•The NRE Project represents considerable investment
•Contributions of many groups and individuals
    •Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
       •Especially their INE initiative with Industry Canada
    •Concordia University – and all universities in our network – we need and appreciate their support
    •The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
    •Statistics Canada
    •CRRF
    •NRE Research Team
    •Rural Citizens in our field sites

•Presenters are asked to prepare the following slides (presentation) which will include:

    •1 slide- overview of project

    •1 slide- student training (add. info. handout)

    •1 slide knowledge mobilization activities (inc. indication of public outreach grant(s) and what it added to your knowledge transfer capacity)

    •1 slide successes

    •you may want to add an optional slide on important structures or processes your team has put in place that contributed to your team's successes

    •1 slide challenges

    •1 slide- lessons learned
•Students are asked to Present:

    •1 slide on type of work undertaken by the student presenting (and other students on the team as well if desired)

    •1 slide on "high points + low points" or "the good, the bad and the ugly"

The NRE Project

•Established in 1997

•15-20 researchers from all across Canada

•Rural Observatory – 32 rural sites + 2 sites in Japan

•Organization:

  •Central administrative office (Concordia)

  •4 themes centred in other (rural) locations

    •Services (UNBC)

    •Governance (UQAR)

    •Environment (UNB)

    •Communications (Mt Allison)

•Data collection and analysis

•Workshops and conferences

•Researchers, Policy-makers, Rural People

•International collaboration

NRE² — BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Rural Revitalization

- Drivers and processes
- Building Capacity
- Findings
  - Key economic, social, political processes
  - Relative importance of economic and social processes
  - Capacity-building processes
  - Social capital, networks, social cohesion, community capacity

- Focus is on rural revitalization
  - Drivers and processes (First 6 years)
  - Building capacity – local, regional, national (last 3 years)
  - Understanding the processes and positioning rural communities for the future
- Findings/contributions
  - Extensive identification and documentation of the economic, social, and political processes that got us here
  - Identification and elaboration of the relative importance of economic and social dynamics
  - Elaboration of the processes relating to local capacity-building (with framework)
  - Key insights regarding the role of social capital, networks, social cohesion, and community capacity
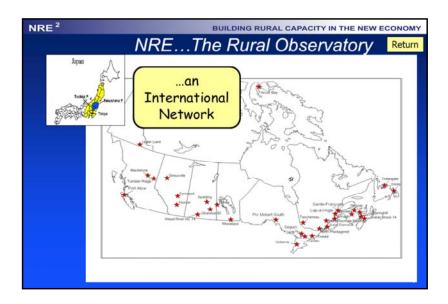 - Organized in
- Focus today on the KM side of our work

Student Training
•Students are not just registered students
 •There is a tendency to identify students as registered students – with priority to graduate students.
 •This is narrow-sighted – especially with respect to the rural research in which we are engaged.
  •Small (rural) institutions don't have easy access to these types of students
  •Learning is a process that takes people in and out of the formal institutions (interests change, financial demands loom, mobility is constrained)
   •Other trajectories:
    •Registered -> employment in NRE -> back to registered (time to think and become inspired) [Simone, Mike]
    •Graduated -> employment in NRE -> other employment (make connections) [Lisa, Bing, Laura]
  •These people take the insights into critical institutions – KM [Health Canada, Statistics Canada, Heritage Canada, UNESCO, NATO]
•Training is not just training for academic objectives
 •Many of our students were attractive to employers since they gained experience with:
  •Administrative tasks – writing, organizing, maintaining
  •Working in groups
  •Working with senior faculty
 •Many of our students were inspired
  •To rural issues
  •To reentering academia
  •To new careers
•Strategies for student involvement
 •Hire 2 over 1 (Point person and backup)
  •Manages other demands and high turnover
 •Frequent meetings
  •All topics valid – personal accomplishments and crises
  •If possible – intelligence gathering for anticipation
 •Don't need to be directly interested in topic
  •Topic contributes to their career
  •Skills learned are generalizable
 •Celebrate accomplishments
 •Maintain contact
  •Alumni inspire
  •Alumni act as ambassadors
  •Alumni provide services (e.g. Gatineau)

KM Activities

•*Rural Observatory* established working relationships with key target group right from the beginning.

> •Site 'give-back' events and documents frequent with opportunities for feedback.

•Identify and organize collaboration across disciplines and spheres but with respect to common, strategic foci.

•(S) Problem: How do we get people with diverse backgrounds, completing demands, and different commitments to talk to one another?

  •Find a common interest that cuts across as many as possible

  •Our selection of geographically defined field sites and locations has served us well in this respect: they bring diverse interests together to address a common object of research.

  •A common cause may also serve this function

  •Regional nodes

•(S) We identified 32 rural sites which we have referred to as the Rural Observatory

  •Went to people in each of these sites and asked them if they would like to work with us

  •As a result, we have worked with most of them over 9 years

  •Community profile data (every 2 years)

  •Household survey (1995) households in 21 sites (2001)

  •Collaboration with community members through local meetings, give-backs, exchanges, and invitations to our events (cf. people here today)

•Our Japanese colleagues were very impressed with this approach and asked us if we would collaborate with them to do the same thing in Japan

  •(S) With our help they selected 2 sites in Japan and ran a parallel and comparative project with ours

•This design allows us to not only understand the dynamics within each site, but allows us to make comparisons across sites – thereby separating out characteristics unique to each site from those that are due to contextual conditions

NRE² — BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

KM Activities

- Rural Observatory
- Consultations with partners
- Conferences and workshops
- Multiple forms of output
- Web site
- Liaison Officer
- Student training

KM Activities – con't

•*Policy-makers and practitioners*: consultation, presentations, and partnerships right from the beginning.

•Sharing of works in progress – with feedback.

•*Conferences and Workshops* bring multiple partners together (researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, citizens).

•Always held in rural areas – thus increasing understanding and visibility.

•*Multiple forms of output*: academic papers, flyers and brochures, posters, web materials, powerpoints, CDs, press releases, interviews, radio broadcasts.

•Our INE Outreach Grant was used for one of these: a 3-day event in Gatineau and Lanark county

•*Web site* as support not primary method of communication (all forms of information made available to multiple audiences).

•Especially important since our research showed how many rural people are not connected – for technical and knowledge reasons.

•Another of our Outreach Grants was used to produce 6 videos and a workbook on the insights from the NRE Project. They can be used as web clips, CDs, and teaching materials

•*Liaison Officer* for network maintenance and expansion, intelligence gathering, communication, conference logistics.

•*Student training* cf. previous slide plus cross-site exchanges, collaborations, and opportunities for meeting.

NRE²   BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Successes

- Rural Observatory – Citizens engagement
- Student support
- Research collaboration
- Advancing the rural agenda
- Build rural research capacity

KM Successes
- Rural Observatory
    - Extensive engagement (citizens and municipal organizations)
    - Valuable insights for our research
    - High impacts at the local level (e.g. Tweed)
    - Considerable international interest (replication)
- Strong student support and capacity (more than 150)
    - Wide diversity of learning (involved in all aspects)
    - Inspiration (return to academia, rural interest generated)
    - Useful diaspora (take rural and research messages to other spheres)
    - Strong alumni support (e.g. Gatineau)
- Strong collaboration across disciplines and distance
    - Rural Observatory as common focus
    - Meetings in rural areas (Conference and Workshops per year)
    - Nurture synergies from smaller institutions
    - Build on existing strengths
    - Give a little, get a lot
    - Transparency
    - Dedication to Liaison
- Advances to the rural agenda
    - Invitations for Parliamentary committees (Natural Resources, Cities and Communities, Senate, NF, BC, Manitoba)
    - Utilization of frameworks in policy materials (PRI, Cities and Communities, Senate, Rural Secretariat-RDI, Think-Tanks: P George, Brandon)
- Build rural research capacity
    - UNBC
    - Rimouski
    - Abitibi-Temiscamingue
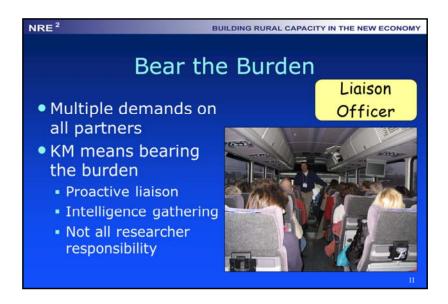   - UNB
    - Brandon
    - RSTP
    - MUN-Grenville

NRE²   BUILDING RURAL CAPACITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Challenges

- Distance and density
- Small institutions
- Diverse target audiences
- Competing demands
- Weak support for infrastructure
- Weak recognition and support for KM

9

Challenges

•Distance and density

    •Meetings cost more (money and time)

    •Communication costs more

•Small institutions

    •Capacity (fewer students, fewer PhDs)

    •Credibility (urban bias – colleagues)

•Diverse target groups

•Competing demands

    •Faculty, students, target groups

•Weak support for infrastructure (core funding)

•Weak support for KM

    •Lack of recognition of extra burdens it implies (especially when working with community groups – more time)

    •Considered an add-on

    •Not recognition of its contributions to research agenda (knowledge)

•*Identify and organize collaboration across disciplines and spheres but with respect to common, strategic foci.* The field sites provided the NRE with common objects of research – thereby encouraging collaboration among multi-discipline based interests (cf. Attachment 8.5). This approach included the selection of research, workshop, and conference sites.

•*Provide the means whereby junior faculty and researchers can meet institutional demands for their careers, while contributing to KM.* This principle arises because of the reluctance of our educational institutions to recognize KM contributions in the awarding of merit, promotion, and tenure. This jeopardizes the renewal process within our research community and often makes the extra demands of KM unattainable. We dealt with this institutional challenge by organizing training and publishing opportunities for junior faculty, shifting most of the administrative and KM demands to senior faculty members, mentoring junior members in KM practices, and developing guidelines for evaluating the quality of KM activities.
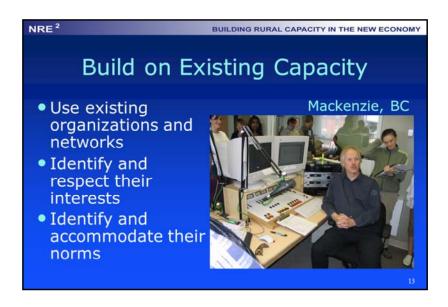
•**Bearing the burden**
•All participants in KM are burdened with multiple demands
  •Researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, citizens
•Thus KM becomes one more demand on our time as we try to get things done
•Governments and funding agents must bear the burden of KM if they want it done
    •They are the most powerful in the relationship
    •Governments and researchers can seldom be equal partners with practitioners, volunteers, and communities in spite of the rhetoric of partnership
    •They should use their additional resources generously to achieve KM
•This becomes a major issue with volunteer groups (the backbone of our KM with practitioners and communities)
    •Grant writing, competition for grants, accountability demands are all very onerous for voluntary groups
        •The legitimate concerns for fairness and accountability conflict with the norms that bring people together in volunteer groups: a common interest.
•Therefore the most powerful member in the partnership must bear the burden
    •Letter of intent with support for full proposal stage
    •Secondment and staff support for training, grant-writing, and finances
    •Go to them:
        •(S) Our practice of holding our meetings in rural places has done much to convince our partners of our interest in them and at the same time provide support for the local economy, and create a valuable opportunity for policy-makers to meet directly with local citizens and experience rural life.
•Researchers: Provide collection of insights (provide grist for the KM mill)
    •KM requires me to stop what I am doing, write something, attend a meeting, speak to someone, fill out a form
    •Even if I am committed to KM I may not know what it is about my work that is of interest to the various target audiences or how to package it to the best advantage (what story to tell)
•KM means taking on this burden
•We find that phone calls and 'press interviews' are often the best way to collect that information – least burdensome, most interesting (researchers like to talk)
    •(S) Devote KM resources (not research resources) to Liaison Officer
        •Doing research on our own researchers and partners (intelligence gathering)
        •Developing a long-term relationship
        •Telephone or face-to-face – non-critical, exploratory, positive
        •Frequent 'how's it going' calls
        •Briefing notes and inventories of key insights
            •Multiple levels of detail
        •Go back to the researchers for comments and responses
        •Feed back results so they can use them in promotion, tenure, lobbying, etc.
        •Proactive Liaison Officer (anticipates admin. problems at the same time)
    •Recommend this to Granting agencies as well
        •Build into mid-term and final reports
            •Drafts, follow-up calls, and press releases
        •Note that I am not recommending this all be done by researchers
•This same principle applies to researchers' relations with their partners

•*Ensure early, extensive, and continual engagement with these target groups.* We built on the extensive collaboration established by CRRF. This meant that many of the key players are already involved and contributing to the project design.

•*Equalize relations of power and maximize mutual respect as much as possible.* Our practice of holding meetings in rural places has done much to convince our partners of our interest, provide support for the local economy, and create a valuable opportunity for policy-makers to meet directly with local citizens.

•*Use existing organizations and networks.* In keeping with this principle, the NRE built on many networks and organizations which in turn have extensive links regionally, nationally, and internationally (cf. Attachment 8.4).
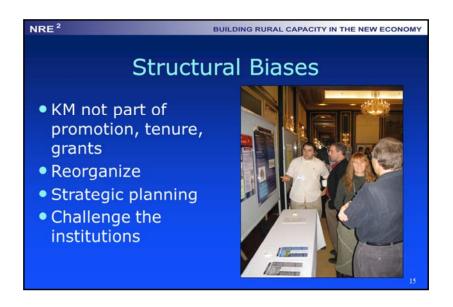
•**Use existing organizations and networks.**

•(S) Many groups are already mobilizing around the issues we investigate – with networks and a wide variety of approaches.

•*But they may not always meet your needs or expectations*

•(S) Identify who they are, what are their interests, and how they relate to your research and personal interests

•Match responses and strategies accordingly

•E.g. Our research revealed the critical importance of local governance for community vitality

•Sought out an alliance with FCM since they are well connected to municipal governments and related organizations

•Directed our research to rural churches after we identified them as an important contributor to social capital

•Our collection and analysis of information about rural newspapers and editors served as a basis for eventual dissemination of our results.

•(S) Remember that the social capital of these volunteer groups does not always rest on the same basis as researchers.

•Volunteers – they are in it for the shared interest. Therefore we must meet and support that interest in order to compete with the other demands on peoples' time (e.g. provide child care)

•Granting agencies need to be aware of this in their program design

•Requires time

•Requires funds for freeing up volunteers (transportation, child care, accountability) (e.g. CURA adjustment)

KM Lessons Learned

- Identify target audiences
- Early, extensive, continual engagement
- Equalize power and respect
- Use existing organizations and networks
- Collaborate across disciplines
- Support junior participants

•*Identify and organize collaboration across disciplines and spheres but with respect to common, strategic foci.* The field sites provided the NRE with common objects of research – thereby encouraging collaboration among multi-discipline based interests (cf. Attachment 8.5). This approach included the selection of research, workshop, and conference sites.

•*Provide the means whereby junior faculty and researchers can meet institutional demands for their careers, while contributing to KM.* This principle arises because of the reluctance of our educational institutions to recognize KM contributions in the awarding of merit, promotion, and tenure. This jeopardizes the renewal process within our research community and often makes the extra demands of KM unattainable. We dealt with this institutional challenge by organizing training and publishing opportunities for junior faculty, shifting most of the administrative and KM demands to senior faculty members, mentoring junior members in KM practices, and developing guidelines for evaluating the quality of KM activities.

•**Provide the means whereby junior faculty and researchers can meet their institutional demands for their careers, while contributing to KM.**

•This principle arises because of the reluctance of our educational institutions to recognize KM contributions in the awarding of merit, promotion, and tenure.

•As a result it is necessary for our junior faculty to publish in academic peer-reviewed venues to maintain or advance their careers.

•This jeopardizes the renewal process within our research community and often makes the extra demands of KM unattainable.

•Responses explored in the NRE Project

   •Accommodate internal to the project (Spread the burden)

      •The NRE Project organized mentoring and publishing opportunities for junior faculty

      •shifted administrative demands to senior faculty members,

      •Shift the burden of rewriting and reorganizing academic products for non-academic audiences to senior faculty members in exchange for junior people to publish and build credibility for the project

      •We were able to do this because we had both research and KM activities integrated in the same project

   •Prepare for the future

      •Mentoring junior faculty in KM activities and skills

   •Challenge the institutions

      •Merit, promotion, tenure, granting agencies downgrade KM activities

         •Legitimately question the quality of these activities

         •Therefore need to develop the criteria for quality

         •E.g. Draft proposal for Concordia

      •*SSHRC Workshop Grants don't make it easy to include local people*

• *Organize for flexibility and adaptation.* The distributive nature of the NRE governance structure provides the flexibility for new partners, issues, and objectives to meet changing conditions. New people, organizations, and ideas will continue to be welcomed with interest and openness within flexible governance structures.

• *Provide the means whereby organizational structures that are* <u>inclusive</u> *are closely allied to those that are* <u>exclusive</u> *(to meet professional criteria for quality and credibility).* Managing the tension between these 2. The relationship between CRRF and the NRE Project has demonstrated how this can work to the benefit of all. CRRF and more recently, the *National Rural Research Network* (NRRN) provide the open, public venues and our research Centres will provide the more exclusive projects required for academic research (cf. CRRF letter of support).

KM Lessons Learned

- Identify target audiences
- Early, extensive, continual engagement
- Equalize power and respect
- Use existing organizations and networks
- Collaborate across disciplines
- Support junior participants
- Organize for flexibility
- Integrate inclusive and exclusive structures
- Prepare for the future

• *Prepare for future recruitment and support.* Since KM requires a long-term investment, it is critical to plan for new participants to support CRRN during periods of high demand, to contribute new ideas, and to replace key personnel as the need arises. Since participation in such networks is essentially voluntary, the principles for mentoring and supporting all participants apply. CRRN will seek to provide the extra support required for volunteers in our activities.

•**Prepare for future recruitment and support.**

•(S) Since KM requires a long term investment

•(S) It is critical to plan for new participants

　•to support the project during periods of high demand

　•to contribute new ideas, and

　•to replace key personnel as the need arises.

•Since participation in such networks is essentially voluntary, the principles for mentoring and supporting all participants apply.

•(S) This includes the necessity for celebration (with finances to support it)

• *Clearly identify the target audiences with which you wish to engage.* In the case of the NRE these are researchers (including students), policy-makers (at all levels of government), community activists (including public and private entrepreneurs), and citizens (primarily rural-based but extending to urban citizens in strategic ways).

• *Ensure early, extensive, and continual engagement with these target groups.* We built on the extensive collaboration established by CRRF. This meant that many of the key players are already involved and contributing to the project design.

• *Equalize relations of power and maximize mutual respect as much as possible.* Our practice of holding meetings in rural places has done much to convince our partners of our interest, provide support for the local economy, and create a valuable opportunity for policy-makers to meet directly with local citizens.

• *Use existing organizations and networks.* In keeping with this principle, the NRE built on many networks and organizations which in turn have extensive links regionally, nationally, and internationally (cf. Attachment 8.4).

• *Identify and organize collaboration across disciplines and spheres but with respect to common, strategic foci.* The field sites provided the NRE with common objects of research – thereby encouraging collaboration among multi-discipline based interests (cf. Attachment 8.5). This approach is reinforced through the selection of research, workshop, and conference sites.

• *Provide the means whereby junior faculty and researchers can meet institutional demands for their careers, while contributing to KM.* This principle arises because of the reluctance of our educational institutions to recognize KM contributions in the awarding of merit, promotion, and tenure. This jeopardizes the renewal process within our research community and often makes the extra demands of KM unattainable. The NRE dealt with this institutional challenge by organizing training and publishing opportunities for junior faculty, shifting most of the administrative and KM demands to senior faculty members, mentoring junior members in KM practices, and developing guidelines for evaluating the quality of KM activities.

• *Organize for flexibility and adaptation.* The distributive nature of the NRE governance structure provides the flexibility for new partners, issues, and objectives to meet changing conditions. New people, organizations, and ideas will continue to be welcomed with interest and openness within flexible governance structures.

• *Provide the means whereby organizational structures that are <u>inclusive</u> are closely allied to those that are <u>exclusive</u> (to meet professional criteria for quality and credibility).* The relationship between CRRF and the NRE Project has demonstrated how this can work to the benefit of all. CRRF and more recently, the *National Rural Research Network* (NRRN) provide the open, public venues and our research Centres will provide the more exclusive projects required for academic research (cf. CRRF letter of support).

• *Prepare for future recruitment and support.* Since KM requires a long-term investment, it is critical to plan for new participants to support the project during periods of high demand, to contribute new ideas, and to replace key personnel as the need arises. Since participation in such networks is essentially voluntary, the principles for mentoring and supporting all participants apply. The NRE seeks to provide the extra support required for volunteers in our activities.

- The NRE Project represents considerable investment
- Contributions of many groups and individuals
    - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
        - Especially their INE initiative with Industry Canada
    - Concordia University – and all universities in our network – we need and appreciate their support
    - The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
    - Statistics Canada
    - CRRF
    - NRE Research Team
    - Rural Citizens in our field sites