Rural Works: A Rural Policy Think Tank Event
Welcome!

Welcome to Rural Works: A Rural Policy Think Tank. This event has been organized by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Brandon University as part of RDI’s 25th Anniversary celebration. The theme of RDI’s 25th Anniversary is “Celebrating Partnerships” to highlight the many partnerships that RDI has been involved with for the past 25 years. These partnerships have included government agencies, academic institutions, rural organizations, businesses and communities.
A conversation across government departments of what rural and rural development means now and going forward is essential.

Dori Gingera-Beauchemin,
Deputy Minister, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Throughout the Years...

Achievements

1989-2014
1989

A Memorandum of Agreement for establishing the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University was signed between the Government of Manitoba as represented by the Minister of Rural Development and Brandon University. This agreement provided Brandon University with funding for core operations and projects to establish RDI.
Brandon University Senate enacted the policy and administration framework for the Rural Development Institute.
Between 1990 and 1993, the Director of RDI played a leading role in the formation of the Canadian University Network on Rural Development (CUNORD). This network linked RDI to rural academics throughout Canada.
The research focus at RDI expanded. The Institute attracted a multi-disciplinary roster of both rural people and researchers, including scholars and senior policy strategists from across Canada.

RDI compiled and published a directory of approximately 400 scholars in Canada with rural research interests.
Achievements 1992/93

The relationship between RDI and the Manitoba Government was clarified including an emphasis on informing public policy. Brandon University and University of Manitoba faculty members became more involved with rural research.
Achievements 1994/95

RDI expanded its network of national and international collaboration, and worked to interest more Brandon University faculty in their activities.

The Institute finished three projects with the Canadian Forest Service.
Achievements 1994/95

A national project with Human Resources Development Canada and the OECD, to strengthen collaboration with Agriculture and Rural Restructuring Group of Canada was completed.
RDI published the research findings of two Masters theses in rural education.
“Growing rural researchers is part of our job.”

Bill Ashton, Ph.D.
Rural Development Institute, Brandon University
Brandon University reviewed research, teaching and outreach activities of the WESTARC Group Inc. establishing the Rural Development unit which included the Rural Development Institute, the new academic program of the Department of Rural Development and the Brandon University Community Outreach Service.
1998

Achievements

Work began on establishing and hiring three new academic positions for the new Department of Rural Development and Master of Rural Development and Graduate Diploma academic programs.

The Rural Development unit received core funding from Brandon University and the Manitoba Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.
Only eighteen months after the establishment of the Rural Development unit, there were three full-time faculty members in the Department of Rural Development with more than 20 students enrolled in the new graduate program.

Dr. Richard Rounds became Chair of the academic Department of Rural Development.
Achievements

Dr. Robert Annis, Executive Director of WESTARC Group Inc., was appointed as the new Director of the Rural Development unit.

1999
The role of the Director of Rural Development Institute was now solely focused on applied research and directing the Brandon University Community Outreach Service.
RDI concentrated on building partnerships among provincial and federal government agencies with the aim of securing financial support for research and related activities.
Research topics during this year included community economic development, community leadership, rural adaptation and change, agro-economic and environmental issues, rural tourism, rural health, information management and technology utilization, and rural policy development.
To enhance community engagement, RDI helped establish and agreed to direct the BU Community Outreach service. The role of the Director of Rural Development Institute was now solely focused on applied research and directing the Brandon University Community Outreach Service. This service was a direct way to engage rural community interests and help position the use of research (led by BU faculty) to define issues and opportunities and to contribute to local solutions.
2001

The President of Brandon University activated an RDI Advisory Committee.

WESTARC Group Inc., a non-profit consulting group focused on applied research, training and economic development across Western Canada was integrated with RDI.
The Brandon University Senate approved a motion to reorganize the structure of the Rural Development Unit. The Rural Development Institute was created as a separate unit of the University, reporting to the Vice-President (Academic and Provost) and the Department of Rural Development joined the Faculty of Arts.
RDI is a founding member of the Manitoba Alliance for Research on Community Economic Development (CED). This alliance consisted of the Rural Development Institute, the University of Manitoba, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the University of Winnipeg. It received a multi-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct research on community economic development.
Through the Rural Development Institute, received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada’s national health research granting council.
RDI released a book titled, “The New Countryside: Geographic Perspectives on Rural Change” edited by Dr. Ken Beesley, a professor with the Department of Rural Development. The publication was jointly produced by RDI and Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
Achievements

2003

The Brandon University Board of Governors granted RDI the ability to recognize RDI Research Affiliates.

RDI implemented the Student Internship Program for undergraduate and graduate students at Brandon University.
From 1999-2004, RDI led a multi-disciplinary team for the SSHRC Determinants of Health of Rural Populations and Communities research project. The Principal Investigator was Dr. Fran Racher from Brandon University.
RDI received approval from the Greencover Technical Assistance Program, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, for a multi-year project focused on leafy spurge on the prairies.

Brandon University and the Province of Manitoba signed a new Memorandum of Agreement for RDI for the fiscal years 2003/04 to 2005/06.
From 1999-2005, BU Community Outreach Service responded to over 100 requests from faculty, students and the community, and facilitated over 50 projects which included financial support.
RDI took a leadership role in the project design and implementation of the new 5-year Community Collaboration Project Model Project: Empowering Communities and Building Capacity.
2006

Achievements

ACTION

The Department of Rural Development launched an online journal, The Journal of Rural and Community Development. RDI served as the publisher with an International Editorial Board.
With 200 plus peer-reviewed articles since 2005, the Journal is attracting authors and readers from around the globe.

Doug Ramsey, Ph.D.
Editor of Journal of Rural and Community Development
RDI shared research findings and related activities with more than 150 rural and northern communities and organizations in western and northern Canada.

RDI upgraded its web presence.
RDI and Department of Rural Development’s Graduate Students Association hosted the 2006 International Comparative Rural Policies Studies (ICRPS) program at Brandon University.
A new research initiative emerged from ongoing work on rural immigration. RDI continued studying immigration in Brandon and southwestern MB, particularly the temporary foreign worker process.
Achievements 2007

Twenty-six presentations, nine reports and working papers, four book chapters and three new fact sheets were published.
The Youth Standing Committee of Rural Team Manitoba commissioned RDI to coordinate and conduct research to investigate the extent of youth migration in rural and northern Manitoba.
RDI completed two multi-year projects, the Community Collaboration Model Project and the Health Care Access of Northern Residents projects.

A study of youth mobility in selected regions of Manitoba on behalf of Rural Team Manitoba was completed.
RDI actively worked to facilitate cooperation with other groups across Western Canada as they dealt with invasive plant species which led to the establishing of a western regional network for collaboration on invasive species.
Dr. Robert Annis announced his retirement as Director of the Rural Development Institute and an international search for the next Director was launched.

RDI continued to study rural immigration, especially temporary foreign workers in Brandon and the western Manitoba area.
Two research projects were completed: Economic Impact of Leafy Spurge in Manitoba and Pathway Prevention of Invasive Species: Increasing Education and Awareness.

The RDI research project, titled A Scan of Community Foundations in Manitoba ended.
2009

Achievements

Over 29 publications were completed and 6 are forthcoming from research projects.

BU paid tribute to Dr. Robert Annis.
Dr. Bill Ashton was appointed as the new Director of Rural Development Institute.

A multi-year research project began, titled "Building Welcoming Communities: A Multi-Sector Regional Collaborative Approach to Rural Immigration" focusing on the impact of new immigrants to communities in rural and southwestern Manitoba.
We are building an international network to support rural revitalization using applied research, collaborative learning, and knowledge exchange.

“Bill Reimer, Ph.D.
Concordia University
RDI hosted a two and a half day national rural policy conference, On the Bright Side: Rural Canada Works with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and over a dozen local to national partners. Our 180 participants joined 36 presenters.
After consulting the RDI Advisory committee and the Vice President (Academic and Provost), the committee’s mandate was aligned to multi-year projects. As such, projects have a project advisory committee.
RDI initiated the drafting of a new Senate policy to enable non-credit professional development certificates.

RDI incorporated a ‘prototype design’ method into an applied research project that resulted in an interactive website that responded to economic development community needs.
RDI negotiated and recommended Brandon University sign a 5-year funding agreement with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

RDI received an Honorable Mention from the Manitoba Government at 2011 Manitoba Excellence in Sustainability Awards on April 5th, 2012.
A learning needs study was completed to better understand the interest in training related to social media tools.

Thirty-six publications and presentations and projects were undertaken by RDI and its research affiliates.
RDI initiated research into rural broadband connectivity and applications of social media tools.

RDI completed a two year inter-disciplinary community-led research project: Pathfinder for Communities: Selecting Tools for Community Economic Development.
This year marked the second year of a four year project, Agriculture Greenhouse Gases Program, project in collaboration with the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District.
At the national rural policy conference Rural Canada Ready to Grow, hosted by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Conference, Dr. Bill Ashton and Dr. Ray Bollman hosted a pre-conference event: New Rural Economy Symposium, with the assistance of Lori Gould.
RDI launched social media training as part of their Social Media Engagement non-credit certificate. The training was offered in June and November.
“Sharing ideas, policies, and practices across OECD countries helps inform discussions and shape decisions as we engage in making a difference in Canada and around the globe.”

Heather Duncan, Ph.D.
Brandon University
Thank You...

and all the stakeholders for supporting the Rural Development Institute.