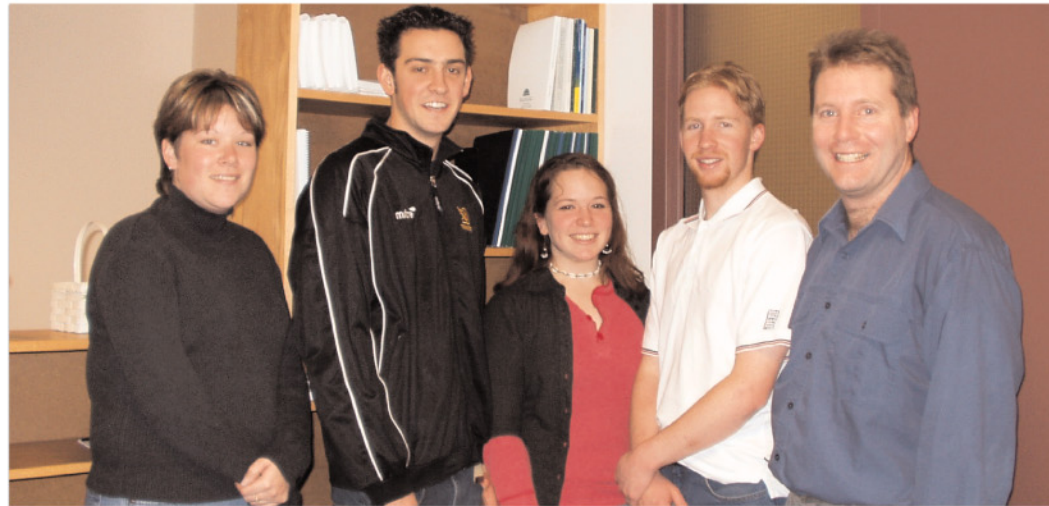


# Rural and small town real-world research

Four bright Mount Allison students are conducting exciting and relevant research into community development this year. Each is working with David Bruce, director of Mount Allison's Rural and Small Town Programme, and each is researching a topic that is real to them and will have real-world effects.

A four-year research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), is enabling David and his students to work with researchers from a dozen other universities in Canada. The \$3-million grant that is shared by these universities will be used to help the universities collaborate directly with 32 rural and small town communities nationwide in order to investigate how communities are changing because of, and adapting to, the new rural economy. The project will also examine ways to build capacity of rural communities and small towns to succeed in the new economy.

How can communities adapt when they have lost natural resources or their main industry base? How do they cope as citizens leave the community to look for work elsewhere? It is answers to questions such as these that David Bruce and his student researchers will be trying to answer as they move forward with their research. In broad terms, David's team is focusing on one specific aspect of the larger project — looking at how people communicate and use technology in the New Rural Economy. Teams at other universities will be exploring the environment, local services, and governance in small communities.



RSTP researchers, left to right: Lindsay Lyghtle, Evan Dickinson, Kathryn Beaton, and Mathew MacInnis with director David Bruce

Evan Dickinson, a third-year geography student originally from Australia but most recently from Calgary, is engaging in online dialogue with various communities. He is intent on helping them create bridging capacity through the use of technology.

Lindsay Lyghtle from Noel, NS is in the final year of her degree and is majoring in environmental studies and geography. She has worked with local communities like Springhill, NS, and Lot 16, PEI, and also with places like Benito, MB to find ways for communities that are widely separated geographically to have meaningful discussions and interaction.

Third-year student Kathryn Beaton from Mabou, NS is studying anthropology and doing a study of the web sites developed by the different towns participating in the project, looking at the services and information on these web sites and also at how they are used.

Matthew MacInnis, a third-year Canadian studies student from Port McNeill, BC is analyzing papers written by RSTP Director David Bruce and other members of the research team and condensing them for use in one-page flyers and news releases. Matthew, interested in becoming a journalist, recognizes that the skills he is learning through his work with the RSTP is enhancing his ability to think, draw conclusions, and write for different audiences.

David Bruce says the overall goals of the research team are twofold. "We want to understand how rural communities are or are not functioning. Then, through our research, we hope to help them take action, make decisions, and build capacity to function in the new economy."

For more information on the Rural and Small Town Programme, visit <http://www.mta.ca/rstp> and for more information on the national project, visit <http://nre.concordia.ca> and <http://www.mta.ca/rstp/nre.html>