

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Facilitating Collaboration among Researchers, Policy-makers, and Communities

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Rural Research Day – U of Guelph 2014

Rural Networks – Research Into Action

- Thank you for this opportunity to join you – if only in a virtual manner. I appreciate the way in which Elin Gwyn and Brad Stephenson, in particular, have made it possible for me to appear in the room with you.
- I find the topic and initiative of this Rural Research Day to be very exciting
- Especially during this period when rural research centres are having great difficulty surviving and the attention given to “rural” gets overwhelmed by the challenges facing our urban centres and the voices broadcasting them.
- It is important, however, to reinforce the point that even though “rural” has become less frequent in our national vocabulary, the issues that it represents have not.
- The quality of our food, the safety of our water, the sustainability of our natural resources, the appropriate production of energy, and the processing of our pollution are all rural issues
 - Just as they are critical to the quality and sustainability of urban life.
- That is why we need to build our rural research networks and connect them to the policy-makers and rural people that are directly affected – even though rural places are, by definition, far apart.
- And it is why we need to find ways to bridge the challenges created by our different objectives and our diverse institutional and professional contexts:
- So that we can understand the factors affecting rural people and places – to the benefit of all Canadians.
- I intend today to speak about some of these challenges – and contribute to the discussion regarding how they might be overcome.
- I have changed the title of my presentation to be more specific about its content
 - It will still address the power and potential of rural networks – but I will focus on some aspects that are particularly relevant to the participants in the rural research day.
- We can turn now to the slides.
- Other materials produced by Dr. Reimer can be viewed via <http://billreimer.ca>.



- I will focus on the challenges to collaboration among 3 types of people and groups.
 - All of them are represented in the participants today.
- (*) The first type is represented by the researchers among us.
 - Primarily those who are connected to universities, colleges, and research centres,
 - But also those who are involved with policy research:
- (*) The second type is composed of policy-makers and related practitioners who develop and make the policy decisions that structure our interactions and allocate resources.
- (*) The third type includes the many people and groups that make up our communities – in this case those primarily in rural areas.
- Many of us are members of one or more of these types so we face conflicting pressures and demands related to our multiple roles.

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Outline


- Researchers
 - Expectations and requirements
 - Institutional and professional constraints
 - Challenges for collaboration
- Policy-makers
 - Expectations and requirements
 - Institutional and professional constraints
 - Challenges for collaboration
- Community people and groups
 - Expectations and requirements
 - Institutional and professional constraints
 - Challenges for collaboration
- Strategies for collaboration
 - Researchers
 - Policy-makers
 - Community people and groups
- Summary and Discussion



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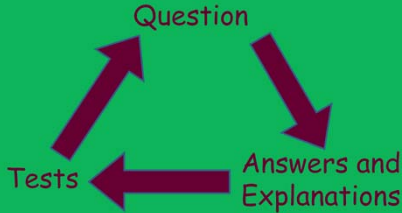
- Here is how I have organized my presentation today.
- (*) I will first go through each of the types of stakeholders, identifying for each:
 - The expectations we have for them and some key requirements they have to meet those expectations;
 - The pressures and constraints they feel as a result of their institutional and professional contexts; and
 - The implications of these expectations and institutional constraints for their ability to collaborate within their type and among other types of stakeholders.
- (*) I will then turn to the question: How can we overcome some of the challenges to collaboration which emerge from the different institutional and professional contexts of these three types of stakeholders?
- (*) I will discuss each in turn before providing some summary comments that look forward to your discussion this afternoon.

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Provide good explanations

- Long term
- Esoteric jargon
- Conditional conclusions
- Open communication



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- Looking first at researchers – at our best, we are expected to provide good explanations for various phenomenon (like I am trying to do today)
 - Typically, we do this by asking questions and systematically improving on the appropriateness of those questions.
- At a general level, our energy is focused on a continual cycle involving the following components
 - (*) Formulating a question that is appropriate for research.
 - (*) Providing a series of reasonable answers to the question – with the explanations associated to each
 - (*) Testing the relative validity of competing answers through the use of logic and/or empirical evidence.
 - (*) Revising the question or questions as a result of that analysis.
 - Then repeating the cycle as we build confidence in the various explanations identified.
- This is what I teach my students and it is what constitutes my colleagues' work when they are at their best.
- Note that this requires us to:
 - (*) Be involved in long-term projects over: months, years, and decades, not days or hours;
 - (*) Develop esoteric jargon in our efforts to make important distinctions in explanations and methodologies; and
 - (*) Draw conclusions from our work that are always conditional and hypothetical.
 - We never “prove” a conclusion, we at best support one conclusion over another.
 - At our best we are a modest lot – since there is always the possibility that our logic is faulty, that better evidence may be found, and a better explanation might be suggested.
 - (*) It also requires us to be open and transparent in our communications – since only by exposing our work to others that our confidence in the conclusions can be increased.
 - That is why we have traditions of peer review, reproduction of results, and transparency of methodology.
- In order to understand the full dynamics of our collaborations, however, we have to consider the institutional contexts in which we work.
- These contexts structure the ways in which we conduct our research, the trajectories of our careers, the competing demands on our research, and the organization of our collaborations.

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Institutional Constraints

- Demands for
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Community service
- **Challenges for collaboration**
 - Discipline focus ∴ rural has lower priority
 - Academic focus ∴ non-academic have lower priority
 - Imprecise criteria for success ∴ limited networks

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- The universities, colleges, and Research Centres in which we operate make more or less three main demands on our time.
- (*) The first demand is on our teaching (typically measured in terms of the number of students, their levels, and the amount of time we spend with them).
 - This is often the bread and butter of our institutions – determining the public grant money, course credit income, and the most public visibility of our social value (training for jobs and other public contributions).
- The second demand is for research.
 - Measured by the value of grants and the number and type of publications in academic journals and books.
 - Characterized by the scientific approach but conditioned by the normal dynamics of professional visibility and attention.
 - In order to be noticed by our peers, for example, it helps to be published in particular journals or to produce well recognized books.
- The third (and usually least stressed) demand on us is for service to the community.
 - The “community” is mainly interpreted as the university or other professional organizations – not the general public.
- The judgements regarding the relative value of these are made by our peers – most often in our departments and faculties.
 - They tend to be conservative and discipline-focused in those evaluations.
- (*) So what are some of the challenges to networking and collaboration that arise from these conditions?
 - (*) It is more valuable for us to be discipline-focused than inter-disciplinary researchers.
 - Immediately puts rural issues on the back burner since they tend to be complex and multi-disciplinary.
 - (*) It is more valuable for us to focus on topics of interest to academic networks than non-academic.
 - To address new or non-academic topics it is strategic to formulate them in more traditional terms or to link them to traditional concepts and theories.
 - (*) Criteria for success are imprecise – therefore increasing the stress on our junior faculty.
 - If you don't know what will be valued, one tends to be exhaustive in background research, highly conditional in claims, and somewhat possessive in the sharing of ideas and strategies.
 - Plays havoc with communication outside a relatively narrow collection of colleagues.



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Make good decisions in a complex world

- Good information
- Authority
 - Appropriate representation
 - Accountability
- Public vision

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- Compare this to policy-makers and policy-designers.
- We expect them to make reasonable decisions in a complex world – decisions that promote wealth, justice, and social support, in a sustainable fashion.
 - These decisions are often in the face of crises and complex (wicked) problems – those with contradictory requirements and incomplete information.
- In order to do so they require:
 - (*) Good information: reliable, appropriate to the issue, and as thorough as possible;
 - (*) Appropriately designated authority
 - In Canada, this includes a requirement for:
 - The proper representation of constituents, and
 - Accountability (transparency) of the activities and outcomes of the policy-makers' decisions.
 - (*) The cultivation of a **public** vision in their decision-making – as opposed to a private one.

["wicked" problem – impossible to resolve because of contradictory requirements, incomplete information, and/or because they are difficult to recognize or comprehend.]

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Institutional Constraints

- Quick decisions
- Appropriate representation and accountability
- Limited cross-department collaboration
- High turnover

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• These conditions and the institutional legacies of our governments produce several challenges for collaboration (especially across disciplines and departments), however.

- (*) The long-term horizons of research and their highly qualified conclusions are often seen as useless for the quick decisions that must be delivered by policy-makers.

- (*) The (justifiable) demands for appropriate representation and accountability are often seen as obstacles for collaboration.

- The severe financial constraints of the current neo-liberal climate exacerbate these challenges.

- (*) Cross-departmental collaborations are particularly vulnerable

- They are typically not standing departments, therefore, they have ad hoc budgets and a relatively weak power base when it comes to bargaining for resources and policy attention.

- Community (place-based) issues are inherently cross-department. When one focuses on a town, village, or city for example, most local issues involve multiple departments or sectors.

- Labour issues are inextricably related to health, education, environmental, social service, and recreational issues, for example.

- But the policies, programs, and budgets within each of these departments are often jealously guarded and the mechanisms to share resources tend to be complicated and difficult.

- As we have seen, in the struggle for funds, it is the inter-departmental and rural secretariat type of departments that are first to go.

- (*) The high turnover in staff (especially under conditions of austerity) means:

- There is often a reluctance to act on the part of new people,

- The staff are continually being trained in the basics – not advanced skills – and the institutional memory gets lost, and

- There are often uncertain mandates from above (as people wait to see what the next person, policy, budget, or program will bring).

- This simply exacerbates the reluctance to act.



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Challenges for Collaboration

- Short time frames
- Impatience with qualifications on results
- Difficulties with jargon
- Reliance on hearsay and anecdotes
- Informal community groups excluded from resources

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- What are some of the challenges that arise for networking and collaboration under these conditions?
- (*) Policy-makers and practitioners can't wait for the research results that might emerge from the academics.
- (*) They are justifiably impatient with the many qualifications on research results.
- (*) Policy-makers also have difficulties understanding the complexities of research jargons and methodologies.
 - Especially when they must make sense of them in terms that are meaningful and interesting to superiors and the public.
- (*) In desperation, there tends to be a reliance on hearsay and anecdotes when formulating policy and making decisions.
 - Research we have conducted in the use of scientific evidence in 4 provinces suggests that both the access to it and the use of it is very limited in the decisions made by community and regional policy-makers. (Reimer, Bill and Matthew Brett (2013) "Scientific Knowledge and Rural Policy: A long distance relationship." *Sociologia Ruralis* 53:3 July, 272-290).
- (*) Our NRE research also shows how government financing is being directed to those community groups who are more formal in their structure (in most cases, this means having a Board of Directors) than those which are more informal.



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Create sustainable livelihoods

- Food, clothing, shelter
- Human capital (talents and skills)
- Social networks (social capital)
- Safe environment

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- I will now compare the situation of researchers and policy-makers to the citizens, municipal officials, and other groups within rural communities.
- At their best, community people are in the business of creating and sustaining healthy and productive livelihoods for themselves, their families, and their communities.
 - They do this by directly engaging with the people and groups in their neighbourhoods and regions, contributing through paid and non-paid activities, and supporting their families and communities.
- In order to do so they require:
 - (*) The basics of life: food, clothing, shelter
 - In Canadian society this usually means an income – through job, business, investments, or pensions.
 - (*) People also need the talents and skills that allow them to function as individuals – what economists refer to as human capital;
 - (*) And we should also recognize the need for social connections for support, information, and companionship.
 - (*) All of these must be available in an environment that is relatively safe from social or natural dangers.

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Institutional Constraints

- Competing demands
- Voluntary activity
- Searching for quick and simple solutions
- Policy regimes too general
- Limited information

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- In the community context, the major institutional and professional constraints they face are intimately connected to their daily lives.
- (*) One of the most important is that there are many competing demands from many different domains in their lives.
- (*) A second is that the management of these demands is largely voluntary.
 - Earning a living, raising kids, caring for the elderly, repairing and maintaining a home, supporting their neighbours, while taking care of their personal and social needs are all examples of these demands – and there are no commonly agreed upon MOUs, terms of references, by-laws, or procedural manuals to manage these demands.
 - Even sustaining a resilient and vibrant economy or improving the social and environmental qualities of a local community depends on volunteers.
- These types of demands have increased over the last 40 years as many communities age (care-givers become care-recipients), populations decrease in the more remote places, women move into the labour force, and the state withdraws from its social support responsibilities as defined in the welfare state era of the 50s and 60s.
- The Walkerton Tragedy is a reminder about how vulnerable this support system can be.
 - Maintaining a safe and consistent water supply, ensuring effective access to health care, upgrading education to national and international standards, responding to the closure of a major industry, or integrating newcomers into the community are activities that rely on an informed and capable volunteer pool.
- (*) Like the policy-makers, people in local communities are searching for easy solutions to crises and effective strategies for long-term negative trends.
- (*) In addition, our New Rural Economy research and more recent work by Kelly Vodden et al. shows that provincial and federal policies and programs are unlikely to be seen as appropriate for the local conditions (<http://nre.concordia.ca>; <http://cdnregdev.wordpress.com/>).
- (*) Finally, the type of information for communities to make decisions about their futures is often inaccessible or incomprehensible.
 - This means that considerable local energy and resources are often spent in ways that are ineffective:
 - Addressing the symptoms of the crises rather than the root causes
 - E.g. chasing smokestacks that exacerbate the vulnerability of communities to external forces; turning to the type of jobs that are themselves destined for increased competition and lower, insecure wages.
 - There is generally, a lack of recognition of the broader social forces that drive the local changes – changes that are often outside the local communities' control.



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Challenges for Collaboration

- Short term demands
- Little recognition of volunteer constraints
- Accountability and representation requirements
- Researchers seen as exploiting
- General policies seen as insensitive

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- What are some of the implications for communities to network and collaborate with others?
 - (*) As with the policy-makers the research, policies, and programs take too much time.
 - (*) There is little recognition by policy-makers of the constraints on volunteers (such as the competing demands of child and elder care, transportation, or employment).
 - (*) The justifiable accountability and representation demands of policy-makers appear as diversions from the important objectives of the volunteer groups and are seen as incompatible with how things are done locally.
 - (*) The long term horizons of researchers are seen as exploitation and useless (researchers collect data for theses and publications, then disappear).
 - (*) General policies of federal and provincial policy-makers seen as insensitive to local conditions.



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Strategies for Researchers

- Involve non-academics early, frequent, critically
- Use the “mother-in-law” test
- Support community-engaged research
- Organize strategically within research networks

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- How can we overcome these quite considerable differences in needs, resources, and social contexts?
 - They all seem to get in the way of effective collaboration.
- In order to open this discussion I will propose some strategies.
 - I assume that there is enough talent and experience in the room to move this far beyond my initial attempts – to come up with some useful and tractable options.
 - I will organize the strategies with a view to the 3 types of groups – committing the noble lie by assuming each group sees the benefits in collaboration and would like to overcome some of the obstacles I have outlined.
- First researchers – how might they make their work more appropriate and accessible to policy-makers, practitioners, and community people and groups?
 - (*) My first suggestion is to invite non-academic people and groups to participate early in the research process, frequently as it develops, and to serve as critics at each stage of the cycle.
 - I recognize that this has to be done strategically since the debates and discussions among researchers can often be interpreted as confusion and conflict by those outside the circle.
 - This was brought home to us in the NRE Project in one of our early workshops in North Bay. The researchers among us were all fired up at the exciting possibilities of the new multi-year project. It stimulated much animated discussion as we debated the ways in which our resources could be used. It generated conflicting perspectives around the table and heated proposals of different methodologies and approaches. To the researchers it was exciting, stimulating, and highly productive.
 - To the policy-makers, practitioners, and community people who had little experience with the norms of academic discussion, it appeared antagonistic, confused, and a bit scary. I'm sure they wondered what they were getting into – or putting their money in.
 - Fortunately, by the end of the workshop we were still talking to one another – and it laid a basis for the important insights that were to come from our policy and community partners who were part of our project. In many cases, these insights only came years later.
 - This inclusive approach was also successfully adopted by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation in its early decision to hold conferences and workshops in rural places – or at least those that are more than an hour from major urban centres.
 - This recognized the difficulties that rural people face in travelling to the cities in which most conferences take place and it provided a rural venue for policy-makers to meet with the people who were affected by their policies and programs.
 - By inviting researchers and policy-makers to act as presenters or session Chairs, it provided them with a way they could justify travel expenses to their supervisors and gave them the public visibility that is important to their personal and institutional careers.
 - (*) My second suggestion is to integrate the “mother-in-law” test into all public communication.
 - This test was suggested by my colleague Ray Bollman as a criteria to use when explaining research results:
 - Can you explain the results and their importance in a way that your mother-in-law would understand? For those without mother-in-laws the principle works just as well if you think of someone who matters to you, is not familiar with academic jargon, and is likely to be somewhat cautious in their praise.
 - (*) My third suggestion is to proactively support the value of community-engaged research.
 - Often the greatest problem is not the administrators of our institutions but our peers and colleagues.
 - We are, therefore, in a position to mentor our colleagues to ensure that the many demands of this type of research are included in their CVs, that they become an important part of the evaluation in our committees, and that the criteria for the quality of the engagement be clearly formulated.
 - (*) A fourth suggestion is to organize strategically within our research partnerships.
 - This worked well in our NRE project.
 - Since we had both junior and senior researchers in our project, we were able to adopt an informal arrangement whereby the junior faculty were encouraged and supported to produce the traditional materials of our profession: journal articles and books, while the senior faculty took on the challenges of community engagement, media responses, and grant-writing.
 - Most of the senior members of the team had tenure so the pressure of publishing was lower – allowing us to take on other demands and leave our junior partners the time to write.



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Strategies for Policy-makers

- Engage researchers and community early, frequent, critically
- Create venues for research and community members
- Provide opportunities for students
- Support long-term research networks
- Take on more knowledge translation

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- What about policy-makers and practitioners? Are there strategies they may adopt to reduce the obstacles to collaboration?
- I am more hesitant in making my suggestions here, since I have only indirect experience with their world, but I offer them as a stimulus to get the ball rolling.
- (*) I see from the existence of this workshop and others like it in Ontario, that there is already effective use of my primary strategy suggestion: Take initiative to engage researchers and community people in your policy and program formulation, implementation, and evaluation.
- (*) Given the fiscal and institutional constraints against such initiatives, this can often mean dreaming up innovative events and venues to make it happen.
 - I was impressed when I received an invitation to prepare a position paper on rural-urban relations when the national Liberal government first introduced the gas tax that would be used for communities and cities. This was in 2005 when the Honorable John Godfrey was the Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities.
 - At the same time he invited a colleague Mario Polèse to prepare a similar paper from the position of urban centres.
 - These two papers were then presented at a roundtable attended by about 25 specially invited academics and policy-makers. At this in-camera event we engaged in an extended discussion with those faced with the decision of how to distribute the considerable funds generated by the tax.
 - This was a low-cost, but highly informative way in which policy-makers made effective use of the large pool of talent from across the country to deal with an immediate and pressing issue of the day.
 - I came across another approach when I was invited by Dalhousie University to present material at one of their occasional "Deans and Deputy Ministers' Forum".
 - This is an event that the university organizes with the NS Cabinet to provide a venue for academics and policy-makers to have an informal and free-wheeling discussion about an issue of the day.
 - The Cabinet suggests the topic and the university identifies the relevant experts to kick off the discussion. All the university Deans, Ministers, and Deputy Ministers are invited – once again to a lengthy and in-camera discussion on the topic.
 - Not only does it pressure the academics around the table to consider the practical implications of their work, but it ensures a wide variety of departments and disciplines are involved – dramatically increasing the chance of new insights and alliances.
 - Many of these types of events are relatively low cost.
 - Researchers are generally interested in speaking about their work, especially in venues where interested (and powerful) people are involved.
 - In some cases this means commissioning reports and creating contracts – an approach that can be challenging under conditions of fiscal restraint.
 - But it can also mean creating venues where researchers have a chance to engage with interested policy-makers and practitioners.
 - The opportunity alone is often enough to attract our attention.
- (*) We are also interested in finding opportunities for our students. In most cases this involves financial support, but it can also be combined with the offer of experience in a policy milieu. I expect that those in the Guelph context are well aware of the benefits of these opportunities. Perhaps some imaginative thinking could be directed to ways in which students in smaller or more remote places can also benefit.
- (*) Most of these strategies require the long-term support of a pool of research and analysis talent.
 - This is one way to ensure that the long term requirements of good research are compatible with the short-term demands of policy and community issues.
 - A vibrant pool of researchers who are relatively free to pursue a wide variety of issues – from pie-in-the-sky to practical, theoretical to marketable – is an important basis for quick responses to short-term crises.
 - A necessary ingredient of this strategy, however, is that sufficient effort has been made from all sides to familiarize themselves with the demands of their partners, so the responses to crises are not diverted by the legacy of mistrust that can emerge from a lack of regular and diverse engagement.
- (*) My final suggestion to policy-makers is to take on a greater burden of the "translation" process from researchers and community people.
 - I have been struck by how often the researchers are expected to do the work of drawing out the policy implications of our results without adequate dialogue with the policy-makers and practitioners.
 - Only a small number of us are trained as policy analysts – and even then the training is often general and abstract without the benefit of practical experience.
 - We are not consultants – think of us as volunteers.
 - Bring your issues and questions, but in the spirit of clarifying them and developing more appropriate responses, not the search for simple answers.
 - Researchers and community members cannot be expected to provide you with policy-ready responses – this is a two-way and long-term process.
 - This is one reason why internship opportunities are so important for bridging the research-policy gap.



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Strategies for Communities

- Build a learning community
- Integrate newcomers
- Use your local assets to entice researchers and policy-makers
- Formalize community groups

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- As I considered the ways in which communities might overcome some of the challenges of collaboration, I found myself getting excited about the possibilities.
- As a result of my research in Canada and outside, I found many examples of community initiatives that increased the collaboration with policy-makers and researchers in very productive ways.
- (*) In the community of Awano, Japan, for example, they take community learning seriously – turning most of their community celebrations into occasions for learning about research, policy, markets, and trends in other parts of the world.
 - They do it by using their neighbours and alumni or diaspora – the many young people or families that have moved out of their village.
 - They organize homecoming events and invite their alumni to return – with pictures and stories. They provide venues for these people to show the pictures and tell the stories of the places they have been and the things that they did. In the process they inform the community about the world. Since many of these people are now researchers, policy-makers, business-people, and corporate workers, they create new opportunities for collaboration and alliances.
- (*) In one of the communities with which we worked over the 11 years of the NRE project we heard how they were having difficulty with the seasonal residents who came to enjoy the tranquility of Parry Sound.
 - It was only after years of tension that the community decided to include these seasonal residents on their municipal committees – the committees where the problems of water quality, the condition of the roads, the levels of taxation, and the challenges of recreational demands were discussed and debated.
 - They discovered that by directly including these people in the discussions the seasonal visitors became aware of the implications of their activities – especially in terms of the cost.
 - The community discovered that the resistance to tax increases declined once these people saw the need for and benefits of the additional income, and
 - They had the added advantage that several of seasonal residents were provincial-level policy makers and corporate executives who were able to identify new sources of funding for local initiatives.
- (*) I have been involved with a number of community events where the communities use their local assets to entice researchers or policy-makers to make a local contribution.
 - One example is where my university initiated an agreement with the Report on Business magazine that occasionally accompanies several newspapers in the country.
 - The university agreed to provide 3 academics to comment on selected companies who claimed to be green in their approach.
 - I have been asked to provide these comments on two different occasions – one concerning the Rona Hardware chain and the other discussing a vineyard and winery in Québec.
 - In the case of the winery, I was invited to a tour of the business and a meal in the world class restaurant associated with their establishment.
 - When speaking with the owner I realized that he was extremely interested in a wide range of research results – from the chemistry of wine to the dynamics of climate change. These are clearly issues that are directly related to the success of his business.
 - I suggested that by using the meal as inducement he would have little trouble finding strategically chosen researchers from the 4 universities in the area – to come and discuss their research and its implications for his business and community.
 - In fact, I expect he would be able to invite local community people and groups to the event – perhaps even covering the cost of the meal itself.
 - There are few researchers I know who would not be interested in speaking about their work in exchange for an appetizing meal.
 - In the process they would add to the knowledge and capacity of the community.
- (*) I mentioned earlier how community groups with Boards of Directors are more likely to receive funding than those without.
 - This should provide a clue to a good strategy for any group looking to connect with governments.
 - By formalizing their organization they help to meet the concerns about accountability and representation that preoccupy our state agencies.

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In Summary

- Researchers
 - Include local knowledge
- Policy-makers
 - Treat researchers and community members as volunteers
- Community members
 - Create multiple venues for collaboration
- Expect and welcome surprises in each collaboration



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•None of these strategies will work, however, if there isn't also the fostering of mutual respect for each others' contexts, constraints, and contributions.

•(*) For researchers:

- It takes an efforts to pass the mother-in-law test.
- It requires multiple efforts to engage with policy-makers and community members in a search for relevance of your insights to specific challenges.
- Sometimes you must risk your own position to recognize and champion the effort and successes of community-engaged colleagues when sitting on departmental and faculty committees.

•(*) For policy-makers

- You must make an effort to participate in research and community events – in a spirit of curiosity.
 - Keep your cool with the sometimes intense debates and differences of opinion – recognizing their importance for good research and good policy
- Take on a greater burden of the “translation” process from researchers and community people.
 - We are not consultants – think of us as volunteers.

•(*) For community members.

- Seek and create multiple venues for access to researchers and policy-makers.
 - Universities and colleges have many faculty members and students who will respond enthusiastically to specific challenges and invitations.
 - Use the internet facilities for engagement and tools at your disposal.
 - A good place to start is the Rural Ontario Institute or Rural Development Institute websites – or the Canadian Rural Research Network blog. They all have valuable resource links.
 - Make use of in-kind local assets in exchange for information and/or public event.
 - A couple of nights lodging for a family,
 - A free golf game,
 - A snowmobile adventure,
 - A walk in the woods.
 - These could all be appealing to various researchers and policy-makers.
- You can also make use of your human assets – including those who have already left
 - Pool funding support for someone to attend an external event, but require them to present their insights to all upon return.

•The goal is to create a long-term sustainable relationship among all types of people, not a one-off event.

•Must be nurtured in the spirit of curiosity, understanding, and exploration.

•(*) Expect and look for pleasant surprises in your engagements with others.

- They reveal your biases and assumptions,
- They stimulate innovation, and perhaps most of all
- They make the work exciting.



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 - **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs and the University of Guelph**
 - *CRRF*
 - *NRE Research Team*
 - *Rural Citizens in our field sites*
- Other materials produced by Dr. Reimer can be viewed via <http://billreimer.ca>.