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Recognizing Change, Recognizing Rural: The New Rural Economy and Towards a New Model of Rural Service

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Recognizing Change, Recognizing Rural: The New Rural Economy and Towards a New Model of Rural Service

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Abstract

Services provide support for both community and economic development. Their delivery provides for routine and emergency needs. Through their operations, services help to support the local economy, employment, the training of new workers, the development of social cohesion and social capital, and the overall quality of life across all ages and stages of life. Drawing upon research from the New Rural Economy project, this paper highlights the role that services play in recruiting and maintaining both businesses and residents. The case study of Tumbler Ridge is used to highlight the importance of services in rural and small town transition and renewal, as well as the pressing need for innovation as older service delivery models are not suited to the contemporary rural landscape. In developing integrated and comprehensive service policy and provision, there needs to be a greater recognition and understanding of the specificity and uniqueness of the rural context.

Keywords: rural, restructuring, services

1.0 Introduction

With many demographic, economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, accelerated change defines the new rural economy. These changes simultaneously affect the nature of relationships amongst community residents and organizations. The pattern of accelerated change illuminates the uniqueness of place as critical in determining the success of rural and small town places in the new rural economy. Regulations, connectivity to the world economy, available labour supply, supportive industries and skills, quality-of-life services and amenities, natural environment, social networks and relationships, safety, and political stability are characteristics which make the specificity of the “local” an important predictor with regards to global economic success (Markey, Halseth, & Manson, 2012).

The New Rural Economy (NRE) project elucidates the importance of infrastructures – community (civil society), physical, human (people, familiarity), and economic (business) as critical components for rural communities in the face of change. The NRE project also highlights the relationship between the capacity of residents to manage change and the stability of services, such as education, health, and government services, that exist within place (Halseth & Ryser, 2004). Understanding the relationship between services and local capacity helps determine which rural communities will thrive in a changing political, economic, environmental, and social landscape.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the critical role that services play in rural transition and renewal. We begin by contextualizing the changing nature of services provision over time and discuss three fundamental concepts addressed within the NRE work: community capacity, social cohesion, and social capital. These three concepts are connected to the importance of place through a brief summary of the NRE services profile work carried out between 1998 and 2005. We then highlight how place-based responses to change determine the ability of a place to successfully engage in the new rural economy. The case study of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia is used to illustrate the important role of services in one community’s response to change. Drawing upon work that extended from the NRE, we will explore the continuing challenge of services provision within rural and small town places to support community development and economic renewal. Finally, we will argue that a better model of service provision that recognizes the realities of the new rural economy is needed.

2.0 Reflections

2.1 Laissez-Faire, Keynesianism, and Neoliberalism

The role and capacity of services to support community development and renewal has been influenced by changes in policies and governance approaches. Three distinct eras of changing governance approaches and services provision for rural areas have occurred over the past thirty years (Halseth, Sullivan, & Ryser, 2003). Combined, these changes have created turmoil in both the stability of the local services base for rural communities, and the level of involvement or responsibility that residents have in securing local services (Grafton, Troughton, & Rouke, 2004).

Prior to World War II, rural and small town places in countries such as Sweden and Canada were generally self-sufficient and isolated with limited service provision or coordination by either private or public sectors (Halseth & Ryser, 2006; Scarpa,

2013). Communities defined what was most important as core local services, and were unique in that the services provided were tailored to the needs of the community (Grafton et al., 2004). This laissez-faire or minimalist economic, policy decision-making approach dominated thinking such that rich communities were services rich (i.e. with well-developed recreation centres and health centres), yet poor communities had few services.

The economic boom of the 1950s expanded the role of the government sector to the point where the rural and small town services base blossomed (Halseth et al., 2006). Government policies designed to improve employment opportunities, income levels, and the general standard of living in rural communities were implemented (Blake, 2003). Government social programs helped level the standard of living for rural Canadians in the post-World War II era. This more progressive Keynesian approach that was adopted not only in Canada, but also in other countries such as Australia and Sweden (Scarpa, 2013; Tonts & Jones, 1997), focused on “continual state intervention to manage the contradictions of capitalism to the benefit of the nation and its least well-off citizens” (Sheppard, 2009, p. 548).

In Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia, an era of neoliberalism began in the 1980s commensurate with the retrenchment of the state and services (Markey et al., 2012; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Shortall & Warner, 2010; Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie, 2005). As low-density, dispersed populations are characteristic of many rural and small town places (Halseth et al., 2004), the regionalization of services in larger centres was seen as one solution to the economic hardship caused by providing government funded services in rural and small town places during an economic downturn (Kornelsen et al., 2005). This retrenchment of services undercut the capacity for small communities to respond to change and threatened short- and long-term community sustainability (Keating et al., 2011; Markey, Connelly, & Roseland, 2010). Service and policy restructuring decisions, however, continue to be applied uniformly to rural regions, despite the diversity of needs and issues that exist across these places. In particular, restructuring decisions in countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United States have continued to reduce, close, regionalize, or avoid investing in supports across rural landscapes despite the unique pressures that are being experienced by small, remote industry towns that are experiencing a renewal of growth (Haslam McKenzie, 2013; Markey, Halseth, Manson, 2008; Polèse, 1999).

As a product of neoliberalism, ‘new regionalism’ is another approach to understand change in rural and small town places (Markey, Halseth, & Manson, 2006). Economically, new regionalism is a socially embedded process where the social capital of a region exerts influence on economic performance (Barnes & Gertler, 1999; Markey, Manson, & Halseth, 2007). There are many challenges associated with the context of new regionalism, including differential levels of a sense of place and commitment among residents and stakeholders, additional demands on time and other resources to organize and manage regional relationships, and the amount of community and capacity development that can support individual contributions and collective benefits. However, it has been favoured as a more “efficient mode of governance because those directly concerned with rural problems can be directly involved with policy delivery and implementation” (Morrison & Lane, 2006, p. 348).

The ways in which services are provided in rural and small town places have changed dramatically over time. There has been a shift from government to governance reflecting a changing role of the state in favour of greater cooperation

amongst public, private, and non-profit sectors to mobilize local and regional assets (Shucksmith, 2009). Collaboration within local and regional arenas is now the foundation for economic development in rural and small town places. This foundation gives rise to the importance of social cohesion and social capital when the capacity of a community is being tested or measured.

2.2 Community Capacity, Social Cohesion, and Social Capital

In rural and small town places, services are critical to support daily activities, quality-of-life, and the local economy (Halseth et al., 2006). Particularly during times of economic uncertainty and social restructuring, services have a profound impact on the retention of businesses and residents (Prior, Farmer, Godden, & Taylor, 2010). The capacity¹ of a community is dependent on the ability of individuals and service organizations to mobilize effective responses to changing circumstances (Aarsaether & Baerenholdt, 2001; Reimer & Markey, 2008). Emery and Flora (2006) remind us that restructuring can be used as an opportunity to renew leadership and capacity by making targeted, strategic investments in various forms of 'capital' to build local capacity. In their framework of natural, social, cultural, human, political, financial and built capital, they identify how investments in one capital (i.e. social capital) could 'spiral up' and lead to gains in other forms of capital (i.e. human capital). In this paper, we focus upon social capital as it can provide a foundation to connect and support the development of other capital assets.

The foundation of community capacity stems from traditions and social relationships between residents that facilitate routine interaction. Community capacity is also nurtured through responses to both positive and negative economic, social, political, and environmental stresses that often take the form of collective behavior (social cohesion), instituted through formal or informal networks of trust (social capital) (Reimer, 2002b). By working together to establish and implement coping strategies, community capacity can be built, stored, and mobilized (Ratner, Meinzen-Dick, May, & Haglund, 2013). As Ryser and Halseth (2010) argue, communities must be able to "identify, enhance, and mobilize human potential, economic opportunities, social relationships, and ecological resources" (p. 516) in order to recognize and mobilize their own community capacity. The emphasis on assets such as social cohesion and social capital provide the mechanism to share resources, information, and expertise and are cornerstone to local capacity building.

There are two main types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital occurs when trusting relationships are formed locally or within local groups, and intensifies local ties, strengthens the ability within local groups and organizations to work collaboratively, and addresses local needs and problems (Michelini, 2013). Bridging social capital occurs when trusting relationships are built inside or outside the community and links are made to a wider pool of ideas, experiences, advice, and support outside the regular circle of interaction (Markey et al., 2012). The more social cohesion interactions occur in a community, the more opportunities exist to build social capital. As social capital is the product of routine patterns of interaction that occur at rural community, focal points such as the post office, local schools, recreation centres, and the health centre (Sullivan & Halseth,

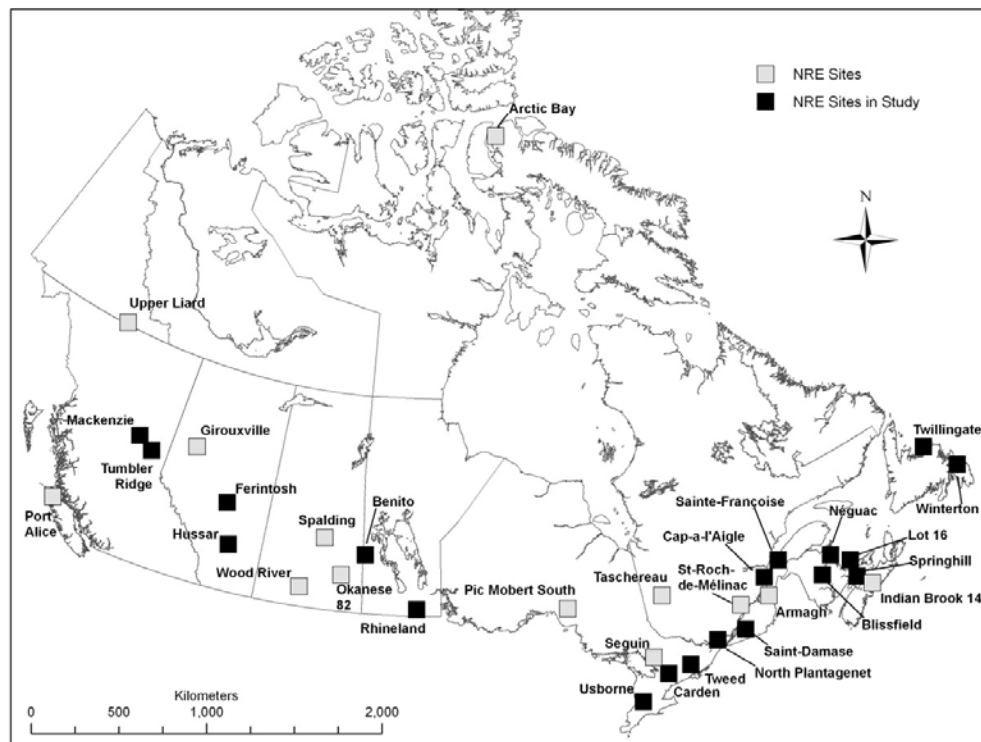
¹ Community capacity is defined as the ability of residents to organize themselves and mobilize their assets to achieve a self-identified objective (Markey *et al.*, 2012).

2000), when such services are closed or withdrawn, the opportunity to create and renew both bonding and bridging social capital is affected (Halseth et al., 2006). The withdrawal of services influences both social cohesion and social capital, and by extension this influences the capacity of a community.

3.0 Challenges to Services Provision: Findings from the New Rural Economy Project

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) connects rural stakeholders and policy-makers to address challenges and opportunities associated with the new rural economy and to disseminate information to support the renewal of small communities (www.crrf.ca). The New Rural Economy (NRE) project was formed by members of CRRF to explore issues related to community and economic capacity building in a 'Rural Observatory' consisting of 32 rural sites across Canada (Reimer, 2002a) (see Figure 1). The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) 'Initiative on the New Economy's' program. The NRE project was structured around a set of research centres designed to address specific themes; for the purposes of this paper, we will focus on findings from the services theme.

Figure 1. *The NRE Rural Observatory*



Map credit: Kyle Kusch.

Seven years of data (1998-2005) were collected on services availability in 19 sites within the Rural Observatory (Halseth et al., 2006). The data show reductions and declines in most categories of services. As Table 1 indicates, reductions in health

services occurred for all sites. The data also show a trend to instead provide these services in regional centres (see Table 2). Reductions in local health services provision impact a community's ability to form both bridging and bonding social capital. Opportunities to build social capital stocks are reduced as residents adjust to reduced availability of local health services, yet local stability and capacity are challenged as residents must rely on each other to access health services outside their local community.

Table 1. *Availability of Health Services – % of All Sites*

Service	1998	2000	2003	2005
Hospital	25.0%	20.0%	18.2%	12.5%
X-ray facility	29.2%	35.0%	22.7%	20.8%
Baby delivery facility*	8.7%	5.0%	4.5%	4.2%
Nursing home	20.8%	10.8%	13.6%	16.7%
Ambulance*	60.9%	30.0%	36.4%	41.7%
N=	24	20	22	24

Source: Site Profiles 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005.

*Note: n=23 as information for this service was not collected for this service that year in one site.

Table 2. *Availability of Health Services 2005 – % of All Sites*

Service	% in Site	% Within 30 Min.
Hospital	12.5	66.7
X-ray facility	20.8	83.3
Baby delivery facility	4.2	54.2
Nursing home	16.7	75.0
Ambulance	41.7	87.5
N=	24	24

Source: 2005 Site Profiles.

The trend toward the regional model of rural service provision is risky, particularly for residents unable to travel (Liu, Hader, Brossard, White, & Lewis, 2001). Those with limited economic means, mobility challenges, the elderly, or any combination of these types of concerns are particularly impacted when key services are moved out of town (Kornelsen et al., 2005). Local capacity to manage stress and change is again challenged as more residents leave town to access needed services. Ryser and Halseth (2012) identify a range of constraints impeding regional mobility to access supports, including distance and travel costs, concerns about winter highway maintenance, limited synergy between service providers and transportation carriers/schedules, limited transportation infrastructure and services, a lack of direct routes to regional centres, financial barriers to pay for routine travel to regional centres, the absence of regional transportation strategies, and limited information about regional services and transportation supports available in other communities. These changes undermine local efforts to pursue new opportunities and to respond to challenges associated with the new rural economy.

3.1 Looking Forward: The New Rural Economy

In the ‘new rural economy’, local and regional leaders, as well as civil society, are relied upon to respond to demographic, economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental change (Ryser et al., 2010). These changes are, in part, driven by a reduction in senior government subsidies, as well as, a more limited capacity to support growth within timely re-distributive policy programs. New regionalism sets the stage for leaders to recognize their own competitive advantage through place-based assets that are needed to foster innovation, build capacity, and respond to change. In this context, innovation is generally understood as the adoption of new ideas, knowledge, products, services, administrative practices, technology, strategies, behaviours, or new processes or ways of delivering services (Osborne, 2002; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2011). Challenges, however, exist as rural community leaders adjust to new responsibilities. As older resource commodity economies are transitioning within a ‘hyper-connected’ and increasingly ‘commodified’ global economy, relationships are reformed which can cause conflicts and diminish community cohesion (Beckley & Krogman, 2002). Conflict emerges from different values and visions about the use and control over limited resources in small communities (Bell & Jayne, 2010; Reed, 2008). Such conflicts can arise between newcomers and long-term residents (Cánoves, Villarino, Priestly, & Blanco, 2004), across different economic and social sectors (Che, 2012; Raedeke, Green, Hodge, & Valdivia, 2003), between permanent and transient residents (McKenzie, 2010), or between supporters of different development strategies (Woods, 2010).

Building community cohesion and capacity, however, can enhance the ability of stakeholders to improve the resiliency and stability of rural and small town places. In fact, research documenting the shifting emphasis from a comparative to a competitive advantage approach to rural economies emphasizes the importance of intangible assets, notably human and social capital, as key to local capacity building (Emery et al., 2006; Markey et al., 2006; Sharp, Agnitsch, Ryan, & Flora, 2002). Rural regions with strong internal and external networks and regional institutions are more likely to grow (Terluin, 2003) and be positioned to support mechanisms for learning and adopting innovations (Crowe, 2006; Smyth, Reddel, & Jones, 2004; Uyerra, 2010). In this context, bridging social capital has been especially important to helping small places acquire resources, information, advice, and training (Halseth & Ryser, 2007; Phillips, 2004). Building upon networks that can mobilize resources, collaborative mechanisms to pool resources and create synergies to support investment and community economic development initiatives continue to be explored (Cawley & Nguyen, 2008). To understand the ‘new rural economy’ then, one must understand these changing dynamics and the deployment of development strategies that reflect *place* versus *space*.

3.2 The New Rural Economy: The Importance of Place Versus Space

One result of the new rural economy has been the change from the importance of *space* to the importance of *place*. Capital in the new economy has become even more mobile, resources are limited with regards to directing development decisions, and there are competing values with places and resources (Dawe, 2004). Place-based economies that focus on the broader view of economic and intrinsic value of places (including resources—natural and otherwise—and ways such places are understood and valued) are important components of competitiveness that are often overlooked,

yet have become most important in the new rural economy (Markey et al., 2012). As Massey (1984) states:

Variety should not be seen as a deviation from the expected; nor should uniqueness be seen as a problem. General processes never work themselves out in pure form. There are always specific circumstances, a particular history, a particular place or location. What is at issue – and to put it in geographical terms – is the articulation of the general with the local (the particular) to produce qualitatively different outcomes in different localities (p. 9).

To increase the effectiveness of mobilizing place-based characteristics under local control, communities now must come to understand their own “local bundle of assets” (location, natural amenities, technological and community infrastructure, population and labour force attributes, built landscapes, cultural heritage, ‘story’ of place, and folklore that attends its history) (Markey et al., 2012, p. 60). Regional partnerships and cooperation then become critical components to a place-based economy as decisions made in one place can affect other places in both positive and/or negative ways (Derkzen, Franklin, & Bock, 2008). Local leaders must now become decision-makers and champions of the social and economic success of their towns (Shortall, 2008).

The concepts of community capacity, social cohesion, and social capital tie in clearly with place-based social and economic development. Pursuing new economic opportunities and mobilizing competitive assets requires a high level of collaboration across various community, government, and business stakeholders (Terluin, 2003). Social cohesion in this context can be further understood as the way a sense of community is created and understood as it is founded on “shared values, shared experiences, and cooperation...and...is normalized through routine relationships and social interaction” (Markey et al., 2012, p. 70). Social capital can become the product of these patterns of interaction, whereby the more people connect and work together the higher levels of trust for each other evolve. These trusting relationships strengthen the ability of organizations to work together to address community needs. Place-based assets—infrastructures and capital—determine the capacity of a community’s ability to endure the demands of time (Emery et al., 2006). The capacity of a community to respond to and navigate change associated with the new rural economy depends on the regularity of socially cohesive opportunities and the quantity and quality of built up social capital. As such, capacity in the face of significant stress can exist if social capital has been built up and maintained, and opportunities to engage in social cohesion are routine. The mobilization of social capital can then spiral up and strengthen other forms of community capacity, renew organizations, and foster new forms of innovation.

4.0 Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia

One illustration of change and community response lies with NRE Site # 28: the mining town of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. Since 1998, the authors have extended their work from the NRE project to track the social and economic transformation of this community. The following data are drawn from this case study work. Incorporated in 1981, Tumbler Ridge was purpose built from the wilderness as an instant (mining) town, and implemented state-of-the-art resource town development strategies and sophisticated social design principles (see Table 3) in the planning phases of development (Sullivan, 2002). The design principles took

into consideration the changing nature of the social and economic fabric characteristic of resource towns, and a neoliberal governance era, and focused on elements that lay a foundation for community capacity amongst residents (Gill, 1990; Lucas, 1971). Upfront investment was put into infrastructure such as a recreation centre, swimming pool, and water treatment plant (Sullivan, 2002).

Table 3. *Social Design Principles*

Social Design Principles	Expected Outcomes
Commitment	social government neighbourhood design town center design homeownership
Challenge	base level service provision network of paths and open spaces
Self-reliance	local government basic recreation facility
Choice	limited range of goods and services
Participation	Social Development Officer Inhabitants involved in modifying and adapting local environment

Source: Derived from statements in Tumbler Ridge planning documents (BC NMA, 1978) and adapted from Gill, 1990.

A critical planning principle in Tumbler Ridge was “participation” and the inclusion of a Social Development Officer (SDO) within the initial appointed local government. The role of the SDO was to:

Help alleviate some of the problems experienced by newcomers [when] settling into a new town. His approach was a proactive one and he took an aggressive stance in organizing associations and events and encouraging residents to participate (Gill, 1990, p. 193).

Although the SDO position was terminated in 1984 after the first local election, residents had already grown accustomed to volunteering at and participating in a wide array of social events and activities. Although there have been fluctuations in the number of seasonal activities and special events offered over time, the opportunity to interact socially in addition to the opportunity to develop friendships in town was encouraged and stimulated through town design (Sullivan, 2002).

Despite efforts to plan for challenges characteristic of resource towns, Tumbler Ridge experienced typical resource town boom and bust cycles. Fluctuating global coal prices threatened profitability of the Tumbler Ridge mines and created instability. Tumbler Ridge remained economically dependent on the two mines despite early recommendations to diversify. Also, despite the intentions of the social design principles to establish a town of homeowners, Tumbler Ridge was, through much of its first twenty years, a rental community.

In March 2000, Teck Corporation announced the closure of the Quintette Mine. The second smaller Bullmoose mine was set to close within two years. Given the economic dependence on mining, the announcement of mine closures brought into question the viability of the town (Sullivan, 2002). Crisis happens all the time in rural and small town places across the Canadian landscape. One key factor that

shapes the future of each community is their capacity to respond to the crisis. Historical models on resource town cycles of development show when the major employer in a resource town leaves, the town inevitably closes (Lucas, 1971). However, in a neoliberal era where social cohesion and social capital tools are consistently built up and exercised over time, community capacity to mobilize and revitalize in the face of crisis can be deployed. The community response to the announcement of the Quintette Mine closure provides one example of the deployment of social cohesion, social capital and community capacity to support community transition and renewal processes.

Despite provincial skepticism about its future, local and regional leaders² mobilized to form the Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force (see Table 4) (Halseth et al., 2003). The Task Force was comprised of two sub-groups to increase efficiency achieving objectives: the governance group (main decision makers) and the administrative group (self-titled “worker bees”). The governance group met four times in the immediate phases of the transition and made decisions based on information from the administrative group. The “worker bees” met weekly and were responsible for carrying out decisions made by the governance group, reporting on progress, and reassigning tasks. To transition the community from crisis to stabilization and revitalization, the Task Force focused on services—municipal, educational, community health, and social services—and the ability to deliver services to a viable and stable community infrastructure. Special emphasis was put into creating an economic environment to stimulate diversity (Sullivan, 2002).

The Task Force identified three time horizons for action (see Table 5). Housing issues were addressed in the *short term* in hopes of creating a municipal property tax base, and changing the rental landscape into one of owners. In addition, local services (education, health, and social) were stabilized through Emergency Services agreements. Also, special funding was pursued to support retraining programs for displaced workers. In the *intermediate term*, a transition plan stabilized services availability and sustainability. Economic diversification, which had long been ignored by key leaders in the community, was highlighted as crucial. In the *long-term*, a diversified economy would create a more stable population. Across all three time horizons, the local availability of services was cornerstone to transition planning (Halseth & Ryser, 2002).

² Many of the representatives on the Task Force were individuals who offered their assistance up front after the mine closure was announced. Upon agreeing on the participant list, the Administrator of Tumbler Ridge called people to formally request their involvement on one of the two committees. Individuals contacted did not hesitate to become involved (Sullivan, 2002). Tumbler Ridge residents in general were also invited to participate in the process through the opening of Task Force meetings to the public. Several interested observers came to watch the meetings in session, and participated by asking questions and listening to the process. Regular updates of the progress of the Task Force were published in local and regional newspapers.

Table 4. *Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force*

Name	Location	Organization
Dan Miller	Victoria	Minister of Energy & Mines
Karen Concurrada	Victoria	Ministry of Energy & Mines
Dr. Hal Gueren	Victoria	Asst. Deputy Minister of Community Development
Jack Weisgerber	Peace River Region	Member of Legislature
Moray Stewart	Peace River Region	Peace River Regional District
Karen Goodings	Peace River Region	Chairperson
Clay Iles	Tumbler Ridge	Mayor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Fred Banham	Tumbler Ridge	Administrator, District of Tumbler Ridge
Al Kopeck	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Tom Dall	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Bill Hendley	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Ray Proulx, Jr.	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Ralph Higdon	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Glenda Nikirk	Tumbler Ridge	Councillor, District of Tumbler Ridge
Blair Lekstrom	Dawson Creek	Mayor
Jim Noble	Dawson Creek	Administrator
Steve Thorlakson	Fort St. John	Mayor
Colin Griffith	Fort St. John	Administrator
Charlie Lasser	Chetwynd	Mayor
Nuje Redfearb	Chetwynd	Administrator
Yvonne Eldon	Dawson Creek	School District #59
Bill Deith	Dawson Creek	School District #59
Sheila Barnes	Dawson Creek	South Peace Health Unit
Rick Robinson	Dawson Creek	South Peace Health Unit

Source: Tumbler Ridge Revitalization Task Force, 2000.

Table 5. *Horizons and Goals of the Task Force Action Plan*

Horizons	Goals
Short Term (6 months following closure announcement)	housing (sales and rental opportunities) local services (education, health, social) funding stability (industry adjustment, schools, health)
Intermediate Term (2001-2003)	forming local services committee to address: municipal sustainability population transition assessment loss transition planning interim stability for services developing a strategic marketing plan
Long-term (2003 onwards)	stable population projects/partnerships diversification/development

Source: Terms of Reference, 2000; Sullivan, 2002.

With clear goals set, the Task Force took action. The first key issue that needed to be addressed concerned housing. Prior to the mine closures, much of the community's housing stock was owned by the mines or Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). While many properties had been privately owned, the houses were re-acquired by the mines and CMHC as part of the bankruptcy protection plan for Quintette following the 1990 coal price dispute with the Japanese Steel Consortium (Halseth et al., 2003). Following the Quintette mine closure announcement, the local government negotiated with CMHC and the mine to acquire 985 units that were then marketed through a national housing campaign by the Tumbler Ridge Housing Corporation. This campaign proved to be very successful as approximately 95% of the properties were sold within two years (Halseth et al., 2002). A key component of the marketing campaign was the availability of cheap housing as houses originally listed for \$25,000 and condos listed for \$12,000. While homes were typically sold to active retirees, they were also purchased by workers outside of the community and new business owners ("Already 100 Homes", 2001). Inexpensive housing was cited as the top reason why people purchased homes and relocated to the community (Halseth et al., 2002). The security of municipal property tax renewal from new homeowners helped to pay for services such as sewer, water, road maintenance and the local recreation centre. Another key benefit of the housing sale was the recruitment of new homeowners in town who brought new ideas to the community and opened businesses ("Already 100 Homes", 2001), such as bed and breakfast accommodations, restaurants, and various construction trades related to roofing, electrical work, and painting. They began renovating and improving their new homes in order to foster a sense of permanence that did not exist with the previous rental population (Sullivan, 2002).

With education, health, and social services as priorities, the Task Force negotiated with the Provincial government to secure transition funds to stabilize education, physician and nursing staff, increase the capacity of health services staff, and consolidate transition social services. (Halseth et al., 2002). Youth counseling, worker retraining, and employment searches were put into place. Provincial and local governments worked together to eliminate the municipal debt by December 2000.

With the community in a state of transition following the March 2000 Quintette mine closure announcement, community stakeholders commissioned our research team to do a community transition survey (Halseth et al., 2002) to obtain information on the makeup and needs of local residents in order to inform investments and strategic directions for policies, programs, and infrastructure. The need for the work was timely given the second round of layoffs at Quintette and the influx of many new residents following the success of the TR Housing sale of properties. The information obtained from the transition study was used to adjust programs and activities at the community centre, such as the public library and the swimming pool, to develop strategic social and employment service supports, and to obtain a better understanding of the needs of new residents moving to the community.

The long-term goals of economic diversification was more of a struggle as residents and decision-makers were resistant to change and were still looking for stabilization from big resource sector projects (Halseth et al., 2002). Resource sectors in the Tumbler Ridge area, however, have undergone a series of fluctuations. Mining companies such as Western Canadian Coal and Peace River Coal have re-emerged since 2006 (Hoekstra, 2006; Woodford, 2010). Following the subprime crisis in the U.S. in 2007, there was a slowdown in the economy, including in the forestry,

mining, and oil and gas industry that affected contractors and suppliers in the area (BC Government, 2010; Holloway, 2008). Proposed developments had been delayed as companies re-examined their business plans or failed to obtain adequate investment capital from tightening global capital markets. More recently, in 2013, Capital Power completed a 142 megawatt Quality Wind Project near Tumbler Ridge that will provide a small number of additional jobs in the community (Ernst, 2013).

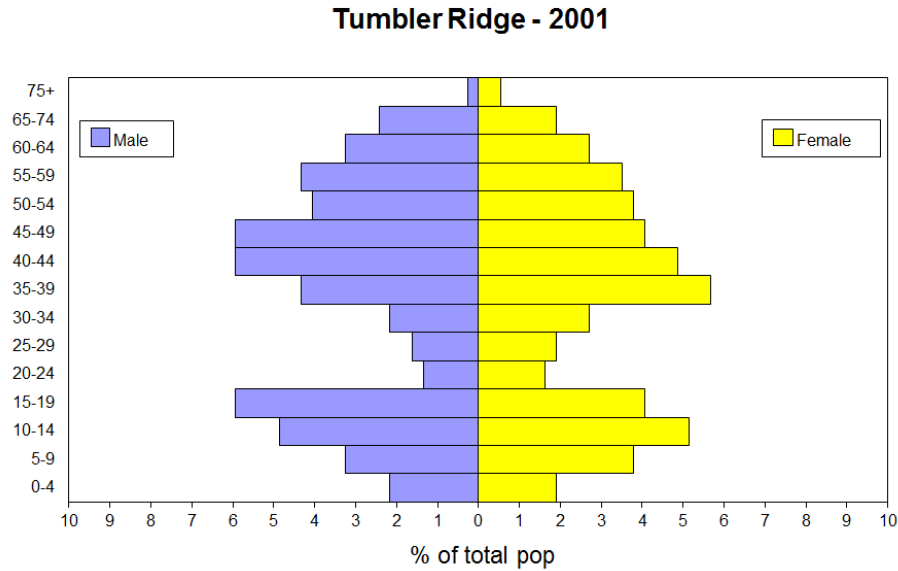
Initial efforts of the Task Force were strategic and successful. Positive enthusiasm, vision, and determination brought Tumbler Ridge residents a long way through the transition process. Experience working together, or using built up social capital resources from patterns of socially cohesive activities to deal with the crisis allowed residents to quickly identify priorities and spring into action when needed (Halseth & Sullivan, 2002). The story of TR Cares provides an example of how this experience of working together led to the formation of a new organization and the delivery of new supports in the community. TR Cares formed after the mine closures and housing sale in the early 2000s in order to respond to the needs of low-income residents (Ryser et al., 2013). The organization was formed by several residents who had routinely worked together through the Tumbler Ridge Umbrella Committee (TRUC). While some supports were initially offered on an informal basis, the local and regional networks that TRUC members had developed over the years played an important role to secure needed resources to deliver a medical shuttle service, victim's services, safe homes, and other supports. The ability for local leaders to mobilize support of both the provincial and regional governments was a critical component in mobilizing short, intermediate, and long-term transition planning. In response to the Quintette Mine closure announcement, community capacity was demonstrated. The identification of services as cornerstone was important for maintaining the quality-of-life for existing and new residents. Stability of the service base not only reduced stress for local residents, but provided certainty to new home buyers (Halseth et al., 2003). The new property tax base stabilized key community infrastructures—roads, sewer, water supply, and the recreation centre. Such infrastructures can play an important role to attract workers and their families to the community (Deller, Tsai, Marcouiller, & English, 2001; Kolodinsky et al., 2013).

5.0 The New Rural Economy and the Continuing Challenge of Service Provision

While the immediate phases of transition after the Quintette Mine closure announcement were successful, the Tumbler Ridge story does not end in 2001. Following our NRE services research in Tumbler Ridge, we continued to engage with community partners to specifically examine seniors' needs. While the housing sale brought an influx of many older residents, the community's workforce was also aging-in-place (see Figures 2 and 3). In 2001, there is a greater proportion of older families as represented by older children between 10-19 years of age and dominance of a workforce between 35 and 55 years of age. The housing sale also prompted the influx of seniors (Halseth et al., 2002) that are represented in this Census period. By 2011, the workforce has aged-in-place and is concentrated amongst those between 45 and 65 years of age, although the renewal of mining and oil and gas activity in the region has also attracted younger workers to the community (Hoekstra, 2010). At the same time, there is now a larger share of seniors than at any time in the past as older workers retired and remained in the community. These increases have been modest compared to what will occur over the next couple of decades as aging-in-

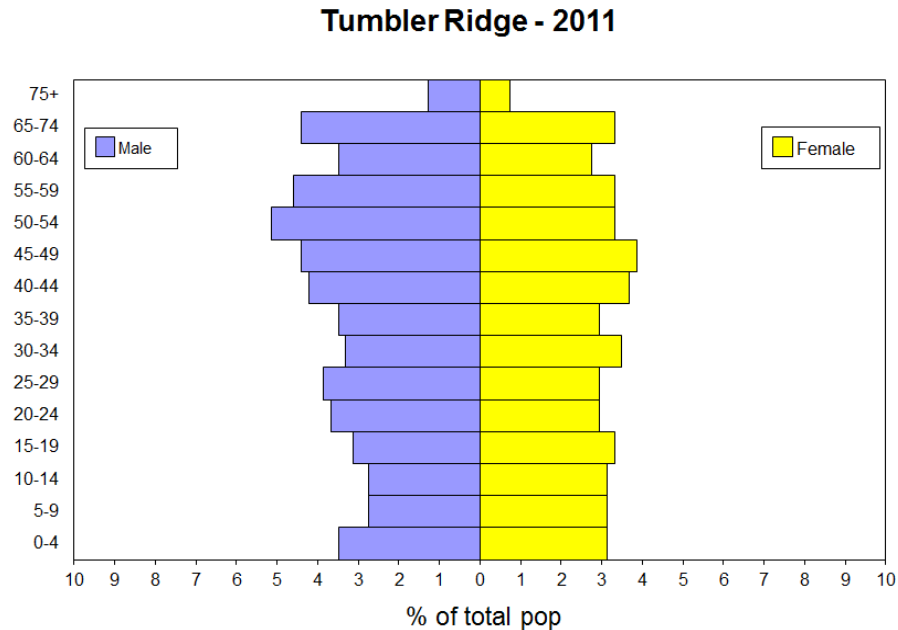
place is coupled with ‘baby boom’ workers’ retirement. While many communities, such as Tumbler Ridge, have pursued the attraction of retirees as one form of economic diversification for resource-based economies (Farkouh, 1999), they are often ill-equipped, however, to address the needs of an aging population due to the underdevelopment of physical and social infrastructure that is inclusive and accessible for an aging population (Liu, Everington, Warburton, Cuthill, & Bartlett, 2009).

Figure 2. 2001 Tumbler Ridge Population



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

Figure 3. 2011 Tumbler Ridge Population



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011.

This meant that the community needed to consider a host of emerging needs that did not exist in the past. One facet of the project was to develop a rural care needs index (RCNI) to evaluate how services available in Tumbler Ridge compared with the types of services available in other northern BC communities (Halseth, Helm, & Price, 2011). The concept was based on the premise that the more remote you are from the nearest regional referral centre, and the bigger your population, the greater your need for basic services in the community ($RCNI = km/100 \times no./1000$). For example, Tumbler Ridge, with a 2006 Census population of 2,454, is 120 km from the nearest referral centre in Dawson Creek. Calculating an RCNI (1.2×2.454) would yield an index score of 2.9448. Once the RCNIs were determined, communities with similar RCNIs were clustered in order to compare the level of services that were available in each place (see Table 6).

All six of the comparative communities have small populations. The smallest is Masset with just under 1,000 and the largest is Houston with more than 3,000. These communities have experienced considerable economic and social change in recent years. The closure of military facilities in Masset, coal mines in Tumbler Ridge, a pulp mill in Chetwynd, and sawmills in Valemount and Fort St. James all led to community challenges and population declines. Similarly, the re-emergence or development of new economic opportunities in Masset (tourism), Tumbler Ridge (coal, oil/gas, tourism), Chetwynd, (oil/gas), and Valemount (tourism) has led to an influx of new residents and new pressures on local services. Whether the population declines or increases, change puts stress on care services as they are on the front line and must react.

Table 6. *Rural Care Needs Indices of Selected Northern BC Municipalities to Regional Hospitals*

Community	2006 population	Distance to regional hospital by road		
		Location	(km)	Index
Houston	3,163	Smithers	65	2.0560
Fort St. James	1,355	Prince George	160	2.1680
Chetwynd	2,633	Dawson Creek	104	2.7383
Masset	940	Prince Rupert	292	2.7448
Tumbler Ridge	2,454	Dawson Creek	120	2.9448
Valemount	1,018	Prince George	293	2.9827

Population source: Statistics Canada, 2006. Rural Care Needs Index = (population/1,000) x (distance/100)

From a comparative perspective, the findings indicate that Tumbler Ridge was underserved (see Table 7). Despite its higher RCNI score, Tumbler Ridge did not have a range of services that were available in other communities, such as overnight beds, complex care beds, dentists, and social workers (Halseth et al., 2008). It also had fewer home care workers, doctors, and other professional medical staff to support the needs of an aging population. Services are no longer commensurate with population or economic development levels. There has been a disconnection between the demands for supports that have emerged in this growing community, and senior government policies that have reduced funding and staff resources for health and other community services despite the pressures being experienced in rapidly growing communities like Tumbler Ridge (Gousseau, 2007; Wakefield,

2014). Furthermore, the community is not served by any commercial transportation company to connect residents with supports in regional referral centres, thereby, identifying a need to upgrade ambulance services and better support alternate ground transportation services that are currently provided by TR Cares.

Table 7. *Medical and Care Services and Staffing in Northern BC Municipalities*

Community	2006 population	Index	Overnight bed	Complex care bed
Houston	3,163	2.0560	0	0
Fort St. James	1,355	2.1680	6	6
Chetwynd	2,633	2.7383	5	7
Masset	940	2.7448	4	6
Tumbler Ridge	2,454	2.9448	0	0
Valemount	1,018	2.9827	0	0

Population source: Statistics Canada, 2006. Rural care needs index = (population/1,000) x (distance/100)

Note: the higher the score, the greater the need for services in the community due to the remoteness or distance to the nearest regional referral centre, as well as the size of the population.

For Tumbler Ridge, economic and population growth continue, with 2011 Census data indicating a population of 2,710 people (yielding RCNI of 3.252). Some of the services that were lost during the economic downturn have not been regained even as the population and local economic activity have surpassed previous levels. Despite the initial success of the Task Force in the immediate phases of transition, senior levels of government have not restored adequate resources in Tumbler Ridge to support flexible and responsive approaches to population and economic change. Instead, community organizations have drawn upon their local and non-local networks to develop infrastructure and services that otherwise would not exist, including the Seniors' Corner, Meals on Wheels, the Snow Angels program (snow removal), hospice and respite care, and the medical shuttle van (Ryser et al., 2013). Tumbler Ridge stakeholders must continue to be attentive to monitor and address existing services gaps.

As stakeholders continue to draw upon information gathered from the seniors' needs assessment (Ryser, Halseth, & Hanlon, 2008) and the Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Project currently under way, they will also need to continue to evolve as new residents representing different demographic bring different needs for services. At times, organizations may be created for a specific need, but then fail to renew their mandate even though the needs in the community may have changed, transformed, or disappeared (Ryser & Halseth, forthcoming). While organizational capacity concerns are not unique to rural settings, these challenges can exacerbate pressures and undermine the effectiveness of an already limited capacity in underserved small communities (Hanlon, Halseth, & Ostry, 2011; Johnsen, Cloke, & May, 2005; O'Connell, 2003). The challenges of capacity and under-resourced organizations are common in rural communities in many OECD countries (Lawrie, Tonts, & Plummer, 2011; Markey et al., 2012) and pose a significant challenge to older ways of thinking and current models of rural service provision.

6.0 A New Model of Rural Services

Services are vital elements in rural and small town places. Services meet both public and individual needs, enhance quality-of-life for residents, and assist in attracting and retaining residents and economic activity in the community. Services help build capacity within communities by providing opportunities for residents to gather and interact (engaging cohesively), and for social capital to accumulate from such patterns of interaction. As communities work through constant change and pressure, researchers across several developed OECD countries have called for a better/new model of service provision (Bruening & Maddern, 1998; Gauld, Goldfinch, & Horsburgh, 2010). Investment in community (civil society), physical, economic and business infrastructure, and human (people, familiarity) infrastructure is needed to nurture community capacity, resiliency, and renewal (Buikstra et al., 2010; Markey et al., 2010). In addition, as Ryser and Halseth (2012) argue, greater synergies across government jurisdictions are needed and more supportive policies and resources must be put in place. A new model of services provision that recognizes the important role that social capital and social cohesion play in the capacity of small communities is a critical next step.

We propose that a new model should consist of five components: investment in social capital, supporting regional connections, recognizing flexible place-based solutions, recognizing the importance of supporting communication and technology, and recognizing the importance of investing in collaborative approaches to smart service delivery. *First*, by strategically investing in stable organizational structures, training and skills development, the renewal of relationships, and the renewal of mandates for service providers and voluntary groups (Ryser & Halseth, forthcoming), community capacity is developed, business and industry are recruited and retained, and residents are supported. Social capital and social cohesion are critical given the important collective role and contributions that public, voluntary, and private organizations play in contemporary service provision. This is especially important in order to share resources and expertise and build organizational capacity and institutional memory in order to ensure that if someone leaves an organization or the community, that capacity is not lost (Winterton, Warburton, Clune, & Martin, 2013). Formal and informal groups build both bridging and bonding social capital and generate both organizational capacity and institutional memory in their daily interactions and operations.

Second, as a reflection of contemporary services provision, regional connections (including across organizations and physical movement across space) are essential. Supporting a regional sense of community as a foundation for the investment in social capital should be integrated in senior government policies on services provision. As illustrated in the case of Tumbler Ridge's Task Force, the identification of priorities for dealing with the initial phases of crisis transition required a joint effort by local, regional, and provincial members. Mobilizing bridging forms of social capital networks were critical components for success. As Markey et al. (2012) state "including a wider cross-section of people and moving beyond the 'usual suspects' in creating community plans strengthens local innovation and leverages different networks and sources of information" (p. 54). The wider pool of partners rural communities make, and government policies support, the more robust opportunities exist in situations of stress and change (Snaveley & Tracy, 2000; Sobels, Curtis, & Lockie, 2001).

Third, senior governments must recognize place-based differences and provide flexible and appropriate top-down public policy supports. Small places have a different context that affects how residents access supports, as well as how community responses to address service needs compare to groups operating in urban settings. Key to these differences are the definitional foundations for rural and small town places—distance and small population numbers (Graham & Underwood, 2012). In addition to the distance involved to connect with governmental agencies or key policy makers, distance exacerbates the possibility that policy-makers do not understand the needs of small places and subsequently mobilize programs that simply miss the mark (Molnar, Duffy, Claxton, Bailey, 2001; Seale, 2013). Rural organizations are also negatively impacted by social distances that impact their exposure to information concerning changes in policies, programs, and resources. Synergies must be created with senior levels of government and regional service agencies, both of which are critical to support transition and renewal processes. For rural and small towns, one size does not fit all. Local, or bottom up, identification of assets working effectively to both protect and realize place-based assets and values are central tenets to success. There is a need to recognize place-specific demographic demands, as opposed to relying on population matrices for the allocation of funding, supports, and programs.

Fourth, senior levels of government must recognize the importance of integrating electronic communications and technology to reduce travel time and costs, and to support professional development and practices of rural and small town service providers. Electronic sharing of information has reduced the need for people to commute for services, such as having blood tests before surgery. Electronic infrastructure has also facilitated rural residents' access to higher order services in distant centres. For example, through videoconference technology, patients, and local doctors can consult with specialists working in urban centres (Watanabe et al., 2013). Furthermore, communications infrastructure supports service professionals working alone in smaller communities and can help them to maintain a community of practice by staying in contact with other practitioners (Brownlee, Graham, Doucette, Hotson, & Halverson, 2010; Hanlon, Ryser, Crain, Halseth, & Snadden, 2010). Investing in communications infrastructure also aligns with European initiatives to create connected people, businesses, and communities no matter where they live in their respective countries (Novotná, Preis, Kopp, & Bartoš, 2013; Woods, 2010).

Fifth, there is a need to generally update approaches to services delivery that recognize the importance of investment in awareness and creation of collaborative approaches to smart service delivery (including co-location, co-management etc.). While strategic investments in policies and programs are critical to foster collaboration to develop smart infrastructure, it is equally important that organizations allocate staff who have the responsibility and resources to routinely support that collaboration to develop and co-manage smart infrastructure. In this new fiscal environment, more organizations in both developed and developing countries are addressing challenges associated with infrastructure and operational costs by co-locating and sharing space in one facility (Belle & Trusler, 2005; Johns, Kilpatrick, & Whelan, 2007; Moseley, Parker, & Wragg, 2004).

When change is constant, the capacity to respond is the critical component in evaluating the long-term sustainability of any community. The case of Tumbler Ridge demonstrates, assets—human, infrastructure, regional/local connections—

provided the foundation whereby residents could gather and connect (social cohesion), and, from which social capital was produced over time. However, the Tumbler Ridge story also illustrates the immediate response to crisis is not what determines the sustainability of a community. Ongoing investment of services and infrastructure that facilitate and foster opportunities for residents to engage in a socially cohesive manner is required to enhance the capacity of a community to persevere long-term. Moving forward, further research is needed to understand how investments in the voluntary sector and service infrastructure strengthen social capital and other forms of community capacity across diverse rural landscapes in order to extend the generalizability of issues raised in this research and strengthen a new model for rural services.

Our discussion throughout the paper has talked about the value of integrating and mobilizing social capital to spiral up and build other forms of capital as done through the Tumbler Ridge Task Force, TR Cares, and other community stakeholders. It also talked about the importance of synergies between rural stakeholders and senior levels of government, as well as the importance of collaboration and developing smart (shared or integrated) infrastructure. Integrated electronic communications and technology strategies are also part of that integrated approach. When all five components of the discussion about the need for a new model are considered, it portrays the importance of pursuing an integrated and comprehensive approach to delivering services.

7.0 Conclusion

Services support both community and economic renewal. Old policy tools and approaches around services that are not situated in the new rural economy are proving to be unwise or inefficient investments. Neoliberal policy approaches are also too focused on decline rather than the boom and bust cycles across various sectors that communities must respond to simultaneously. A more sound approach to rural and small town service provision involves using social capital to bridge other forms of capital (Emery et al., 2006). Supporting investment in network connections and infrastructure at the local/regional level is key. Finally, evaluating the supports and services needed in places like Tumbler Ridge (where services were lost, but have not been recovered despite significant local growth) is a much more practical method of services provision in this new era of change.

The research that has extended from the NRE project supports a new understanding of the role and operation of services as a foundation for community and economic renewal in rural and small town Canada. This research can enhance our knowledge of the importance of services, the critical need for change in the approach to services provision, and the vision for how best to support and provide services in rural and small town places.

Recognizing place-based differences with regards to governance, identifying priorities, and optimizing strengths and assets is critical for local success. Local groups have been cornerstones for cohesive engagement that produces social capital; these assets are most needed and relied upon in the new rural economy. Urban-based neoliberal policy approaches to delivering services must be replaced by innovative models that recognize the importance of rural; support and funding for voluntary groups is key as such groups fill gaps in a neoliberal era. Although such funding is often 'soft' (i.e. temporary, limited), it is critical to respond successfully to emerging local needs (Markey et al., 2012). For the future social and economic success of rural

and small town places to be secure, local, regional, provincial, and federal leaders must recognize the 'rural' in rural services provision.

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