The State of Rural Canada 2015


The State of Rural Canada presents a telling story of neglect in rural Canada despite real contributions of rural places of social and economic wellbeing for the entire country. Even so, the report is hopeful. The diverse authorship of the introduction and the chapters that overview key rural trends in the provinces and territories encourage others to engage in positive dialogue, to be part of the solutions to the significant demographic, social, economic, and environmental changes.

The report calls for new thinking, new models, and new practices by governments, community leaders, and practitioners to face our presumptions, reset their mindsets and commence an open respectful dialogue that also acknowledges how much rural Canada has to offer and teach us. Two important lessons stand out. First, Canada needs to be properly acknowledged as a “diversity of rurals” rather than treated as a homogeneous region. Second, rural voices must contribute to discussions and negotiations while establishing new rural-urban relations.

Continued on page 2

Building Innovation Capacity in the Manitoba Agri-Food Sector

Rural Development Institute has recently embarked on a new two-year applied research project to close the “knowledge gap” clouding our understanding of complex issues and barriers in commercialization in the Manitoba Agri-Food sector. This research builds on RDI’s recent efforts to understand the nature, timing and added value of innovation in the Agri-Food sector (2015). This project is unique in that it focuses on innovation in rural Manitoba, a less studied area, where limited information exists about the commercialization aspects of innovation.

One objective is to identify and address systemic barriers impacting on commercializing innovation. Another objective is to investigate the innovation culture and risk-adversity in southwest Manitoba.

Continued on page 2
Innovation in Manitoba’s Bulk Food Processing Sector

This project starts with multiple definitions of innovation and applies them to Manitoba’s food processing industry. Innovation is defined in terms of types of innovation, novelty, involvement of supply chain, length of time, and specific nature of growth resulting from innovation. The analysis examines 8 case studies of commercialization of innovation in the Manitoba bulk food-processing sector (see www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2011/02/Innovation-in-Agri-food-Processing2.pdf). The new small and medium-sized enterprises include:

- Hemp Oil Canada Inc. is the world’s largest producer of hemp oil with export markets in Europe and the US.
- Floating Leaf Fine Foods (FL) sells bulk wild rice and retail blends to customers around the world.
- Bee Maid Honey (BM), the largest producer owned honey processor in Canada sells retail and bulk honey mostly to domestic and US customers.
- True North Foods (TNF) plans to process cattle, bison and elk in a federally licensed facility.
- Brar Natural Flour Mills (BNFM) mills specialty grain and pulse flours to supply authentic, traditional, South Asian ingredients to the North American market.

Based on 61 interviews and 8 resulting case studies that were validated with all participants, key findings include:

- All 8 cases provided clear evidence of innovation across all four types, including multiple examples of innovative practices all along the supply chain as well as interlinked innovations (i.e. product & marketing).
- The impact of this scale of innovation underscores the current strength and future potential of the food processing sector in the Manitoban economy.
- All stakeholders involved in the food processing supply chain contributed to innovation but four players were identified as hotspots in these achievements: outside resources and consultants, processors, distributors and consumers.
- All 8 case confirmed the innovation demands collaboration and cooperation, and
- The eight cases revealed three different chronological patterns of innovative initiatives from long and continuous, short and intense, to long-term intermittent; the pattern used depended on the need for a short-term problem-solving fix or addressing a number of issues.

The cases underscore the importance of ongoing public investment in research and related centres to support these initiatives.

This research was supported and funded by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (MAFRD).

For more information on this project, contact:
Gillian Richards, Ph.D. (RDI, Project Lead):
204-571-8554, richardsgi@brandonu.ca

The State of Rural Canada 2015 Cont...

The Report’s three closing recommendations signal just how important this new dialogue will be in shaping the future of rural Canada:

- Provincial, Territorial, and Federal governments must develop a new and robust vision and policy frameworks for rural Canada.
- Rural communities and stakeholders must be active participants in understanding, planning and investing in their own futures.
- Following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, all Canadians must acknowledge and seek serious corrective steps to heal the “historical trauma” suffered by Aboriginal peoples.

More information on CRRF can be found at:
http://sorc.crrf.ca/

For more information, contact:
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Building Innovation Capacity in the Manitoba Agri-Food Sector Cont...

The project will be:

- Conducting literature reviews and contacting innovation centers and organizations supporting innovators and entrepreneurship development;
- Interviewing Manitoba Agri-Food innovators and associated Manitoba Agri-Food stakeholders; and
- Surveying households, youth, immigrants and SME owners in several southwest communities.

This project, funded by Growing Forward 2, relies on the participation and expertise of partners, including Southwest Regional Development Corporation, Community Futures Westman, Westman Agriculture Diversification Organization, Innovate Manitoba, Life Sciences Association of Manitoba, and Manitoba Food Development Centre.

For more information on this project, contact:
Eleni Galatsanou, MSc. (RDI, Project Lead):
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Growth Strategies for Rural Communities

How do communities change from declining to growing, from surviving to thriving? To search for an answer we examined local activities in three declining communities and three with a growth trend. This project offers preliminary results to fill a significant knowledge gap that compares activities in these two growth situations in rural communities. There are many self-directed guides suggesting different growth strategies and a large literature on assets and capitals, but little research on what rural stakeholders actively pursue.

An inventory of growth strategies suggested from guides was compared to actual activities in three declining rural communities and three recently growing communities. Interviews with the key informants were used to identify growth initiatives that were categorized into eight growth strategies and seven capitals, including financial, built, social, human, natural, cultural, and political capital.

Five key findings became evident.

1. An assumption that growing and declining municipalities would have differing numbers of growth initiatives proved false. Both growing and declining municipalities had similar numbers.

2. Growing and declining municipalities used different growth strategies. Growing municipalities had more initiatives for retaining and attracting people, attracting new businesses, and regional cooperation. Declining municipalities had more initiatives using health and wellbeing, and recreation and culture.

3. Growing and declining municipalities had similarities and differences in the capitals used to implement growth initiatives. Financial and human capitals were used in initiatives by both growing and declining municipalities. However, growing municipalities used social and political capital more often while declining municipalities used built, natural, and cultural capitals more often.

4. The categories of growth strategies need to be revised to better reflect local activities; housing should be a stand-alone growth strategy since it is integral to retaining and growing population. In addition, given common focus on enterprises, retaining and expanding local business and attracting new business should be conceived as one strategy.

5. Neither growing nor declining municipalities formally evaluated growth initiatives.

As an applied research project, the findings of this research are intended for use by rural planners and development officers.

This project draws from a recent recommendation about a major next economic development step for rural Manitoba, namely:

Consider approaching your economic development activities based on a functional economic region as a way to respond to issues and opportunities in your community and others. Seek and share examples in effective economic development from other provinces and regions.

This recommendation arose from the Rural Works!: A Rural Policy Think Tank that was coordinated by RDI in November, 2014. (See https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2014/09/Rural-by-Design-Com-V1-6.pdf).

This project will inform and advance a broader social conversation about communities being essential and integral to economic development in rural and remote Manitoba. Smaller population levels in some rural areas, even after amalgamation, require collaboration and partnerships within a larger regional setting. The main goal is to help individuals better understand their community in a regional context and work together to redefine a functional region to grow their economy.

This goal necessitates asking the key research questions: how to define a rural region? And how to define a functional economic rural region?

This research was supported and funded by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (MAFRD).

For more information on this project, contact:
Lonnie Patterson, MRD. (RDI, Project Lead):
pattersonl@brandonu.ca

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For more information on this project, contact:
Lonnie Patterson, MRD. (RDI, Project Lead):
pattersonl@brandonu.ca
Immigration Settlement Services in the North

Building on 29 community case studies in western Canada, this project examined settlement services in Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. The research method followed the same format as reported in the Western Canada study (see https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/02/Western-Canada-report.May-2015.pdf). In this case, the research data was collected by telephone interviews with 13 settlement service representatives from the three territories. The data confirmed that while immigration figures are proportionally smaller in the territories and settlement services are not as common as they are in the western provinces, immigration has still increased in the territories. The final reports provide insights into the settlement services currently offered in the territories, the services needed, and identifies the gaps and opportunities for better service delivery in these regions.

Over the last year RDI has directed a research project called “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s Western Region.” To date 29 reports have been completed providing a comprehensive analysis of settlement service provisions as well as identified gaps in representative communities from across the four western provinces (see https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publications/immigration-services-and-gaps/ & http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/research/immigration/3747.html).

Key findings include:

• The number of newcomers settling has increased in all three territories over the last 10 years due mainly to economic and employment opportunities but also family reunification. The participants felt that newcomers could settle easily in the territories mainly due to the size of the communities, employment opportunities, and cultural diversity, yet language barriers experienced by newcomers, housing, isolation due to geographic location, cost of living, and the harsh climate posed real challenges.

• Participants felt that newcomers could easily find employment in the territories, yet these jobs are often entry level and pay less. The key challenges to finding employment for newcomers are English language skills, Canadian work experience, foreign credential recognition, and understanding Canadian workplace etiquette.

• Settlement service providers in NWT, Yukon and Nunavut reported stretching their resources, funding, and volunteers to support the successful settlement of a growing newcomer population. To do so, participants reported their organization is working in partnership with other organizations in their community.

The completion of this project affirms RDI’s growing capacity and leadership in the area of labour and immigration.

This research was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) through Immigration Research West (IRW) at the University of Manitoba and directed by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) of Brandon University.

For more information on this project, contact:
Eleni Galatsanou, MSc. (RDI, Project Lead):
204-571-8552, galatsanouh@brandonu.ca
International Comparative Rural Policy Studies

The 12th Annual International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) Summer Institute was co-hosted by University College Dublin, the National University of Ireland, Galway, and Teagasc, the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority. Brandon University’s contingent this year included, RDI Director, Bill Ashton, Dr. Bill Reimer, Wayne Kelly, RPLC Project Coordinator, Sarah Woods, RPLC Liaison Officer, and Michael Blatherwick, MRD student.

The 2015 Summer Institute continued to focus on a number of general themes such as rural policies focused on sustainability, contemporary policy challenges for rural communities, and research and analysis methods. In addition, a number of sessions through the two-week program addressed specific Irish and EU themes: Agriculture and food systems, coastal economies and ecosystem services, rural development, services regional development, social structure and change, and governance. The range of presentations speaking from the Irish and EU context drew special attention to the international and comparative nature of the institute.

Next year’s ICRPS is to be hosted by the University of Alaska, Anchorage. This event promises to bring a distinctive Indigenous and Northern perspective to the international and comparative focus of ICRPS. To inquire about the program and scheduled events, contact the event coordinator:

Dr. Phil Loring, School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, phil.loring@usask.ca
For more information about ICRPS, check out: http://www.icrps.org/

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Rural Policy Learning Commons

Now into the 2nd year of seven, the Rural Policy Learning Commons (RPLC) has a growing number of successes. Now there is a full slate of 3 Liaison Officers: Dr. Marco Pagani at the University of Bologna and Michael Blatherwick at Brandon University, join Pam Kelrick at the University of Missouri. They are involved in coordinating activities among research and knowledge mobilization teams. We have established a fifth research theme with the new Transformation in Indigenous Communities Team. Financial and logistical support has been provided to a number of learning events and activities such as the International Comparative Rural Policy Studies Summer Institute in Ireland as well as a national conference with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and travel funding for students.

The RPLC is getting the message out by supporting the development and release of: The State of Rural Canada Report 2015. This is a collaborative effort through CRRF, RPLC, RDI, and Brandon University was an important hallmark of partnerships and engagement. In addition, 3 webinars with rural policy experts discussed municipal governance, food waste policies and practices, and growth in Canada’s food industry. All 3 three events attracted a national and international audience.

RPLC is supporting Dr. Gary McNeely, RDI Researcher, to initiate a project: Identifying Learning Outcomes and Competencies in International Comparative Rural Policy.

The RPLC website has been revamped to provide a more robust platform for connecting and finding out who’s doing what in the rural world.

Support for this project is provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and over 30 partners.

For more information about this project, check the website at http://rplc-capr.ca, or contact:
Dr. Bill Reimer, (RPLC Project Director): Bill.Reimer@concordia.ca
Bill Ashton, Ph.D. (RDI Director): 204-571-8513, ashtonw@brandonu.ca
Wayne Kelly, MRD. (RPLC Project Coordinator): 204-872-0269, kellyw@brandonu.ca

Community Foundations in Manitoba

Philanthropy, especially through community foundations, is a powerful catalyst for strengthening communities in Canada as more vital places to live, work, and play. Of the 164 community foundations in Canada, 51 are in Manitoba representing urban, rural, and northern communities.

This project aims to assess their economic impact in rural Manitoba. In addition, a framework for repeating such an analysis will assist in subsequent years to help establish trends. Resulting information will assist community foundations, government policy and programming, and academic institutions concerned with community development.

This research was funded through The Winnipeg Foundation (For more information, see The Winnipeg Foundation www.wpgfnd.org).

For more information on this project, contact:
Kim Lemky, Ph.D. (Project Lead): 204-571-7869, lemkyk@brandonu.ca
Brandon University Community Outreach Service – program review

The Community Outreach Service (COS) provides an opportunity to share learning and build community capacity by drawing together community organizations, faculty members of Brandon University and students around a community-based project. Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development (MAFRD) provides funding for applied research projects, while Brandon University funds a student and RDI provides direction for this service.

After operating for about 10 years, a review of the outreach service was conducted with the goal to determine improvements and adjustments to its current operations. This research focused on three objectives:

- Identify the Outreach Program’s achievements and contributions,
- Identify how the COS can be improved, and
- Identify what in COS should remain the same.

The research sample covered the last five fiscal years for 2009-10 and 2014-15, and examined 52 projects undertaken during this period. Research participants included four main groups: the community organizations, Brandon University faculty, members of the COS Steering Committee, as well as project applicants whose proposal was not accepted. In total, 43 participants were interviewed.

Based on the findings, three main recommendations were identified to aid in supporting and improving COS:

1. Improve the program’s application process and administration
2. Engage stakeholders, especially community organizations and students
3. Keep funding the Outreach program

The results of this research will help to ensure that Brandon University remains an active community member, providing opportunities to collaborate and share knowledge and expertise with community groups and to build enriching learning experiences for students.

Funding for this project was provided by Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development and Brandon University.

For more information on this project, contact:
Michael Blatherwick, (BU Outreach Coordinator):
(204)-571-8585, blatherwickm@brandonu.ca

Shelterbelts and Agricultural Greenhouse Gases

In examining the importance of shelterbelts on the prairies, this project is involving beef producers and the importance of alley cropping. The series of surveys and consultations have confirmed that most agricultural producers are aware of the benefits of shelterbelts in preventing soil erosion and sheltering livestock, and that many producers have them on their properties. An important question is, just how many and where are they located? Research on this question is led by Dr. Dion Wiseman from BU’s Geography Department and student Samantha Smyth. Their data will provide an inventory and mapping of shelterbelts in the landscape, and a comparative analysis of changes in shelterbelt density, spatial distribution and fragmentation from the late 1970s to late 2000s.

Also, a strategic proposal is being developed to seek funding to mobilize tree planting activities, building on the foundation of the AGGP project.

Funding for this project is provided by the Agricultural Greenhouse Gases Program (AGGP), a federal AAFC program through the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District (UARCD). Support and collaboration is provided by other organizations such as Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (MAFRD), Manitoba Beef Producers, and the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association.

Those interested in shelterbelt usage and their benefits are encouraged to visit the project website: http://www.prairieshelterbelts.ca/ or to contact:
Gillian Richards, Ph.D. (RDI, Project Lead):
204-572-1855, richardsgi@brandonu.ca
Knowledge Dissemination

Webinars
(hosted by RDI at Brandon University with the RPLC):

Publications


Morrison, D. (2015). CAPF: Canada should aim to become the “Most Trusted food source on the Planet”. Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

Presentations


Journal of Rural and Community Development
RDI continues to take an active role in supporting the publication and distribution of the Journal of Rural and Community Development (JRCD). Dr. Doug Ramsey, Chair of BU’s Department of Rural Development, remains chief editor of the JRCD.

Volume 10(2) was published with 9 articles and 2 case studies with discussions covering topics including rural tourism, regionalism, impacts of energy extraction, gender relations, sustainable rural development practices from a wide range of international perspectives covering China and east Asia, Scotland, the United States as well as Canada.

Volume 10(3) was just released with 6 articles examining issues ranging from immigration and public health, temporary foreign workers, rural regional development, to local governance in rural tourism, housing for seniors, and post-disaster community development. The issue also offers an editorial from Doug Ramsey commemorating the journal’s 10th Anniversary.

For more information, see: http://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/
Our Future: Our Vision...

With partners in communities, agencies, and among academics and students, RDI continues to initiate new outreach activities, research, and learning options, and contributes to addressing rural development issues and responding to opportunities. The Institute builds on a strong history of collaborative activities while enhancing resource capabilities and programming. As a leading source of information on rural areas, RDI continues to deliver new knowledge of rural issues and helps create opportunities for vibrant rural communities and regions.

Strategic Research Direction

To respond to rural trends, challenges, and opportunities, the needs of various stakeholders, and the necessity to sustain a viable organization, RDI is committed to pursue five strategic research directions: rural immigration, regional economic development, governance and capacity building, rural infrastructure and services, and rural innovation.

These directions build on both past and current 20 research initiatives, and will also incorporate emerging research needs and contribute both directly and indirectly to BU’s strategic plan, academic plan, and research plan.

Senate External Review of RDI

The recent Senate External Review of RDI’s research activities marked an opportunity to reflect upon past achievements and decide upon future goals. This process entailed taking stock of its working relationship within Brandon University and how it continues to engage with external project collaborators, community stakeholders and rural policy practitioners, and partnerships.

Contact Us

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