

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Space to Place: the Next New Rural Economies Workshop

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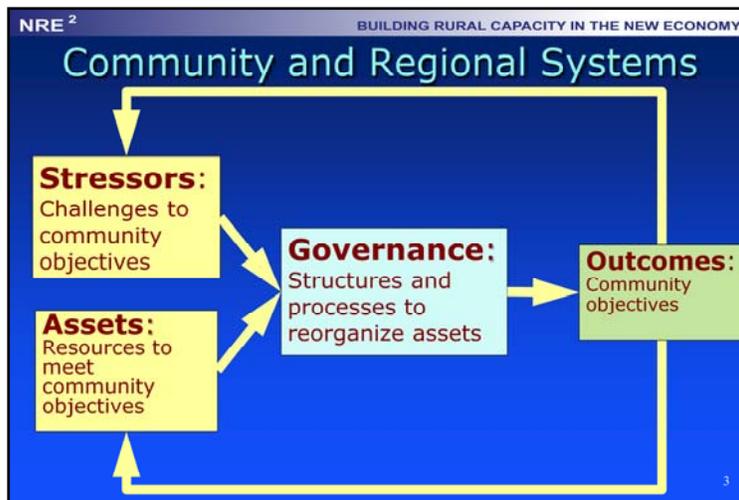
NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

My Task

- A framework for analysis
- Stressors and Assets in Place
- Governance issues
 - Regional support for local action
 - Bridging conceptual styles
- Policy implications

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- The editorial team set us with a difficult task
- Two major elements:
 - Focus on place
 - Look into the future
- My activist sensibilities adds another to that
 - How can we help rural people?
 - By this I mean how can we help rural communities, activists, citizens, and policy-makers in their difficult task of making daily, important decisions in a context of uncertainty?
- Especially with our premise (and conclusion) that place matters
- If place matters – then each place is special – its history, particular constellation of people, its particular endowment of resources, and the way it gets things done (or fails to get things done)
- What can we say that is relevant to them when our strengths and training are all about general patterns, trends, and comparisons –often over long periods of time?
- Especially – What can we say about their future when our work focuses mostly on the present and the past?
- Yet we have set ourselves the task – and so in the spirit of youthful optimism (or perhaps Quixote-an delusion) here is my attempt.



- I find it useful to think about place-based processes and choices using a systems point of view.
- My version is a kind of 'systems-lite' view of places, communities, regions, and networks
 - I treat them as somewhat integrated systems
 - (S) Then consider the outcomes as part of the ongoing process of system adaptation and change
- From this point of view those outcomes are considered to be the result of 3 major factors
 - (S) The first are the stressors that affect the place, region, or other unit of analysis.
 - These stressors can be a wide range of things – both good and bad – but they are the many events, crises, and trends that affect the fate of communities or regions.
 - For this conference, we tend to focus on the trends that are likely to significantly affect rural places into the future
 - (S) The second are the assets of the community, region, network or system being considered.
 - These can be the natural resources, amenities, financial, human, and social characteristics of the region or community – the things that can be mobilized to deal with the stressors
 - The difference between a stressor and an asset is not hard and fast, by the way – since stressors can become assets and vice versa – but as we shall see, I prefer to treat them as separate at this point and conceptualize this interdependence as part of the overall dynamic of the system
 - (S) The third element affecting the outcomes is the governance arrangements and actions that facilitate the reorganization and mobilization of assets in new ways to meet the challenges of the stressors – and hopefully produce the valued outcomes for the community (S)
 - This is an aspect which is addressed by most of the papers
- (S) Since this is a dynamic system, these outcomes can also become stressors or assets in the future – either directly or indirectly

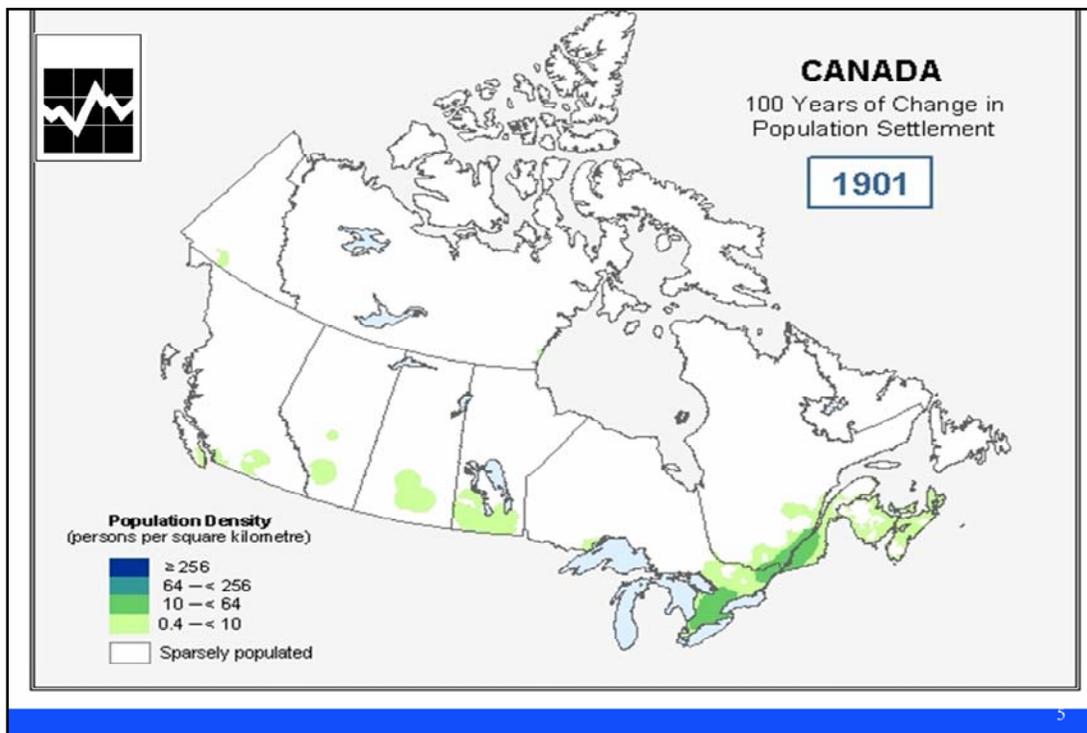
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Research Questions

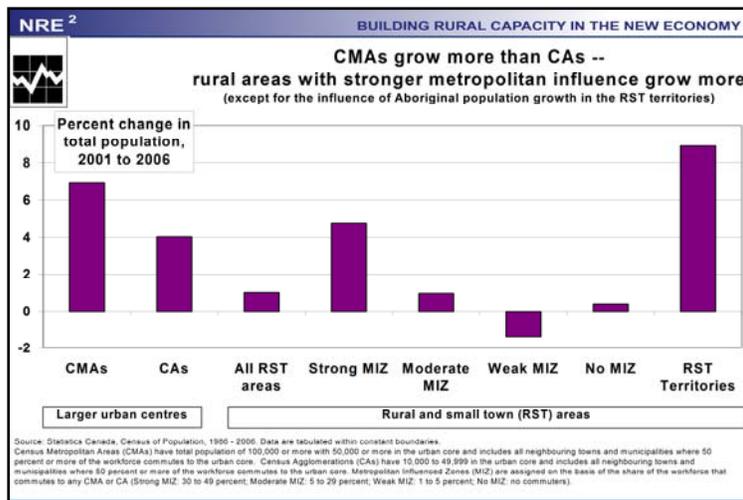
- What are the major stressors?
- What are the assets of rural places?
- What outcomes are desired?
- What are some useful strategies for governance?

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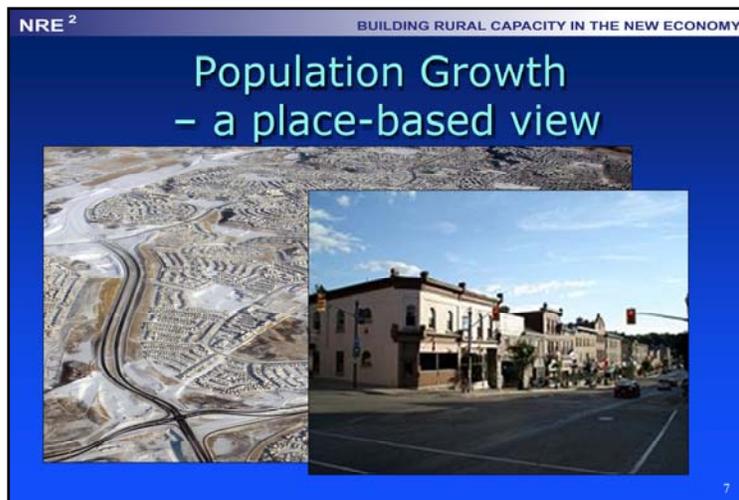
- This framework and the task established by the editorial group have left me pondering the following types of questions over the last few months
 - What are the key stressors that rural places are likely to face in the near and distant future?
 - What are the assets that they can use to position themselves for those futures?
 - Where would they like to be in the future?
 - How can rural places and people best organize themselves for those futures?
- I have looked over your draft papers with these questions in mind
- I don't intend to detail the many answers I found since you are better able to do this – but to direct your attention to some of the ones I found most exciting and to fill in a few gaps which my own work suggests
 - *It will try to identify specific places where this coincides with your work since most of what I will be saying here is inspired and elaborated in your papers*
 - *But I know that I will be missing many of those coincidences, so I apologize for inadequate citing along the way*
- This is done in the spirit of the task which the organizers put to me:
 - To suggest some frameworks for viewing these contributions, and
 - To inspire not only the researchers, but community activists and policy-makers as they face the challenges of their specific places (I consider the latter to be the more difficult part of my task)



- I will start by introducing a stressor that appears explicitly or implicitly on all our lists: urbanization
- (S) In Canada, this stressor has been a basic feature of Canadian society since the 1940s.
- Since there are few signs that it will diminish, we can also treat it as a major process that's likely to continue into the future
- It has usually been articulated and developed within a discourse regarding the diminishing importance of rural areas in Canada and a sad tale of rural outmigration.
- I would like to use it to make a different point – one which takes the perspective of place and highlights the dynamics of the framework I have identified above



- From the perspective of place, the story of urbanization as a stressor is much more complicated than the simple one of urbanization as a disaster for rural places – especially if we see how the general trend (urbanization) gets manifested as different types of stressors in different types of places
 - This graph shows us first of all how urbanization does not always mean rural decline
 - Note how rural areas on strong MIZ areas (Metropolitan Influence Zones) and some of the boom towns in the territories are dramatic exceptions to this generalization
- Urbanization, for example, means that the stressors facing growing places will be substantially different from those in declining areas or those showing little growth
 - For growing rural areas, this is a story of in-migration, housing pressure, service pressure, and conflicting values about the relative importance of economic growth, the environment, and lifestyle – to name a few
 - These stories are well documented in the papers – in Canada, the UK, Japan, Australia, and France
 - For low or no-growth areas the stressors come in the form of falling incomes, a decreasing pool of volunteers, and often an aging population
 - Examples can easily be found throughout the papers as well
- In both cases, the assets and opportunities are different
 - Growth areas have access to markets, services, enterprises, and governance structures that are largely missing from little or no-growth areas
- Let's reconsider Ray's map on urbanization and re-examine it from the point of view of place
- From a place point of view we have to resist the administrative desire to redefine areas based on density or commuting flows and instead follow a fixed set of boundaries over time
 - If we take the 1991 CSD as our identification of place, for example, then view the process of urbanization from the perspective of someone in one of those rural places, we see the type of differentiation that I have outlined above
 - From this perspective, 2439 (43%) rural CSDs face the stress of population growth over the period 1991 to 2001 and about 3271 (57%) of them faced steady or declining populations over that time.
 - Of course, many of them have lost their rural status in the process according to Statistics Canada, but this is only indirectly relevant to us from a place-based point of view



- From a place-based point of view (as Lovering implies) we see a very different set of rural stressors, assets, and opportunities
 - (S) Metro-adjacent rural areas make a significant contribution to urban places through the supply of land, amenities, and life-style options
 - The massive suburban growth which we point to as evidence of the decline of rural now becomes a sign of the growth and significance of rural places
- The challenge for rural-growth places is to manage that growth – to ensure that it does not result in the loss of the assets it implies – open spaces, relatively cheap land, natural amenities, and access to services (the reasons why people are moving there in the first place)
 - (S) There are many inspiring examples where this is occurring (including in the papers by Hugh Gayler re TO, Nigel Walford re. Wales, Salma Loudiyi in France, Sean Markey in Northern Canada) and we can often add to these from examples where existing social and physical infrastructure are used to sustain a walking and cycling neighbourhood, green spaces are maintained, low density housing is provided in an environmentally and financially sustainable fashion, public transportation provides quick and cheap access to high density areas, and commercial developments are established without billboards and neon signs
 - Growing places need to anticipate these stressors, consider the outcomes they want, and mobilize the necessary resources to ensure it – a governance issue to which I will return later.

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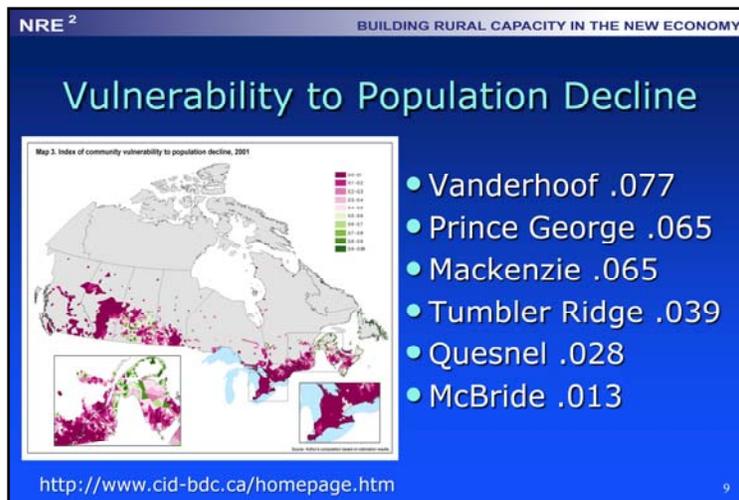
No and declining-growth communities

- Argent et al.: Australia
- Bruce: Miramichi
- Harrington: USA Plains
- Cawley: France, Ireland
- Che: Michigan
- Jean: Québec
- Vodden: NL
- Halseth: northern BC
- Ouchi: Japan

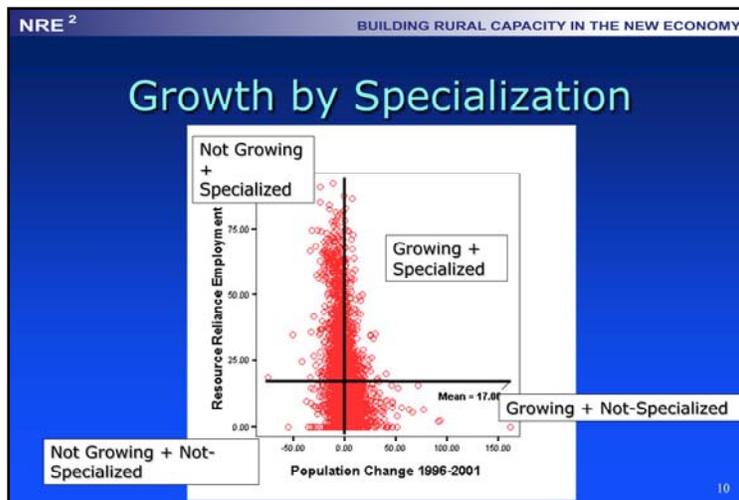


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- Let's look at the other side of this distinction – those communities and regions which are showing little or negative growth: usually where access to a sizeable centre of growth is a major obstacle: involving a trek normally outside the commuting range
- Several papers are clearly about these more isolated areas:
 - Neil Argent: rural Australia
 - David Bruce: Miramichi
 - Lisa Harrington: High Plains of the USA
 - Mary Cawley: lagging regions in France and Ireland
 - Deborah Che: Michigan's fruit belt
 - Bruno Jean: La Pocatiere
 - Kelly Vodden: rural NF
 - Greg Halseth: northern BC
 - Sean Markey: FIFO locations
 - Masatoshi Ouchi: Japan
- My first cut on this dimension places a wide diversity of places in the same pot – including places accessible by road, those only accessible by boat or airplane, places providing regional services with those devoted almost entirely to a single industry.
- We know from our research that this is too wide a swath – it not only combines places with different natural and physical characteristics, but what is more important, the nature of the challenges and options available are different, so the governance issues are too diverse to make our insights directly relevant to people in those places



- Thus, I suggest we turn to the research to introduce another distinction
- This time, it comes from our conference preoccupation with the anticipated future trends of the global economy and environment
- From this work we anticipate:
 - Continued mechanization of commodity-based goods
 - Shift to a knowledge-based economy
 - Vulnerability to global trends
- We have ample evidence that the fate of rural communities is closely associated with their links to these trends
- Thus the position of remote communities with respect to these trends is an important characteristic for local people and policy-makers to consider
- Recent work we have conducted on community vulnerability to population decline examined a number of stressors and assets over the 1981 to 2001 period
- Using multivariate techniques we found that the greatest stressor driving population decline was the economic specialization of the place (in this research 'place' was the census consolidated subdivision)
 - Specialized economies were more susceptible to population decline over the 20 years we examined
- This effect remained even when the specialization of the surrounding region (CD) was controlled
- This suggests another distinction for us to consider:
 - Specialized vs. non-specialized communities and regions
- Our NRE research has shown how specialization is also closely related to the extent to which a place or region is connected to the global economy
 - Most specialized places are closely connected to the global economy through commodity trade – at least in the Canadian context
 - They are therefore, vulnerable to the booms and busts associated with that economy – and susceptible to decisions and changes made at considerable distance from home



- Now we have four types of places:
 - Growing areas
 - Those that are specialized (e.g. amenity-based, tourism), and
 - Those that have a diverse economic base
 - Low or negative-growth areas – divided into:
 - Those that are specialized, and
 - Those that have a diverse economic base
- Here is one of the ways in which the generalizations and variable-based analysis of macro research can connect with the specific characteristics of place
 - By identifying the characteristics which are likely to matter most to each type of place
 - Where are you located?
 - How do you experience the stressors?
 - What assets do they suggest?
 - Where do you want to be?
 - How can you get there?

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Future Stressors

- Urbanization
- Machines replace labour
- Global competition
- Knowledge economy
- Environment and climate
- Immigration
- Population aging (Aboriginal pop. growth)
- Governance reorganization

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•In the interest of parsimony and in recognition of the time, I will resist the temptation to add other stressors to this typology, but I will mention some of them to direct your attention to the papers and to the issues

- Substitution of machines (technology) for labour is likely to continue (becoming more productive and price-competitive means requiring fewer workers, so jumping on the commodity treadmill is likely to be a dead end for places wishing to grow – as Ray reminds us)
- The economy will continue to be global – meaning both competitors and markets are world-wide (highly dependent on transport and communication costs, so the wild card may be the price of energy)
- Knowledge critical (knowledge of these global markets, knowledge about using the new technologies, and generally learning how to learn and anticipate the futures)
- The environment, climate, and sustainability will increase in importance (rural particularly vulnerable to its effects)
- Immigration will continue to be a necessity for Canada into the future – as it has been in the past
- Rural and urban communities alike need to consider the impacts of these (and related) issues on their local place if they are to thrive – but the process of doing so is often a challenge itself
- In this respect, the final question which I have posed is often the most difficult to deal with

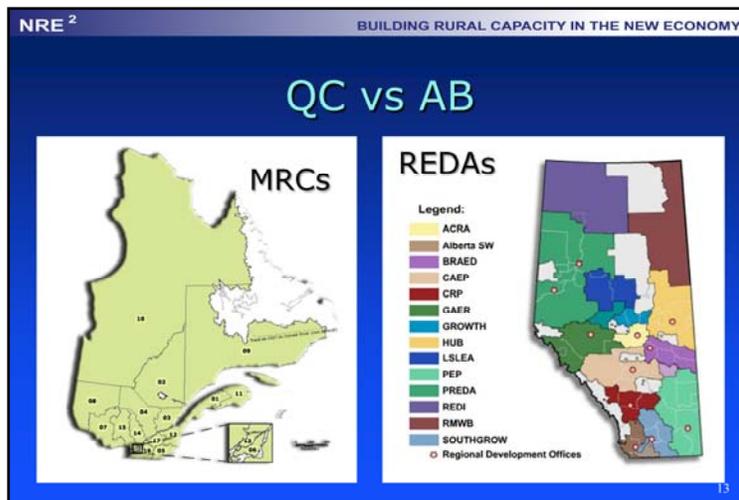
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Governance

- Argent et al., Vodden: reorganizing local assets
- Bruce: building regional clusters
- Cawley: organizing across sectors
- Walford, Bryant, Markey, Ouchi, Loudiyi: reorganization examples
- Story, Gaylor, Ramsey, Harrington: reorganization challenges

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- How can we best facilitate the emergence of appropriate responses to the stressors of the future?
- Our NRE research and many of these papers have already made some significant contributions to answering that question
 - The governance must respect and make use of a bottoms up approach
 - It must be inclusive – not only of the formal mechanisms, but of the informal ways in which communities and regions organize themselves
 - It must take an approach where the decision is made at the appropriate level or scale – the principle of subsidiarity
- Many of the papers pick up this question and provide some valuable suggestions and examples
 - Neil Argent et al. and Kelly Vodden point out how we should focus on the reorganization of local assets in innovative ways as a more useful approach than trying to create new ones
 - David Bruce: explores how we might build regional clusters
 - Mary Cawley: reminds us to do our organizing across sectors
 - Nigel Walford, Chris Bryant, Sean Markey, Masatoshi Ouchi, Salma Loudiyi: provide additional examples of the way in which this reorganization can take place
- But we are also warned that this regional approach is fraught with challenges (David Story, Hugh Gayler, Doug Ramsey, Lisa Harrington)
 - Would like to focus on this

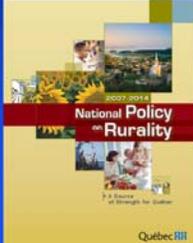


- I have watched with considerable interest, the variations in approaches to rural development that are reflected by our provincial governments
- In many respects, most have articulated the principles of governance that I have outlined, but with very different programs and with very different results
- Perhaps the greatest contrast in my mind is between AB and QC
 - I will briefly outline them to illustrate my point
- Both of these governments champion a bottoms up approach and encourage local municipalities to engage in an expanded mandate over local decision-making – moving beyond the maintenance of roads and water to include economic development and environmental stewardship
- But the institutional contexts of the 2 provinces are considerably different (appreciate Selma Loudiyi's reminder of the importance of institutions for defining 'place')
- Under the Levesque government, Quebec established a number of regional boards (MRCs) (sometimes against substantial opposition) composed of mayors and municipal representatives with a mandate for regional development and resources to support it. The emphasis was on regional development – cross sectors and inclusive of social development.
- In Alberta, the approach was more laissez-faire – where regional collaboration was encouraged, some resources were allocated to regional groups if they requested and justified it, but there was little consistent pressure for such collaboration (Regional Economic Development Alliances). The focus was clearly on economic development.
- The results have been dramatically different at the local level.
- In Quebec there are many examples of regional initiatives – tailored to local conditions and themselves providing a basis for second-order activities in small places
 - Over the 20 or so years of their operation within this new regime, local municipalities have learned how to use the regional structures to voice their concerns, debate, negotiate, compromise, and collaborate with other municipalities, and in turn, to negotiate with the provincial government on behalf of their region and village or town
 - In turn, the provincial government has discovered the value in subsidiarity – now allocating responsibility to the regional boards for a wide range of economic and social policy and programs, and (most importantly) showing confidence in the decisions and accountability of the MRCs – making the governance of the province both more efficient and effective
 - This system of consultation has even become more elaborated with the recent emergence of regional round tables – with more issue-focused objectives
- In Alberta the situation on the ground is very different
 - A few regions have taken initiative, formed their own corporate bodies, and moved ahead, largely on their own steam
 - Most municipalities, on the other hand, were unable to get beyond their protectionist traditions to reach agreements with their neighbours around the complex challenges they faced – either denying that conflicts of interests existed or refusing to discuss them in any but the most limited terms
 - In the end, the provincial government simply made the decisions for the municipalities, pointing to the failure of regional collaboration, lack of accountability, and the pressure of time as a justification for top-down management
- What is the lesson here?

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Governance Lessons

- Evaluate results not rhetoric
- Bottom-up development requires higher level support



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- What are the lessons emerging from this comparison?
- For me, there are 2
 - First – the rhetoric of subsidiarity and collaboration needs to be critically assessed in terms of the results. Both provinces have remarkably similar articulations of their regional policy, but the implementation of those principles is considerably different
 - Second – a policy of bottom-up development can only work within an institutional context which supports it. Quebec established the regional boards with a mandate and sufficient resources to make it work
 - It took considerable time for the municipal representatives to learn how to use the MRC – a period of time that was marked by conflict, mistrust, and failures
 - It has taken them over 20 years to make it work, but now we find that the MRCs and the Roundtables provide critical assets for the municipalities, regions, and province
 - For the municipalities, they provide a venue in which their interests can be expressed and negotiated. Care has been taken to include the representation of even the smallest places in the process, with little additional demand on their finances
 - For the regions, they provide a place where conflicts can be expressed, common interests identified, and collective action can be taken. Since the provincial government has come to respect those decisions and trust the accountability of the regional organizations, the MRCs and Roundtables have also acquired a very good record of success in acquiring the additional resources for implementing their decisions.
 - For the province, the MRCs and Roundtables have taken on a considerable burden formerly required of the provincial government. Decisions emerging from the MRCs have proven themselves to reflect the regional constituents in a reasonable manner, so the central government has felt comfortable leaving the matter up to them. In addition, the regional bodies provide a convenient and sensitive source of information and intelligence for the province.
- The particular form of regional government as found in Quebec, may not be satisfactory for all provinces, but my hunch is that the principles remains:
 - Bottom-up development needs an institutional context of strong regional governance to make it work
 - The inevitable conflicts of interest that emerge require multiple venues for expression, negotiation, and the compromise that are necessary for action
 - Relations of accountability and representation are necessary ingredients for establishing an adequate level of trust for the system to work
 - This requires the development of a common language and understanding for collaboration
- I would like to focus on this last issue before concluding – since it is one that relates directly to the special characteristics of a place-based approach

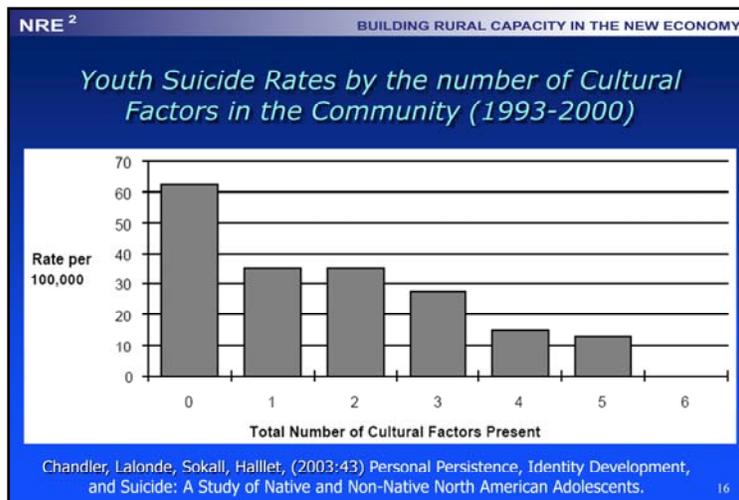
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Bases of Understanding

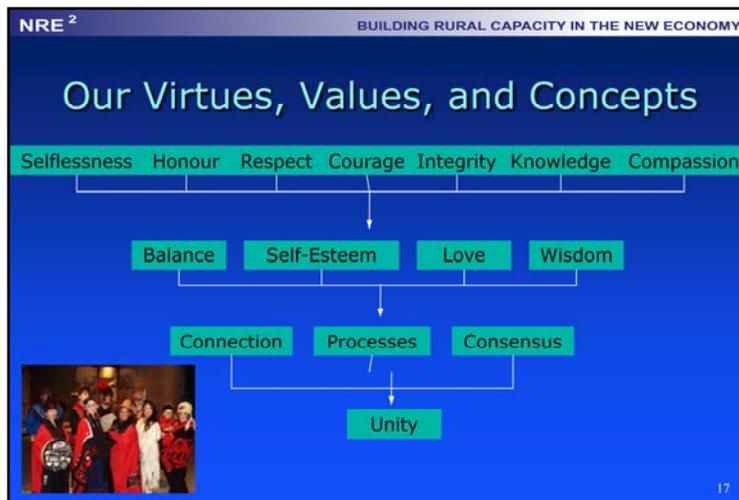
Narrative	Essentialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Vancouver • Married to Fran Shaver in 1967 • Four grandchildren by our 2 children •  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociologist • Professor • Father • Grandfather • White

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- If we are wishing to emphasize the merits of a place-based approach, we need to recognize and understand the important role of narrative and its difference from the essentialist approach which we most often take in academia and government.
- Narrative is about understanding and deciding on the basis of stories, specific social relations, and unique historical circumstances – reminiscent of the ways in which we discuss a place-based approach
 - From a narrative perspective, I am Bill Reimer, son of Lilian and Peter Reimer, born in Vancouver, moved to Quebec in 1972 and father of Daegan and JP
- Essentialism is about understanding and deciding on the basis of underlying patterns and processes, general principles, and inferred trends – reminiscent of the ways in which we debate around our conferences and parliaments and met out justice in our courts
 - From an essentialist point of view I am William Reimer, a university professor, father, husband, white, male.
- Both are critical ways of knowing and both are in a struggle for legitimacy – a struggle made most visible when it comes to our efforts for bottom-up governance
- There are two points I would like to make about this distinction
- First: we ignore or discredit narrative-based knowledge at our peril
- Second: this way of knowing is intimately associated with an emphasis on 'place'
- The most dramatic illustration of this come to me via the extensive work of Chandler and his colleagues here in BC



- *Chandler, Lalonde, Sokall, Hallett, (2003:43) Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.*
- In their work on adolescent suicide among Aboriginal peoples, they discovered a very strong relationship between the failure to recognize aboriginal culture and suicide
 - In those communities where the history and culture were celebrated, the suicide rate dropped dramatically (cf. graph)
- Their subsequent work has led them to argue that:
 - A strong sense of identity and continuity is essential for healthy personal and social resiliency (and an important mitigating factor against suicide)
 - Identity and continuity is rooted in local events, relationships, and history – especially among narrative-based cultures
 - Undermining the legitimacy and credibility of this local history and relationships has significant negative effects on the identity of those closely connected with it – especially among narrative-based cultures
- This research, and supporting work among rural Quebec adolescents suggests to me that place-based perspectives are more important than simply a special focus of analysis for designing our policy and research – they touch on a critical feature of our sense of self and humanity along with our ability to function in confidence and sympathy with others
- It also suggests that we need to aggressively seek to understand the nature and relationship between narrative and essentialist approaches to the world
 - Our disastrous policies directed to the eradication of Aboriginal culture, the elimination of cultural and ethnic traditions, and the relocation of communities makes clear that the eradication of narrative for essentialist approaches is not the way to go
 - Instead, we are much better off searching for new ways in which the strengths of narrative understandings can be integrated with those of essentialist approaches to build new forms of governance which respect local places
- [Cultural continuity factors:
 - *Recognized institutions of self-government*
 - *History of Land Claims actions*
 - *Cultural Education – Majority of students attend a band-administered school*
 - *Level of local control over health services*
 - *Number of local cultural facilities*
 - *Extent to which local band controlled Police and Fire services]*



- My recent visit to the Carcross/Tinglit Nation in the Yukon has inspired me to feel that this will be an exciting path
- As the result of recent land and governance settlements, the Carcross Nation – along with many Aboriginal groups in BC and Canada – are faced with the enormous challenge of organizing their economic, social, health, education, political, and welfare institutions
- They have responded with an innovative and promising approach – that bodes well for the future of place-based governance
 - Each of their policy documents begins with a study of stories – primarily oral stories in this culture, told to them by their elders and recorded with a view to particular policy objectives
 - They started with family policy – compiling the stories and working on the identification of principles and themes that inform them about the role, importance, and nature of family learning in their culture.
 - Out of these stories, they then develop the positions, programs, and criteria that are necessary to merge with the more essentialist approach of our government and judicial systems – producing a policy document to guide their institution-building and relations with other levels of government
 - The final act is to design a dance – a dance which represents the policy and its roots in the history and culture of the nation which developed it
- So far, the territorial authorities have accepted this innovative approach to self-government – one which recognizes the people and places of Carcross, but which merges with the statutes and regulations of the broader government
- I put this example before you for two reasons
 - It illustrates some of the implications of our focus on place – implications that are likely to take us outside the comfort of our research and governance traditions and challenge us to entertain new forms of thinking and new forms of governance – better adapted to the idiosyncrasies of place, and
 - It inspires us to see how such exploration and transformation might be done – in this case learning from the people and cultures that we were so quick to discount and suppress. Many other experiments of this nature are taking place as we come to agreements with native peoples in BC, in Nunavut, and across the country.

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Conclusions

- Stressors
 - Urbanization, globalization, knowledge, etc.
 - Local conditions modify stressors
- Assets
 - 'Place' importance
 - Look broadly
 - Reorganize assets
- Governance and outcomes
 - Inclusive
 - Messy
 - Imaginative
 - Long-term

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- This brief survey of our objectives and insights identifies many places which require further research
 - What are the relative impacts of various stressors in various types of places? How do they interact?
 - Which assets are most useful for dealing with various stressors in different places?
 - Which approaches to governance are most appropriate for dealing with these various combinations?
 - What are the best ways to manage the inevitable conflict that emerges with local and regional governance challenges?
- And I know that many of us are hard at work trying to answer them
- But I would like to also address the challenges faced by the policy-makers, activists, and citizens among us – who do not have the luxury of long time frames
- What are our best answers to the questions I posed at the beginning of my presentation
- What are the major stressors that rural places are likely to face in the future?
 - Here and elsewhere we have answered this question in terms of a relatively long list: urbanization, global competition, increasing importance of knowledge, climate change, and immigration to name a few
 - But we can also add, that the nature of the place in which you live or act will significantly alter the nature of those stressors – in some cases minimizing their impact and in others, increasing them significantly
- What are the assets you can use to position yourselves for the future?
 - Here, we reinforce the importance of 'place' in the identification of assets (and liabilities): each place will have its particular constellation of assets that may serve to mitigate or build upon the stressors
 - But we also have something to say about the things to consider when exploring potential local assets
 - Look broadly – consider social, natural, cultural, historical, formal, and informal assets as well as the usual economic, financial, land, and leadership ones.
 - Remember that the successful use of assets is usually about recombining ones that are already in place rather than creating new ones. This is the message of Neil Argent, et al., David Bruce, Masatoshi Ouchi, Sean Markey, Hugh Gayler, and Kelly Vodden (competitive advantage over comparative advantage)
- The final question I posed is intimately linked to the third one:
 - How can you best position yourselves for the future? It is directly linked to answering Where would you like to be in the future?
- In many ways this is the most difficult – as reflected in the amount of attention devoted to it by the authors in this conference
- What have we learned that might be of use to you?
 - Good governance is inclusive: formal and informal organizations and groups, all relevant parties, all relevant levels
 - In our NRE research we look at not just formal government relations, but what we call market, bureaucratic, associative, and communal
 - Good governance is messy: David Story, Doug Ramsey, Salma Loudiyi, and Hugh Gayler remind us that with multiple parties, there will be many conflicting interests, so that we need to provide the venues for these differences of opinion to emerge, be debated, and decided. Multiple venues are better
 - Good governance needs imagination and flexibility: There are many ways of understanding and managing the challenges we face. The best responses often come from a new blending of them in place-appropriate ways.
 - Good governance needs a long term vision: My Quebec example illustrates this – as does the Carcross approach (they think in terms of generations, not months or even years)
- Research also provides the evidence and stories that can keep us optimistic about the results.
 - We have many illustrations of the ways in which local places have reversed their fortunes, overcome deep rooted conflict, and created new opportunities for themselves and others
- I would love to have the time to tell you some of these stories because they are the stories that inspire us and keep us going – both researchers and activists alike.

NRE² BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Space to Place: the Next New Rural Economies Workshop

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