

# RURAL & REGIONAL DEVELOP- MENT

IVAN EMKE & ANITA BEST



**NL FORUM 2014**  
PEOPLE | PLACE | CULTURE | ECONOMY | DEMOCRACY



# DR. LESLIE HARRIS

October 24, 1929 – August 26, 2008

When the Public Policy Research Centre and the Centre of Regional Development Studies were to be merged in 2004, the idea to name the new centre after Dr. Leslie Harris seemed perfect. Dr. Harris' career and values embodied the contribution that the new centre was intended to make to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Leslie Harris was born in rural Newfoundland, the son of a fisherman, and he never lost his connection to the way of life of the province. He was an avid salmon fisherman and dedicated berry picker. When his health prevented him traveling too far from St. John's, it was his trips to Fogo Island that he said he missed the most. His wife Mary was from Fogo, and they enjoyed many years visiting their summer home there, out on the berry grounds and enjoying, according to Dr. Harris, the best salt fish that could be found anywhere. Dr. Harris' love for and knowledge of the fishery and rural Newfoundland and Labrador were eloquently captured in his many inspirational talks and speeches over the years.

When he returned to Newfoundland with his University of London PhD, he helped design a new history program at Memorial that introduced students to history as a discipline. As he taught it, history was not about remembering names and dates, but it was about interpreting the past, understanding differing perspectives, and reaching your own conclusions.

This intellectual discipline was reflected in Dr. Harris' work as an administrator and as a leader in the province's public policy community. Whether it was as a labour arbitrator, the leader of an historic task force on the fishery, or the head of the Royal Newfoundland and Labrador Constabulary Police Complaints Commission, Leslie Harris was trusted to assess the merits of all arguments and evidence and reach fair and practical conclusions. He brought the same wisdom to his years as a senior administrator, vice-president (academic) and president at Memorial University. Through all his life and career, Leslie Harris personified integrity as an individual and engendered respect for the independence of the university as an institution. These values of integrity and independence have become the guiding principles of the Harris Centre.



# 10 YEARS OF HARRIS CENTRE

BY THE LESLIE HARRIS CENTRE OF REGIONAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

**T**he Harris Centre was born out of a merger between the Public Policy Research Centre and the Centre for Regional Development Studies in 2004. In hopes that this new Centre of Regional Policy and Development would emulate the esteemed character of Dr. Leslie Harris—renowned for his integrity, independence, and relevance—it was named after the former president of Memorial.

In the ten years since, the Harris Centre has sought to live up to Dr. Harris' reputation, holding hundreds of public forums, dozens of regional workshops, and funding hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of applied research, all pertaining to regional development and public policy in the province, all with the aim of increasing Memorial University student, faculty, and staff capacity to help the province contend with complex issues, and to improve public understanding of the same.

*An immense body of work funded, supported, and otherwise fostered by the Harris Centre has entrenched the Centre as an important part of the regional development and public policy landscape of the province.*

*The decade's worth of work stretching from Nain to St. John's, from the arts to the environment, and all points in between reads like a compendium of bright ideas from some of the most thoughtful and capable thinkers in the province. Always seeking to maintain integrity, independence, and relevance, the Harris Centre has provided a stage for Memorial's faculty's, students', and staff's expertise and curiosity to grapple with some of the most puzzling problems confronting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.*

*To launch the Harris Centre into its second decade, and to facilitate further substantive public discussions about import-*

*ant issues, the Harris Centre has recruited a team of talented researchers to look back over its first ten years of work, and lead a discussion about where the province and the Centre are headed in the next ten—something we are calling NL Forum 2014.*

*The goal of the NL Forum 2014 is to discuss where we are and where we are going as a province through the lens of where we've come over the past ten years—ten years of unprecedented growth and prosperity—in five important areas: demographic and labour market development, environment and natural resource development, governance and public policy, regional and rural development, and social and cultural development.*

*This is the second of five topical reports, wherein Dr. Ivan Emke and Anita Best examine the crucial issue of regional and rural development, something that is top of mind in all parts of the province, and around the world, as people seek to under-*

*stand how to ensure all regions and all communities are able to benefit from provincial prosperity, and participate in the development of the economy.*

*The other reports include Dr. Tom Cooper's work on environmental and natural resource development, which will consider how our natural resource-based economy can be developed in a manner that is both environmentally and economically responsible. Dr. Russell Williams and Lucy MacDonald will explore how important decisions are made for the benefit of the province and its communities by all levels of government.*

*And previously, Dr. Lisa Kaida and Chris William Martin from the Faculty of Arts (Sociology) assessed the complex demographic and labour market challenges facing the province, and the threat they pose to the province's economic and social sustainability, let alone growth. Dr. Jennifer Dyer examines the Harris Centre works related to the social and cultural development of the province, and provides a clearer picture of*

*the important role culture plays economically, socially, and in relation to the other four themes in Newfoundland and Labrador.*

*These thematic reports are a synthesis and critical analysis of the content of research reports, presentations, and conferences supported by the Centre—the ideas and issues dealt with across the range of Harris Centre programming since its inception.*

*Taken as a whole, the five reports will kick off discussion at the NL Forum 2014, a two-day conference that will bring together thought leaders and important decision-makers in the public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors to network and discuss these crucial issues. The issues discussed, the insight gleaned, and the understanding of major, and oftentimes complex, provincial issues will truly form the basis for public dialogue and important decisions for the next ten years. With the governing provincial party in a period of transition, and an election coming shortly on the heels of the conference,*

*these two-days promise to be a watershed moment in contemporary Newfoundland and Labrador.*

*Following the NL Forum 2014, international regional development expert Dr. David Freshwater will synthesize all of the lessons learned and insights gleaned from the reports and the discussions, and extract their implications for the future of the province. Dr. Freshwater's report, upon its release in Winter 2015, will be a game-changing document for Newfoundland and Labrador. It will provide a panoramic view of the state of the province now, as well as a well-grounded look ahead to the next ten years in a rapidly changing province, and lay the ground work for the next ten years of work to make the province a better place to live, work, and do business. ■*



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Given its ambitious mandate, the work of the Harris Centre necessarily straddles the entire range of challenges and issues that face the province. It would be monumental to analyze, in a reasonable manner, all of the ways in which the Harris Centre has contributed to public policy discourse and community development efforts in the province. Thus, in an effort to provide more focused discussion, the work of the Harris Centre was divided into five broad themes, one of which was regional and rural development. This is still a very large terrain, and it has been one of the central topics of many of the Harris Centre activities, presentations and publications. The purpose of this report was to discuss the ways that the Harris Centre's work

connected to the context and the challenges of regional and rural development in the province over the past 10 years. In so doing, the discussion moves us toward a set of suggestions regarding how the future work of the Harris Centre in regional and rural development can be informed by the lessons of the past, and embrace the potential of new strategies and topics.

Without a doubt, regional and rural development has been an enduring thread of discussion and debate throughout this province, in coffee shops, on wharves, and during numerous consultations and public events. As a thinly-populated province, with all of the issues that come with having an immense geography and an industrial development tradition of reliance on large and centralized corporations,

there is good reason for this focus of conversation. When the Harris Centre emerged, it was logical that one of the primary focus areas would be regional and rural development. The Regional Workshops, held quarterly in different regions of the province, provided an opportunity for select individuals in the regions to put specific issues on the agenda. The Synergy Sessions and Memorial Presents events offered the opportunity for Memorial academics, as well as invited professionals and researchers from outside the university (and the province) to discuss research that related to rural and regional issues. This all built on the legacy of Leslie Harris (a former President of Memorial, after whom the Harris Centre was named shortly after its origin), a scholar who championed the

importance of the University being fully engaged in the communities of this province; a man who modeled the part of the Memorial Charter which instructs the university to be “of service” to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In terms of the structure of this paper, we will begin by setting out the terrain of regional and rural, as we see it. In order to discuss the ways in which the Harris Centre has intersected with the issues of regional and rural development, it is only fair to outline what we take to be some of the central issues at play in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, this list cannot be exhaustive, and could raise the hackles and stoke the ire of readers at the outset, which isn't a bad thing. If we can anger you early on, there is a good chance you'll stay for the duration, if only to find more grist for your letters to the editor, or your MHA, or your Facebook friends. On top of this, it will provide context to help make sense of our comments when we outline the strengths and gaps in the Harris Centre's work of the past.

But let us be very clear at the

outset. We are looking forward to the Harris Centre's next decade. We have both been actively involved in Harris Centre events in the past, and expect that to continue in the future. For the Centre has achieved much. Thus, any suggestions or gift discernment or discussion of gaps that follow must be read as constructive. If we did not believe in the potential of the Harris Centre, we would not have taken the time to do this review. After all, reading over numerous reports and coalescing it into a paper is not among the “Top 10 ways to spend a summer vacation...” So be reassured that we are offering this in the spirit of open and frank discussion – a spirit that has been heartily encouraged by the Harris Centre in its work.

Thus, we begin with our (incomplete) list of some of the major regional and rural development issues in Newfoundland and Labrador. This will be followed by observations of the ways these issues (among others) have been handled by the Harris Centre over the past decade. We will also identify any gaps in the Harris Centre's coverage of these issues, and, finally, we will pull together some

suggestions for the Centre's future work. In the course of these discussions, we will argue for the necessity to also understand the social context of university-community relations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

All of this is, naturally, a somewhat subjective reading of the impressive set of materials from the Harris Centre. But this is not a shortcoming of such an analysis; rather, it is a strength. There are different ways of knowing. Some could rely on the compilation of charts of numbers related to which themes were covered and how often. We did some of that, but the lack of consistent language and categorization made such an enterprise of limited use. (Though, admittedly, it would have looked very nice on a Powerpoint graph!) Instead, we've relied upon reading the material in light of our own experiences working and living in this province.



## 2 CHALLENGES FACING RURAL NL

(ABRIDGED)

A few of the challenges facing rural Newfoundland and Labrador, as we see them, presented in no particular order:

### 2.1 ECONOMIC & SOCIAL DETERIORATION

The continuing economic and social deterioration facing rural communities, coupled with the recognition of untapped natural resource potential in many of these regions.

### 2.2 VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES

A lack of value-added industries in rural regions, which means that we are not able to take full advantage of rurally-situated natural resources (forestry, agriculture, fishing, energy). How do we transfer natural resources into sustainable economic resources?

### 2.3 DECLINE OF SERVICES

Decline (and regionalization) of services in health, education, social services, voluntary organizations and religious organizations.

### 2.4 INFRASTRUCTURE DECLINE

Deterioration of infrastructure (roads, ferries, access to sufficient energy for new businesses, access to broadband Internet).

### 2.5 MIGRATION

Migration issues—outmigration of youth as well as mid-career adults (permanent outmigration as well as long-distance commuting for work—four weeks away and two back, etc.), coupled with challenges in attracting and retaining newcomers.

### 2.6 DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES

Demographic challenges, related to low birth rates and a lack of in-migration of younger people and families, which has an impact on a range of issues from the availability of services to succession planning for rural businesses.

### 2.7 ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

Limited diversity in economic opportunities, and a focus on resource extraction, rather than manufacturing or secondary processing.

### 2.8 LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN RURAL REGIONS

A lack of confidence among community members in facing the challenges they have (this is both self-confidence

and a general confidence in community-wide abilities). This is reinforced daily by a litany of reports in the media and elsewhere about the so-called intractable problems of rural communities.

## 2.9 ENTITLEMENT FAILURE

Entitlement failure, or the gap between expectations of services that should be available, and what is deemed to be economically feasible (using conventional economic models).

## 2.10 CULTURE OF DISCONTENT

A rising culture of discontent, related to the issues above, but also to a lack of faith in government actors, a cynicism about top-down initiatives, and a general “political de-skilling” of rural people. (Roger Epp refers to political de-skilling as the process of removing opportunities of rural people for self-governance, and for learning the skills of governance and leadership, through the centralization of powers in major urban centres and the removal of local control over school boards, hospital boards, meaningful municipal and regional development, and so on.)

## 2.11 TECHNOLOGY

The need for realistic and technologically-appropriate solutions to promote the sustainability of small rural and remote communities (e.g. potable water and sewage systems, accessible telecommunications, public transportation options, and food security).

## 2.12 ADDITIONAL COSTS

High transportation costs for residents (both direct and indirect) to avail of services that have been regionalized.

## 2.13 RELIANCE ON TRANSFER PAYMENTS

A heavy reliance on transfer payments as a large percentage of income, which is generally due to structural problems and policy gaps, including those mentioned above, rather than individual factors.

## 2.14 POLICY COORDINATION

The lack of coordinated policies related to resource use and management. Such as when multiple sectors or government departments or agencies are all engaged in different aspects of management of the same resource but there is little coordination among the different players.

## 2.15 FOOD SECURITY

Food security, especially in the light of the province’s profound dependency on complex and tenuous transportation networks (in particular, those connecting the island to the mainland and those servicing coastal Labrador).

## 2.16 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation challenges that affect the tourism industry including the cost (time and money) of air and ferry travel, negotiation with federal parties responsible for marine transport, shortage of rental vehicles during peak times, and the general lack of public transportation.

## 2.17 VOLUNTEERISM & LEADERSHIP

The difficulty of sustaining volunteerism in rural communities and the negative impacts this can have. This can be attributed to dependence of community institutions on volunteers, the decline of volunteers under 50, the increasingly-high expectations being placed on volunteer groups by funding agencies, and the burn-out of current volunteers.

## 2.18 LONG DISTANCE COMMUTING

We are beginning to see social and cultural impacts as a result of the large numbers of people in the province who participate in the long-distance commuting labour force (those who maintain a Newfoundland and Labrador residence, but who work in another part of the country and travel back and forth on a regular rotation). For example, there are preliminary observations regarding family-unit instability, a lack of time available for community participation and volunteer activities, and even emerging patterns of drug use that are creating challenges in small communities.



# 3 THE WHACK-A-MOLE GAME

OR, COVERING REGIONAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

In beginning this analysis, we were provided a long list of workshops, presentations, research reports, public forums, and magazine articles that had been organized, funded, promoted, and held by the Harris Centre over the last 10 years. We sifted through hundreds of pages of materials and hours of video that pertained to regional and rural development, as identified by Harris Centre staff, as well as ourselves. In the end, this included 23 Regional Workshops, 21 Memorial Presents events, 43 Synergy Sessions, two conferences, two Applied Research Grants and five *Newfoundland Quarterly* articles. (Note that there was overlap among some of these. For example, a Memorial Presents may also be part of a Regional Workshop and then reappear

as a *Newfoundland Quarterly* article.) This was the material that we worked with. However, this selection is clearly not the entire universe of what the Harris Centre has been engaged with over the past decade, it is only a sample. The rest of the Harris Centre material is covered by the four other thematic reports that are part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

Just reading the listing of topics that were covered at the workshops and synergy sessions and public events reminded us of Whack-a-Mole—that old carnival game where mechanical moles would appear and the player would try to hammer the creature before it disappeared, only to have it reappear soon after in a different place. Over the last 10 years, topics have come and gone, appeared

and disappeared, were discussed and re-discussed. Given that this happened with different groups, different feature presenters, and in different places, it leaves the reader feeling that the treatment of many issues was regular, but they may not have had the chance to evolve over time. The same challenges (such as the lack of support for smaller-scale forestry or fishing, or the need to develop tourism infrastructure) were discussed in somewhat similar ways. The same moles kept returning, albeit in different geographical locations with different audiences. But this could be an artifact of the attempt to lead public discussions on a set of relevant topics throughout the entire province. Or it could relate to the lack of good solutions, so the problems keep getting

repeated (in hopes of some kind of a breakthrough or innovation).

In relation to the content itself, we can begin by asking how particular issues may get identified as important to cover. This would help in understanding the actual process of the community-university (and sometimes government) collaborations that distinguishes the Harris Centre's work. We argue that you cannot separate process from content (as beguiling as that may seem). Even if all of the most important topics for rural Newfoundland and Labrador were covered, but they were done in a manner that was not inclusive, the entire exercise would experience problems. So understanding at least some of the process of how issues emerged is important.

For example, in the case of the research work, the topics are largely based on the interests of applicants and participants (with some gentle suasion based on funding criteria).

In the case of Regional Workshops, a local organizing committee of select individuals in the region define the issues to be discussed and workshop participants would further flesh out the themes during the workshop. And it is possible that the lack of evolution of the topics over time (which we refer to above) was a result of the need to work with whoever was willing (and thus accept their suggestions). As the saying goes, "you needs ta dance wit who brought ya." In addition, there was a need to work with the volunteers who came forward to avoid the appearance of the university (through the Harris Centre) determining "from above" how an issue was approached.

As a result, there has been a glorious anarchy of the ways in which common themes have been approached. In addition, in order to be thorough, there was possibly a desire to let the issues arise organically. The upshot of all this is that it is difficult to narrow down a coherent set of re-

gional and rural development themes that have been approached in a singular way over the Harris Centre's first 10 years. Attempting to do so is bound to be a leaky process. As we shall see, this has both its advantages—allowing for a variety of voices on similar themes—as well as its disadvantages—a lack of a consistent stream of development, or movement forward, in relation to topics. And it could quite legitimately be argued that coherent and progressive threads of analysis of topics may not be either realistic or preferable. Maybe the engagement of Memorial and the community *needs* to be over a thousand points of interaction, a thousand points of light, and thus *needs* to be ad hoc and anarchistic and without some singular drive toward "the answer." Maybe "Whack-a-Mole" is the only game worth playing after all!



# 4 UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN THE STRUCTURE & PROCESS OF THE HARRIS CENTRE

*OR, DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE*

**W**e are convinced that a significant aspect of the context of regional and rural development in the province is actually the residue of previous university-community relationships. This was in place prior to the Harris Centre being set up, and has affected some of the community-based perceptions of the Harris Centre's work that we have experienced. This pre-existing set of expectations has coloured at least some of the Harris Centre-community relationships that did develop (thus affecting the content that was covered and the manner in which it was organized). Thus, at this point, it is worth

noting the history of the ways in which the Harris Centre has needed to position itself as a bridge between Memorial and the public since its inception. In 2004, many rural residents still harboured fond memories of the work of Memorial Extension (which was set up in 1959). This university-based service placed workers in communities across the province, and attempted to be a bridge between the University and these communities. It was responsible for many local initiatives, as well as the development of often locally-based communication tools, such as video, television, newsletters, magazines, etc. (In fact, the

CBC show "Land and Sea" owes its origins to Memorial Extension.) The service was closed in 1991, and the last remnants of Memorial Extension, the Don Snowden Centre for Development Communications, was packed up and sent off to the University of Guelph in 1996.

These warm feelings for Memorial Extension in the communities may have been based on experience, or on the myths of Extension that continue to exist. We use "myth" here in the anthropological sense, of stories that may or may not be true, but which serve as important bearers of social and cultural understanding.

More than two decades after the demise of Memorial Extension, stories of its significance are increasingly difficult to corroborate. Some of the claims for what it accomplished cannot be confirmed by the community workers who were involved, but on the other hand there has been a rather muted (and generally invisible) acknowledgment of the successes of Memorial Extension within some parts of the university. Nevertheless, whether it liked it or not, the Harris Centre began its life in the shadow of the legacy of Memorial Extension.

In formative Harris Centre documents and events (such as the early Regional Workshop in Kittiwake in 2005), there was reference to the end of Memorial Extension and the need for the university to improve its connection with communities. But it was also made clear that Memorial was not here “to solve your problems,” but to act as a resource to communities and the province. This distinction between Memorial Extension and the Harris Centre is the distinction between the old models of university-community *extension*, and the new models of University-community *engagement*. It is still in the process of being clarified, but it points to the fact that Memorial *is* a different University than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Just as rural Newfoundland and Labrador *is* different than it was in that same era. And the old extension model *has* changed throughout rural North America (where it has survived).

But nostalgia is a powerful force of the finest kind. And it is only fair that significant changes in university-community connections be critically evaluated in terms of how the interests of the partners may have changed and the relationship may have shifted the balance of payments in one direction or the other.

For example, since Memorial Extension included an explicit focus on the social and cultural side of community development, one way of distinguishing itself would be for the Harris Centre to focus more on the business and economic side of development. We are not suggesting that this is either a conscious or a strategic approach. It is likely a result of a combination of factors, involving who was involved in defining the issues and the perspectives of those most active with the Harris Centre. Even if it is a byproduct of other factors, it was logically consistent for the Harris Centre to develop a set of issues that would reflect their new type of relationship with the community.

As an example, we can take one of the Harris Centre’s prominent forms of community-university connection—Regional Workshops. The main objectives of these workshops are threefold, as stated in the introductory script for the workshops: (1) To promote the University as a resource for regional policy and development throughout the province, through the utilization of research, teaching and outreach activities at Memorial; (2) To communicate current Memorial University activities to local stakeholders and communicate local stakeholder priorities to Memorial faculty, students and staff; and (3) To provide a forum for the identification of new opportunities/linkages between Memorial University and local stakeholders.

Our point is that this set of objectives could potentially put boundaries around the topics proposed and the manner in which they were presented, since the focus is firstly on Memorial and secondly on communities. To work well, this would assume that Memorial researchers *do* cover all of the important issues of regional and rural Newfoundland and

Labrador. This is not an assumption that it would be safe to make.

Basically, we are saying that these objectives (and the structures that supported them, such as the specific connections between researchers, zone boards, community champions and the Harris Centre) may have affected which moles were chosen to whack—and the order of their whacking. There was always a chance that local people involved in research or who participated during the workshops or public presentations could introduce their own themes (and we know this happens). For the Regional Workshops, a group of key partners in a region first chooses the topics, but participants can add their own perspectives at the workshops. In the case of the Synergy Sessions and other public presentations, and the research projects, the most frequent themes are often those that Memorial researchers and students prefer to target. (The structure of these events and reports provides a chance for the Harris Centre to be more pro-active in defining the topics. These are mechanisms whereby the Harris Centre can plug any gaps in issues that it sees as important.) This is neither something to be embarrassed about, nor something to celebrate. It is simply part of the context; part of the structure and terms of engagement. As such, it may help us in understanding the types of topics related to regional and rural development that were covered. And now (finally, you may sigh) we will turn to outlining some of the most common themes of coverage over the past 10 years.



## 5 ISSUES COVERED BY THE HARRIS CENTRE

To begin, we worked on a quantitative categorization of major topics in the Regional Workshops, research reports, and public policy forums. However, the terms used across these were not consistent, and the clustering of topics varied widely. This meant it was not really possible to know for sure which topics had the most coverage in quantitative terms. For example, tourism may be included under business development, or environmental sustainability, or heritage preservation. In each of these contexts, what was meant by “tourism” could vary significantly. (Words, even the simplest of them, often smuggle in connotations.) There is always the regular caveat that it was difficult to make a judgment about

how well these topics were covered or the responses they received, since the reports were made by the Harris Centre rather than the participants or members of the audience.

One more note before listing major themes of coverage—the issues covered often reflect the region in which the discussion takes place. For example, agriculture emerged as a topic in places where it was possible, fisheries in coastal locations, self-government in parts of Labrador... and tourism just about everywhere.

These topic areas appeared numerous times in the material. They are presented in no particular order:

### 5.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources has been a per-

sistent theme of discussion throughout the entire range of Harris Centre work. Particular areas of focus have included: how to use resources wisely (the definition of “wise” depends on who is speaking); how to ensure that their harvesting contributes to rural communities given that Newfoundland and Labrador’s resource wealth is generally rurally situated (see the October 2011 session in St. John’s on ensuring community value for natural resource development); how certain types of exploitation of natural resources could assist in providing good jobs in rural areas and help stem the tide of urbanization; models for how to determine the value of nature and the environment (an April 2007 Memorial Presents in Corner Brook);

ideas for new uses for traditional resources, as well as new resources to exploit; all often underlined by the assumption that it is natural resource development that will result in the most secure and long-term employment for rural regions. Specific natural resources discussed have included the following:

### 5.1.1 FISHERIES

This sector was covered in a variety of ways over the course of the Harris Centre's last decade of work, ranging from consideration of fisheries policies (such as the fleet separation policy in a Memorial Presents in Port aux Basques in April 2012), to comparative analysis of what we can learn from fisheries in other countries (a Memorial Presents in St. John's in September 2012), to explicit consideration of how fisheries could be connected to rural revitalization (two different sessions, in Newtown in November 2005 and in Stephenville in March 2006). Aquaculture also received some attention, especially in the early years (Regional Workshops in Bay d'Espoir in October 2006 and L'Anse au Clair in May 2006.) However, there were some aspects of fisheries that seemed to be less likely to be considered (such as the effects on the stock of modern fishing technologies, or the need to improve ecological efficiencies and usages of the fishing that currently occurs). On the other hand, it seems as if there was sometimes an over-dependence on the fisheries as a topic, which may mimic the situation on the ground. The fishery is historically important to the economy of the province, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and it continues to be centrally important culturally. But in its current state—in terms of the vulnerability of the stocks, the global volatility of the markets, and the concentra-

tion of ownership in the industry—is the fishery truly the brightest spot for future prosperity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador? Is it still valuable as a stand-alone enterprise for development, in this age of the high cost of entry for new entrepreneurs? Are there other more promising priorities for rural Newfoundland and Labrador at the moment? (These questions may elicit strong opinions, but such a discussion would be useful in our view.) Or, alternatively, would it be better to link the fishery to other pursuits, such as tourism? An underlying issue here is the tension between giving people what they want or expect and forcing upon them the medicines you think they need. The latter requires a fair bit of self-righteous presumption, and being prophetic may well be a waning skill at the university. (Besides, it is not always appreciated by promotion and tenure committees...)

### 5.1.2 AGRICULTURE

This was discussed at a number of points over the past 10 years, but we would argue that it is underdeveloped among the themes. (Two Regional Workshops included agriculture as a central theme – Stephenville in March 2006 and Corner Brook in 2011.) This is especially notable in relation to the amount of attention paid the fisheries – we would argue that agriculture shows more promise than the fisheries for rural employment and development and the drive for more regional self-sufficiency in general. And, as noted in the “gaps” section below, the discussion of agriculture that has occurred has not yet been able to effectively harness the vitality and promise of those involved with the food security and small-scale farming movements within the province (and beyond).

### 5.1.3 FORESTRY

This theme was raised in a number of Regional Workshops and public forums, in particular those regions where forestry has been a traditional pursuit (such as the Humber Valley in January 2010 and Central Newfoundland in June 2011). These events were good at raising issues and pointing out historical trajectories that led to the present situation, but there could be more work done on how to move the discussion forward in light of the decline of the pulp industry, changes in markets for wood fibre products, and the rise of the importance of environmental certification (which can be challenging in the current structure of forest management).

### 5.1.4 ENERGY

Both hydro and petrochemical energy are other natural resources that have received some attention in relation to regional and rural development. Given that activity in these sectors is increasing rapidly across the province, we would expect that its coverage would increase dramatically in the years ahead.

## 5.2 CULTURE

Culture. Cultural resources, and tourism in particular, has been an ever-present theme in the Harris Centre's work. Often it was the central focus of a workshop or forum, and other times it was something that was raised in discussions of economic and social development in general. Sometimes the discussion focussed on infrastructure, or marketing, or product development. Other times, there was a consideration of value-added tourism products, such as re-enactments or community theatre productions. There were sessions on specific types of tourism (such as an April 2009 event on cruise ship tourism) or particular challenges (e.g., sustainable tourism in the north, as discussed in Nain, April 2010). One observation

which emerges from looking at the discussions, in particular, is that heritage and culture were generally folded in with tourism. While these things may have economic exchange value as a touristic commodity, heritage and culture also have intrinsic value in terms of community solidarity, social capital and social cohesion, and thus deserve treatment on their own terms.

Our observation is that the Harris Centre should work on ensuring that it uses a broad understanding of the concept of culture—one that fully encompasses both arts and heritage (which in itself includes the tangible built aspects of heritage as well as the intangible aspects of local knowledge, traditions, customs, practices, beliefs, etc.). Including a broader range of cultural players among the community partners who help organize Regional Workshops, for instance, may help to alleviate this shortcoming. Often community leaders invited to participate were chosen only from the municipal representatives, or the business or economic development community. (An example of this broader conceptualization of tourism and heritage was seen in a Memorial Presents in Norris Point in May of 2009, called “The artist as rural entrepreneur.”)

### 5.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This topic appears regularly throughout the Harris Centre’s work both on its own, often conceptualized as business development, and also as the subtext of many other discussions, such as those related to natural resources or tourism. Economic resilience is a central issue in regional and rural Newfoundland and Labrador, so such discussions are warranted. Over the past decade, there may have been a slight shift away from community development (broadly conceptual-

ized) toward economic development that privileges business models and wealth creation, with a particular focus on issues such as: manufacturing and secondary processing; value-added business development; and economic diversification in sectors such as marine or tourism. Sometimes this focused on cluster development (such as a Synergy Session on marketing seaports in October 2008). This more narrow definition of development may have been related to the shift that regional economic development boards (key Harris Centre partners while they existed) were instructed to take by their funders. We are not suggesting that this is not an important set of issues, but this shift in focus has resulted in fewer discussions about what makes a place worth living in or worth fighting to keep alive to begin with.

### 5.4 LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

A common thematic area of Harris Centre work, related to the above, regards the shifts in the supply of workers and the skill demands of the current rural and regional economies. The assumption being that there is a need to find some type of fit between supply and demand – either through attracting new talent to particular regions or sectors, *retaining* (and often *retraining* current residents), and/or addressing the challenges posed by shifting demographics in the province, especially low birthrates, the effects of inter- and intra-provincial migration, and the aging rural Newfoundland and Labrador populations. Sub-themes included:

Shifts in the demand for particular skills (for example, for mining technologists in parts of Labrador, or welders and electricians for off-shore developments).

More specific strategies to entice young people into sectors of

the work force, or attract “non-traditional” workers into skilled trades areas. Some specific examples include the conference on women in oil and gas, “Fueling the Future,” held in March 2011 in St. John’s. The presentations were able to drill down into a multitude of issues (e.g., sociological issues around gender expectations, labour market issues around training, industrial assumptions around labour force recruitment).

Demographics, in particular the decline in birthrates and the effects of inter-provincial and intra-provincial migration. Clearly, these factors are linked to regional and rural development, but we ask if it is always the case that economic opportunities need to come first? Or can regions and communities be entrepreneurial in the sense that they can (on the basis of their supply of specific skilled labour) attract industry (or develop their own industries)? Cluster theory would imply that is the case, at some point. This may not dramatically turn around the demographic tide. But the point is that such well-known phenomena as the aging of rural regions requires some bold ideas. (Even if they are unpopular ones, such as how to restructure our expectations toward an economy with fewer workers and a focus on jobless development).

### 5.5 INFRASTRUCTURE

This appeared as a topic a number of times. In particular, in regions where ferry service was an important factor, or where road access was limited. Sometimes broadband infrastructure was referenced as a necessary prerequisite for business expansion or the maintenance of services. For example, an October 2010 public session in St. John’s on “Harnessing the Internet for Regional Development.” An underlying subtext of the discussions relates to the appropriate level

of infrastructure for different regions of the province, based on industrial and business needs and population projections.

## 5.6 SERVICES

In a number of workshops, forums, and research reports access to services has been a central issue to regional and rural development. This includes a particular focus on health services and education (at a variety of levels). For example, concerns over ensuring rural communities have access to health care and the effects of the regionalization of health services. This was discussed at the Exploits Regional Workshop in Grand Falls Windsor (November 2007), the Emerald workshop in Springdale in September 2012, and a Memorial Presents in St. John's in June 2007 ("Are Rural Areas Receiving Second-Class Health Care?"). And in terms of education, there have been discussions on issues such as teacher stress, and the potential for e-learning (Memorial Presents in St. John's on November 2007).

## 5.7 REGIONALISM

This topic relates to what the terms "regional" and "rural" mean, including consideration of new ways to conceptualize regional and more remote geographical areas (such as under the framework of what was termed "functional regions," for example). There were also a number of presentations on clustering, and sectoral development based on geography, common culture and heritage, or existing business interests, and the notion that communities and regions could be seen as entrepreneurial, just like firms and sectors. (For example, a major theme at the workshop in Port Blandford in March 2012 was on developing a cluster related to "ocean based wealth generation.")

In all of the above themes, one of the useful thrusts of the discussions was the application of a "rural and regional lens" on the issues – to consider the specific ways in which general policy developments and social/cultural/economic shifts affected rural regions differently from urban regions. To the extent that such a lens was a part of the reports, workshops, or forums, it was effective. This was a sort of a touchstone that hearkened back to the regional and rural realities of Newfoundland and Labrador – how will the ideas being proposed roll out in the regions, and what impacts will they have across the province. For example, will green energy result in a shift in any jobs toward rural regions, compared to our current energy production? (See the Synergy Session in September 2010 on "Green Power, Green Jobs" or the discussion at the St. Bride's Regional Workshop in November 2006 that included discussion of wind and tidal power.)

One valuable approach that cut across multiple themes was comparative work that outlined what could be learned from other jurisdictions. This type of work appeared very useful in generating discussion and ideas. However, we would encourage the presenters and researchers to go beyond description, and to look at what the different policies and practices could do for Newfoundland and Labrador. How would some of the examples from Ireland or Norway or Iceland or India be implemented here, and how might they affect the social and economic landscape of the province? (There were some prime public sessions that began to address these comparisons, including October 2008 on the North Atlantic Alliance, September 2012 on the inshore fishery in a variety of countries, and August 2007 on the fishery in Gujarat State, India.)

While we outlined a number of distinct areas above, it is also very important to have discussions that cut across multiple sectors. Indeed, we argue for additional integration of thematic areas. For example, in the discussion of tourism there may be reference simply to markets or products. But the area is a virtual network of many needs, even in one small area, such as infrastructure (roads, signage, tech support, Internet access, ferry, etc.). Or, in the case of manufacturing and natural resource development, one needs to also include issues around access to reliable power in some rural regions of the province. So there is a necessity to always be thinking across the themes and sectors. Some sessions did work on this, such as May 2008's event in Northwest River on climate change and renewable resources in Labrador.

Once again, the distribution of these themes may reflect the manner in which the workshops (in particular) and presentations have been structured. In the future, it will be important to continue to revisit the ways in which themes are developed. The *process* of determining topics is at least as important as the *content* or topics. How will the Harris Centre decide what to concentrate on in the future? Who will be their advisors? Who are their audiences? Do they connect with specific communities? Government departments? Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador? Memorial academics who work with communities? What is the role of any advisory bodies in setting this agenda? All of these are useful thoughts for the future. Possibly one of the most important areas of focus for the Harris Centre will be how to move forward in defining issues for discussion.



# 6 GAPS IN COVERAGE

OR, THE OPEN SPACES FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF DIALOGUE

**S**ilence can be useful. Gaps in conversation may give us time to think (if we don't immediately fill them with noise); they allow us to collect our thoughts if we are not entirely sure how to approach a particular topic. Sometimes, silence is not an oversight, but a way to add emphasis for effect. At other times, silence can point out what is being missed. At times, as the old saying goes, some silences do speak loudly. What is being said by the silences (or gaps) in the Harris Centre's coverage of important regional and rural development topics? You may have to decide whether these silences (or gaps) below speak loudly of something missing or if they are evidence of ongoing thought about *how* to approach a topic.

Of course, whenever we

mention a potential gap, we are sure that someone can find reference to it in a report or a workshop or a piece of paper from a feedback session somewhere. And we have tried to indicate where there has been some movement toward filling the gaps. But the observations that we make are based on looking at the record *as a whole*. In addition, while this section focuses on gaps, it needs to be stated that the coverage of the Harris Centre also included some areas that we had not listed in our first section on challenges in regional and rural development, but which we would likely add to that list in retrospect. That is indeed a very positive indication that the Harris Centre has expanded our awareness of and knowledge regarding regional and rural development.

However, here are the gaps that we noted:

## 6.1 QALIPU FIRST NATION

One definite gap was a lack of coverage related to the rise of the Qalipu First Nation in the province. In general, there was a lack of coverage of indigenous interests on the island portion of the province, and how these emerging groups could play an important role in regional and rural development, and how they are affecting community dynamics, especially on the west coast. This emergence over the past decade (the same time as the Harris Centre has been active) has virtually re-drawn many of the former outlines of communities up and down the west coast and the central region of the province. It

would be hard to think of another change that has been so significant in its scope and its complexity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador since the turn of this century.

## 6.2 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

We had expected even more of a focus on social enterprise, collective ownership, and coop models of business and innovation throughout the 10 years (given the history of cooperatives in some regions of the province). There have been two recent forums related to this (Harbour Breton and St. Anthony), and so we would hope that this bodes well for the future. In addition, the social enterprise model was presented at a Regional Workshop in Port Blandford in March 2012. We would like to have seen more critical evaluation of some of the standard models for rural service support. It is possible that the social enterprise model may work for community development. And, given our erratic and attenuated tourism season, maybe social enterprise would be a better ownership structure in that sector than the current ones.

## 6.3 RURAL SERVICES

Another thing missing is an explicit discussion of the role of rural services—such as schools, churches and service groups—and their function in sustaining communities. One specific role of such organizations is their contribution to rural leadership development. Where will rural leadership come from in the future when there are fewer rural schools, churches and service groups—all of which are nurseries for community leadership? Related to this is the role of volunteers, which deserves more discussion. (The need to nurture volunteers was the topic of a Synergy Session in Fogo in April 2007, and volunteer issues did emerge at a Regional Workshop in

Marystown in November 2012.)

## 6.4 REGIONAL COLLABORATION

It would have been good to have seen more work on inter-community and regional collaborations that have been built from within. While there was extensive use of regional economic development zone boards throughout the Harris Centre's work, the example of the continuing work of their predecessors (the rural development councils) would have been good sources for how regional collaboration can be built locally. (And, in an ironic twist, a number of these rural development associations still exist, even after the demise of the zone boards.) Or, to have discussions of how regional heritage groups and museums can collaborate and create networks up and down a peninsula (such as the heritage network in western and northern Newfoundland and Labrador). A Memorial Presents in Conception Bay did discuss regional cooperation in northeast Avalon in April 2011.

## 6.5 INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

In terms of heritage, it would be good to see more direct discussion of intangible cultural heritage. It sometimes appears as part of other discussions, but we would like to see more direct consideration of culture and heritage as a living entity that is a part of everyday lived experience. There was some discussion that moved toward this broader view of culture at Regional Workshops in Bauline East in November 2007 and Gander in June 2011.

## 6.6 IMMIGRATION

With demographic issues, while there has been some discussion of immigration, it strikes us that the issue deserves far more attention. In particular, there needs to be specific cover-

age of the challenges of immigration and settlement in rural regions of the province. (There was one session on this, however, in November 2012, which was a very good start on the issue.) For example, how to make communities more welcome to newcomers, and how, given that virtually all of the provincial services for immigrants (both governmental and non-governmental) are located on one end of the island, this is a significant challenge. Indeed, increased immigration may only exacerbate the power imbalances in the province related to rural and urban. And, especially in more recent times, the implications of the changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program warrant more discussion. Will the rise of such workers reduce the need for seasonal EI programs? The Harris Centre discussions thus far are useful as a beginning, but the hard questions still need to be addressed.

## 6.7 MUSKRAT FALLS

Given the importance of the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric dam development, we would have expected to see more coverage of this, as it relates to regional and rural development. This issue has become highly politicized in the province, though we doubt that was the reason for the lack of coverage. Also, with mega-projects like Muskrat Falls, it would be good to see more consideration of the social and cultural costs of these types of developments. For example, the ramifications of large numbers of highly-paid men in the construction camps with limited recreational opportunities and no family supports. There was a session regarding the boom cycle in northern BC, and the issue of the social costs of large-scale development also appeared at Regional Workshops in Labrador City (March 2013) and Placentia (June 2013). Related to this

was a Memorial Presents in St. John's in December 2012 on the impacts of long-distance commuting on communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## 6.8 ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

We encourage more discussion about alternate sources of energy, such as solar, wind and tide.

## 6.9 AGRICULTURE

There could have been more attention paid to sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry on a smaller individual or community scale. There have been discussions of agriculture in general. However, there is potential to build a robust and diverse agricultural industry in the province, one that could include smaller scale sustainable production (which would likely employ more people than the larger capital-intensive firms – though on economic balance sheets they may appear to be less “efficient”). Although some attention was paid to smaller scale food production, we feel that it is one of the prime areas where rural communities could benefit, and where we could build stronger rural-urban linkages. (Food security issues were covered during a June 2010 event in St. John's called “What's for Dinner?” and a Regional Workshop in Corner Brook in January 2011.)

## 6.10 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

While there was a session on fostering civic engagement (February 2013 in St. John's), we are inclined to suggest that there should be more attention paid to this, given the role that the Harris Centre has staked out for itself. People may not be well versed in public participation, unfortunately, and the Harris Centre can play a role in fostering, modeling, and giving people opportunities to work on civic engagement.

## 6.11 MUNICIPALITIES

Since we do not have regional-level governance, in general, much work relies upon the municipalities. Thus, it would be good to see more work related to the role of municipal bodies in regional and rural development. Maybe the focus of collaboration could move more toward municipal issues, and away from the regional issues of zone boards. Municipalities have needs related to sustainability planning (and there was a presentation on that in September 2011 in St. John's), but there may be regional and rural needs in such planning and development that the Harris Centre could support.

## 6.12 OUTLIERS

It would be good to see more coverage of what we might call the “outliers”—the small communities that are maintaining themselves, despite expectations of the experts to the contrary. We are speaking here of the Conches and Branches and Buchans of the province. What can be learned from these communities that do not fit the trend of decline in rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

**W**e also noted a number of gaps in partner organizations that were highly involved in Harris Centre events:

## 6.13 MARINE INSTITUTE

One potential key partner in the Memorial family, the Marine Institute, was involved in some workshops, but seems to be visibly absent during some of the events and workshops that were on topics or in locations that directly related to marine issues. This was particularly significant, especially to rural communities that have had an historical connection with marine issues.

## 6.14 COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

We see a need for Harris Centre to maintain sustained connections with the campuses (especially the rural ones) of the College of the North Atlantic. This resource has not been fully integrated. These relationships are crucial in order to be more effective within rural Newfoundland and Labrador. College of the North Atlantic has had sustained contact with many communities more so than the University (especially since the termination of Memorial's Extension Service) and a partnership with the College should be seen as both a fertile source for collaboration and a resource for the Harris Centre.

## 6.15 HOSPITALITY NL

Given the prevalence of tourism in so many Harris Centre activities, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador could play a larger role as a partner.

## 6.16 OTHER GROUPS

There may be other groups to be involved at certain points, such as School Boards (or School Council organizations) and voluntary organizations (and some of their over-arching bodies, such as the Community Sector Council).

## 6.17 COMMUNITY

Of course, the nature of the “community” that participates in Harris Centre events that are targeted toward community engagement is worth noting. Who helps to plan the events and choose the topics to be discussed? We deal with that more in the last section.

**L**et's take one more look at that abridged list of issues in regional and rural Newfoundland and Labrador that we outlined early on to see how the Harris Centre's coverage

has played out over the past decade. This is not meant as some kind of “scorecard,” but, rather, a useful reference. The issues are listed in the same order that they appeared in the earlier section. The numbering refers to a sort of traffic light approach, whereby 1 is sufficient coverage, 2 is some (albeit insufficient) coverage, and 3 is no (or not nearly enough) coverage.

Finally, in terms of gaps, we have a number of observations regarding the potential gaps in process. Clearly, most regional and rural development issues are long-term in developing and will take time to be addressed. It is not clear that the *process* in many of these events is robust and long-term enough to possess the persistence required to fully address some of these issues. And this takes us, mercifully, to our conclusion.

**FIGURE 1 DEGREE OF COVERAGE BY ISSUE**

ISSUE	
Economic and social deterioration in the midst of untapped resources	1
Need for value-added industries	1
Decline and regionalization of services	1
Infrastructure decline	1
Migration issues	2
Demographic challenges	2
Economic diversity	1
Lack of confidence in rural regions	2
“Entitlement failure”	2
The culture of discontent and political de-skilling	3
Solutions through appropriate technologies	2
Additional costs for regional and rural residents	3
Contributing factors for the reliance on transfer payments	3
Need for co-ordinated policies	3
Food security	2
Transportation challenges	1
Volunteerism and leadership	3
Social & cultural effects of long-distance commuting practices	3



# 7 CONCLUSIONS

OR, WHAT IS PAST IS MERELY PROLOGUE...

We begin by reminding the reader of our role here—we are intending to provide a critical examination of regional and rural development issues in the province as covered through Harris Centre events, funded research, and other activities, from our own perspective of living and working in rural Newfoundland and Labrador over the past decade. But the purpose is also to look forward. We are not only tacking up post-it notes about the actions of the past, but we are contributing to an agenda-setting exercise of what to focus on for the future. And we are also celebrating what has gone right over the past decade.

As we read through the materials, we kept being reminded of issues that may be important to re-

gional and rural development, but which were not yet present. Then, a workshop would pop up that had addressed the issue. Thus, the overarching feeling is not so much that there were many topics that were ignored, but that numerous topics appeared and reappeared, and one was left to wonder what happened to the initial starts that were made. How many of the ideas that emerged in the haze of late-afternoon carnation-infused tea and partridgeberry muffins eventually moved forward? We cannot answer that question, nor was it the purpose of this analysis to do so. But it will be an important piece of evaluation in moving forward into the next decade. It seemed that sometimes it was a challenge to engage Memorial personnel to be present (especially at

the Regional Workshops held in the outlying regions). But a more significant challenge is how to have Memorial to be present in these communities *after* the events. Is it possible that such events raise expectations within the community beyond what can be sustained? For that reason alone, it is worth evaluating how to possibly approach the next decade differently, when it comes to such explicit community engagement. It could well be, on the other hand, that the Synergy Sessions and public forums (most of which take place in more urban regions) have *already* found the best model for engagement with those more specialized (typically urban professional) audiences.

One very important change in the context, especially in relation

to the quarterly Regional Workshops, is the loss of the regional economic development zone boards (most of which dissolved by 2013). These were seen (rightly or wrongly) as the local development champions, and were important partners of the Harris Centre with their Regional Workshops. Without the help of the zone boards, the usual mode of planning and executing Regional Workshops, which are a central source of connection with regional and rural development issues, has become much more difficult. However, this could actually be an opportunity to breathe new life into the Regional Workshops, and expand the voices at such events. Indeed, one important theme in the near future may be the dynamics of the re-structuring of post-zonal board rural regions of the province.

In looking forward, it is important to not only raise issues, but also to work diligently on providing some answers (which is always the more difficult part of the equation). If materials remain at the level of data and problems that are already widely-known (and we have referenced several areas above where we think this was the case), it may appear to be picking off the “low-hanging” fruit but leaving the more difficult heavy lifting to other individuals and groups. Regions and rural areas need help with solutions, not just problem identification. It is one thing to know *for sure* what is going on (something that the Harris Centre has some skill in doing, clearly), and still another to evaluate opportunities for change (which we would encourage to be a priority in the next decade). A more ambitious and practical approach will not always be successful, but it would be good to focus on studies that relate to *actions* and the evaluation of them (using broad metrics).

These concluding thoughts

lead to a rethinking of the roles of the five central parties of regional and rural development: the university, the community, the government, NGOs, and industry. All of these parties change over time. They are all intricately related to each other. None of them are without complexity. And the way in which they work together (or don't work together) has an influence on the success (or failure) of regional and rural development. Let's take each very briefly in turn.

Why is the university involved in regional and rural development? We know that Memorial is charged in its mandate to be of service to the whole province, which certainly implies a responsibility. Being the only university in the province raises the bar of responsibility. And

### ***Being the only university in the province raises the bar of responsibility.***

the example of Leslie Harris, which is meant to inspire the work of the Centre named after him, demands us to engage in rural and regional issues. However, is there a value of expounding on Memorial's presence in rural Newfoundland and Labrador? It is an important message for Memorial (we agree), but can it be seen as a tad self-serving? And the events that privilege such presentations can lose credibility as community engagement. But the university profoundly needs the support of the community, and vice versa. And we are convinced that the motivations toward community engagement of many within the university go well beyond any kind of simplistic public relations exercise.

Indeed, there have been a number of sessions that focus directly on the role of universities in eco-

nomic and social development within their regions. For example, there was “From Ivory Tower to Regional Power,” a Synergy Session in St. John's in January 2008, and a March 2011 Synergy Session in St. John's on University-community relations (taking the example of Simon Fraser University as a model).

And what is the value of these engagement activities for the communities? (Harris Centre events generally included feedback forms for participants, but these results would need to be parsed out based on whether respondents were members of the community or not.) Workshops and community presentations rely on the need for people in the community to step forward and participate, but is that their job? Speaking of jobs, community members may be otherwise employed. How do they get compensated for their time away from work? As a result, the “community” at Regional Workshops may be reduced to elected officials, staff of NGOs and government workers. In addition, community members (whether it is in Regional Workshops or public presentations) are generally not given the same status as presenters. (At a Regional Workshop, the speakers in the first evening and the morning session are generally academics.) This is understandable for the Regional Workshops, in light of the stated objectives of the Harris Centre. But it may be something worth reconsidering, depending on the extent and type of buy-in desired from the community.

And what is the purpose for government in all of this? Due to their role, government needs to be involved in the discussion of regional and rural development, but it is important to not surrender to their more temporary agendas. While there may be pragmatic reasons to forge connections with government departments,

history does not show that such strategies are necessarily useful in the long term. Departments change, priorities shift, elections are fought and won and lost on issues that relate to political expediency. Even in the past few years we have seen IBRD's retreat from the zone boards (following ACOA's cues), and the disappearance of the Rural Secretariat into the Office of Public Engagement. Both of these are natural allies of the Harris Centre's work on regional and rural development. That said, government is a good *audience* for idea discussion, but there are problems if it is seen as a *source* of an agenda.

NGOs are a sub-set of communities, but they tend to have interests and networks that reach beyond communities and span regions (and beyond). Many people who serve on boards and community initiatives and work with service groups end up acting as the glue and oil of social cohesion in rural regions. They may come to stand in for the community or speak for the community, whether they be sectoral (e.g. volunteer tourism committees) or issue-dependent (e.g. literacy initiatives). While some of the NGOs may receive part of their funding from government, they can nevertheless enjoy autonomy in their activities. Participation in Harris Centre events can be useful for NGOs, as it is a way for them to advance their own agenda items, and speak to the value of their own missions. And such participation is useful for the Harris Centre as well, as this represents groups of active and engaged citizens. Thus, there is a positive symbiotic relationship between NGOs and the Harris Centre's activities related to regional and rural development.

Finally, industry is a key player in regional and rural development, and thus it would have been good

to have more industry involvement in Regional Workshops and presentations. In some cases, others have represented their interests at the table (zone boards, for example). But industry can provide the spark of innovation that is sometimes lacking in discussions – that urge to *do things now* and to take chances. This is much in need.

The nature of the relationships among these parties is a part of the context in which the Harris Centre does its work. For example, if we were to take the two major parties (as we see it) – the University (as represented by the Harris Centre) and the community. As stated above, we assume that the Harris Centre (and the

***It is almost as if we need a neutral translation service—to help academics speak with communities, and vice versa.***

University as a whole) is motivated to assist regions and rural communities, but the challenge is always to find rural and regional voices from the communities to participate in this project. This can be a daunting task, and one that university departments are not well-placed to figure out. Sessions can leave one group or the other feeling frustrated at the level of the communal discussion. Some may feel that a session is too theoretical, whereas another may find a session too focused on peculiar or local details. But they are different audiences, with a different relationship to the issues. It would not be good if these differences drive a wedge between the so-called ordinary folk living in rural communities who really want to find solutions to their problems and University aca-

demics who may sometimes miss the point, or who have difficulty with lay language. *Indeed, we emphasize that the Harris Centre should be lauded for its continual pressure on academics to present and write for a broad audience.* (We apologize if we have not lived up to that in this report....)

It is almost as if we need a neutral translation service – to help the academics speak with the communities, and vice versa. Inasmuch as the Harris Centre has been able to act in this capacity, it is a significant contribution. But this cannot be a service that is perceived to be driven and implemented by one or the other of the parties who are trying to communicate. Just as is the case in international business negotiations, it is best to make sure that you are bringing your own translator to the meeting, so as not to rely only on the translation of the entity with which you are negotiating.

Indeed, there is always a challenge in balancing the professional or academic input from the outside with the lay discussions in communities. Clearly, we do not expect that the Harris Centre will be immune to this tension, or that it will discover the ultimate way to manage it; but we would hope it will continue to wrestle with this tension, seeking ways to broaden the conversation and trying new styles as it evolves over the next 10 years. (We are heartened by developments such as the MUNButtoned events, as they show an eagerness to be creative in community dissemination of research.)

In all of this community work, there is the danger of being the town crier – of simply announcing the demise of regional and rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We doubt that is a role that the Harris Centre wants to play. Rather, we applaud the fact that many projects have been able

to go beyond the expository and contribute tangible and significant projects – from water treatment strategies to plays on local heritage. Selected “success stories” of university-community engagement are used as a way to prompt further interactions. Our argument is for an increased focus on such examples of engaged research with results felt throughout the community.

Possibly, to address the criticism of simply identifying the problems and not working on solutions, it would be nice to see a list of maybe 5-8 major topic areas that the Harris Centre would prioritize and follow. They would have associated metrics, and there would be regular updates on the evolution of these. This would provide some continuity over time. A key objective here is to provide at least the public perception, as widespread as possible, that there is a *continuity* in the analysis – that things will be followed and tracked over time. Without in-house researchers, this may be difficult. But it is not insurmountable.

Like the elderly neighbour uncle who cradles his tea and biscuit just a bit too long, we have likely overstayed our welcome. We will end with “the danger” and “the challenge.”

There is an old German joke about a drunk who is staggering around a light pole, staring intently at the ground and kicking at the grass. An officer of the law strides up and asks, “what’s up?”

“I’m looking for my keys,” slurs the drunk.

“And did you lose them here,” inquires the perceptive officer?

“No,” says the drunk, “I lost them over there in the bushes. But the light is better here.”

That is the danger: it may be easier to work in areas where the conditions are comfortable, where the data appears clear and equivocal and easy to manipulate. But the important and much needed work may also be over there in the bushes—where things are more difficult. This could be related to complex social and cultural changes in regional and rural de-

velopment, or to the necessity to find potential solutions to implement, or to communities which may appear to lack champions to work with but that have serious challenges. We need to look in the bushes. Even if it is dark there.

The challenge is to make sure we learn from the danger: that we have faith in ourselves to go beyond description and basic explanation, and the courage to move confidently from ideas to actions. That we have the imagination to experiment, and the grace to learn from our failures. That we gather partners along the path who we can learn from. Whether we have anything to teach them in return, we will figure out in time. And the challenge is to do all of this with an intensity and sense of profound joy, which will make this a better province.

The intensive data gathering phase is over. We are now well-placed to make use of that information. It is time to start getting messy. ■

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# THE AUTHORS



**DR. IVAN EMKE** was born and raised, along with a variety of mixed livestock, on a farm in Bruce County, Ontario, sandwiched between the mighty Lake Huron and the pristine Georgian Bay (where ships can still take on their drinking water for a voyage). He comes from an extended family of farmers who focused on pure bred livestock, and has fond memories of skipping school to exhibit sheep and cattle (and the odd cabbage) at Fall Fairs throughout Central and South-western Ontario. It was almost as good as being in a circus.

After these honest beginnings, he went on to study at several Universities, and has been teaching in a Social and Cultural Studies program at Grenfell Campus since late last century. Currently, he is the Facilitator for Internationalization at that campus.

In terms of research, Ivan spends a lot of time pondering rural communities, both in Canada and elsewhere. He is obsessed with community media (radio in particular). And (in a whole different area of study) he ponders the effects of our modern funeral industry on our rituals around death and remembrance.



**ANITA BEST** was born on the island of Merasheen in Placentia Bay on Newfoundland's south coast the year before Newfoundland joined Canada. When she was a child, singing, dancing and storytelling were the main forms of recreation and when the nights grew longer and colder and the fishing season was over, people would gather in each others homes and keep heart in one another with tunes, songs and stories.

Anita performs the traditional songs and stories from her childhood, as well as ones she learned later from people in Bonavista Bay, Cape St. Georges and the communities in and around Gros Morne National Park. She also performs songs from Newfoundland's beloved contemporary songwriters, Pamela Morgan and Ron Hynes. With her rich voice and warm personality she builds a marvelous bridge between old-time and contemporary Newfoundland song-making and storytelling traditions.

Anita has received several honours for her work in collecting and disseminating Newfoundland folksongs, including the Marius Barbeau award from the Folklore Studies Association of Canada and an Honourary Doctorate from Memorial University.

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