

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Conversation Café

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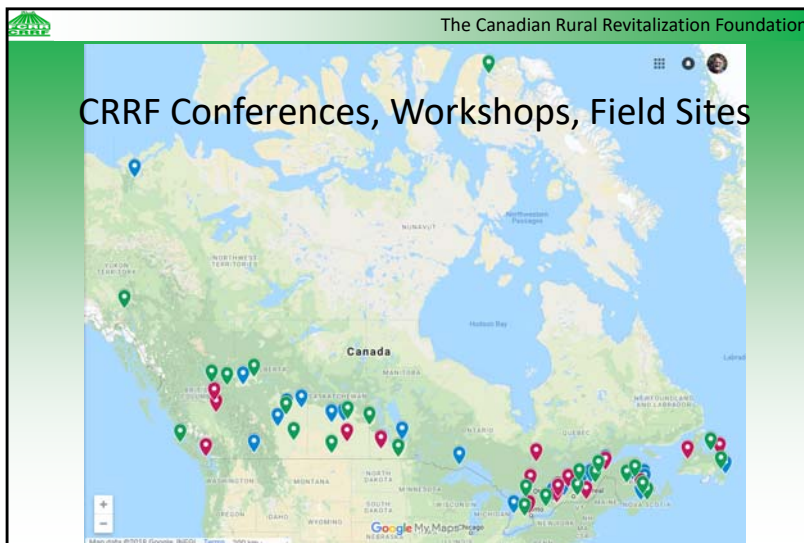
- Question: What are some of the important rural and remote issues we face today?
- My objective: to provide a brief indication of some of the issues which CRRF, and ARRГ before it, have addressed
 - The legacy within which we consider the question today



- When considering those issues, I turned to our annual conference program attracting researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, rural citizens
- Our first major contribution was our early decision to hold the conferences in rural places
 - This ensured collaboration with the local communities. They identify the issues and organize the event. We provide suggestions, people, and networks who can address those issues. Both national and international.
 - Over the years we have held our conferences in 30 places from Prince George in the west to Twillingate in the east and Inuvik in the north.



- Add to that the various workshops which we have supported and the number jumps to more than 50 places.



- Including the 32 field sites of the CRRF-initiated and sponsored New Rural Economy Project and the number goes to more than 75.
- This means that we have collectively visited, learned about, and shared experiences in multiple rural towns and villages throughout the country – providing a rich basis for our understanding of the diversity, challenges, and assets of these communities (not to mention the many creative, committed, and engaging people we have met).

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CRRF local impacts

- Coaticook
- Tweed




- These are all places that have been impacted by our decision to meet in rural places wherever possible.
- Not just the value of getting policy-makers and researchers out of their urban institutions
- In many cases we have stimulated long term changes in the conference communities
 - Like the small community of Coaticook, QC that used the conference to transform a local barn into a conference centre and accommodate 200 international guests in a town with one 36-room motel. They subsequently marketed their town as a conference centre.
 - Or the village of Tweed, ON that collaborated with two of its local rivals to put on the conference, then – inspired by the conference theme of regionalism – to subsequently organize several local towns into a tourist destination called “Comfort Country”. I was pleased to see how their actions in turn inspired several other towns in Eastern Ontario to do a similar thing.



Early ARRГ/CRRF (1987 to 1996)

- Sustaining Rural Development, Ottawa, ON
- Stimulating Rural Economies for the 2000s, Camrose, AB
- Manufacturing and Tradeable Services in Rural Development Strategy, Brandon, MB; Goderich ON
- Development Strategies for Rural Canada, Wolfville, NS
- Rural Institutional Restructuring, Grande Prairie, AB
- NAFTA and the New Rural Economy, Coaticook, QC, Gimli, MB

- ARRG emerged from 50 years of radical transformation of (mostly rural) resource industries
 - We were producing more, with fewer people and more machines
 - Declining populations as labour was shedded
 - Dramatic reduction in the community capacities they supported
- It is little wonder that the conference and workshop topics at that time focused on the changing rural economy
- What did we find?
 - Chasing smokestacks is not a way out - but a part of the community decline process
 - Rural manufacturing strong - just eclipsed
 - Impacts vary by social and financial status (NAFTA): Three rural Mexicos (David Davila)



The New Rural Economy (1996 to 2013)

- Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices, West Prince County, PE
- Rural Marginalization, Nelson, BC
- Rural Revitalization, Alfred, ON
- The NRE: From Challenge to Action
- Rural Matters, Miramichi, NB
- Building Rural Capacity in the NRE, Gatineau, QC
- The Future of Rural Canada, Lanark, ON

- Federal interest in connecting with rural people
 - Invited presentations to Legislative Committees
 - Establishment of Rural Secretariat
- What is this new rural economy? What are the options for communities?
 - Conference topics dominated by these questions
 - Fed by 11 - year NRE project
 - Federal attention via Rural Secretariat
 - Significant opportunities for research and community engagement
- What did we learn?
 - Rural communities must take initiative
 - Local assets are critical
 - Necessary to build capacity in social organization and governance
 - Warning: window of opportunity closing as urbanization increases



Building Rural Capacities (2014+)

- Connecting Communities: Rural and Urban, Vermillion, AB
- Boom-Bust Economies, Inuvik, NT
- Culture, Place, and Identity, St. John's, NL
- Creating Rural Connections, Olds, AB
- Rural Canada: Ready to Grow, Thunder Bay, ON
- New Realities, New Relationships, Prince George, BC
- Building Resilient/Vibrant Communities, Summerside, PE, Guelph, ON
- Different by Design, Nelson, BC

•1980s recession, urbanization, and neo-liberal ideology created conditions for the withdrawal of federal commitment to rural and remote places and people

- Provinces preoccupied
- Downloading with little fiscal and capacity support
- Even QC – in 2014 drastically undercut its Rural Policy
- Regionalism becomes a topic
- Policy impacts?
- Rural on its own
- Rural-urban alliances become critical




Gap

Are there important rural and urban differences in perspectives which are likely to modify your suggestions for future initiatives?

- Finally – considering gaps
- Have noted the current comparisons of rural and urban voting patterns which have been picked up by the popular media in the USA and Canada.
- Not a new phenomenon, but has become a new topic of speculation – with a wide variety of suggestions
- In the CRRF tradition, this means it is time to subject those speculations to more systematic and empirically-based descriptions and analysis – including potential drivers of voting patterns such as migration, the significance of place, our long-standing policy of moving people to jobs, not jobs to people, urbanization, immigration, and most of the other issues on our list.
- I invite you to consider this issue as part of your discussions at each table: Are there important rural and urban differences in perspectives which are likely to modify your suggestions for future initiatives?



- This is the context in which we meet today to consider the issues you face and the options for the future.




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Contributions to our learning

- <http://www.billreimer.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Reimer30YearsOfCRRF02.pdf>

- I would also like to make clear how much our engagement with local communities has informed and inspired new perspectives and learning among all our CRRF participants
- How Mackenzie, BC demonstrated the downside of chasing smokestacks and the value of relying on local assets
- How Cap-à-l'Aigle (Village of Lilacs) showed us how combining those local assets and marketing them to the world could provide a more sustainable approach to community development.
- How the two Japanese communities of the NRE project encourage the departure of their children – and use them as intelligence-gathering agents for local community development
- How Inuvik uses its boom periods to create social institutions (like a modern, well-equipped hospital and recreation centre) to make their community so attractive that people will figure out how to stay there during the inevitable bust period of a resource community.
- Or how Seguin looked to integrate its urban-related seasonal residents to ensure they knew about the challenges of maintaining a small town and use them as contacts and support for regional and provincial initiatives.
- I have tried to capture some of these for all our 30 years in series of slides. Invite you to explore them via the CRRF website (About > History links) – or <http://www.billreimer.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Reimer30YearsOfCRRF02.pdf>



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Accomplishments

- 34 international conferences
- 24 workshops
- 10 books
- 3 presentations to Senate and/or House of Commons Committees
- More that 500 presentations, chapters, and other products relating to rural issues – in 20 of the conferences

- Another way of looking at CRRF accomplishments is to look at our products.
- A cursory examination of our CRRF history – and ARRG before it reveals some of the following statistics.
 - 34 conferences
 - 24 workshops
 - 10 books
 - 3 presentations to Senate and/or House of Commons Committees
 - My search of only 20 of those conferences and workshops reveals more that 500 presentations, chapters, and other products relating to rural issues
- Most of those topics are related to the issues represented by the roundtables topics in this session.