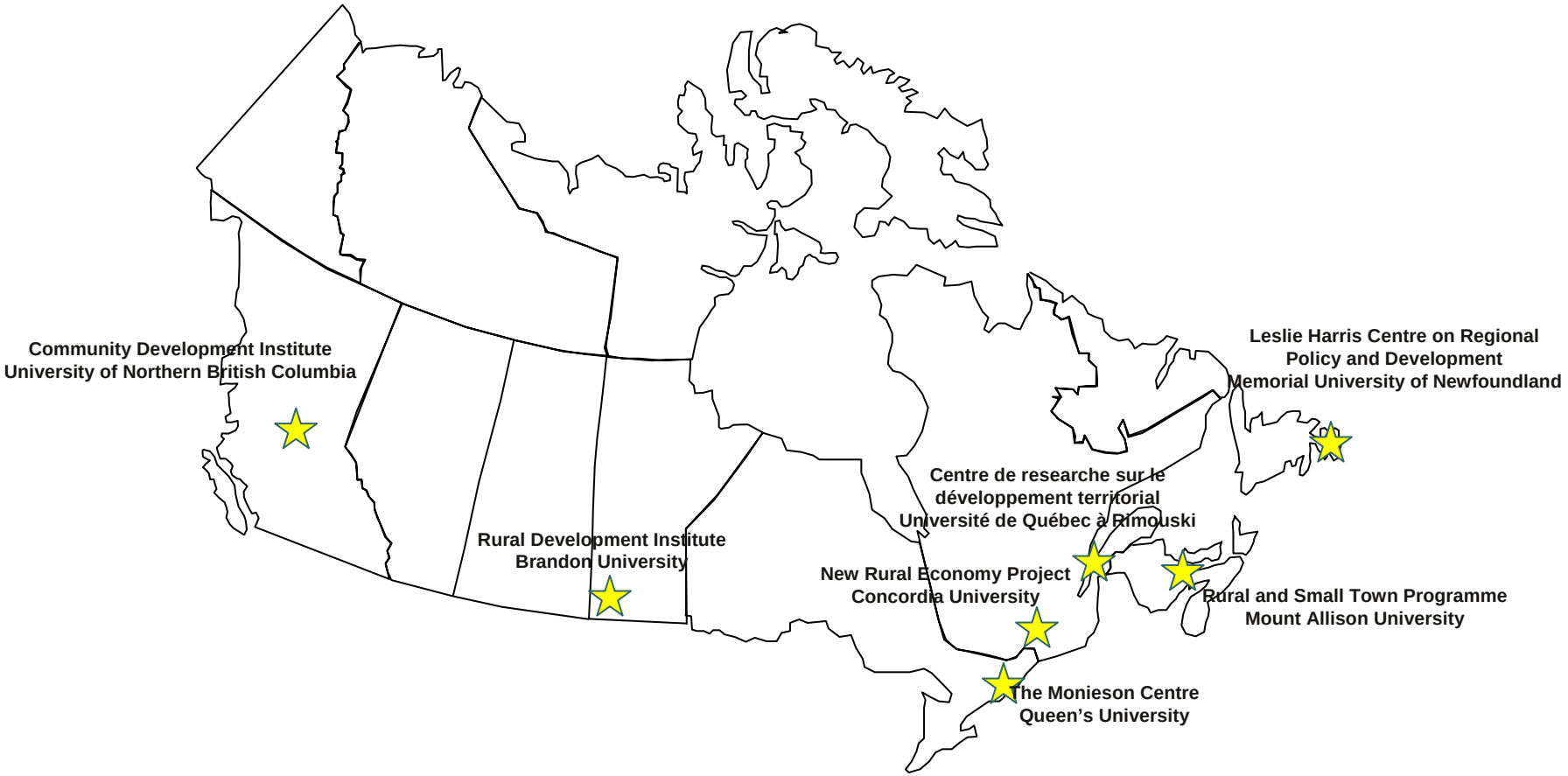
Exploring the Role of Rural Development Research Centers in Knowledge Translation, Mobilization and Community Engagement

Knowledge in Motion Conference
16 October 2008

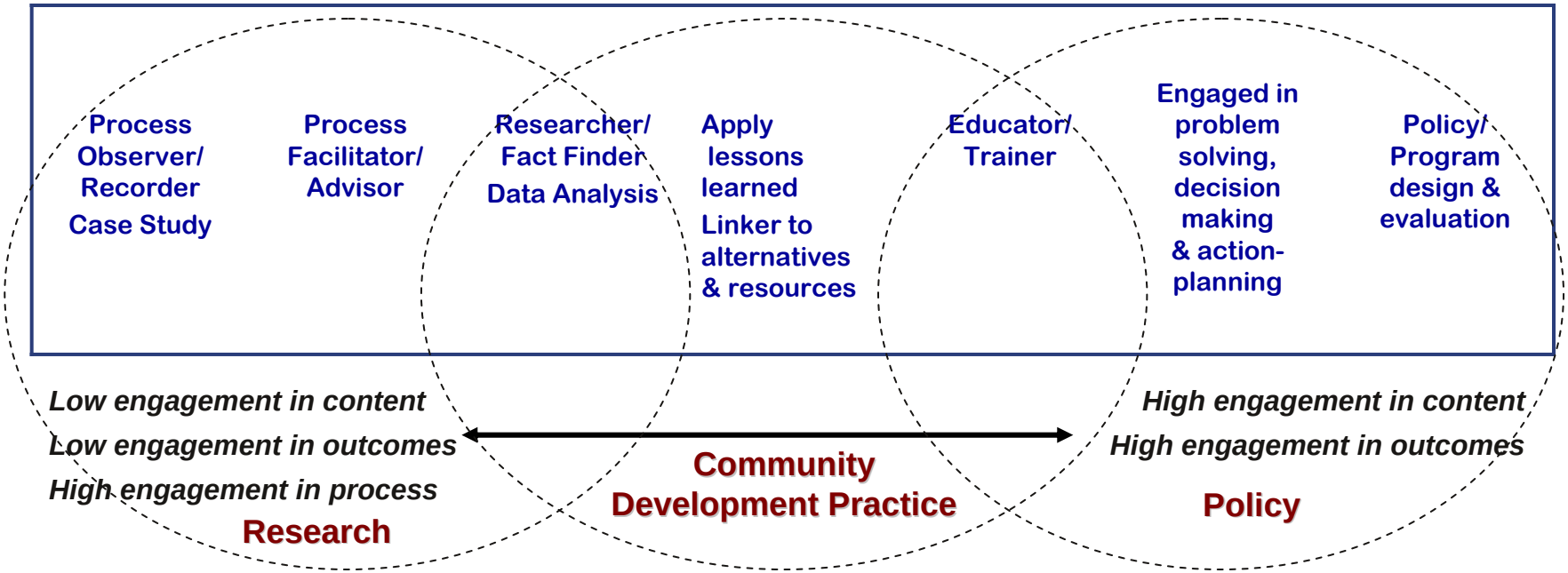
Overview of Session

- Overview of research centres in Canada
- Knowledge mobilization and transfer examples
- Constraints and opportunities to building capacity of small places to be consumers of research
- University environment and challenges
- Strategies for engaging research centers - Open discussion
- Reception

Rural Research Centres in Canada



Potential Roles for University Institutes



Presenters

- **Bill Reimer**, Director
  New Rural Economy Project, Concordia University
- **Yolande Chan**, Director
  The Monieson Centre, Queen's University
- **Laura Ryser,** Manager,
  Rural and Small Town Program, University of Northern British Columbia
- **Ryan Gibson,** Research Affiliate,
  Rural Development Institute, Brandon University
- **Rob Greenwood,** Director
  Leslie Harris Centre for Regional Policy and Development, Memorial University of Newfoundland
- **Robert Annis**, Director
  Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

Online Resources

A copy of the presentation is posted at www.brandonu.ca/rdi.

- Centre de researche sur le développement territorial – www.uqar.qc.ca.crdt
- Community Development Institute – www.unbc.ca/cdi
- Harris Centre – www.mun.ca/harriscentre/
- The Monieson Centre – www.business.queensu.ca/centres/monieson/index.php
- New Rural Economy Project – http://nre.concordia.ca
- Rural and Small Town Programme – www.mta.ca/rstp
- Rural Development Institute – www.brandonu.ca/rdi

Overview of Rural Research Centres in Canada

Bill Reimer

New Rural Economy Project
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

Knowledge Mobilization and Transfer: Research Centre Examples

Yolande Chan, PhD
Director, The Monieson Centre
Queen's School of Business
Queen's University

The Monieson Centre

- A Queen's School of Business research centre focusing on the management of knowledge-based organizations and industries
- Helps organizations and communities harness their knowledge—comprehensively, rigorously and economically
- Conducts applied, leading-edge, multidisciplinary research
- Draws on Queen's faculty, graduate students, and leading thinkers at other universities
- Offers top-tier research addressing economic and business problems

http://business.queensu.ca/knowledge

Current Rural Community Projects

THE MONIESON CENTRE INITIATIVES

- **Faculty and student teams are assisting PELA Community Futures Development Corporation**
  - **Studying creative economy opportunities, physician recruitment, leadership of new rural ventures**
- **Leading 2 Eastern Ontario SSHRC-funded economic development projects**
  - **KIS: Knowledge Impact in Society, 2008-2011**
  - **CURA: Community-University Research Alliances**
    - **2008 Confirmed**
    - **2009-2014 Proposed**

SSHRC-Funded, Community-Focused Projects

KIS and CURA Project Goals:

- Create academic knowledge
- Mobilize knowledge
- Increase rural Eastern Ontario's economic activity
- Grow healthier rural communities
- Improve the success of rural businesses
- Assist policymakers

KIS and CURA Projects

- **Partnering Organizations**
  - Artisan Bakers' Quality Alliance
  - Centre for Health Services and Policy Research
  - Centre for Studies in Primary Care
  - CEONet
  - CIRANO
  - Desjardins Venture Capital
  - Eastern Ontario CFDC Network Inc.
  - Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
  - Fédération des Chambres de Commerce du Québec
  - FedNor/Industry Canada
  - Fifth Town Artisan Cheese
  - Fleming College Centre for Alternative Wastewater Treatment
  - Haliburton County Development Corporation
  - Le réseau du développement économique et d'employabilité
  - Northumberland CFDC

KIS and CURA Projects

- **Partnering Organizations Cont'd**
  - Northumberland County Economic Development Commission
  - OMAFRA
  - Ontario East Economic Development Commission
  - PELA CFDC
  - PELAIRD
  - Prince Edward County Economic Development Commission
  - Queen's Executive Decision Centre
  - Queen's School of Business
  - Queen's School of Policy Studies
  - Queen's Sustainable Bioeconomy Centre
  - Rural Secretariat
  - SE LHIN
  - Shasha Bread Company Inc.
  - The Ontario Rural Council
  - U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research
  - University of Guelph School of Environmental Design and Rural Development

SSHRC-Funded, Community-Focused Projects

Differences

- **KIS**
  - **We find out what the community needs to know and then distribute information that is already available to help address the challenges – *Knowledge Mobilization***
- **CURA**
  - **We find out what research questions need to be answered and then conduct new research to answer them – *Knowledge Creation and Transfer***

Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) Project

Queen's University-Eastern Ontario CFDC Partnership to Address Rural Economic Development Knowledge Needs

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

Objective:

- **To move the results of academic research into the community – or – mobilize knowledge!**

SSHRC defines knowledge mobilization as "moving knowledge into active service for the broadest possible common good."

Knowledge Impact in Society Project

Three-year, $300K Project

Collaborators:

- PELA CFDC
- Eastern Ontario CFDC Network Inc.
- The Monieson Centre

Partners

- Local, Regional, Provincial, and Federal Organizations

KIS Knowledge Mobilization Initiatives

Sharing Knowledge with Communities

- Discovery Workshops
- Business Cases
- Knowledge Syntheses
- Rural Business Consulting Projects
- Best Small and Medium Enterprise Surveys
- Rural Community Knowledge Hub

Discovery Workshop Illustration

- **University representatives travel to rural Eastern Ontario**
  - 3-hour sessions (relationship building, technology-facilitated information exchange, networking)
  - Ask: What do you consider to be burning issues and challenges re (your rural community's) economic development?
  - Ask: If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research "wish list" and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?
  - Ask: What local resources/information sources are available?
  - Ask: What do you expect from the university? What would KIS project success look like?
- **Community leaders and academics collaborate**
  - Identify Eastern Ontario knowledge needs and resources
  - Share experience and knowledge
  - Build lasting relationships and communication channels
  - Serve Eastern Ontario

Discovery Workshop Schedule Excerpt

Date	CFDC
September 17	North&Central Hastings/South Algonquin
October 8	Renfrew Country
October 29	Greater Peterborough
November 5	Grenville
November 19	South Lake

Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) Project

Proposed 2009-2014 Research

- **22 Academics**
- **16 Research Projects**
- **5 Research Themes:**
  - **Innovation and Sustainability in Creative Rural Communities**
  - **Knowledge-Intensive Rural Economies**
  - **Rural Knowledge Workers and Entrepreneurs**
  - **Knowledge Workers in Rural Healthcare**
  - **Rural Knowledge-Based Infrastructure**
- **Each theme has an academic lead and a partner lead**

Knowledge Transfer Strategy

- Peer-reviewed journal submissions
- Conference articles and presentations
- Translation of academic findings for practitioners
- Municipal government/community organizations/ partner meetings and presentations
- CURA conferences, roundtables and research theme meetings
- CURA project reports
- CURA website / online knowledge hub
- CURA newsletters and mailing lists
- Practitioner tools: templates, models, checklists, guides, frameworks, business cases

Knowledge Mobilization and Transfer: Research Centre Examples

Thank You

Constraints and Opportunities to Building the Capacity of Small Places to be Consumers of Research

Laura Ryser and Greg Halseth
Community Development Institute, UNBC
Knowledge in Motion Conference
October 16, 2008

Community-University Partnerships 'The Challenge'

- Rural and small town places face many changes
- Seek information to make the best decision
  - Need timely, relevant, and useful information
- Academics enter research task seeking to improve questions
- Mismatch of expectations
  - Communities want answers
  - Academics want questions

Constraints to KM - I

- Small municipal offices – few staff
  - Experience
  - Turnover, capacity 'leakage', and institutional memory
  - Limited local technical capacity, support, and resources
- Getting mutual commitment
- Partnering demands
  - Difficult on time / staff
  - Often need financial commitment

Constraints to KM - II

- Bottom-up 'may not be equipped' to mobilize knowledge
- Need support for building relationships / capacity
  - Poorly understood by funding programs
  - Academic and funding institutions talk 'engaged language' but not equipped to follow through with infrastructure / support

Developing Opportunities

- Relationship development
  - Who to talk to / know who to call
  - Routine interaction (become the 'go-to' focal point)
  - Developing trust
- Residents contact us with significant concerns / events in the community
  - Researchers privy to emerging issues
  - Improved ability to respond timely to needs

Research "Product Cycle" for Consumers

- Design
  - What do we really need to know?
- Execution
  - Building local skills so they can do it next time
- Implementation
  - Communication
  - Follow through

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in project design:
  - Ensures fit with partnership goals
  - Improves understanding of questions and how results can be used

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in execution:
  - Provides labour and builds capacity (data collection, writing, promoting results)
    - Tumbler Ridge Seniors' Needs Project

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in implementation:
  - Communicating research
    - Update letters, newspaper articles, radio interviews, posters, copies of research products, websites, community forums, council presentations.
    - Posting solely on a university website does not work!

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in implementation continued:
  - Build momentum to initiate change
    - Linking communities with similar issues (i.e. rural transportation)
    - Promoting best practices
  - Respect, patience, flexibility, AND follow-up!
  - Planning sessions to bridge results and next steps
    - Short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions
    - Success breeds success

Partnership Issues

- It's a people process
- "Getting to know you" protocols
- Relationship development
- Listening / sharing
- Capacity building
- Mutual commitment

Developing Community Capacity to be Consumers of Research

- Develop relationships / trust
- Understand the research process / results
- Communication
- Planning and follow-up

- Knowledge mobilization will improve once appropriate time /resources / roles are allocated to people and processes

Challenges of Research Centers

Ryan Gibson

Rural Development Institute
Brandon University
Brandon, Manitoba

Overview

- University-based research centres can operate in unique environments
- Each research centre has different areas of focus
- Challenges and misunderstandings can lead to frustrations

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University Environment

- Faculty/professor involvement
- Students involvement
- Timelines
- Funding and resources
- Ethics

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Faculty Involvement

- Time availability
- Diverse expertise and research interests
  - Smaller universities, smaller number of faculty members
  - Research interests may not be similar to local requests

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Student Involvement

- Primary focus is classes/graduation
  - Time availability may be limited
  - Time availability may be concentrated in specific parts of the year
- Small universities have smaller number of students

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Timelines

- Can be influenced by a many factors
  - students and faculty availability
  - funding availability
  - internal process, such as ethics
- Need to be awareness of realistic timelines for both community groups and research centres

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Funding and Resources

- Research centres are not usually funders of research projects
- External funding required
  - Process can be time consuming, 'down' time while waiting for decisions
  - No guarantee of funding

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Ethics

- All research projects must be reviewed by a research ethics committee
  - Approval must be received prior to starting activities
- Addresses topics such as confidentiality, data ownership, and informed consent
- Can influence timelines

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- **Research centres**
  - **have strong commitment to work with communities**
  - **Source of expertise and networks**
- **Students benefit from opportunities to work with communities**
- **Understanding the university environment can avoid build successful projects**

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Strategies and Discussion

Rob Greenwood

Harris Centre for Regional Policy and Development
Memorial University

St. John’s, Newfoundland

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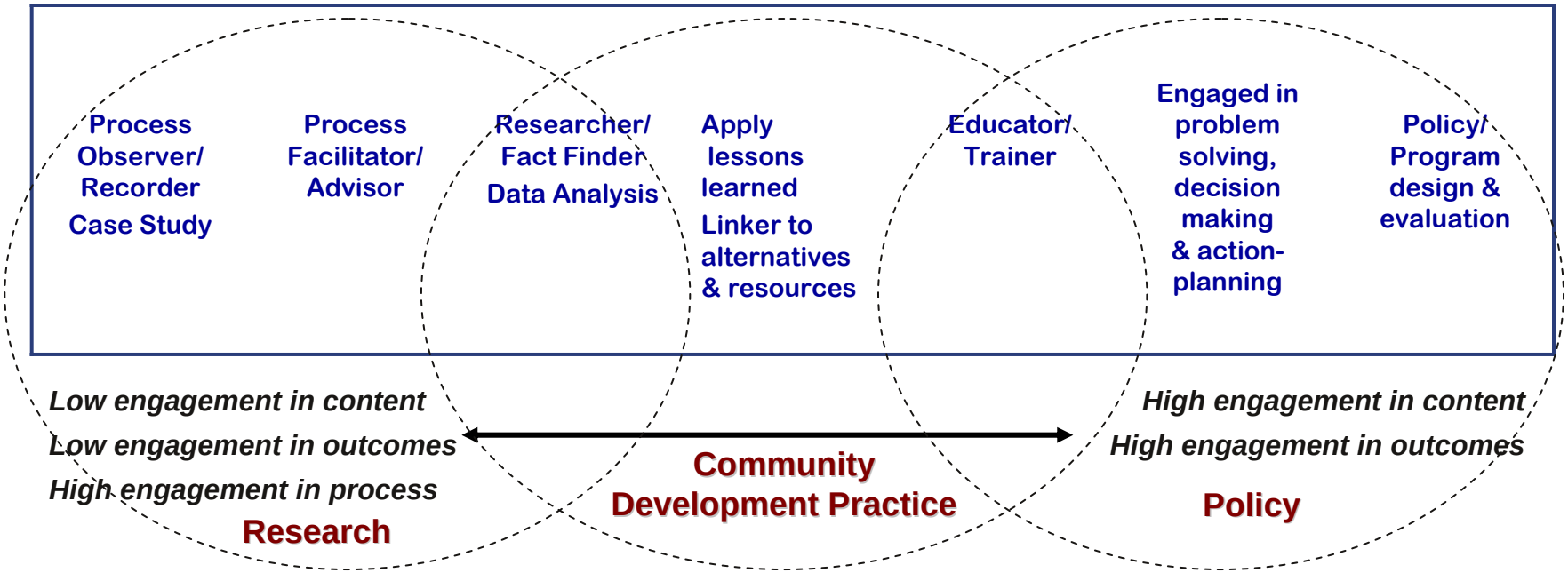
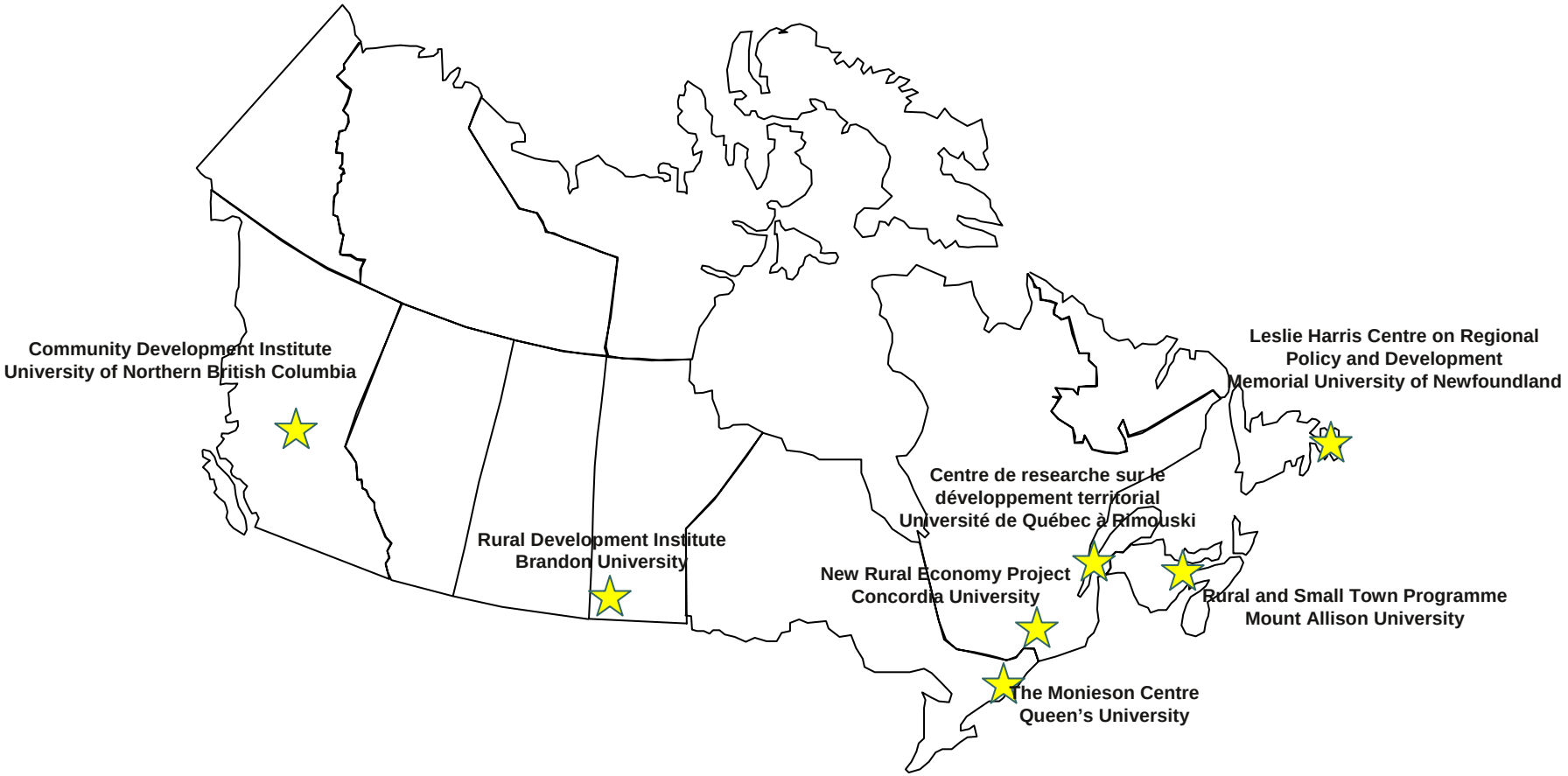
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