

# Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve (RMBR) Research & Knowledge Forum

Speaking Notes – Doug Ramsey

**Topic:** Rural Communities: Changes Ahead

Thank-you for the invitation.

Being at the Elkhorn will be an illustration of my ultimate point: the role that the tourism sector can play

## **Introduction:**

*I will cover three main points:*

1. Rural Change – an overview
2. Rural Research Trends
3. How does the Sustainable Tourism Policy link to the RMBR

## **1. Rural Change – Overview**

- general trend towards urbanization has stabilized
  - o 80% urban
    - 50% of Canadians live in urban agglomerations of Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver-Victoria, or Edmonton-Calgary
  - o Although rural is changing
    - Urban adjacent rural is growing
      - YOU SEE THIS ON P. S3-11 OF COMMUNITY ATLAS
    - Other rural and remote is either stable or declining
    - Resource economies are in decline
- Manitoba rural
  - o Mirror image of Canada
    - 80% urban, 2/3 in Winnipeg
    - Urban adjacent is growing
    - Other rural and remote is either stable or declining
  - o Difference = case studies of growth in rural Manitoba
    - Winkler-Morden - immigration
    - Gimli - immigration
    - Russell area – recreation and tourism development
- Resource economies still dominate the Canadian economy
  - o Responsible for our trade surplus
  - o Connect the heartland to the hinterland
  - o Failure to accrue maximum benefit of raw materials
- Notion of New Rural Economy is used to analyze and evaluate transitions from traditional to non-traditional economies

## 2. Rural Research Trends

- *Introduction of your work*
  - Health and well-being
    - System health
      - agroecosystem health that intertwines ecosystems, human systems and community systems
      - Political and economic dimensions are driven by human and community systems but ultimately affect all three
  - Agricultural change
    - Drivers (forces of change) and impacts of this change
    - As well as measuring change itself (e.g. since 1976 Manitoba has seen an increasing in hog population from 625,000 to 2.9 million while the number of farms reporting hogs has declined from 6,000 to 1,200.
    - The driver is industrialization
    - The change is fewer people
    - The impact is hog concentrations and fewer people in the c'side
  - Rural tourism
    - Seen as a panacea for rural areas throughout THE world
      - Costs more to start-up
      - Returns are lower than anticipated
      - Seasonality is bigger issue in rural – almost everywhere
        - E.g. tropics have rainy humid seasons
        - E.g. we have winter
    - Nature based tourism has lots of potential
      - Birding, trails for hiking/cycling
      - At same time, people want comforts, so opps for rural enterprises
      - Turkey Trail – Theme-based tourism excursions
      - While I have not researched specifically in the Biosphere, it is something that interests me. The Park is surrounded by a rich mix of cultural history – people, architecture, community...
      - Parks often seem mere links on provincial websites. Should RMNP have a seat at the table of Travel Manitoba? Celes Devar has been involved at the committee level, but perhaps a Parks Canada rep should be there along side, the Forks, the Airport Authority, Manitoba Museum, small businesses etc.
- *Cutting edge within your field*
  - Social capital in the field of health and well-being
    - building an economy and preserving the environment are determined by the social capital and capacity of the communities. The Biosphere is actually an example of the third C – Cohesion – which is the measure of the ability/success/failure of communities to act on their capital and capacity
  - Determinants in the field of health and well-being

- Similar to human health, we need appropriate and measureable indicators of system health.
  - Post-productivism in the field of agricultural restructuring
    - Not something I buy into, but in making the contrary argument, Parks are museums, the Biosphere is a working entity – i.e. productivist (What is old, is new again....so an opportunity to use RMBR as a case of a productivist system)
  - Alternative food systems – organics, locality, sustainability
    - Lots of potential to link to tourism – marketing local products in restaurants and shops. Shouldn't we all eat Elman's pickles, bottled in Winnipeg since 1938 – or Peak of the Market products....in a similar vein one of the salespeople at one of the Chrysler dealerships could not explain why minivans on the lot had made in usa labels nor could he find out whether/how much it would cost to get one made in Windsor. Kind of an irrelevant argument these days, but the point is, we should be able to purchase Made in Canada or Manitoba stuff without tariffs etc.
  - Diversification/pluriactivity in agricultural restructuring AND agritourism
    - Ag and tourism – potentials, pitfalls, relationship to the park
  - Political economy in the field of tourism
    - Role of the state, Travel Manitoba, MMAFRI, Parks Canada, etc. in support and regulation – often conflicting goals (e.g. think of the Hog sector)
  - CED in the field of rural tourism
    - Heritage preservation in Plum Coulee and Carberry – two different models – the same end result – saved elevators, main streets, and fostering community pride
  - Trails/route based tourism (pilgrimage, literary, historical, nature-based)
    - Turkey Trail - Manitoba
    - Barcelona – Shadow of the Wind
    - Camino de Santiago – Spain
    - Trans Canada Trail
- *Overview and examples of research within your field (your own and other research)*
  - Forces of change impacting health and well-being (Ontario, Manitoba)
    - There are real concerns about service provision in westman
      - Health and education in particular
      - Keeping facilities open AND finding people to work in them
  - Diversification in rural economies (Canada, Germany, Belize)
    - Canada's trade surplus is, and always has been, reliant on staples exports. Every once in a while (30s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00's) we get hit over the head with it. Lots of problems. One, for example is hard drug abuse in rural Newfoundland. Why? Because guys are getting hooked living in the tar sands, and now moving home. There are NO rural services for Meth and coke addicts!



*which is viable over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.*

- General Strategy
  - Lead by example
  - Apply social/cultural, economic, and environmental considerations to planning and implementation of projects
  - Inform and educate industry on importance and benefits of a sustainable approach
  - Promote responsible travel practices to visitors
  - Work to influence policy decisions and a business climate conducive to supporting sustainable practices.
- Consistent with strategic directions and aligned with our long term objectives:
  - To increase the industry's contribution to the economy
  - To ensure the sustainability of the industry

### **3. How does the Sustainable Tourism Policy link to the RMBR**

My summary points.

I will follow the three principles of the RMBR

1. Conservation (integrity, long-term health, diversity)
  - a. Arguably, touristic values complement preservation.
  - b. Idea of multifunctionality in Europe where farmers receive payment for products sold and environment maintained (also called a back door subsidy to farming)
  - c. Diversification opportunities for farmers – farming and tourism
2. Sustainable development (society and environment)
  - a. Central to the new approach being developed by TM as I noted a few moments ago
    - i. Truly trying to balance conservation and economic development (agriculture and tourism)
3. Capacity building (information for decision-making)
  - a. TM as product developer and marketer
  - b. Trying to be inclusive of views through board and working committees
  - c. Showcasing success through awards
  - d. Implementing strategies for quality assurance
    - i. Working with agritourism industry
  - e. Leisure, culture, hunting/fishing remain core aspects
    - i. Opps to bring in route-based tourism ideas to RMBR
  - f. Role of Brandon First – to attract meetings/conventions/tournaments
    - i. Field trips to RMBR – for conference participants