



ALBERTA RURAL REMINDER

NEW PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Team Alberta is pleased to bring you the first issue of the **RURAL REMINDER** – a publication to keep residents of rural and remote communities in Alberta up to date on pilot projects, activities and events, supported by the federal government to promote rural development.

When rural Canadians made it clear that they want the federal government to show leadership and to have a vision for rural Canada, the federal government listened. When, across the country, diverse communities with special needs also made it clear they want the federal government to be an active and supportive partner, helping them achieve their own vision for rural Canada, the federal government responded.

The active involvement of citizens from rural and remote communities helped shape the Federal Framework for Action and develop the federal rural policy and rural priorities. This policy is key to guiding the actions of the federal government in addressing its commitment to Canadians living in rural and remote communities.

It is this commitment that gave rise to the creation of the Rural Secretariat and the development and implementation in 1998 of the Canadian Rural Partnership and establishment of rural teams to implement the Partnership.

Fostering a higher quality of life for rural and remote communities is the Canadian Rural Partnership's focus. It is achieving this through coordination and leadership of partners to create greater awareness and improved access to products, services and information that rural citizens can better use to address the many issues they face, and in so doing improve their quality of life.

RURAL TEAM ALBERTA

In support of this vision, in the Alberta region, as in others across Canada, federal Rural Teams are working in partnerships with provincial and municipal government departments and key rural organizations to develop local solutions to local challenges. Rural Team Alberta plans to use a combination of Community Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships with the added involvement of youth to address the priorities of rural Albertans.

In addressing rural Albertan's priorities, Rural Team Alberta is also working to enhance communications with residents of rural and remote communities and within governments among participating departments. To strengthen the communication process, Rural Team Alberta is introducing this publication.

In this first issue, the **RURAL REMINDER** takes a look at the Canadian Rural Partnership and several projects that rural Albertans are using in their partnership with the federal government to develop local solutions to local challenges.

We look forward to working with you and keeping you informed about rural development activities in Alberta.

Derrick Pieters
Managing Editor

Supporting local solutions to local challenges

THE CANADIAN RURAL PARTNERSHIP IN ALBERTA

The Canadian Rural Partnership is the Government of Canada's strategy for supporting development in rural, remote, and northern Canadian communities; and promoting local solutions to local challenges by adopting new approaches and practices to respond specifically to the needs of these communities.

As an advocate for rural and remote communities, the Canadian Rural Partnership carries out its mandate through

- Rural Dialogues to listen and respond to rural and remote development issues and concerns
- Research and Analysis to increase knowledge about rural and remote Canada and ensure that a rural dimension is built into ongoing research and analysis
- The Rural Lens to encourage federal departments and agencies to scrutinize their policies and programs to ensure they address the priorities of rural and remote communities
- Rural Teams and partnerships for developing a coordinated approach to rural and remote priorities
- Pilot Projects that are community-based and test new ways of promoting sustainable community development through collaboration with the private sector, the voluntary sector, co-operatives, and various levels of government
- Information Outreach to provide better and easier access to information; and offer a way for rural Canadians to participate in the government's Rural Dialogue and influence programs, services and policies that affect rural and remote communities

The Rural Secretariat provides the overall leadership and co-ordination for a cross-government approach through an Interdepartmental Working Group comprising representatives from most federal departments and agencies. In each province and territory, Rural Teams work towards implementing the partnership.

Rural teams, which carry out the Partnership's work in individual provinces and territories, are made up of representatives from each of the government departments, such as Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Industry Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Bill Wilson, co-chair for Rural Team Alberta, describes the Canadian Rural Partnership as "...an exciting challenge; and it's a great opportunity for people from a variety of departments to come together to address Rural priorities."

Using a combination of Community Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships with the added involvement of youth Rural Team Alberta plans to work towards addressing rural Albertan's priorities.

An integral part of the Canadian Rural Partnership's work is the pilot projects that it funds. These are projects designed by rural community development associations and/or not-for-profit organizations to address problems in their communities. Each project must demonstrate that it addresses one or more of the eleven priority areas identified by the Rural Dialogue. These include: improving access to federal government programs and services for rural Canadians; strengthening rural community capacity building, leadership and skills development; and connecting rural Canadians to the knowledge-based economy and society and helping them acquire the skills to use the technology.

The projects range from the creation of a comprehensive website to serve rural and remote Northern Albertans to the use of solar technology to restore a river. But the ultimate goal of these projects, and of the Canadian Rural Partnership, is to help support local solutions to local challenges in rural and remote communities across Canada. This is made possible by a positive relationship between the federal government and individual rural community groups.

The strength of that relationship is reflected by the success of past pilot projects, such as: the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®) project, a joint venture between the RCMP and the federal government. Although the D.A.R.E.® program has been in effect for five years, it has received funding from the Canadian Rural Partnership within the last two years and continues to enjoy success.

Tim Vatamaniuk, head of the Stony Plain RCMP detachment, has been involved with the D.A.R.E.® program for several years and said "this program builds relationships between kids and the police and it helps to build those relationships as they go through high school. It's received tremendous support from schools, parents, community groups and even members of the government. It's just been a great success."

About the Canadian Rural Partnership he said, "it's a good initiative to get the federal government back into rural life. It's been a real benefit. As members of the RCMP, we are already in the communities and have networks there, allowing us to communicate rural needs to our federal partners more easily." See page 9 for our story on the D.A.R.E.® project.

Visit our web site at www.rural.gc.ca for more information on the Canadian Rural Partnership.

RURAL ALBERTANS NAME THEIR PRIORITIES *By Sarah Dobson*

In 1998 rural Canadians were given a voice through the federal government's first series of Rural Dialogue sessions. Through these sessions rural Canadians identified 11 priorities that were important to them.

While rural Albertans were included in the Dialogue, the conclusions were drawn for all of Canada.

Therefore, it was not clear whether the 11 priorities for Canada were priorities for Alberta as well. This, combined with the fact that the initial Dialogue session was done over 3 years ago, encouraged the Rural Team Alberta to go back to Alberta citizens for the answers to two questions. Were the 11 priorities applicable to Alberta, and if so, why were they important? For the answer to these questions, Rural Team Alberta is using a two-stage approach. The first is a survey of rural Albertans, and the second is another series of Rural Dialogue sessions specific to the priorities of Alberta.

The Rural Survey was completed this past spring through telephone interviews. 407 Albertans were randomly selected for participation in the survey.

Within the survey, questions were asked to determine the relative importance of each priority among Albertans.

While all of the 11 priorities found in the first Rural Dialogue session rated highly, the top 5 had 87% to 96% of participants feeling that they were either important or very important to their communities.

For Alberta, the top 5 priorities were:

- 1) Accessible quality healthcare
- 2) Strong community leadership
- 3) Good infrastructure
- 4) Government-local partnerships
- 5) Promotion of rural areas

Through the survey, rural Albertans were also given the opportunity to identify issues that were important to them. In particular, 90% of Albertans felt that environmental issues were important to the quality of life in their communities. Although not part of the initial 11, this rating indicates that the environment needs to be considered more highly in the future.

While the Rural Survey was successful in determining the priorities of Alberta, it was also an opportunity for the government of Canada to speak with communities and demonstrate its increased commitment to rural issues. At the same time, the communities were able to show their own interest in government having more involvement with rural areas. The next step in carrying forward this communication process will be the Rural Dialogue.

With the completion of the Rural Survey, the focus of the Rural Team Alberta has been shifted towards the planning of the following Dialogue sessions in:

1. Edson
2. Vegreville
3. Vulcan
4. Bashaw
5. Grande Prairie

THE RURAL PRIORITIES

The Government of Canada's vision for rural Canada is:

- Vibrant communities and a sustainable resource base contributing to our national identity and prosperity.
- Citizens making informed decisions about their own future.
- Canadians sharing the benefits of the global knowledge-based economy and society, and taking full advantage of opportunities for personal and sustainable community development.

The Government of Canada will build towards this vision focusing on the eleven priority areas identified by participants in the Rural Dialogue:

1. Improve access to federal government programs and services for rural Canadians
2. Improve access to financial resources for rural business and community development
3. Provide more targeted opportunities/programs and services for rural youth, including Aboriginal youth
4. Strengthen rural community capacity building, leadership, and skills development
5. Create opportunities for rural communities to maintain and develop infrastructure for community development
6. Connect rural Canadians to the knowledge-based economy and society and help them acquire the skills to use the technology
7. Strengthen economic diversification in rural Canada through more targeted assistance
8. Work with provincial/territorial governments to examine and pilot test new ways to provide rural Canadians with access to health care at reasonable cost
9. Work with provincial/territorial governments to examine and pilot test new ways to provide rural Canadians with access to education at reasonable cost
10. Foster strategic partnerships, within communities, between communities and among government(s) to facilitate rural community development
11. Promote rural Canada as a place to live, work and raise a family recognizing the value of rural Canada to the identity and well-being of the nation

RURAL ALBERTANS (CONTINUED)

In these one-day sessions, Rural Albertans will once again be given the opportunity to speak with the federal and provincial governments, and this time the discussions will be tailored around concerns that are specific to them. For information on becoming involved with the Rural Dialogue sessions, Sarah Dobson can be contacted in Edmonton at (780) 495-3670.

In 1998, rural Albertans were part of a chorus in the federal government's first round of Rural Dialogue sessions. Now they are being given their own voice as the federal government uses the Rural Survey and Dialogue sessions to discover what is truly important to rural Albertans, and how the government can bring it to them.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS - THE BACKBONE OF CFDC's

By Sarah Dobson

When the first Community Futures Development Corporation was established in Manitoba in 1986, it changed the face of business development in rural Canada. Since then, CFDCs have spread through the 4 western provinces, and Alberta currently has 27 offices strengthening its rural communities. Taking a grassroots approach, CFDCs bring about community and economic development with a primary focus on job creation in rural areas.

CFDCs are a part of the Western Canada Business Service Network (WCBSN), which was established to reach out to people in the West and give them the resources required to participate in Canada's free enterprise economy. The WCBSN is strongly connected to the community through their volunteers. One of the main strengths of CFDCs is their community base, and the ability of each office to identify the needs in their communities. They are non-profit, run by a volunteer board of directors consisting of local community members, and are funded in part by the Government of Canada (Western Economic Development).

Their goal is to help community-based economic development by strengthening both the community, and the entrepreneur.

Services for the community include economic development planning, strategy building, and provision of leadership. CFDCs help to facilitate the implementation of community plans, and increase the resources available to rural citizens through their partnerships with municipal, provincial, and federal governments, community groups and organizations, and private industry. They provide up-to-date advice and research which works to stimulate, revitalize, and diversify rural communities.

Both funding and employment services exist for the entrepreneur. The Community Futures (CF) general loan fund lends a maximum of \$125,000 to new and existing businesses, and the Self Employment Program provides training and financial services to help new entrepreneurs get their businesses up and running. CFDCs also have separate programs which are aimed specifically at the needs of the disabled and the youth within their communities. The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, and Enhanced Services, provides mentoring and value added services to the disabled. In partnership with Industry Canada, the Community Access Program (CAP) Youth Initiative provides employment for rural youth. The CAP program is designed to bring Internet access to rural areas, and the Youth Initiative provides funding for the hiring of youth interns who help communities improve their use and knowledge of the Internet. The results are twofold in that communities learn how to make effective use of information technology, and youth are given work experience in their field of interest.

The CFDC organization is also active within the Canadian Rural Partnership. The CFDCs, together with the provincial and federal governments, work towards helping communities find local solutions to local challenges. George Rife, manager of Reach Corporation, the Community Futures Office in Smoky Lake, is an active member on the Alberta rural team.

CFDCs are all across Alberta, and further information on the entire organization, or an individual office, can be found from the Community Futures Network Society of Alberta. They can be contacted by phone at (403) 529-6180, and toll free at 1-877-482-3672, or through their website at www.communityfutures.ca/provincial/ab (english only). One of the questions facing rural Canada today is how to keep rural Canadians in rural areas in the face of a changing economy. The CFDC can help. CFDCs help sustain the rural way of life, while allowing the economy to move forward. They maintain and generate jobs, while creating a good living for citizens close to their homes. They are teaching that change is positive, problems and challenges are solvable, and that when communities take control the future is theirs. Change is always there, but CFDCs give communities the resources to act, and allow them to take control so that change can continue as a pathway to further success.

PEACE COUNTY TAKES GOVERNMENT SERVICE ON-LINE

By Jody Parker

We all want our lives to be easier and making the lives of their residents easier is the goal of the Peace County Development Corporation. The Peace Region of Northwestern Alberta is an area in which residents and communities have expressed concerns over their lack of information on, accessibility to, and awareness of government programs and services.

The Canadian Rural Partnership and the Peace County Development Corporation plan to meet this challenge by creating a new Web Page for residents of the Peace Region. The Web Page will allow residents to find information about government programs and services without having to search multiple web sites. The site, PeaceInfoGate.ca will be available to the general public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and will be a new way of delivering services and information with much less hassle for the customer.

What does the Peace Region On-Line Project mean for rural Peace County residents? A wealth of information on government programs and services with no line-ups and faster turnaround time.

According to Margaret Eagle, general manager for the project, the project came about because "we recognized that people were not familiar with government programs and services and that they were not familiar with what level of government to look under. So we said, 'why not design a web site that will allow us to train and educate our residents and allow them to enter into the twenty-first century?'" And that's exactly what they're doing. With this program, Peace County's rural residents won't need to know which level of government to look under; information about all levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal) will be provided on one web site.

Many rural residents of the Peace County live two to three hours away from major centers where they can access government services. This new on-line service gives rural residents the option of accessing information and even applying for certain programs from home. For example, residents will be able to purchase different licences (i.e. pets, hunting) on-line without leaving their home or community. That means no more long trips to the city and no waiting in line-ups. If they do have to travel to one of those major centers, they will be able to learn who to contact in which department and which jurisdiction before they leave home.

The Peace County Development Corporation is aware that only approximately forty per cent of households in the target area have internet access. To make it easier for residents to access this new on-line service, they will be providing the public with access to computers; terminals will be strategically placed in meeting spots within the community for use by residents who do not already have access to the internet. As well, they will be making information and services accessible by using Plain Language, based on the client's ability to access information.

Although the project is still in the planning stages, there is a lot of enthusiasm for it. Patti Savoie, a coordinator for the project, says, "the response to the project has been extremely positive. Everyone we've spoken to has said, 'it's about time that there was something like this'. We see a real need for this program and we definitely see it growing." She adds, "We're not just interested in government services. Grande Prairie has stores on-line selling products made in the Peace Region and we're interested in connecting with community stores and promoting these sort of community services and products."

The Peace Region On-Line Project received funding of \$50,000 through the Canadian Rural Partnership, a program designed to help build a higher quality of life in rural and remote communities.

For more information on the Peace Region On-line Project, contact Margaret Eagle, General Manager or Pattie Savoie, Project Coordinator at (780) 624-1161 or visit the Web Site at PeaceInfoGate.ca (english only).

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE RESTORES FAITH IN THE SYSTEM

By Terry McConnell

The face of justice for young offenders looks different in Innisfail, Alberta than elsewhere in Canada and, with help from the Canadian Rural Partnership, that unique approach will benefit even more people in the rural community.

The program is called Restorative Justice, a process that keeps many young offenders out of court and, statistics prove, out of trouble.

"It's a win-win for everybody - the community, the victim and the accused," says Tim Gilbert, an officer with the RCMP detachment at Innisfail, 120 kilometers north of Calgary.

The RCMP initiated Restorative Justice in Innisfail two years ago as a way to deal with the troubling incidence of assault, vandalism, break-and-enter, mischief, theft and bullying in the region. The intent is to keep the teens and young adults who are primarily responsible out of the court system. But if the program has been a success, police credit J.J. Beauchamp, a corrections officer who uses his mediation skills to bring victim and offender together to reach a resolution that works for both sides - and the community. "We're fortunate to have come across

him," Gilbert says of Beauchamp. "He's taken it farther than we ever could have because he's such an energetic man."

According to Beauchamp, each criminal incident brought to him by police presents a 'teachable moment' for the offender, one that encourages him to learn new ways to improve his behavior. The offender is brought face-to-face with his victim so that he can appreciate what he did wrong and how he can make restitution.

"It's working very, very well," Beauchamp says. "I've handled over 70 files and no one has ever re-offended."

Gilbert agrees. "It's a fantastic program," he says, adding parents of some offenders are its biggest supporters. "We've had parents come back to us who were delighted with the changes in their youth's behavior as a result of this program."

One of Beauchamp's favorite examples of how well Restorative Justice can work involves a victim, an 84-year-old woman, who was so fearful of the young vandals who ruined the wishing well and fence in her yard, she asked police to escort her to their face-to-face meeting.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (CONTINUED)

"The kids offered to buy her a new wishing well, but she said 'no, build me one,' " Beauchamp recalls. "They asked what else they could do and she suggested 20 hours of community service." Instead the kids volunteered to perform 60 hours. And not only did they repair her fence and build her a new wishing well, they built and sold four others. Finally, on the day they brought the wishing well they built for her, she had cake and cookies waiting for them. Gilbert is not surprised by such an outcome. From a police perspective, he sees Restorative Justice as a tool that helps people understand each other better. "The gist of the program is that victims can see who violated them and get reassurances that there's not a villain out there, that it was an error in judgment," he says. "It really reassures them, and actually has a significant impact on how they cope with being a victim of crime." As for the offenders, "they can see the victim's face. When they damage something, it means nothing to them, but when they put a face to the victim and see the hurt they've caused, it has a very significant impact. " And, of course, offenders emerge from the program having made restitution

while avoiding a criminal record. Even the RCMP have first-hand experience in how well it can work. "We used it for a citizen who kicked out a police car window," Gilbert chuckles. "For young offenders, we prefer it over the courts." Beauchamp agrees. The caseload in courts is so heavy, it can often take a long time for a case to be heard. By that time, he says, the impact of the offence is lost on the offender, and the victim has little say in the outcome. With Restorative Justice, the offender has to stand in front of his victim and admit to his crime. Says Beauchamp: "That takes a lot of courage."

In conjunction with the RCMP, Justice Canada and Corrections Canada, the Canadian Rural Partnership has granted the Restorative Justice program \$20,000 - funds that will allow Beauchamp to train eight more facilitators for the program. All of them will work in the region served by the Innisfail RCMP detachment, which encompasses 60,000 people in nine rural communities. The money will thereby allow for greater accessibility to the program.

"Most of these kids, they're not bad, just carefree," says Beauchamp. And thanks to Restorative Justice and the Canadian Rural Partnership, that trouble won't follow them the rest of their lives.

CALL A RIDE IN BEAVER COUNTY

By Jody Parker and Sarah Dobson

If you live in a city and need to go to the doctor but do not have a vehicle, you can call a taxi or even take a bus. But what if you live in, or around, a small town where there is no form of public transportation? How do you get to the doctor then? Finally, a solution is in hand, thanks to a program being initiated by Beaver County with support from Health Canada's Rural and Remote Health Innovations Initiative. Health Canada is a participant in the Canadian Rural Partnership.

Beaver County proposed and created a transportation system for out-of-town residents. The Beaver (County) Call-A-Ride Society (B-CARS) addresses the transportation needs of residents in the County who are otherwise unable to access various medical and social services. The Call-A-Ride service complements the Handi-vans that already operate in centers such as Tofield and Viking and provides services that the Handi-vans are unable to.

Since its start on August 1, 2001, Mike Andresen, coordinator for B-CARS, believes that the project has met expectations. There are some concerns with the low attraction for the shuttle buses, but new ideas are already meeting this challenge.

Special rides are being held to promote the buses, and service is extending to larger centers. As a community based project, they are also working to tailor their rides around community activities such as health clinics and other special events taking place in the county. In addition, like any new organization, they are continually working to increase the public's awareness of their services.

This project is expected to continue to succeed because it is a coordinated county-wide approach, combining the efforts of community members from Beaver County, Holden, Ryley, Tofield, and Viking. These members are residents who are volunteer drivers, riders, and family members. They also include professionals working in health, family and community support services, mental health, education and municipal government. The joint effort of all these community members means manpower, fuel and vehicles will not be wasted, as has been the case with past uncoordinated systems.

For close to five years, Beaver County has been overseeing a number of small projects - transportation systems in individual towns. Centers such as Tofield and Viking have a Handi-van or shuttle service that operates within town limits. However, this does not address the problem of citizens who reside outside the city limits. In such cases, due to the size of Handi-vans and the operational costs, it is impractical for the Handi-vans to travel out of town for only a few individuals.

According to Phyllis Footz, Chairperson of the Board for the B-CARS project, Beaver County "looked at the existing programs and their shortfalls and realized that transportation was an issue in every community and something had to be done to address the problem. What we came up with is the B-CARS project."

BEAVER COUNTY (CONTINUED)

This project will benefit not only the communities involved at this time but other parts of Alberta and other provinces as well. Footz noted that, "when we spoke to other groups in other communities, we realized that a major concern for all of them was transportation and that a system like this could really benefit other areas as well". To that end, the work that is being done on this project is being carefully recorded so it can be used as an example for other communities facing the same problem. While the project has

yet to extend out of Beaver County, there are already interested individuals calling B-CARS and looking for a ride.

For more information on the Beaver (County) Call-A-Ride program, contact Mike Andresen at (780) 663-CARS, or Phyllis Footz at (780) 662-3984.



BEAVER COUNTY TRIES HI-TECH SUPPORT TO ATTRACT YOUTH *By Terry McConnell*

Beaver County, Alberta doesn't have a problem with high unemployment. But that's a deceiving statistic. The reason is because so many of its young people - those who are traditionally the victims of unemployment - have left the region for greener pastures.

Beaver County is optimistic a solution can be found in an initiative called the Community Development Information Systems Centre, or C-Disc for short. It's part of the Beaver County Community Resilience Project, whose intent is to create a more stable and sustainable economic base for the region east of Edmonton.

The 21st-century challenges faced by Beaver County are common to rural communities throughout Alberta and Canada. It's a sparsely populated region, with only 10,000 residents spread over 3,500 square kilometers. Agriculture and oil and gas are its economic anchors, both of which leave the county's residents susceptible to boom-and-bust cycles. Obviously, the out-migration of young people is more pronounced during the bust periods as they search for a more stable future.

C-Disc is a high-tech enterprise designed to assist the five municipalities in the county - Tofield, Ryley, Holden, Viking and Beaver County itself - bring more economic development to the area. And it marks the first time such a model has been applied to multiple municipalities, says Karen Wright of the East Central Alberta Community Futures Development Corporation.

The information system will be to a standard Web site what a Formula 1 race car is to a tractor. With a planned high-speed link to the University of Alberta, and the rest of the world, the system will

provide for a data interchange among its municipal, provincial and federal partners to assist in economic, community and educational development. At the same time, it will provide for the opportunity to train local people to manage and maintain the system.

"It's unique because it integrates Beaver and the other four municipalities into one regional community plan," says Wright, who works out of Viking.

With mentoring from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, the system will include Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology that will provide users with an interactive tool that will, among other things, map the municipal infrastructure in the county - everything from bridges to buildings, streets to sewers - and, in Wright's words, "determine the alternatives for expansion and development. If perception is reality, it will try to get perception and reality to meet, to help people understand what's needed."

Beaver County official Martin Baert agrees, "This will help us develop the tools we need to jump to the 21st century."

"Rural areas look for alternatives (to the boom-and-bust cycle) and a steady economy is important," says Wright. And that's why the Canadian Rural Partnership got involved in C-Disc. Because the project will develop local expertise for what is advanced technology, Beaver benefits from quality job opportunities.

"The community is struggling," admits Wright. "Job opportunities are needed and this would lay the ground work for it." The project will receive \$32,000 from the CRP to assist in 'training the trainers' for C-Disc.

The inventory of county resources that C-Disc promises will prove particularly useful not only to government officials and economic development officials, but for those seeking opportunities in business and tourism, for students studying the region and for the public. What's more, it's blazing trails that could prove useful just about anywhere in Canada.

"It is anticipated this project could be applied to every region in the province," says Wright, "and eventually to the rest of Canada."

The Canadian Rural Partnership, in conjunction with Natural Resources Canada, is helping fund this pioneering initiative that will not only help sustain Beaver County's communities, but create training opportunities for young people in their home towns.

SOLAR POWER HELPING RESTORE DRIFTPILE RIVER *By Jody Parker*

With the banks of the Driftpile River deteriorating rapidly, the Lesser Slave Lake North Country Community Association (LSL) recognized the need for environmental restoration and protection and saw a unique opportunity for using modern technology to achieve this. Together with the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP), the LSL has created the Driftpile River Riparian Land Management Project.

According to Paula Heijnemans, Project Manager, "The driving force behind this project was that something needed to be done in this area and we have a diverse group of individuals working together to achieve our goal."

The goal of this project is to restore portions of the Driftpile River with the help of solar technology. The site in question is an established farm located along the west bank of the Driftpile River, near Faust, Alberta.

SOLAR POWER (CONTINUED)

The farm consists of three cattle pastures; each separated by forest, that border on the bank of the river in six places. Both the banks of the river and the forest that separate the pastures are deteriorating as a result of cattle grazing.

In order to restore the riverbanks, a fence will be constructed to restrict cattle access to the riverbank, and a riparian buffer strip will be planted along the riverbanks downstream of the farm. Riparian refers to the area of transition between wetland and drier upland sites or simply anything of or on the bank of a natural body of water. This buffer strip will be planted with native shrubs and trees collected from nearby donor sites and the deep binding roots of the woody vegetation will help to stabilize and prevent further erosion of the river bank.

To prevent further deterioration of the river bank caused when cattle go to drink from the river, a solar powered offstream watering system consisting of four cattle troughs, powered by two portable solar powered pumps, will be used to supply river water to 150 cattle. The entire system is portable and as part of a sustainable grazing system, will be used in one pasture at a time, allowing the other two pastures to recover.

Some long-term goals and benefits of this project are to improve the ecological "health" of the river by reducing sedimentation and nutrient loading in the river and improving the river as a habitat for fish.

An interesting feature of the project, aside from the environmental gains, is that it is intended to test existing theories about, and gain practical experience in, the construction of treed riparian buffer strips and alternative livestock watering sites. If this project proves to be successful, similar efforts will be made to repair and restore other nearby riparian areas. Additional construction is dependant on the first project's success which will be measured by a reduction in erosion and the successful establishment of vegetation - so the project will be carefully monitored and its results made available to other land owners in the

area and anyone else who is interested. Heijnemans says, "Our mandate is to give something back to the community that's given so much to us. One of our biggest priorities is educating farmers, youth and communities in riparian management practices."

To that end, students of the North Country School are doing much of the work, including planting and removing debris from the river. The Lesser Slave Lake North Country Community Association has operated the 30-student, two-building school for the past 21 years. Study of the area and work done on the project are included in the curriculum of the school, particularly at the Grade Four level. The Driftpile Reserve, High Prairie and Joussard Schools will also be able to visit the site as applicable to their curriculum. Paula Heijnemans adds, "It's great to see the youth participating in the project. The kids do a large proportion of the planting and they're out there every day, working very hard."

The benefits of effective riparian area management are very long-term, and the results may not be seen for a few years as the trees and shrubs become established. Trees planted in the buffer strip will require several years to develop a root system extensive enough to have an impact on stream water quality. However, if the project is as successful as it is expected to be, it will be a local demonstration site for appropriate riparian management practices in the area.

According to Heijnemans, "This project has been challenging and a great learning experience for everyone involved. There are changes that we will have to make but it is definitely a process that we will be continuing."

The Driftpile River Riparian Land Management project received funding of \$11,400 through the Canadian Rural Partnership, a program designed to help build a higher quality of life in rural and remote communities.

For more information on the Driftpile River Riparian Land Management project, contact Paula Heijnemans, Project Manager, at (780) 355-2646.

RURAL CONTACT AND COMMUNITY LIAISON MEANS ONE-STOP INFORMATION ABOUT FEDERAL SERVICES IN STRATHCONA

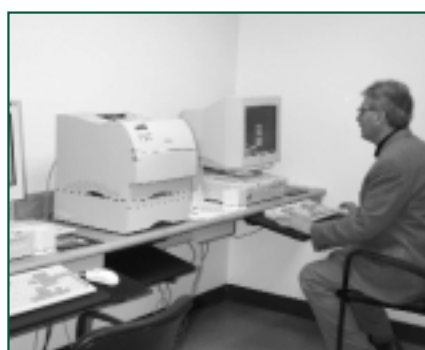
Strathcona County Mayor Veri Island MP Ken Epp (left) and Al Saskatchewan, Rob Lougheed, t ribbon at the opening of the Ha



RURAL CONTACT AND COMMUNITY LIAISON MEANS ONE-STOP INFORMATION ABOUT FEDERAL SERVICES IN STRATHCONA

By Jody Parker

Strathcona County saw an opportunity to present their residents with easy access to government services and programs. Together with the Canadian Rural Partnership, they have created the Rural Contact and Community Liaison Office.



David Turner, manager of corporate planning for the Contact Office, says, "So far, we've been able to provide our rural residents with a convenient link to municipal government resources and it has worked very well. We also hope to be a referral service to federal, provincial and other non-profit programs, possibly through the use of an internet site."

ONE-STOP INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

What this means for rural residents of Strathcona County is increased access to information on government programs and services without having to make a trip to a large urban center.

In Strathcona County, approximately 22,000 residents live in rural areas north and east of Sherwood Park and many often feel isolated from urban centers and may be uncomfortable dealing with government staff in those urban areas.

This office provides rural residents with all the information they need in a setting that they are more comfortable with. This is especially important for farmers. During harvest, for example, there simply isn't time to travel to the city, where you might end up having to wait in line for a long time. This office makes it possible to get information on government services quickly and conveniently.

On June 2, 2001, the Rural Contact and Community Office officially moved into the New Station No. 4, Heartland emergency Services Hall (approximately 5.5 km north of Josephburg on secondary highway 830).

The office is open Mondays through Thursdays, 1-4 p.m. for anyone who wants to drop by. As well, the staff is available evenings and weekends to meet with groups or individuals who wish to discuss community concerns or initiatives.

This office provides a full-time Community Liaison, Dinah Canart, someone who is knowledgeable about federal, provincial, municipal and non-profit organizations and the programs and services provided by each organization. She says, "We provide a variety of services such as fire permits and helping people determine which government department they need to deal with. We listen to our residents to learn how to customize our programs to meet their specific needs."

This office also provides internet training and access, as well as formal instruction on internet use and ongoing assistance for users. The office also works to strengthen the community by providing a forum to discuss community issues and concerns and develop solutions to those problems. This way it will bolster community networks and create opportunities to establish partnerships between various community groups.

Currently, this project is targeted at the residents of north-east Strathcona County and adjacent non-county residents, an estimated 6,000 - 8,000 rural residents. It is difficult to assess the impact on the community this early into the program but, according to David Turner, "for those who have taken advantage of the program, it has been extremely beneficial. Certainly more people will benefit from the project as awareness increases."

Dinah Canart says that, "the residents really seem to love the Community Liaison program. It makes them feel just as important as urban residents, which they are." About the Canadian Rural Partnership she adds, "It's absolutely commendable that the government is getting more involved in rural life, providing rural residents with the opportunity to access these services in their own backyards."

The Rural Contact Office and Community Liaison received funding of \$29,300 through the Canadian Rural Partnership, an initiative supporting local solutions to local challenges in rural and remote communities.

To contact the Strathcona County Rural Contact Office and Community Liaison, call:

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Cell: (780) 909-9490

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55305 Range Road 214
Mailing Address:
2001 Sherwood Drive
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7

David Turner, Manager - Corporate Planning, at (780) 464-8248

RURAL CONTACT AND COMMUNITY LIAISON OPENING

Don Hartwell, assisted by Elberta MLA, Clover Bar-Fort uses a fire axe to cut the Heartland Emergency Services Hall.



KIDS DARE TO RESIST DRUG ABUSE

By Terry McConnell

Sergeant Tim Vatamaniuk, Constables Kevin McDonald and Kim McKee believe strongly in an RCMP program called D.A.R.E.®, which is an acronym for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. They figure if the program was more widely available across the country, police would see a remarkable drop in illegal drug use.

"If we had that program in all the elementary schools, there's no doubt in my mind, we'd see a difference on the street - a change in the attitude of the kids, a change in the demand for a lot of the drugs out there," says 26-year veteran McDonald.

Financial assistance from the Canadian Rural Partnership helped bring the RCMP officers' dream a little closer to reality. During the 1998-99 school year, CRP funds helped train over 100 RCMP officers to be D.A.R.E.® instructors, which means over 15,000 more students in rural Alberta benefited from the life lessons the program has to offer.

D.A.R.E.® is more than a lecture about the dangers of substance abuse, however. "It's more of a life skills program," says McDonald, who is based at the RCMP detachment in Sherwood Park, a suburb of Edmonton. And though it was originally targeted to grade six students, D.A.R.E.® has since expanded in some communities to include junior and senior high students, even adults.



DARE Graduates

KIDS DARE (CONTINUED)

McDonald says the program is filling a role that would otherwise go wanting. "No one was taking the time to explain to a lot of these kids that the choices they make now determine where they go in life," he says. And while there are no discernible measuring sticks to tell police if the program is successful, you don't have to convince McDonald it works. "From an instructor's point of view, you can never measure a substance-abuse program on numbers. If it helps one or two children, it's done its job."

Of course, the numbers suggest D.A.R.E.® has helped more than one or two kids. RCMP Sergeant Kevin Graham, who works out of K Division headquarters in Edmonton but is credited as being one of those responsible for the growth of D.A.R.E.® across the country, says Alberta has the largest D.A.R.E.® program in the world, having reached 47,000 schoolchildren so far.

Presumably, every D.A.R.E.® instructor can recall how the program made the difference in the life of at least one kid. In McDonald's case, it's a boy from a broken home who dropped out of school at 13 and began living on the street. But as he watched one of his friends self-destruct as a result of the drugs he was taking, the boy called on the self-esteem he learned from D.A.R.E.® and saved himself. At the age of 17, he sought out social services, returned to school and will graduate this year.

For McDonald, who has been teaching D.A.R.E.® for five years, that one student made it all worthwhile.

While the program does talk to kids about drinking, smoking and soft drugs, the focus is more on teaching kids how to be assertive and not succumb to peer pressure, how to maintain self-esteem and resolve conflicts without violence. After 17 weeks, the students 'graduate' in a ceremony that often attracts parents and other family members to watch.

McDonald estimates he has instructed 700 kids "many from rural Alberta who are bussed to school in Sherwood Park" in his five years with the program. But he may very well be making a bigger difference as a 'mentor' - an officer who trains other instructors. He estimates he has trained 300 instructors in the past two years, not just from Alberta, but



Minister Woloshyn, Const. McKee and staff of Meridian Heights school during the presentation of certificates to DARE graduates.

British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Maritimes. Much of that training was made possible with the \$37,500 in funding from the Canadian Rural Partnership.

Today, 80 per cent of the RCMP detachments in Alberta are utilizing the D.A.R.E.® program; and 80 per cent of those are in rural areas, including reserves and Metis communities. Yet, even though they're ultimately called on to enforce the law, enforcement is not the issue for these officers. Instead, it remains a health issue and a life issue.

"Enforcement has never done it for us," says McDonald. "Kids get exposed to so much more at such an early age. You have to get the straight facts out there. They get bombarded with these messages that drugs are cool, and there's no counter-message to say why they're not cool." And that's why he can see the value in getting that counter-message into more schools.

"You're not going to see a change at the other end, at home or on the streets, until you see a change in schools. Education and awareness are going to do that, not enforcement."

And the Canadian Rural Partnership with growing community support is helping to see that change come about.

D.A.R.E. PROGRAM ACTIVE IN STONY PLAIN

In Stony Plain and area, Sergeant Tim Vatamaniuk strongly supports D.A.R.E.® training in the schools. On June 11, Constable Kim McKee, who was one of

the first RCMP officers to be trained as a D.A.R.E.® instructor, Vatamaniuk and Alberta Minister of Seniors, Stan Woloshyn (MLA for Stony Plain) watched 60 more grade 6 students graduate from the D.A.R.E.® program. Since the program began, McKee has trained over 800 students in eight schools in the area.

FIGHTING AIDS WITH MUSIC By Terry McConnell



Marlo Cottrell

really well, with good information and interactive components," recalls Moore, the executive director of HIV North Society. "But the youth didn't stop and say 'hey, what's going on?'"

Lesson learned. Good intentions and flashy gimmicks weren't going to make the kids safer in the Mistahia and Peace health regions of Alberta.

That's when Moore and the board members of HIV North Society (formerly the South Peace AIDS Council) hit upon an idea they're confident should work. And with the assistance of the Canadian Rural Partnership in conjunction with Health Canada, they got their chance to prove it.

"Should I Wear Pants Today?"

Now, that statement might sound confusing but, in an era when the most popular rhetorical question is 'Who let the dogs out?' well - perhaps not. The medium is the message, said Marshall McLuhan and, in this case, the medium is music.

"We got talking within our board, and asked 'what would youth like' and 'well, they like music,' Moore says. "We decided that if we did something for youth, number one, it's important to take it to them and, two, when we got there, it was worth listening to."

So, this spring, music and theatre converged in 41 junior and senior high schools throughout northwestern Alberta.

The music was provided by a Saskatoon a-cappella band called Streetnix; the message courtesy of a Grande Prairie woman, Marlo Cottrell, who is both HIV positive and has contracted hepatitis C.

"She (Cottrell) is someone who grew up right here. It's her story and it's a local story," says Moore.

From the start, indications pointed towards a receptive audience. On February 14, HIV North Society held a youth leadership workshop and invited two students from each school in the region. "That was such a great day," Moore recalls.

It was the kids who came up with the 'Should I Wear Pants Today?' theme. They were asked if they would help write the lyrics for a song, and that line was one of the results.

The participation of Streetnix was a critical element in the success of the initiative. The group relies solely on their voices, with no instrumental backup - though Moore says sometimes they can sound like they do have instruments - and use a lot of humor on stage. "The kids really love them," says Moore.

Young people respond to their performances, she says, because group members are not a lot older (25 to 28, though they look younger) and do a good job of pulling audiences into their performances.

But, of course, the message is the most important element. And it's not just about delivering information about HIV and hepatitis C, says Moore. "What we want to do more than anything is have the kids think about the choices they have in their lives."

During the leadership workshop, the kids said they're tired of being told what to do, and would rather make up their own minds. "So the whole presentation revolves around choices". There are all kinds of choices to make, some will have really great consequences and some won't.



Fighting Aids Streetnix Performance

"If you're informed, maybe you can make a better choice for yourself." And in making those choices, young people in the Grande Prairie area can't assume HIV and hepatitis C are problems more readily identified with urban centres like Edmonton, Calgary or Vancouver. The incidents of infection may not be as great in rural areas, but it's all a matter of proportion.

"The kids here have a mentality that they don't need to worry about HIV because, even though they hear about it a lot, it's a big-city thing," says Moore. "They're wrong. We do have a lot of cases in our area. We need the kids to understand, even though they may have gone to school with somebody since kindergarten, it doesn't matter what kind of person they are, or if you know their family background or if you know who they're related to. It matters what they've done as far as behavior. One choice a month ago or a year ago that you might not know about might mean that person could put you at risk."

Moore now reports that with the help of the Canadian Rural Partnership, the HIV North Society has delivered that message to nearly 8000 students and teachers throughout the Mistahia and Peace Health regions in Alberta. Preliminary evaluation of the project show that over 97 per cent of respondents said they had a better understanding of HIV and Hepatitis C; 96 per cent said the information was important to them; and 79 per cent said that Marlo's presence and story had a telling impact on them.

At the final performance on May 17 in Grande Prairie, the HIV North Society's Brenda Moore, publicly thanked the Canadian Rural Partnership, Health Canada, the Alberta Community HIV Fund (funded by Health Canada and Alberta Health), and Ansel Canada — makers of Lifestyle prophylactics.

The Canadian Rural Partnership contributed \$25,000 to HIV North Society's initiative to help ensure kids get that message. Wherever you live, "everybody's got to stop and think," says Moore. "There is no luxury anymore in not weighing all the possibilities."

JOURNALISM AWARD TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT

The Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and the Government of Canada's Canadian Rural Partnership are co-operating to promote sustainable rural development in Alberta and the Northwest Territories and help enhance the quality of life in rural and remote communities. The federal Rural Secretariat, through the Rural Team Alberta has announced a new Rural Development Journalism Award to recognize journalistic excellence by weekly newspapers. Awards will go to reporters of weekly newspapers in Alberta and the NWT for outstanding stories highlighting various aspects of rural development in the province and territories. "We are pleased to co-operate with the federal government in highlighting the work of rural communities in enhancing their quality of life," commented AWWNA president Lynne Chernin "It's a good way to increase awareness of the unique way of life and needs of residents in rural Canada."

The first awards will be presented at the Association's convention in the fall of 2002.

The prize structure is as follows:

First place	\$1000 plus a plaque and certificate
Second place	\$500 plus a certificate
Third Place	\$250 plus a certificate

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