaching all contributed to the success of the project and were identified as important in capacity building. Connecting WaterWolf to a local academic institution (University of Saskatchewan) provided them with resources to initiate a participatory evaluation of their processes. In addition, the academic institution representative became a member of the Rural Team, thus providing a new linkage between the academic institution and federal and provincial governments.

Capacity Development

In the WaterWolf Regional Round Table 2008 evaluation report, Martz states:

As individuals, board members indicated they have developed their skills over the course of the project through learning by being involved and listening to others, working with others and attending meetings associated with the different projects. When there were not ready answers, members and staff looked for written materials and accessed the Internet to find information. Staff and some board members also took training and attended workshops, seminars and conferences. Board members also talked about gaining a better understanding of the issues facing rural Saskatchewan, the benefits of thinking regionally, sharing ideas and co-operation through their experience with WaterWolf. One Board member stated that their experience with the WaterWolf led to interest and membership in other provincial and location organizations.

The capacity of the staff was enhanced through continuous training with ESRI Canada (GIS) and using that training to work with communities to produce GIS outputs. They further developed their project management skills as they evaluated and managed a large, complex and highly significant project. They enhanced their team working skills as the contributions of all members were critical to fulfill the obligations of the job.

Staff gained confidence in dealing and partnering with all levels of government and government departments. Staff and board members developed their interpersonal skills with participants who ranged from local councilors to Rural Team members. The networking base of all involved expanded tremendously to include representatives and staff of federal, provincial, and Aboriginal government; faculty at Brandon University and the University of Saskatchewan; and other government and non-government organizations. Staff and some board members improved their ability to plan and manage multiple projects.

Board members were also able to use their experience with WaterWolf as well as their learning about rural economic development, capacity building and partnering to develop new and successful projects in their own communities. The skills and knowledge acquired at the regional round table were important in the formation of an non-governmental organization in one community to bring in international students for their final two years of high school. The regional round table approach has also been used to organize a Lake Diefenbaker Destination Tourism group to develop a comprehensive marketing plan (Martz, 2008).

WaterWolf staff has devoted a lot of time and effort in initiating a GPS asset management and emergency response system for their region:

The intent of this project is to assist municipalities in asset management and evidence based decision-making, as well as provides real time road and grader data to emergency dispatch organizations to help move rural dispatch to a digital base. We currently have commitments from two rural municipalities to equip their graders [with GPS units](MidSask, Spring 2007).

In 2007, WaterWolf was awarded the Minister's Award of Excellence and Innovation to recognize their efforts, innovation and initiatives towards economic development and support to their communities. To be a recipient of awards such as this certainly underscores WaterWolf's capacity to initiate and lead innovation and change in their region (MidSask Winter 2007).

The Community Collaboration Story

Influence and Advocacy

The Community Futures Development Corporation/Regional Economic Development Authority and WaterWolf Regional Round Table have become "visible" within the provincial government, and starting, in a small way, to influence how things are done. Representatives from a number of provincial government departments have attended WaterWolf meetings and meetings of the project committees. Some provincial government employees have devoted a significant amount of time to WaterWolf projects. The WaterWolf Regional Round Table had two meetings with representatives of provincial government departments and crown corporations including Highways and Infrastructure, Energy and Resources; Municipal Affairs; First Nation and Métis Affairs; SaskPower; Enterprise and Innovation and Tourism; and Parks, Culture and Sport. A future follow-up meeting is being organized by the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation. A planner from the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport has been a valuable asset in developing the Lake Diefenbaker Destination Area Plan.

Resiliency and Sustainability

In the beginning some of the board members were not sure how successful WaterWolf would be. Some of the uncertainty was about the degree to which regional co-operation would develop or what results would be achieved. According Martz's 2008 report:

> In retrospect, many of the Board members reported that the WaterWolf Regional Round Table had achieved better results than they had originally expected. They mentioned much better regional interest and co-operation than anticipated, more positive networking and participation among the communities and municipal governments in the region and the much higher profile of the region as very positive outcomes. Board members also mentioned that the WaterWolf Regional Round Table was a great example and a template for similar projects.
>
> > Results so far have exceeded my wildest dreams. I never in a million years dreamt we would be sitting around a table representing some 45 municipal governments all talking about working together and envisioning a new Saskatchewan. I follow along in wonder (Martz, 2008).

Results so far have exceeded my wildest dreams. I never in a million years dreamt we would be sitting around a table representing some 45 municipal governments all talking about working together and envisioning a new Saskatchewan. I follow along in wonder.

At the outset, the staff hoped to create a regional service delivery project that would reinforce and create new and existing partnerships with their local municipalities, provincial and federal governments. They hoped that the various levels of government could be shown the value of regional planning and capacity building. Although the staff knew there would be a considerable amount of time and energy needed for the project, they underestimated what it would actually take. Looking back, staff are very pleased with the progress they have made. Both staff and board members commented in their recent evaluation that they didn't expect that the WaterWolf Regional Round Table would be as successful as it has been, more municipalities are coming to the table than expected and landowners, councilors, developers and government departments are now realizing the value of land use planning.

There is a strong sense among the staff and board members who responded to the [2008 evaluation] survey that the momentum built by this project is sustainable. They recognize that at least in the near term and perhaps for some projects over the long term, they will have to continue to access outside funding from the federal and provincial governments. Some board

members noted that it will be important to continue to have success stories that are tangible for people to ensure support for WaterWolf to continue and support to a move to new models of internal funding. The importance of strong leadership and consistency in the people involved has been a key asset and will be important in the future. It was also noted that there will be challenges as some of the more divisive issues in the region are addressed. Another challenge will be the need for a shift in mentality from a government funded pilot project to a service model that is self sustaining through user pay funding. The goal of staff is to continue to move slowly in that direction and to be 75-80% there after the next three year phase.

> *It will be important to continue to have success stories that are tangible for people to ensure support for WaterWolf to continue and support to a move to new models of internal funding.*

Suggestions from board members to ensure sustainability included:

- continuing to have success stories that produce tangible benefits for people in communities;
- taking on new projects;
- additional resources for implementation of the strategies being developed. Both government resources and local funding by participants were suggested as sources;
- the continued endorsement and participation of the members;
- a strong leader with skills and dedication;
- consistency in the people involved; and
- action taken by all levels of government to ensure the lessons learned from WaterWolf are recognized (Martz, 2008).

Yukon Regional Round Table

Processes and Infrastructure

Vision, Goals and Objectives

The Yukon Regional Round Table developed a vision with six key themes: collaborative community economic development; accountability and credibility; healthy, respectful relations; networking; coordinated promotion; and social development initiatives (Gibson & Annis, 2008).

Objectives of the Yukon advisory group included: maintaining open channels of communication with the regional round table; serving as a conduit for communication between all members of the Rural Team and the regional round table; establishing open lines of communication with other provincial/territorial Rural Team advisory groups engaged in similar processes in other provinces; and assisting the regional round table to access information, human resources, and financial resources that will move their projects forward.

Membership

The regional round table deliberatively strived for inclusive membership for all Yukon communities and First Nations. Communities and First Nations were welcomed to join the regional round table at any time. It was decided at the February 2006 meeting that each community and First Nation could send two representatives to the regional round table. The suggested representation was one elected and one administrative representative. Fourteen out of eighteen Yukon communities and First Nations are now members of the regional round table.

Coordination and Administration

At the outset of the regional round table formation, RDI recognized that the long distance between Brandon Manitoba and the Yukon would necessitate enhancing the facilitation process used with other regional round tables. To this end, RDI sought and engaged local community development professionals to assist with meeting organization, facilitation and recording. As time went on, and a core group of communities came together to form a regional round table, the need for local facilitation diminished. RDI continued to retain a meeting organizer and recorder on behalf of the regional round table until June 2006 when the regional round table engaged a part-time facilitator to coordinate and facilitate regional round table activities. Initially this person took on the financial administrative tasks for the regional round table. The financial administrative role was transferred from the facilitator to a contracted financial administrator for a few months. The Village of Haines Junction then volunteered to handle the financial administration for the regional round table. After approximately one year, the financial administration function moved to the Village of Teslin, which, at the writing of this report, is still providing the financial administration for the regional round table.

Resources

Both the regional round table and advisory group noted resources were required for the regional round table to effectively function. It was noted, "the regional round table can not be done off the corner of someone's desk. It needs to have real resources and recognition of person's involvement" (Gibson & Annis, 2008). Member communities and First Nations financially supported members to attend meetings and absorbed costs of hosting meetings. Numerous in-kind contributions, such as contributions of time and supplies, were made to the regional round table and advisory group.

At the writing of this report, the Yukon Regional Round Table has four project funding proposals awaiting decisions:

Proposals #1 and # 2. *Sustainability and Development Initiative*: to the Yukon Territory Community Development Fund and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Targeted Investment Fund

- The funding request was for $91,500.00, with a total project budget of $113,000. The regional round table would provide $21,500 in support from in-kind and other sources.

Proposal #3. *Asset Mapping Pilot* to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Targeted Investment Program for $28,215.00.

- The Asset Mapping Project was already funded with $19,400 from the Yukon Territory Community Development Fund.

Proposal #4 *Asset Mapping Database*: to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Innovation and Knowledge Fund for $19,100.

- A separate Database Pilot Project was proposed with a total budget of $23,600, with the regional round table providing $4500 in project coordination and administration costs.

Communication

In the past, there was no regular forum for communications between communities and First Nations. One Yukon Regional Round Table representative noted, "this type of forum has been long overdue in my opinion." The value of face-to-face meetings was emphasized by a number of regional round table members as being of great importance. The communications between meetings was identified as a challenge. With the open membership approach, the regional round table had to be proactive with their communications. As not all communities and First Nations are able to participate in each meeting, the regional round table had to be able to communicate effectively between meetings.

To address communication issues, the regional round table utilized an online project management website called Basecamp[6]. Through this program, members of the regional round table and advisory group were able to post key documents, messages and collaborate on proposal development. Each member received personalized access to the website and the website became a central depository for all documents, meeting notes, proposals, and discussions. Members were divided on their opinion of the usefulness of this online tool. For many, Basecamp was seen as a good way to communicate information to all members. They felt the website helped create transparency within the group as all documents were available to everyone. A number of members noted they used online tool sparingly or were reluctant to use the website. Reasons cited for not using the online tool include not having the time to explore the program to understand it, lack of confidence with computer programs, and the lack of Internet access at home (Gibson & Annis, 2008).

Partnerships and Relationships

At the beginning of the regional round table process members viewed the regional round table as an opportunity to build respect and trust among participating communities, First Nations, and government representatives. At an early meeting, a First Nation member addressed "the wall" they perceived that existed between First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Since that meeting the regional round table intentionally addressed building understanding between First Nation and non-First Nation communities. The regional round table's agenda included capacity sessions on Aboriginal self-governance and conflict resolution. A member noted the regional round table was currently building relationships that would assist in building trust among the group. A member indicated, "this has definitely been one of the best byproducts of the entire process. Communications and trust between communities, First Nations, and government is still building but we are starting to see benefits". A regional round table member expressed the regional round table has helped build understanding between government departments, communities and First Nations. This understanding will be a key asset toward building trust (Gibson & Annis, 2008).

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[6] Further information on Basecamp is available at www.basecamphq.com.

The Community Collaboration Story

The creation of the regional round table brought communities, First Nations, and government together at the same table. As one member noted, "we had very little experience working with our neighbouring First Nation, not to mention other communities and First Nations across the territory." A key benefit of the regional round table to date is the increased understanding of communities and First Nations. A prime example cited was the understanding of Aboriginal self-governance. A number of members indicated they did not understand Aboriginal self-governance until the capacity session organized by the regional round table. One member said, "I grew up here but have never understood the structures of local First Nations. This is the first time I have heard a clear message about First Nation self-governance." Another member noted " I was much more involved with my local First Nation since the formation of the regional round table. The regional round table has been influential in assisting local collaboration between the community and the First Nation" (Gibson & Annis, 2008).

> *The regional round table has helped build understanding between government departments, communities and First Nations. This understanding will be a key asset toward building trust.*

The regional round table was not exempt from conflict, although all members were unanimous in describing the conflicts to date as healthy. A member noted the regional round table did not leave conflict unresolved at meetings. When conflicts occurred, members took time to discuss the issues and find consensus. "By and large, people are respectful of opinions. Every opinion is valued and we look for consensus. Personal ideas and agendas are usually put aside". It was also noted "the consensus format of the group has been advantageous as we are able to understand the various perspectives from across the region." A member described the regional round table meetings as venues for "open and frank discussions, but this was the intention from the beginning."

The regional round tables entered into one formal and five informal partnerships with external organizations. In addition, the regional round table strengthened many existing relationships between communities and First Nations. The formal partnership is:

Yukon Tourism and Culture – A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the regional round table and Yukon Tourism and Culture to assist in developing the new Yukon online tourism calendar of events. In addition, a representative of Yukon Tourism and Culture has been a member of the advisory group from the beginning.

Informal partnerships include:

Arctic Health Research Network Yukon (www.arctichealth.ca) –The Arctic Health Research Network Yukon is part of a Canadian tri-territorial health research network linking northern regions to improve health outcomes through research. Two members of the Network attended a regional round table meeting and expressed an interest in the asset-mapping project the regional round table was undertaking.

Crime Prevention Yukon (www.crimeprevention.yk.ca) - As a non-profit organization that encourages activities and networks that lower crime in communities, Crime Prevention Yukon was interested in learning about the regional round table and a representative attended the September 2006 meeting and made a presentation about her organization.

Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia (www.unbc.ca/cdi) - In building the asset mapping, the regional round table established a connection with the Community Development Institute at the University of Northern British Columbia, which had

been active in research in northern communities. The regional round table met with an Institute representative who provided suggestions on the asset mapping process.

National Rural Research Network – In February 2008 the regional round table had the opportunity to co-host the Northern Dialogue Session with the National Rural Research Network. The Northern Dialogue Session focused on the themes of regional governance, Aboriginal self-governance, understanding and working with diversity, and capacity building. Through the workshop, members had the opportunity to network with researchers, community development practitioners, and government representatives from southern Canada.

Yukon College (www.yukoncollege.yk.ca) – In 2007, RDI partnered with Yukon College to assist in the collaborative evaluation. Yukon College also served as host for one regional round table meeting.

The regional round table positively demonstrated that communities, First Nations, and government could work together. Yukon Regional Round Table members indicated that the process of working together was time-consuming and frustrating at times; however, the results far exceeded the effort. Changes in membership in both the regional round table and advisory group created challenges: lack of continuity in members required that new relationships to be developed. One regional round table member noted that many people under-estimated the time and resources required to develop and sustain the inter-community/First Nation relationships.

Capacity Development

The regional round table purposefully undertook activities to increase the capacity of the regional round table and its members. In conjunction with the meetings, a series of capacity building sessions were held. These sessions included conflict resolution, collaborative evaluation, First Nation's self-governance, sustainability/social economy, residential school compensation, and asset mapping.

As noted in the 2008 evaluation report, (Gibson & Annis, 2008) all regional round table members noted they personally gained skills and knowledge through the regional round table although some were difficult to describe and count. Knowledge and skills gained included:

- I learned a lot about asset mapping. Prior to the regional round table I had never heard about this. After learning about asset mapping through the regional round table meetings, two groups I am involved with are now looking at this kind of model. I have been able to bring much of the information I learned from the regional round table to these groups.

- I learned and refined my active listening skills.

- I gained a better relationship with First Nation communities through the territory that I have never had in the past 20 years I have lived here.

- Travelling to each of the communities and First Nations has been a huge learning [experience] for me. Prior to the regional round table, I had never been to many of the other communities. As I travel I am learning about each community, their assets, their opportunities, and their challenges.

> *Travelling to each of the communities and First Nations has been a huge learning [experience] for me.*
> *Prior to the regional round table, I had never been to many of the other communities.*
>
> *As I travel I am learning about each community, their assets, their opportunities, and their challenges.*

- A key capacity I gained is I realize we, as communities, do not have to work alone. Working together with neighbouring communities and First Nations was rare in my community.

- The regional round table process is a bit like 'herding cats'. Through the process I have gained many skills in group facilitation.

- I learned to allow others to speak and hear other people's thoughts and opinions.

- I gained a better understanding of tourism and how to relate to the Department of Tourism.

- I gained an appreciation and understanding for the different ways things are done among the municipalities and First Nations.

- The training session on First Nations self-governance was an eye-opener. Since that training session I am better able to understand the roles and responsibilities of the local First Nation, which has changed my approach to working with the First Nation.

- I learned to communicate with people. I was quite shy and did not speak well in public. At the regional round table meetings I now feel comfortable speaking, something I was definitely not anxious to do when I first started with the regional round table!

- I try to apply regional round table meeting techniques to my local town council.

Influence and Advocacy

Stemming from a lack of understanding of community-based tourism initiatives in the region and the lack of a year-round online source of tourism events, the Yukon Regional Round Table pursued building a coordinated regional approach to an online tourism calendar. The culmination of the regional round table's discussions was a proposal to Yukon Tourism and Culture for the development of a regional website and to build capacity within local communities and First Nations for updating key local information such as upcoming events and tourist attractions. This proposal was not funded, however, the regional round table received the attention of Yukon Tourism and Culture which was in the process of a large scale review of their website. The department approached the regional round table to provide suggestions and comments for the re-development of the tourism website. These efforts culminated in a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the regional round table and Yukon Tourism and Culture.

The regional round table has more influence that we originally recognized. Now we need to focus on how to use the influence for positive changes in our communities.

The initial reaction of the members was disappointment because the department did not accept the proposal. However, the meaningful contributions towards the re-development of the territorial tourism website and the Memorandum of Understanding were acknowledged as "success". One regional round table member noted this was the first tangible output the regional round table had produced and a "very significant achievement".

Through collaborative efforts such as these, regional round table members acknowledged their strength as a collective regional voice. A member noted, "the regional round table has more influence than we originally recognized. Now we need to focus on how to use the influence for positive changes in our communities." During the earlier meetings, the regional round table explored two formal structures: a registered non-profit society and an incorporated group. The regional round table decided to pursue neither option. A member noted, "We already have more power as an organization than we would ever have as a non-profit."

Resiliency and Sustainability

At the beginning of the process, the Yukon Regional Round Table was provided process funding through the Models Program until the end of March 2008. In February 2008, regional round table members were unanimous in expressing their desire for the regional round table to continue beyond March 2008. At the writing of this report, the regional round table and advisory group are exploring funding opportunities to support regional round table activities.

In reflecting on the past two and half years, the regional round table members agreed the benefits have out weighed the costs of participating in the regional round table. From the community perspective, the costs of participating in the regional round table have been low. Many members were quick to note they believe the value of the regional round table is still to be discovered. In moving forward, members identified three items to address. First, the regional round table members need to have active leadership from all members with each member assisting the regional round table in accomplishing its goals. Second, the regional round table needs to continue building relationships among communities and First Nations. Third, the regional round table needs to explore methods to keep communities and First Nations engaged that couldn't participate in the meetings.

Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table

Dr. Nicole Vaugeois of Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo British Columbia, partnered with RDI to conduct a collaborative evaluation of Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table. When the regional round table moved away from the Community Collaboration Model Project, RDI provided funding for a transition period and Dr. Vaugeois agreed to document and report on this transition (Vaugeois, 2007).

Processes and Infrastructure

Vision, Goals and Objectives

Forming a regional round table was viewed as an opportunity to bring the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the region to the same table to advance common goals, one being the development of tourism along the Alaska Highway corridor. One of the primary goals for the regional round table was to strengthen relationships with representatives from the First Nation communities

Membership

Membership in the regional round table included Aboriginal, local government elected officials; representation from local industry and economic development officers (as ex officio). The membership of the initial regional round table included federal, provincial and local level government agencies, municipalities and First Nations communities. As was the design, this structure was also to link Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table to Rural Team British Columbia, and RDI.

After becoming aware of the loss of funding support through the Community Collaboration Model Project, some of the municipal groups within the regional round table strengthened their commitment to the regional initiative. For example, arterial communities such as Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge both offered to host regional round table meetings.

Coordination and Administration

The regional round table was administered by the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association administrative staff who coordinated six regional round table meetings and two transitional meetings.

Resources

The Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association had financial support from its membership, as well as for the projects it had underway, such as the Alaska Highway Community Initiative.

Partnerships and Relationships

With Member Communities

After meeting one another through the activities planned by the regional round table, stronger networks in the region and enhanced partnerships emerged. For example, the Peace Liard Regional Arts Council signed a Memorandum with the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association to develop cultural tourism along the Alaska Highway Corridor. The Executive Director maintained communication with administrative personnel of the Yukon Regional Round Table. Tourism staff in some of the municipalities formed stronger working relationships and discussed the potential for joint marketing initiatives and packaging their products.

With Rural Team British Columbia

According to Dr. Vaugeois's report, when the Administrator of the North Peace Economic Development Commission and the Executive Director of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association initially approached the Rural Team British Columbia Regional Advisor regarding establishing a regional round table in northeastern British Columbia, he was very candid and explained that the time required to establish a regional round table was beyond his time commitments. In addition, he also explained that since the majority of the Rural Team members were from the lower mainland, representatives from government agencies that were more involved with the north would have had interest in dealing with the issues of northeastern British Columbia and sitting as members of the advisory group. However, when the Executive Director of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association, RDI and the representatives of the Rural Team British Columbia initially met in Vancouver to discuss the possibility of forming a regional round table RDI's impression was that the Rural Team was a fully participating partner. RDI and Rural Team British Columbia subsequently signed a Memorandum of Understanding that outlined the roles and responsibilities respectively of the Rural Team and RDI.

Dr. Vaugeois noted that through her discussions with regional round table members that, from their perspective, the interest by the majority of the Rural Team members appeared to be minimal. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of what was taking place with the regional round table and of the role that the Rural Team was to play in its overall success. This "disconnect" was felt by many of the regional round table members to be an important "missing link" in the overall regional round table process. Without a clear understanding of the role of the Rural Team and advisory group, the regional round table administering body selected members for the advisory group themselves and identified and invited multi-level stakeholders to participate in the regional round table. The misunderstanding due to the perceived or apparent lack of involvement/direction from the Rural Team and selection of the members and creation of

the advisory group by the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association team was a point of weakness in the regional round table. The role of the advisory group and the members seemed not to be clearly defined. Also, the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association team and the regional round table members appeared to not be fully aware that the Rural Team was to play a greater role in establishing the advisory group. In preparation for the September 2006 regional round table meeting, the Rural Secretariat assigned an interim chairperson for the advisory group. The appointee was very uncomfortable with the position and unfortunately this step was not well received by the First Nation representation on the regional round table. The situation was very confusing and uncomfortable for many of the advisory group members who were not certain of their role or the function of the advisory group. Following that meeting, it was difficult to gain interest/commitment from some of the people who were to sit on the advisory group.

During the transition period, the Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table operated without the links to Rural Team British Columbia and RDI but strengthened its membership regionally. In terms of government involvement during the transition, no other government body joined the regional round table following the original establishment. As evidenced through participation at the March 2007 regional round table meeting, only one government agency, through the provincial Ministry of Economic Development, was present. The advisory group, which was originally comprised of members from various government agencies, appeared to dissolve. At the local level however, the nine municipalities continued to participate in the regional round table.

With Other Government Departments and Agencies

Throughout the transition period, a very important relationship was developed with a representative from the provincial Heritage Branch of the Ministry of Tourism Sport and the Arts department. This representative was a member of Rural Team British Columbia and appeared to be genuinely interested in the area. Over the years, the Heritage Branch did not have enough funds to enable him to travel extensively around the province; however, the funds dedicated through the regional round table enabled him to travel to the region and establish new partnerships. Discussions with this representative at the regional round table meeting prompted the member from Tourism Dawson Creek to help the City of Dawson Creek become better informed about the steps required to establish a Heritage Advisory Committee.

A representative of Industry Canada shared a genuine interest in the regional round table and the opportunities that discussions at the grassroots level would offer for reassessing the value of federal funding programs for rural areas. Unfortunately, he retired January 2007. However, he remains a champion for the process.

With First Nations Communities

One of the primary goals for the Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table was to strengthen relationships with representatives from the First Nation communities. During the original regional round table, this relationship was fostered through the participation of the Northeast Native Advancing Society and the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association which had previously signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work on tourism development initiatives collaboratively.

During the transition period, other community leaders – i.e. Treaty 8 Tribal Council, further respected the relationship between the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association and the Northeast Native Advancing Society. Evidence of this strengthened relationship was that Northeast Native Advancing Society contributed funding to operate the March 2007 regional round table meeting and over one third of all participants at that meeting were from First Nations within the region. Some specific examples of increased involvement included a commitment by the Kaska Dena First Nations to send a representative to the regional round table. As well, in 2006 representatives traveled to Ross River Yukon to attend the Annual General Assembly and invited the Nation to participate. An invitation was extended to the Northeast Native Advancing Society/Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association to attend the 2007 Annual General Assembly at Liard River Hotsprings. As well, Fort Nelson First Nation and McLeod First Nation also became aware of the regional round table and the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association. The remaining funds from RDI for the regional round table meeting held in March 2007 were offset by a Labour Market Partnership agreement between the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association and the Northeast Native Advancing Society. The purpose was to introduce and investigate storytelling techniques. That meeting marked a milestone for the regional round table as representation by the First Nations communities was much stronger. The meeting was attended by the drummers from the Doig River First Nation, elders from the Doig and Blueberry First Nations, and the First Nations Education Coordinator for Northern Lights College.

With Universities and Colleges

Integral to the Community Collaboration Model Project were development of partnerships with academic institutions. In addition with forming a partnership with RDI, an objective of the project was to foster the development of new regional round table/academic institutions partnerships with closer-to-home academic partners. Three academic institutions were involved in this process in northeastern British Columbia.

Rural Development Institute

RDI's relationship with Rural Team British Columbia and the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association began in November 2005 at a joint meeting held in Vancouver British Columbia. At this meeting, RDI explained the Community Collaboration Model Project and the roles and responsibilities of each partner - the Rural Team, the regional round table and the academic institution. RDI was invited to and attended regional round table meetings during 2006. In August 2006, RDI hosted an evaluation-preparation workshop in Atlin British Columbia. The purpose of this workshop was to work with the regional round tables and advisory groups in preparing their evaluation frameworks and plans. Members of Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table, and an academic partner from Malaspina University-College, Dr. Nicole Vaugeois, attended. Prior to this workshop Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table members and RDI had held discussions regarding the evaluation process, data collection, analysis of the findings, storing and ownership parameters. Some Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table members had concerns regarding the evaluation, particularly about data ownership. After several conversations that included members of RDI's Community Collaboration Model Project steering committee, it became clear that much more time would be needed to develop the relationships to enable all parties to understand each others' needs and build consensus regarding data collection, storage and ownership and sharing findings.

Unfortunately, the time-lines to complete evaluations didn't provide enough time for the much-needed relationship building, understanding and consensus-building.

From RDI's perspective, it seemed that the regional round table administrative personnel didn't view RDI as a partner, but rather that of a funder. This seemed to create some frustrations on the administrative personnel's part for providing the documentation agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding. RDI's relationship with the advisory group never really got off the ground. RDI did not attend any Rural Team British Columbia advisory group meetings, and initially all communication was with the Regional Advisor; part way through the year that contact was turned over to the Acting Senior Policy Advisor.

Malaspina University-College (Nanaimo British Columbia)
RDI initially partnered with Dr. Nicole Vaugeois of Malaspina University-College to facilitate the evaluation process. Dr. Vaugeois participated in the evaluation planning workshop in Atlin British Columbia in August 2006 and worked with the regional round table representatives to create an evaluation framework. When the regional round table transitioned out of the Community Collaboration Model Project, Dr. Vaugeois agreed to document the transition.

During the transition period, Dr. Vaugeois remained connected to the regional round table through her role as evaluator and as an advisory group member. She assisted in locating resources and facilitated sections of the regional round table meeting. She further developed some links with individual communities that enhanced her own projects to support rural tourism in British Columbia. The communities of Taylor and Mackenzie, for example, sought out expertise to gain an external perspective on tourism assets through the Tourism Research Innovation Project, coordinated by Dr. Vaugeois and various provincial partners. Vaugeois promoted the regional round table and efforts of the northeastern British Columbia region in presentations at the British Columbia Annual Tourism Industry Conference and in regional presentations, and accompanied the staff and community leaders to visit Minister Stan Hagen in Victoria. Dr. Vaugeois and the Executive Director of the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association collaborated to place a regional liaison in the northeast region of British Columbia for the summer of 2007 to undertake some joint initiatives for the Tourism Research Innovation Project and to follow up on some of the ideas developed during the regional round table meetings.

Northern Lights College
Relationships with representatives from Northern Lights College were also stimulated through the meetings. It is expected that these relationships will be expanded in the future.

With Other Partners
A relationship formed between the regional round table and the Peace Liard Regional Arts Council . In the spring of 2007 and as a result of relationships formed through the regional round table, these two bodies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work collaboratively on tourism development initiatives.

Capacity Development

During the regional round table experience, members of the regional round table built capacity. These capacities resulted from the nature of the activities required with regional collaboration. In the *Collaborative Evaluation Report, July 2007*, Vaugeois observed that members of the regional round table developed the sensitivity required to facilitate a meeting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members. One of the tools used to develop regional collaboration was community storytelling. Stemming from a conversation between the regional round table and the Northeast Native Advancing Society representatives, the idea of using storytelling to advance the work of the regional round table was first discussed in November 2006. The need to learn more about each community in the region also came through in the input session at the meeting, indicating to the group that perhaps the tool would be useful to advance the regional round table. The March 2007 meeting was dedicated to introducing the concept of storytelling, providing examples, and highlighting the opportunities for introducing a storytelling program in the region.

Influence and Advocacy

Members of the regional round table felt that there continued to be a lack of understanding by federal agencies and administrators of government programs for the support and solutions that are required in order to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities of northeastern British Columbia (Vaugeois, 2007).

Resiliency and Sustainability

The transition of the regional round table from the Community Collaboration Model Project resulted in new opportunities and challenges for the northeast British Columbia region. The announcement of the transition and an understanding of why the Community Collaboration Model Project did not fit the region created a renewed commitment among the participants of the regional round table. One participant stated "We failed because we were trying to fit a square peg into a round hole – but let's learn from that and not do it again**.** The relationships formed and emphasis on a common goal developed early in the regional round table process allowed the regional round table to become resilient to funding pressures. Committed partnerships resulted in leveraging for the March 2007 meeting and two communities pledged support for the next meeting. While there were still reporting requirements during the transition period, there was also less administration and reporting expected following the end of the period. This of course was offset by the priority to find new funding partners, write proposals and lobby for support. During the transition period, the regional round table was able to focus more on what they wanted to do and less on a model that they "had to do" due to funding requirements. As the struggle with fit was reduced, the participants responded with ideas to further their goals and spent less time trying to understand what the regional round table was. Not working within the framework of the Community Collaboration Model Project provided the Northeastern British Columbia Regional Round Table with the flexibility to focus on quality of life issues that related to developing a healthy tourism industry and supported a corridor management strategy for the Alaska Highway (Vaugeois, 2007).

The transition period was also marked by some challenges for the regional round table members. Some of these challenges were overcome and others were still being addressed as the regional round table moved forward. The loss of funding security for long term planning impeded the members of the regional round table to move into an implementation stage during meetings. As many of the regional round table members had to travel long distances to participate in the meetings, the transition period was strained by the need for members to

return to their communities to justify continued participation. The initial announcement of the regional round table and enthusiasm of the participating communities served to create a lot of expectations in the region about what could happen when they worked together with government at the table. During the transition period, there was a notable feeling that the region "did not fit" and the regional round table had to realign the expectations of its members and supporting communities (Vaugeois, 2007).

Manitoba Regional Round Tables

The Manitoba regional round tables collectively developed an evaluation framework and measures of success. Throughout 2006-2007 representatives of RDI worked with the regional round tables to evaluate their regional round tables. This endevour resulted in a collaborative evaluation report (Gibson & Annis, 2007).

Processes and Infrastructure

Vision, Goals and Objectives

Each regional round table developed a mandate through its vision, goals and objectives. Hudson Bay Neighbours established itself as more of an advocacy network. Northern Vision and Bayline had both advocacy and project activities within their mandates. Southwest focused on capacity building and project development. Two of the regional round tables, Bayline and Southwest, went through incorporation processes as means to secure project funding. While the regional round tables remained focused on their visions and goals, Northern Vision, especially, had challenges carrying them out.

Membership

Each regional round table established its membership criteria early on in their development. Bayline and Hudson Bay Neighbours mandated that elected members of their local governments be representatives to the regional round table. Northern Vision encouraged but did not require elected representatives be members of the regional round table. Requiring local decision-makers to be their community's representative enabled those regional round tables to make decisions to move a regional agenda forward. However, arriving at those decisions took considerable time and effort. The Southwest's membership was designated as Economic and Community Development Officers. When talking to Southwest members, a common theme for them was getting attention and support of their respective mayors and town councils. They were constantly challenged with having their projects and activities be seen as regional efforts by the local politicians.

Membership in the steering committee, at first, consisted of federal funders who saw an opportunity to collaborate amongst themselves, and then sought a region and facilitator to enable them to put forward their collaborative efforts. That membership soon expanded to strategically include other funders or potential funders whose mandates and/or interests were in rural and northern Manitoba. As time went by, and as Rural Team Manitoba grew from an ad-hoc networking group to a group with structure and focus, the steering committee's membership started to purposefully include others from the Rural Team.

Changing members was a considerable challenge for the regional round tables and the steering committee. With each change in membership, new relationships needed to be built, which took time and effort, especially as these relationships were often built over considerable geographical distance. In the steering committee, members changed because of new and/or changing

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responsibilities, retirements and changing responsibilities within their respective departments. The steering committee members noted, however, that new people brought new ideas and energy. In some of the regional round tables, membership changes were related to changes in community leadership through elections and retirement. Changing membership also presented challenges of ensuring continuity and linking to the "history" of the organization. While new members brought freshness with new approaches, linking to the past was also important. The regional round tables that had some type of continuity mechanisms in place seem to overcome those challenges better. The changing membership, as well as other factors, likely contributed to Northern Vision's inability to meet over the past two years. Changing membership in Southwest over the past year has caused them to pause and re-evaluate their organization. The steering committee's changing membership did not seem to affect its ability to remain a group, however, it did change the connectivity of the steering committee to the regional round tables. Feedback from the regional round table members indicated that when a steering committee member who was their connection to government moved to other responsibilities or retired, the regional round table experienced a disconnect with the steering committee.

Coordination and Administration

Each of the regional round tables approached the coordination and administration of its regional round table differently, and, as stated earlier in this report, that is as was expected because the community collaboration process was not a "cookie cutter" process. The coordination ranged from a total voluntary system, to a blended system, to having paid staff. Southwest and Northern Vision relied on coordination and administration by the regional round table members themselves. In Southwest, the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary assumed many of the administrative responsibilities. Northern Vision, like Southwest, designated coordination and administrative responsibilities to its executive officers. However, as their membership changed, and, as well, the communities' population and demographics changed, the administration and coordination in Northern Vision seemed to flounder.

Hudson Bay Neighbours had unique challenges because of the cross-jurisdictional nature of the organization. Their meetings alternated between Manitoba and Nunavut. The responsibility for organizing a meeting lay with the host community, and that community's representative acted as the co-chairperson. The other co-chairperson was the host of the previous meeting. As they moved away from RDI's facilitation and coordination, the Keewatin Business Development Centre in Arviat Nunavut assumed a coordination and financial administrative role. A meeting coordinator was contracted with, and he organized the meeting held in Gillam in 2005. Legal issues arose from that process and diverted the regional round tables efforts and attentions for some time. The cross-jurisdictional nature of the regional round table passed

Volunteer administration posed challenges for the regional round tables, as those charged with the administration responsibilities were often carrying out those responsibilities "off the side of the desk", that is, in addition to their "regular jobs".

additional challenges. In order to hold a meeting, funding support was needed from both the Manitoba and Nunavut governments. On more than one occasion, one of the governments could provide funding for a meeting but not the other one resulting in the need to try and reschedule the meeting. This inability for the provincial and territorial governments to coordinate their funding efforts impeded Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table's progress.

The Wabowden Community Council initially provided administration and coordination for the Bayline by providing the services of their Community Animator. As the regional round table moved away from external facilitation, they applied for and received funding for regional round table-led projects. As is often the case with project funding, there were gaps where the work needed to be done, but the funds had not arrived. The Wabowden Community Council underwrote the administrative expenses, enabling the work to continue until the funding arrived. Having paid staff to administer Bayline enabled them carry out the regional projects that were important to their region.

Volunteer administration and coordination posed challenges for Southwest, Hudson Bay Neighbours and Northern Vision, as those charged with the administrative responsibilities were often carrying out those responsibilities "off the side of their desks", that is, in addition to their "regular jobs". Where carrying out regional projects were part of their mandate, volunteer administration and coordination to write proposals, secure and report on project funding was a considerable challenge.

Administration and coordination of the steering committee seemed to fall to the Rural Secretariat Regional Advisor. While it is unknown if that was intentional, it seemed to be practical. Because of the evolved connection to the Rural Team and the Rural Secretariat, coordinating and administering a Rural Team sub-committee, as the steering committee became, seemed to be a natural fit with the responsibilities of the Regional Advisor. That individual was a member from the beginning, and has been able to ensure the continuity of the committee, linking its past mandates to its current one.

Communication

Communications were described by regional round table members as pivotal for the regional round tables to operate effectively. The ability to share information, plan meetings, circulate meeting notes, and create dialogues was highlighted as key communications. The regional round table meetings, which were held based on need, priorities, and activities, were the principal means for members to communicate with each other. The time between face-to-face meetings often was time of little communication: the more meetings held, the greater was the communication.

Regional round table representatives make presentations to Town Councils and Economic Development Boards on an ad hoc basis, typically reporting on the regional round table activities. Community discussions were not documented; however, one regional round table member estimated that each community received at least one report on the regional round table activities per year. To assist in communicating the work of the regional round tables, all four utilized local and regional media. Regional round table members indicated they supplied stories and press releases to local newspapers and radio stations most of the time.

Each regional round table had the opportunity to develop information and communication technologies through a partnership with the Community Information Management Network, which provided common tools to create, store, share, and manage community information more effectively online. All four regional round tables developed websites in conjunction with the Community Information Management Network. The original websites contained meeting notes, description of member communities and information on project activities. To assist in building information and communication technologies capacity, the Community Information Management Network provided training for the regional round table members. Approximately

sixteen to twenty people from the four regional round tables received the training between 1999 and 2004. However, three of the four regional round tables indicated their websites were not updated in the past year. Lack of time, lack of training (and ability to take training), and lack of need were cited reasons for no longer utilizing the information and communication technologies tools. Bayline is the only regional round table still actively utilizing the online tools to administer and update their website.

Over the past eight years, communication between and among steering committee members, regional round tables, and other partners/stakeholders fluctuated. Changing membership within the regional round tables and the steering committee contributed to miscommunications or no communication. At times, some regional round table members noted that their communications with the steering committee became infrequent. One regional round table member noted that if a steering committee member was not present at their meeting, they often did not communicate with that steering committee representative after the meeting. It seemed that steering committee members' presence at regional round table meetings facilitated greater communication.

Communicating to other members of government often was a challenge for the steering committee. Some steering committee members constantly needed to communicate within their departments/agencies providing a rationale for their continued involvement with the regional round tables. After the steering committee became a sub-committee of Rural Team Manitoba, the members were able to communicate with other members of government more efficiently by providing updates on regional round tables' and steering committee's activities at the Rural Team meetings.

Partnerships and Relationships

Regional round tables and steering committee members identified that trusting relationships were essential in the Community Collaboration Project. Relationships between and among regional round table members and Steering committee members, as well as with other partners, needed to be created and maintained. A regional round table member stated "we didn't notice the difference that relationships made to a group until we didn't have the relationships anymore."

> *We didn't notice the difference that relationships made to a group until we didn't have the relationships anymore.*

Since 1999, each of the regional round tables formed numerous relationships and partnerships that assisted in building their capacity for undertaking activities and projects. The regional round table members noted that commitment was required in building relationships. One member stated, "there is a recognition that our group functions well because of the commitment of each member." A second member explained, "the more you work together the better results you can achieve." As discussed earlier, membership changes posed challenges because relationships with new members needed to be built. An interesting observation was identified in relationships between regional round tables and the steering committee. The relationships that were developed were perceived to be mostly individual relationships and not organizational relationships, so when a member of either group was replaced, the relationship building began again.

Through the Community Collaboration Project, the steering committee members identified that new and beneficial relationships developed between communities and governments. Connections to the regional round tables provided mechanisms for steering committee members to become more actively and directly engaged with rural and northern communities, increasing their knowledge of community issues, opportunities, and challenges. Over the past eight years, through these relationships, communities provided government departments/agencies with

> *Since 1999, in addition to the partnerships established between the regional round tables and Steering Committee, at least thirty-five new partnerships, both formal and informal, were attributed to the Community Collaboration Project.*

feedback and commentary on policy and programs. Conversely, through direct relationships with government representatives, regional round table members gained greater understanding of how governments and government funding opportunities worked. Those relationships, in several instances, enabled a regional round table member to telephone a government representative directly with questions, requests for assistance, suggestions and feedback.

Each of the regional round tables indicated that they built a number of partnerships as a result of the Community Collaboration Project. In some cases, new partnerships were established, while in other cases existing partnerships were strengthened. Since 1999, in addition to the partnerships established between the regional round tables and steering committee, at least thirty-five new partnerships, both formal and informal, were attributed to the Community Collaboration Project.

A profile of achievement was completed for the Bayline Regional Round Table in 2007 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2007). The report's authors interviewed members of the regional round table and steering committee. The members were asked the question *"have these partnerships actually worked?"* The following is excerpted from that report:

> Responses from interviewees continually supported the assertion that the partnerships developed were very much a key ingredient to the success of Bayline Regional Round Table…an important ingredient of the partnership issue is how Bayline Regional Round Table is perceived by First Nation entities. Since jurisdictional matters between on and off-reserve communities often challenges relationship building efforts, the fact that the

> *This level of cooperation and working together is quite extraordinary.*

> town of Ilford and the War Lake First Nation are linked together closely by geography and that both are active members of Bayline Bayline Regional Round Table, is a significant sign that these partnerships certainly cross jurisdictional boundaries. However, even more instructive were the responses of representatives of two First Nation groups from outside the Bayline area (The Four Arrows Regional Health Authority 'representing the four Island lake First nation communities' and the Bunibonibee 'Oxford House' Cree Nation) when asked about their relationships with the Bayline Regional Round Table. One said 'without the Bayline Regional Round we would not have put ourselves on the map for our food projects' and the other said 'they were very helpful, they always made us feel included, and they shared information and offered practical support.' From experiences with First Nations – other jurisdictional quagmires in other parts of Manitoba – this level of cooperation and working together is quite extraordinary.

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Capacity Development

Over the years, each regional round table established mechanisms and systems to enable their organization to operate. Organizing into regional round tables enabled the communities in the region to pursue goals and objectives that, in most cases, were too large or complex for any one community to tackle. All four regional round tables successfully made applications for funding projects important to their regions. This required developing capacity for proposal writing and project administration. Bayline's capacity grew to be the "go-to" organization for facilitating projects that went beyond the geographic boundaries of their regional round table. Examples of that include the Food Security project (Bayline Regional Round Table, 2008) and the Access to Health Services in Northern Manitoba research project (Community Collaboration to Improve Health Care Access of Northern Residents 2008). The partnerships for these projects were based on the relationships and networks developed by the Bayline and its members through the Community Collaboration Project.

Steering committee members noted that through the Community Collaboration Project, regional round table members increased their understanding of governments, planning processes, cross-jurisdictional issues and long-term planning. A steering committee member illustrated that observation by stating that in 2001 no Kivilliq region of Nunavut communities had long-term economic development plans. By the end of 2006, three communities had plans, while four additional communities were finalizing their plans. It was felt that through the connections and relationships developed at the Hudson Bay Neighbours, the communities' abilities to complete these plans increased. Through the organizational capacity that was developed, steering committee members noted they witnessed increased pride in communities and regions. In their opinion, the communities empowered themselves to take action and be proactive on local issues.

In addition to developing organizational capacity, as was discussed earlier in this report, the Community Collaboration Project facilitated developing collective and individual capacity. For many communities, experience in regional planning was limited before the Community Collaboration Project. Through facilitation, the regional round tables representatives built trusting relationships with other communities and steering committee members that

> *Communities did not realize the power they held collectively.*

moved the regions forward. For communities to successfully work together, a steering committee member noted, communities needed to address past inter-community suspicion and competition. Through the organizational capacity that developed there seemed to be an increased sense of pride in communities and regions. It was noted by another steering committee member communities did not realize the power they held collectively. Regional round tables undertook a coordinated and comprehensive approach. All regional round tables have now realized they have significant power. Regional planning capacity was hindered, at times, by events in each community such as the departure of major employers. In those situations, the affected communities focused their attention back to their communities rather than the region.

The Bayline's experiences highlight outcomes possible once organizational capacity was built. Bayline identified that food and food security were primary concerns within their member communities. Access to healthy foods was limited within communities in northern Manitoba. Many communities only had small general stores with limited selection and hours of operation. Most residents relied on transportation out of their communities to obtain groceries and household products. Four of the six Bayline communities could not access fresh produce within their communities. To address issues related to accessing healthy foods within communities,

> *The garden project provided benefits to not only to the children, who learned valuable skills, but also to the families, who were provided fresh healthy foods that may otherwise have been unavailable.*

Bayline promoted 'community gardening' and 'freezer' projects. Gardening tools including rototillers, were purchased by the regional round table and supplied to each community to develop community and private gardens. In one Bayline community, partners worked closely with the local school to engage youth in growing fresh produce, with the children starting their own gardens at home. Volunteers visited the children and their gardens weekly during the summer of 2006 and assisted them whenever needed, empowering not only the students, but also their families and the communities. The garden project provided benefits not only to the children who learned valuable skills, but also to the families, who were provided fresh healthy foods that may otherwise have been unavailable. In addition to the gardening project, a neighbouring community raised chickens as a means to locally provide the community with fresh poultry.

An additional component related to food security in northern Manitoba as identified by Bayline was the capacity to properly store food. When transportation and access to healthy foods were limited, it became imperative to have the ability to buy in bulk and store food long-term. Many issues related to 'bulk buying' were addressed by Bayline, specifically related to transporting purchased goods. The regional round table worked with Via Rail to enable residents to transport their goods on the train at no charge, even when the number of packages exceeded the passengers' allocated amount. The freezer project helped community residents purchase freezers to store foods, either purchased in bulk or obtained through hunting and gardening. The *Northern Healthy Foods Initiative* (Bayline Regional Round Table, 2008) funded the project and Bayline made the purchases and necessary transportation arrangements. Payment plans were arranged with Social Assistance and Band payrolls and twenty-two freezers were placed in communities. The project was highly valued by partners and residents as a self-sustaining mechanism to improve food security and quality of life. Bayline also lobbied Social Assistance to designate freezers as 'essential appliances' so that appropriate provisions could be made for individuals to pay for their freezers, continuously re-investing in and expanding the project so that more northern residents may benefit.

A research project, *Community Collaboration to Improve Health Care Access of Northern Residents*, (Community Collaboration to Improve Health Care Access of Northern Residents 2008) funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and facilitated by the Rural Development Institute, worked closely with Bayline partners and partners in northern Saskatchewan providing a comparative perspective not only cross-jurisdictionally within northern Manitoba, but also between the two provinces. Researchers in Manitoba conducted interviews and focus groups with community members, service providers and government representatives involved in policy and program design and implementation. Research participants identified several key themes related to accessing health services in their communities, including issues related to accessing services within communities, issues related to regional access, issues related to specialized services that were available only in southern, urban centres and transportation issues. Collaboratively Bayline sought dialogue with local regional health authorities, federal and provincial government representatives to share their concerns and work towards positive solutions that would enhance access to services and quality of life and care in remote northern communities.

Over the past several years, Bayline's Coordinator/Community Animator hired and trained four administrative/secretarial assistants. Each of these assistants took their newly acquired skills and sought full-time employment elsewhere in public and private sectors. Rather than lamenting their "bad fortune" of training people who left soon thereafter for other employment opportunities, a Bayline member saw this a positive by stating that, people in Wabowden view working with Diana as a big item on their resume. Although we have constant turn over, it is great to see this opportunity for young women in the community.

Early on, Southwest identified a lack of learning opportunities for Economic Development Officers in the area. Because their membership was mostly Economic Development Officers, they facilitated a number of training events on topics such as competitive intelligence, business retention and expansion and negotiation skills. In addition, they researched value-added agriculture opportunities, and explored youth migration in their region. While many of the members who participated in those learning opportunities moved to other positions and left the regional round table, they carried the skills and knowledge that they acquired while being members of the regional round table with them to other spheres in their lives.

Through the CCP, a steering committee member noted, "seeds have been planted in communities which have fostered growth and change." Communities and regions were actively engaged in future planning and actions. Regional round tables were empowered and motivated communities to address issues and concerns to achieve mutual benefits and opportunities. A steering committee member noted, "at times, the regional round tables could be chaotic, but out of chaos came opportunities. Many communities capitalized on these opportunities through the Community Collaboration process."

> *In April 2007, Diana DeLorande-Colombe (Community Animator, Bayline Regional Round Table) was recognized for her achievements in community leadership at the Manitoba Rural Forum.*
>
> *On September 1, 2007, Diana was awarded the Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life by the Women's World Summit Foundation. Diana was one of only fourteen winners in the world and the only one from North America.*
>
> *The prize honours creative and courageous women and women's groups around the world for their contributions in improving quality of life in rural communities, for protecting the environment, transmitting knowledge and standing up for human rights and peace.*

Influence and Advocacy

The regional round tables attempted to influence government policy and programs through resolutions, projects and relationship building. The results of this influence are varied depending on the situation. Regional round table members noted that they may have informally influenced members of the steering committee through their involvement, but they were not certain this translated into influence on policy or programs. They believe that they increased the governments' understanding and appreciation of the regions. Through regular connections with steering committee, a regional round table member noted: individuals in government, I would like to believe, have a better appreciation for our communities and region.

Bayline and Hudson Bay Neighbours were active in creating and circulating resolutions based on mutual concern. Since 2005, eight advocacy resolutions directed to private business or government services were adopted by those regional round tables. A member explained, results

from resolutions adopted at regional round table meetings took an enormous amount of time before seeing any results. However, another member perceived that their resolutions were getting people's attention. As mentioned earlier in this report, through the efforts of Bayline, Via Rail changed their baggage policy and also transported gardening equipment and supplies at no charge to each of the Bayline communities. Bayline lobbied for raises in Social Assistance food rates within the provincial government. The Hudson Bay Neighbours lobbied for changes in government programs and policies. A Hudson Bay Neighbours member believes that the regional round table has had some influence on the discussions on the location of a future road connecting Manitoba and Nunavut.

Steering committee members cited regional round tables as community development examples to their colleagues. Southwest was cited as an example in the *Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting through an Integrated Framework* brochure released April 2007 (Green Manitoba, 2007). The Bayline was often cited by the Public Health Agency of Canada as an example of process funding for grass-roots community development.

Resiliency and Sustainability

To be sustainable, organizations must have agreed-upon structures, processes, capacity and resources, both human and financial. While all of the regional round tables developed organizational structures and processes, not all have been able to carry on after 2005, when external facilitation and financial support ended. Only two, Bayline and Southwest continue to meet regularly.

Southwest did not have the challenge and expense of organizing meetings over a large geographic landscape. In fact, that was a non-issue, as at most, it was a one-hour drive to a meeting. Their challenge, however, was changing membership and the associated continuity issues, as well as not being all that visible with their political leaders. This left the members with competing priorities, at times, for the little time that the members could afford to spend working on the regional round table activities.

Hudson Bay Neighbours not only had the challenge of a large geographic landscape, they also had cross-jurisdictional logistics to deal with as well. They were further challenged because most of the operational responsibilities, which were being provided by the facilitator until 2005, now lie with volunteers who already have busy lives.

Northern Vision has all but ceased to function. There was an attempt in 2006 to restart the regional round table, expanding their membership and mandate. Although there were good intentions to continue, nothing has happened since. In addition to having similar challenges of operational responsibilities lying with busy volunteers, the communities within Northern Vision are in a state of change with demographic shifts and population changes.

Funding is all project-based, so the focus is on that, for example, food security. There are other urgent issues such as housing; we do them on the periphery.

Bayline continues to exist, and in fact has grown in capacity since 2004. They manage to carry on their operations by seeking project funding, and by having the underlying support of the Wabowden Community Council. Pragmatically, their project choices were those for which funding was available. One Bayline member stated they followed the money: "funding is all project-based, so the focus is on that, for example, food security. There are other urgent issues such as housing; we do them on the periphery. Our priorities would have been different if we had general funding". When asked what they saw in

the future for Bayline, members stated "if the founding people and Diana were to leave, the regional round table would still exist – there is enough of a foundation—even with less funding, we would exist".

As discussed earlier, the regional round tables were provided resources from 1999-2005 to fund the processes of forming regional round tables. These funds provided for facilitation and travel and other costs associated with bringing community representatives together from across vast geographical regions. However, that funding ended in March 2004 for three of the regional round tables, and a little later for Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table. It seems where there was no provision to engage and pay staff to carry out the operations of the regional round tables, it was very difficult for them to carry on, once all supports were removed.

Some Northern Vision members have gone to other places, some remain, and new ones are joining. However, it seems the current members are directing their focus back to their communities and dealing with the communities' issues and challenges and there isn't a common vision anymore within the regional round table. It is questionable whether Northern Vision has the organizational capacity to carry on. There are those among the members of Hudson Bay Neighbours who feel there is political will for them to carry on; they are now figuring out a way to do that. Southwest is in transition as founding members have left, and new members are joining. They have a history of seeking project-funding, so if the membership is able to carry out the work of the regional round table in addition to their "day jobs", they too may carry on. Bayline is carrying on; leveraging what is available to them, to new opportunities that reflect their vision and goals. One of their members summarized it this way: it's OK to have a big goal, just so long as you understand that you can get there only one step at a time. Accountability, transparency and good financial records, minutes and resolution summaries are all there for those who follow us.

Manitoba Regional
Round Tables

WaterWolf Regional Round Table

"In 2007, WaterWolf was awarded the Minister's Award of Excellence and Innovation to recognize their efforts, innovation and initiatives towards economic development and support to their communities.
To be a recipient of awards such as this certainly underscores WaterWolf's capacity to initiate and lead innovation and change in their region."
(from MidSask, Winter 2007)

Lessons Learned:
Community Collaboration Model Project

Partnerships and Capacity Development

What was demonstrated over the past eight years is that developing trusting and valued relationships and partnerships within and between communities, governments; and academic institutions took persistence, deliberate effort, time, resources, and committed, skilled and sustained leadership. In each of the regional round tables, some of the communities needed to overcome historical rivalries, or as Russ McPherson of the WaterWolf Regional Round Table has often stated, the "hockey wars".

Moving from rivals for attention and resources from governments took deliberate effort and visionary leadership. The persistence of the Bayline Regional Round Table to seek funding for the food security project, and leverage that and other funding to achieve additional goals is evidence of committed and skilled leadership. WaterWolf Regional Round Tables' ability to gather more than forty towns, villages and rural municipalities together on issues such as land-use planning speaks to the visionary leadership of the Board of Directors and the staff.

Overcoming the historic challenges, as well as the large geographic distances between communities took considerable amounts of time and effort. As Baker noted in his research findings, it can take up to ten years for a muti-community organization to reach stability and sustainability. A contributing factor to the inability to form a regional round table using the Community Collaboration Model Project in northeastern British Columbia was there wasn't sufficient time to develop the relationships necessary to understand each partner's perspectives and build consensus on processes for moving the regional round table forward.

Beverly Cigler, a professor of public policy and administration at Penn State University conducted case studies of collaborative partnerships in Michigan and Alberta. From this research, Cigler developed a list of pre-conditions within the local context for muti-community collaborations. Those pre-conditions include: a disaster occurrence; community fiscal stress or perceived stress by key local decision-makers; the presence of a political constituency for cooperation and/or the perception by key officials that such a contingency exists; supportive programs provided by external agents, such as state government, professional and municipal associations and university programs (Cigler, 1999).

In the Community Collaboration Model Project, there were elements of all four pre-conditions. However, project demonstrated that **visionary opportunities** brought communities together. The civic leaders in the Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table saw an opportunity to cross jurisdictional boundaries and form a regional round table where the sum was greater than the parts to give them greater opportunities for influencing policies and programs. The Southwest Regional Round Table members saw an opportunity for Economic Development Officers of small individual communities to pool resources for training and research. The Yukon Regional Round Table members seized the opportunity to come together in a first-ever forum of communities and First Nations. WaterWolf Regional Round Table leaders envisioned a future whereby their member communities and rural municipalities determined their own fate around land use planning, as well as other agreed-upon priorities.

Lessons Learned: Regional Round Tables

As was discussed earlier in this report, the regional round tables need organizational infrastructure if they wish to succeed over the long term. They need to have visions, goals and objectives, which need to be revisited from time to time and revised as needed. They need to have terms of reference for membership that at least includes "who" the members are, "how long" they serve, and what the decision-making process is. Likewise, there should be clearly defined roles and expectations for the executive and for those who are coordinating and administering the regional round tables. It has also been discussed earlier that there needs to be continuous communication using a variety of media and technologies that are appropriate and accessible. Absence of organizational infrastructure can lead to misunderstandings, tensions, and ultimately the failure of the regional round table to achieve its goals.
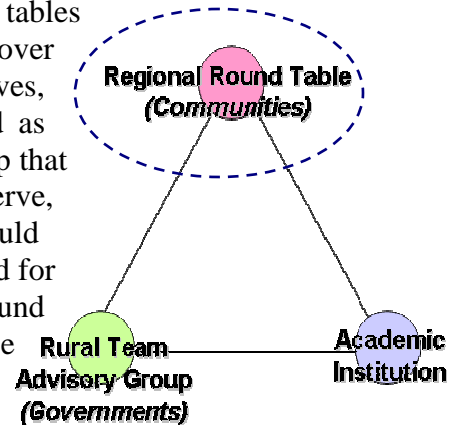
To effectively participate in multi-community collaborations, regional round tables need individuals who have the desire, skills and time to devote to multi-community collaborative efforts. It was difficult for the regional round tables that did not have paid staff to carry out their mandates. The responsibility to plan, organize, conduct and record the meetings fell to busy volunteers. The responsibility to ensure that proposals were written, and if/when funded, were carried out was burdensome for volunteer members. Northern Vision Regional Round Table did not have a staff person, and struggled to achieve their goals. Comments from Southwest Regional Round Table members indicated that they were worried about the continued viability of the regional round table because of the "full plates" of their members with their "regular" jobs. The Yukon Regional Round Table faced the same dilemma, however in the short term they had the resources to engage a part-time coordinator/facilitator, and have plans to recruit a permanent coordinator. Long term, as demonstrated in the Bayline experience, Yukon Regional Round Table intend to pay for this service through project dollars. This is problematic, because if they do not receive project funding, they will not have process funding, and the viability of the Yukon Regional Round Table becomes questionable. The skilled leadership of the WaterWolf staff enabled the regional round table to work on its goals and objectives successfully.

Member communities need to contribute both cash and in-kind resources to the regional round tables to be sustainable. As illustrated earlier in this report, the communities, in fact, contributed significant in-kind resources to their regional round tables and because of the nature and reporting requirements of the Community Collaboration Model Project, the in-kind contributions became visible and evident. That is not always the case because in-kind contributions are often seen as "soft" contributions that are of lesser value.

Overcoming the jurisdictional problems of territorial/provincial funding support for meetings was difficult and almost impossible to attain for the Hudson Bay Neighbours Regional Round Table. The funding to support travel and organizational costs for meetings did not seem to be available from both jurisdictions at the same time. This will likely be a challenge for any regional round table that crosses political boundaries, so collaborative planning and discussions need to take place early in the formation phase of regional round table development.

Lessons Learned: Academic Institutions

The Community Collaboration Model Project was intentionally designed to include post-secondary academic institutions such as universities and colleges. This included partnering to provide facilitation and evaluation as well as fostering partnerships that may have not previously existed. In the Manitoba regional round tables, the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University was the academic institution that partnered with the regional round tables to facilitate the formation and evaluation processes. In Saskatchewan, that connection was made with the University of Saskatchewan. In the Yukon, both Yukon College and the Rural Development Institute partnered with the regional round table. In Northeastern British Columbia, a partnership developed between the regional round table and Malaspina University-College of Nanaimo British Columbia. That partnership endured even after ending the Community Collaboration Model Project efforts. In addition, the academic institutions benefited from partnerships that developed with each other.
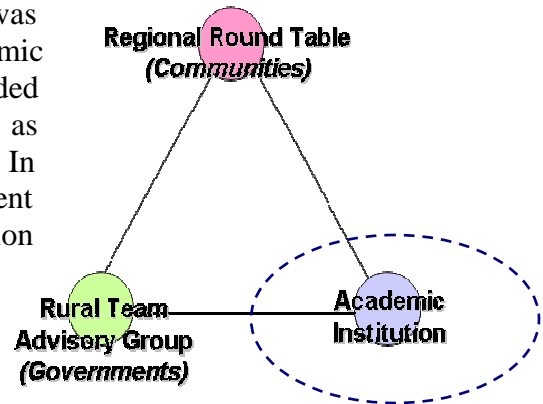
A primary objective of the Community Collaboration Model Project was to provide opportunities for students to build capacity in community development research and practices, and to participate in in-the-field community development processes. Two Masters of Rural Development students from Brandon University and one student from the University of Saskatchewan actively participated in the project. In addition, two recent graduates of the Masters of Rural Development program actively coordinated components of the project. One student described the experiences:

> Learning to work with communities in building capacity was truly beneficial as a student…learning to work with people had its benefits and challenges…but how to handle those challenges is an art …learning to talk in public presentations I have to give …was not an easy task at first [and] still something I am learning…the art of facilitating HUGE!. When I had to do focus groups for my thesis and after my thesis, as a research associate, learning how to facilitate <u>well</u> is difficult. There were a lot of things I picked up from the RRT [regional round table] meetings, such as making sure everyone gets a chance to talk, how to get conversations flowing, what to do if there are a few dominant participants, keeping it fun and interesting, etc. I had the opportunity to participate in report writing, it has since been very valuable in the research I am doing now.
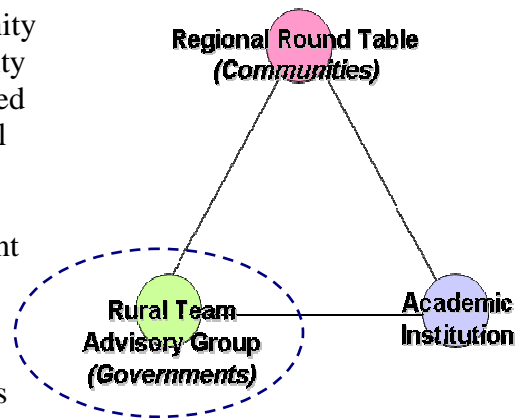
Another viewed the experiences this way:

> As a student many of my interactions were with the Bayline Regional Round Table in northern Manitoba. Through this project I gained first-hand knowledge about many of the challenges that northern people and communities face, as well as how they creatively approach those challenges. Experience, in addition to education, enriched my studies. Education and experience provide insight into many of the issues rural and northern communities face, enabling me to continue to meaningfully contribute to academically and professionally to the fields of rural and community development.

To effectively participate in multi-community collaborations, academic institutions need to find new and creative ways to engage the human and capital resources of universities and colleges in communities to be more engaged in community development processes. Academic institutions need to view communities as something more than research laboratories, and communities should be able to view academic institutions as resources for their efforts. Academic institutions also need to better understand and value community service by refining understanding of how community service is defined when individuals are "judged" for advancement purposes.

Lessons Learned: Governments

From the lessons learned in the Community Collaboration Project, 1999-2004, the Community Collaboration Model Project was intentionally designed to require government participation through the Rural Teams in the provinces/territories. As was discussed earlier, this was an evolutionary learning experience as the Community Collaboration Project's government partners moved from a management committee to a steering committee to finally, a sub-committee of the Rural Team. Requiring participation of the Rural Team was intended to ensure that there was government "buy-in" to the process, as well as putting forth the concept and practice of "partnering" with communities. Where there was a commitment of the advisory groups to attend and participate in the regional round table meetings, the relationships and partnerships developed and grew. Comments by both regional round table and advisory group members suggested there was mutual respect and appreciation. When the advisory group members were less able to attend and participate in regional round table meetings, the partnerships appeared to be more tentative. For the most part, the advisory group members participation in the community collaboration process appeared to be conducted "off the side of their desks", adding to their already-busy working environment, and perhaps "under the radar" of their mandates.
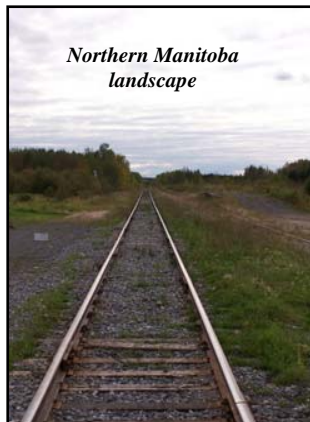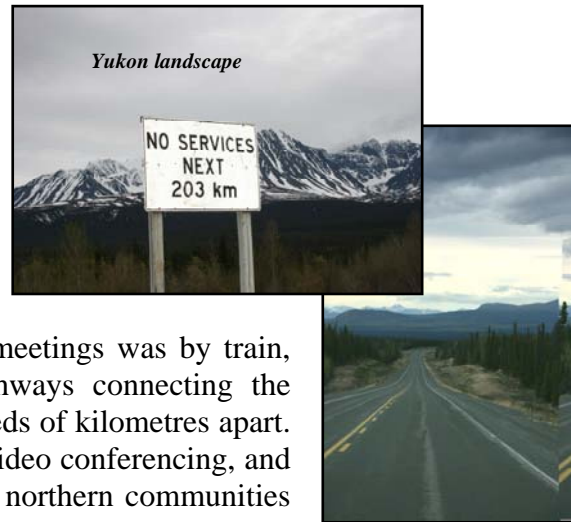
Governments need to see that investing in community development processes in an appropriate use of public funds. Governments need to move from funding deliverables to supporting capacity development in the ways similar to that demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project. For community/region-government partnerships to be sustained and effective, government representatives need to have mandates and reporting structures that are flexible enough to work with communities and regions in non-traditional ways and to move them from working "under the radar" to working "within the radar". The Community Collaboration Model Project demonstrated that investing in community development processes yielded increased partnership and capacity development and produced tangible benefits to the regions involved. Governments need to better manage their complex accountability structures. They also need to better manage files horizontally across government departments and across governments. The membership and activities of the Rural Team advisory groups demonstrated that this is possible and can produce synergistic results.

Resources

It was equally evident that formation of regional round tables required resources for the collaborative processes. The Community Collaboration Model Project was very innovative in that regard, because the funding provided by the Rural Secretariat was for collaborative *processes.* This allowed for flexibility and individual decision-making by the regional round tables as to how their collaborative processes would unfold and go forward. This flexible funding model provided the much-needed resources for regional round table members to meet face-to-face, enabling them to form the relationships that were foundational to the collaborative process.

For four of the six regional round tables, overcoming large distances to hold meetings was a huge challenge. Since there were no all-weather road access for over two-thirds of the communities and First Nations belonging to the northern Manitoba/Nunavut regional round tables, organizing and holding meetings was challenging. Depending on the season, travel to meetings was by train, boat, or airplane. In the Yukon, there are highways connecting the communities, however the communities are hundreds of kilometres apart. While the use of technologies such as telephone, video conferencing, and Internet was an option for meetings, many of the northern communities do not have the available technologies and/or the skills to use the technologies. In fact, sometimes arranging a telephone conference call was a challenge. Internet was unavailable in many communities, or if it was available, it was low-speed dial-up access, which was not conducive to almost any type of communication between and among regional round tables. The optimal option for meetings was face-to-face, which was expensive. Because relationship-building is foundational to multi-stakeholder collaborations, face-to-face meetings, especially in the forming phase were critical. Being able to not only have formal discussions, but to have informal and personal conversations enabled people to connect with each other. The large distances and remoteness required considerable creative planning included "piggy-backing" regional round table meetings with other events. Because of the expense and distance, some regional round tables held meetings only two or three times a year, rotating between communities.

Resources, both human and financial, were critical to the success of regional round tables' formation and sustainability. It was evident in the Community Collaboration Model Project, that formation of regional round tables required resources for collaborative processes. The project was very innovative in that regard, because the funding provided by the Rural Secretariat was for *processes.* This allowed for flexibility and individual decision-making by the regional round tables as to how their collaborative processes would unfold and go forward. This flexible funding model provided the much-needed resources for regional round table members to meet face-to-face, enabling them to form the valued relationships and partnerships that were foundational to the collaborative process. Funding for the collaborative processes of the Community

Collaboration Model Project was an investment that yielded benefits and will continue to yield additional benefits over time. Resources are still needed to maintain and grow the regional round tables to realize their full potential. Hopefully the flexible funding model demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project is the beginning of a paradigm shift for government, in which financial resources are invested in partnership and capacity development processes in communities and regions of rural and northern Canada. The dividends/returns on investing in the communities and regions within the Community Collaboration Model Project are already being realized and have the potential to grow, however, it takes considerable time, perhaps as long as ten years (Baker, 1993).

> *Hopefully the flexible funding model demonstrated in the Community Collaboration Model Project is the beginning of a paradigm shift for government, in which financial resources are invested in partnership and capacity development processes in communities and regions of rural and northern Canada.*

As shown in this graph, the Rural Secretariat provided cash contributions for the formation of three new regional round tables. The cash contributions represented 34% of the total contributions for the Model Implementation portion of the Community Collaboration Model Project, included the formation of the WaterWolf, Yukon and Northeastern British Columbia regional round tables. From an investment perspective, for every $1.00 that the Rural Secretariat invested, $2.00 was invested by other sources. That is an excellent leveraging of the Rural Secretariat's investment!

Contributions to WaterWolf, Yukon & Northeastern BC Regional Round Tables

- 41% — In-Kind Contributions Other Sources
- 25% — Cash Contributions Other Sources
- 34% — Cash Contributions Rural Secretariat

Model Implementation
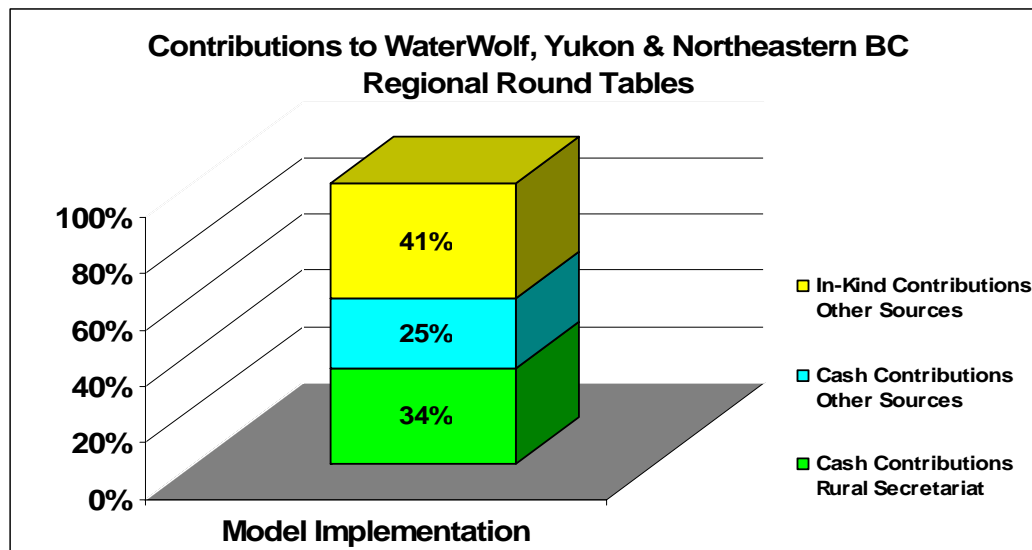
Source: Rural Secretariat 4th Quarter (2008) Cashflow Report

Sixty-seven percent of the Rural Secretariat contributions flowed directly to the regional round tables. Considering it from an investment/benefit perspective, the Rural Secretariat's investment in formation of regional round tables yielded increased partnerships and increased regional capacity. Regional round table members also believed that individual capacities of their members increased.

Distribution of Rural Secretariat's Contribution to Model Implementation

Legend: WWRRT, YRRT & NEBCRRT; RDI

67%

33%
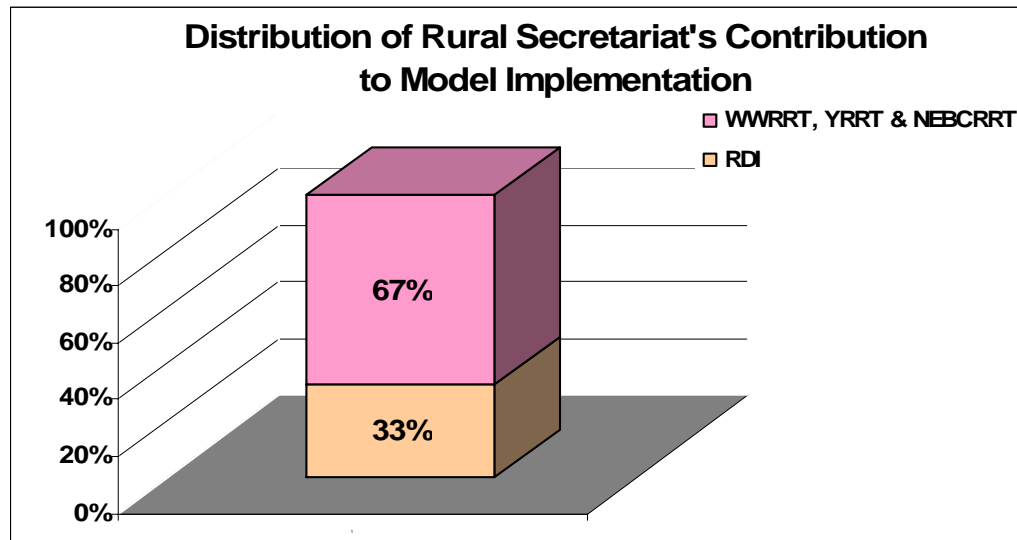
Source: Rural Secretariat 4th Quarter (2008) Cashflow Report

The regional round tables now need to raise those collaborative process funds on their own. WaterWolf, Yukon and Bayline regional round tables are resolving this dilemma by seeking out project funding, and managing to fund their meeting costs, so far, through their projects. This method is precarious, as receipt of project funding does not always coincide with paying the regional round table's bills. WaterWolf and Bayline have founding organizations that will "carry" them, if need be, however the Yukon does not have this organizational infrastructure; the ability to continue meeting will undoubtedly become a greater challenge.

Regional Governance

There is a growing body of discussion internationally around regional governance. Regional governance is different than regional government: it is not necessarily about replacing legacy governments but evolving to have additional forums for planning and decision making. Communities and governments, at all levels, have been concerned over the future of rural and northern communities. Decentralization and trends in regional policy are influencing rural policy makers (OECD, 2006). The exploration of rural regional governance is an issue affecting many communities, regions, and governments.

Bill Reimer, in his Foreword to the *Rural Community Health and Well-Being: A Guide to Action* writes of the demands governance makes on civic groups:

> Political analysts point to the 'new governance' as 'the revolution that no one noticed'. They refer to the many ways in which non-government and private sector groups have taken over government functions — sometimes on their own, and sometimes in partnership. Health, environmental enhancement, recreation, economic, and social support services that used to be provided primarily by governments are now shared by complex systems of government, private, and public partnerships or left to the purview of voluntary groups. Without strong and flexible civic engagement, this new form of governance is bound to fail. It requires communities and groups that can investigate and represent their situation in terms that are well founded and comprehensible. It requires debates on key values and objectives that are transparent and inclusive, and it requires social action that is focused and strategic. All these place additional demands on communities that are challenged already by change and uncertainty (Annis *et al*. 2004, p 3).

Communities have increasingly become more responsible for local development, which has varying implications based on the availability of human and social capital (Drabenstott, 2001; Jean, 1997; Reimer, 2006). Communities throughout Canada have identified a number of means to address issues presented in rural and northern communities (Annis & Gibson, 2006; Baldacchino & Greenwood, 1998; Vaugeois, 2000). With these ever-changing dynamics, many rural communities have turned to regional governance as a mechanism for survival and sustainability. Unfortunately, the conditions and context for regional governance are not well understood, particularly understanding critical phase changes, negotiated power sharing, the role of distance/density and placed-based relationship. Understanding regional governance and collaboration will have an influence on rural policy, at the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal level. As communities and municipalities create an interest in regional governance and collaboration, provincial and federal governments need to be responsive to new needs (Douglas, 2005). Through effective rural policy, rural and northern communities may have an opportunity to increase their contribution to national economies (Johnson, 2001).

Goldenberg (2008) states:

> New policy approaches to regional and rural development require new governance structures and methods. Indeed, new and effective governance modes are inherent in the new, more holistic, place-based and community-driven approaches being implemented by countries.

> Governance in this context will require innovative and active consultation and engagement mechanisms to involve the local community and citizens; effective coordination and strategic planning; new partnership arrangements to bring together the different actors including the local community, the private and non-profit sectors, government at all levels, educational

institutions, and others; new accountability regimes; and new delivery systems to accommodate the different players and agencies involved and better link services to local needs and contexts (p. 27).

Communities and governments have begun to "think regionally"; however, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge by communities, government and academia. A better understanding is required to enable researchers, governments and communities to apply collaboration and governance to policy, practice and research (Goldenberg, 2008; Ministère des Affaires Municipales et des Régions, 2006; Partridge, 2007 Drabensttot, 2001; Douglas, 2005; Johnson, 2001). Role of Information and Communication

Role of Information and Communication Technology

The role of information and communication technologies in supporting social networks for community development and in supporting universities, research institutes, and governments engaged in community research processes was also examined. Information and communication technology was a part of each regional round table advisory group process. Low-technology tools such as telephone conference calls were employed during the course of the project. Emails were constantly flying around the country and web-based technologies were used in websites and online collaboration tools such as that used by the Yukon Regional Round Table. Successful use of these technologies depended on the individual's awareness, access and skill level. There were still some communities that did not have Internet access, or if they did, it was slower dial-up access. Even when Internet access was available sometimes there wasn't the appropriate hardware to access it; or if there was the hardware, the cost of Internet access is too high. Another limiting factor was that even when there was access, hardware, and affordability, regional round table members may not have had the skills and/or the time to maintain their online presence. This was the case for three of the Manitoba regional round table websites. Websites were developed, and initially there were skilled people to maintain and update the sites. This diminished over time, until the websites were not maintained and not used. Where there were dedicated resources, such as in WaterWolf's case, the website became an important communication tool. Feedback in the Yukon suggests that even though there was access, affordability and skill, not all members used the online collaboration tool. WaterWolf successfully utilized technology for planning and carrying out their objectives.

Information and communication technology was useful and appropriate for meeting planning and follow-up, however, it couldn't replace the face-to-face interactions that occurred during the meetings. Because relationship-building was foundational to the regional round tables' and advisory groups' development, face-to-face meetings, especially in the forming phase were critical. Being able to not only have formal discussions, but also to have informal and personal conversations enabled people to connect with each other at a personal level. Community, government and academic representatives found common ground, formally, through meetings and informally through the non-formal components of each meeting, such as hikes up mountains, and walks through the woods.

> *Information and communication technology was useful and appropriate for meeting planning and follow-up, however, it couldn't replace the face-to-face interactions that occurred during the meetings.*

Who represents communities and regional round tables?

Who represents governments?

Who represents academic institutions?

Can you tell?

Collaborative Partnerships

The Community Collaboration Story

Community Collaboration Model: Replicability, Transferability and Moving Forward

Replicability and Transferability

The Community Collaboration Model processes can be initiated in other areas of rural/northern Canada; however, the Model cannot be replicated from province to province to territory because the community collaboration processes are not "one-size-fits-all" processes nor are they cookie-cutter approaches.

The Community Collaboration Model Project vision was to encourage communities to explore and develop processes to increase their ability to address change and work toward becoming more sustainable.

The Community Collaboration Model Project tested transferability and replicability to other areas of rural/northern Canada. Did that occur? The answer is "yes" and "no". The Community Collaboration Model processes can be initiated in other areas of rural/northern Canada; however, the Model cannot be replicated from province to province to territory because the community collaboration processes are not "one-size-fits-all" processes nor are they cookie-cutter approaches.

What was demonstrated is that the Community Collaboration Model is applicable elsewhere, providing there is deliberate effort; time; financial resources for community collaboration processes; and skilled, committed and sustained leadership. Where one or more of those conditions is not present, it is unlikely that a regional round table can be formed, as in the case of northeastern British Columbia, or if formed, cannot sustain itself, as is currently the case with Northern Vision, Hudson Bay Neighbours and Southwest Regional Round Tables. From the evidence documented from the WaterWolf Regional Round Table tangible outcomes such as land use planning and the tourism corridor illustrate what can be accomplished regionally. The Yukon Regional Round Table is exploring and developing processes to increase their ability to address change and become more sustainable. However since they are still in the formation phase, it is too soon to tell if that will occur.

What was demonstrated is that the Community Collaboration Model is applicable elsewhere, providing there is deliberate effort; time; financial resources for community collaboration processes; and skilled, committed and sustained leadership.

The same conditions and circumstances apply to the advisory groups. There also needs to be deliberate effort; time; financial resources for community collaboration processes; and skilled, committed and sustained leadership for the group to form and sustain itself. The Yukon advisory group is the most active advisory group at the writing of this report. The Saskatchewan advisory group and the Manitoba steering committee are less active, so there is a question of whether they are viable into the future. The Rural Team British Columbia had limited engagement in the attempt to form a regional round table in Northeastern British Columbia and was unable to form an advisory group.

Research

The Community Collaboration Model Project demonstrated the need for more research to investigate multi-community collaborations and regional governance. The Community Collaboration Model Project Governance and Collaboration Study Group, through their meetings and deliberations raised the following research themes and questions:

Analysis of critical phase change factors in rural governance systems: What are the phases? How would we analyze and interpret the phases? What do the phase changes mean? What are the indicators?

Critical interpretation of negotiated power sharing progress for rural local governments in emergent governance systems: How do local governments gain/lose power? Is negotiated power formal or informal? How does Aboriginal self-governance fit in power-sharing?

Critical analysis of tension and resolution between legacy power and emergent negotiated power constructs in rural governance: What is the residual power? What is the relationship between legacy power and emergent governance systems?

The role of spatial factors in the formation and operations of rural governance systems: What are distance and densities of rural governance systems? How do federal, provincial, and territorial governments perceive space as opposed to how communities or regions perceive space? How is the shape of new governance depicted?

Interpretation of "maps" for decision design and decision-making in rural governance systems: What are the networks that people have? What is the influence of the networks? What is the changing nature of these networks?   What influence does this have on governance?

'Voids' as trigger conditions for emergent rural governance systems: case studies and implications: What are the voids or lapses in our current system? How do you define the concept of voids? What role does technology/Information and Communication Technology play in creating opportunities? Has Information and Communication Technology allowed for different types of governance to be created?

How individuals are changed and change emergent rural governance systems: How do the characteristics of people aid or hinder the process? What change occurs? What is the role of gender and culture? How are individuals located, changed? What are the changes in emergent governance systems?

*A critical analysis of place-based relationships in collaboration and rural regional governance systems:*What is the role of place? What is the role of place-based assets? How do people describe their relationship to their place? What is the loyalty to place?

Identification of assets, conditions, initial context and change of communities collaborating together and/or involved in new governance systems: How are assets, conditions, and context measured through the process? What is the influence of these assets in new governance systems?

Influence of normative systems interrelationships in collaboration and rural regional governance systems: What normative systems are at play in emergent regional governance systems? How is capacity built within the normative systems?

Reflections and Suggestions
for Policy, Practice and Research

As a component of the collaborative evaluation process, RDI facilitated annual workshops to enable the regional round tables and advisory groups to reflect on the past year, tell their stories and share what they had learned. There is a need for a similar mechanism to reflect on the lessons learned from the Community Collaboration Model Project that would develop suggestions and recommendations for policies, practices and research from a rural and northern perspective. Perhaps this type of reflective study would also benefit the Rural Secretariat's Models for Rural Development Program by reviewing and reflecting on three or four of the models within the program. This could be accomplished through a facilitated discussion/symposium of community, government and academic participants that could yield recommendations for rural and northern community development policies, practices and research.

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Increased interest in collaborative, regional development by academics, practitioners and policy-makers along with technological advancements that have changed how information is exchanged and business is conducted hold many opportunities for rural and remote northern communities. In a Western Canadian context, the Community Collaboration Model Project was an example of how people from different communities, businesses, researchers and all levels of government worked together to take advantage of opportunities and face challenges in their region. Making use of academic research on the various aspects of community-based development and with government funding support, community members became more capable and empowered to collectively identify and act on the myriad of problems facing their communities. As with any human endeavour, there were successes and challenges, however, evaluation indicates that the community-based development model used had an overall positive impact on the individuals, communities, governments and academic institutions involved.

*Community-
Government-
Academic
Collaboration*

Yukon Regional Round Table

A Collective Voice based on trust and relationships is immensely powerful.

The Community Collaboration Story

Appendix A –

Community Collaboration Model Project
Governance and Collaboration
Study Group Members

ROBERT C. ANNIS (BRANDON UNIVERSITY)

Robert C. Annis, Director of the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University, is actively engaged in many community-based development organizations and research activities. Dr. Annis has published more than 50 peer-reviewed journal publications, reports and foundation documents reviewing many of the important social and economic issues facing rural and northern people on the Prairies. Research Interests include: community-based development strategies; sustainable healthy communities; rural social and demographic trends; community government partnerships

MARIAN BEATTIE (BRANDON UNIVERSITY)

Marian Beattie, a Research Affiliate with the Rural Development Institute is an experienced educator and facilitator, her expertise experience are in the field of human resources and organizational development, specializing in adult education, training and development. Her career began as a teacher in the public school system. She also spent several years as a human resources coordinator for a rural health district in southwestern Manitoba followed by nine years as a training specialist for a large international manufacturing company. Six years ago, she established her own independent consulting firm. During the span of her career she has focused on individuals and their communities: assessing needs, designing, developing, delivering and evaluating programs.

KENNETH C. BESSANT (BRANDON UNIVERSITY)

Kenneth C. Bessant is an Associate Professor in the Department of Rural Development, Brandon University and a Research Affiliate with the Rural Development Institute. Ken has been a resident of and student of varying rural environments for the better part of his life, most notably as a long-term member of two Manitoba communities, a "part-time" farmer, and a rural social scientist for over 25 years. Ken's research interests include social and community capital; rural community health and vitality; the diverse functions, activities, and linkages among community (economic) development organizations multiple job-holding within the farm family household (division of labour); the role of women in agriculture; the farm "crisis" and farm stress, and the changing structure of agriculture.

MARK DRABENSTOTT (RURAL POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE)

Mark Drabenstott is the Director for the Centre for Regional Competitiveness at the Rural Policy Research Institute in the United States. Mark is working to develop economic indicators that help regions understand their economic competitive standing and to provide regions with tools to diagnose their competitive advantage. In addition to being an active speaker on economic issues, he also provides analysis of the economy and economic policy issues to Congress, state policymakers, and Federal Reserve officials. He is involved in a number of community organizations and has published on many economic issues involving agriculture, rural America, and public policy.

DAVID DOUGLAS (UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH)

David Douglas is a professor with Rural Planning & Development, University of Guelph is actively involved in a number of research projects and community outreach, and instructs several courses within Rural Planning and Development. His academic interests include: rural community development and governance, local and community-based economic development, rural development policy, strategic planning and management, regional development planning, sustainable development, participatory process, local government, organizational analysis and development, small community design, planning and development theory.

RYAN GIBSON (BRANDON UNIVERSITY)

Ryan Gibson is originally from rural Manitoba and has been engaged with the Rural Development Institute since 2002. During this time, Ryan has been involved in many RDI research projects. His research interests include community development, cooperatives, broadband connectivity, rural governance, and rural revitalization.

CHRISTINE GOSSELIN (CANADIAN RURAL REVITALIZATION FOUNDATION)

Christine Gosselin is a member of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and a Public Policy Senior Advisory for the Rural Development Department of the Québec Ministry of Regional and Municipal Affairs. As a member of this team, the ministry works to elaborate and apply Québec rural policy. Christine is a board member of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and the Rural Network of Rural Research. In addition to working rural development, Christine has also worked in the areas of tourism, regional governance, regionalization, and land use planning.

TOM JOHNSON (UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA)

Tom Johnson is the Frank Miller Professor of Agriculture Economics and Director of the Community Policy Analysis Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In addition to being actively involved in teaching and research he directs a university center called the Community Policy Analysis Center (CPAC) which conducts research and outreach programs focused on the economic and social decision-making in small communities.

DIANE MARTZ (UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN)

Diane Martz is the Director of Research Ethics at the University of Saskatchewan. Her work focuses on rural women, rural families, family farms and rural communities. She has been involved in qualitative and quantitative research projects in sustainable community planning in economic regions and watersheds: farm family work; the new rural economy; women's work in the agricultural and forestry processing industries; and family violence in rural Saskatchewan. Diane was involved in the establishment of the rural family support center in Humboldt, SK and is currently taking the lead role in the development of a family violence protocol in that region.

ALISON MOSS (BRANDON UNIVERSITY)

Alison Moss is a Research Affiliate with the Rural Development Institute, Brandon University. Alison grew up outside of Dauphin, Manitoba on a small farm. Alison has spent time living and working in northern Manitoba. Those experiences gave her first hand-knowledge of the remarkable environment, culture, and life-style in the northern extremities of Canada. She became aware of many of the challenges associated with daily life in isolated communities. Since 2004, Alison has worked with RDI on a number of projects including access to health services in northern Manitoba, youth migration, rural immigration, and community collaboration.

DARELL PACK (RURAL SECRETARIAT)

Darell Pack is the Senior Policy Advisor (MB/SK) with the Rural Secretariat. A native of rural southern Alberta, he has been employed with the federal government since 1984, working out of Saskatoon, Ottawa and Winnipeg. He has experience in communications, policy analysis, and program administration and delivery. Prior to joining the Rural Secretariat in February 1996 he spent three years with the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) Administration. Previous work experience included time spent with Western Economic Diversification in Saskatoon, a secondment in the office of the Honourable Charlie Mayer as Press Secretary and Policy Advisor and the Communications Branch of Agriculture Canada.

BILL REIMER (CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY)

Bill Reimer is a Professor of Sociology at Concordia University in Montréal. He is currently a Board member of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) and Research Director for their national research and education project entitled, Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices. He has conducted research on issues relating to social rural Canada, with particular focus on social inclusion and exclusion. His publications deal with the impact of technology on rural communities, women's farm and household labour, the economy and the household, Aboriginal communities, the informal economy, social support networks, social capital, social cohesion, and community capacity-building. In addition to directing the NRE Project, he participates as a researcher in four other partner-based rural research projects.

NICOLE VAUGEOIS (MALASPINA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

Nicole Vaugeois is a faculty member in the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at Malaspina University College. Nicole undertakes research projects in a number of areas, many to do with recreation and tourism in rural areas. She has undertaken numerous market research projects, labour market analysis, economic impact studies, and inventory development.

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