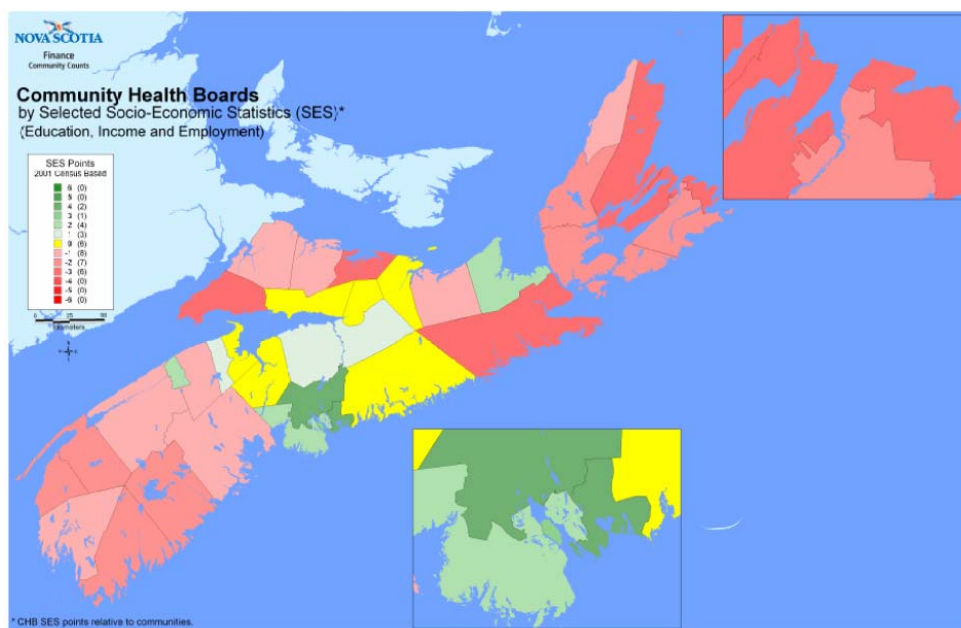


Community Data Forum Report

November 26th, 2004



Prepared for:
Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project

The mission of the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre is to conduct and facilitate health promotion research that influences policy and contributes to the health and well-being of Atlantic Canadians.

The Coastal Communities Network (CCN) of Nova Scotia provides a forum to encourage dialogue and share information that promotes the survival and enhancement of our rural coastal communities.

The goal of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project is to increase the ability of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access and use social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of communities. RCIP is a 5-year research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and co-sponsored by the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre and the Coastal Communities Network.

This report has been prepared for:

Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre
Suite 209 City Centre Atlantic
1535 Dresden Row
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3T1
Phone: 902 494 2240 Fax: 902 494 3594
email: ahprc@dal.ca website: www.ahprc.dal.ca

The Coastal Communities Network
P.O. Box 1613
Pictou, Nova Scotia, B0K 1H0
Phone: 902 485 4754 Fax: 902 752 9844
email: coastalnet@ns.sympatico.ca
website: www.coastalcommunities.ns.ca

The Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project
Suite 209 City Centre Atlantic
1535 Dresden Row
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3T1
Phone: 902 494 1590 Fax: 902 494 3594 website: www.ruralnovascotia.ca

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*Community Health Boards by Selected Socio-Economic Statistics (Education, Income, Employment)
Nova Scotia Department of Finance – Statistics/Community Counts Division*

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RCIP Community Data Forum

Truro, NS

November 26th, 2004

1. General Notes

- In Part One of the Forum, participants were asked to describe their projects as data providers or data users in the context of the following criteria:
 - Types of Data
 - Possible Uses
 - Accessibility
- In Part Two of the Forum, discussion focused on four main areas of concern:
 - Determining what data communities need
 - Improving access to data for communities
 - Ways of integrating and linking data sources
 - Opportunities for collaboration
- Readers should take note of overlapping comments, themes and ideas within and between each section of the report.

Malcolm Shookner, the RCIP Project Coordinator, convened the Forum and reviewed the above agenda.

2. Background

- The Forum idea originated at a recent meeting of the RCIP Indicators Work Group (WG). With the RCIP *Rural Report: Paining the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia* approaching its one-year anniversary, the WG is faced with the task of deciding “what next?”
- The “data landscape” is different than when the Rural Report was produced. There are more data providers trying to provide community-level data to rural communities. There are also more community groups using data for policy change.
- Work Group members asked themselves: “How do we coordinate all the work that’s going on now? The Work Group decided to convene a meeting – a Community Data Forum - to find out if other groups are asking similar questions about types of data, accessibility of data and integration of data sources.
- The Work Group members compiled a list of data providers and a variety of users of community-level data to invite to the forum.

3. Descriptions

Each data provider and data user was given approximately 5-6 minutes to present their work. Some providers distributed a one-page “fact-sheet” describing their project. The fact sheets have been incorporated into the report notes below. For copies of the original fact sheets, please contact the RCIP Project.

3.1 Data Providers

1) Dennis Pilkey – Nova Scotia Community Counts – NS Department of Finance

General

- Possible public release in January 2005
- over 40 strategic development partners
- over 20,000 data screens, numerous charts and tables

Types of Data

- Census of Population
 - 1991, 1996, & 2001
- Taxfiler Data
 - 2000 & 2001 & later – all levels
 - 1990 & 1995 – higher levels
- Administrative Data
 - Health, Education, Justice, Community Services, Other
 - E.I., CMHC, retail sales
- NS Community Counts needs support in defining the data that is needed by communities and community training on how to use the data– the front and tail ends of data provision.

Features

- Core statistics
- Comparative indicators
- Browse data
 - By topic
 - By community
- Charts and graphs
- Population pyramids
- Thematic maps
- Context sensitive help

Possible Uses

- Decision-makers will have data they need to support:
 - social policy review and development
 - program assessment
 - accessibility to government services
 - stronger communities

- Researchers will have better access to data about issues affecting:
 - population health
 - quality of life
 - sustainability of communities

Accessibility

- Access is currently limited to strategic partners while licensing agreement is negotiated with Stats Can for public Internet access.
- Public access is planned for January 2005.

2) Ed Light – GeoNOVA Program – Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations

General

- The GeoNOVA portal is the Province of Nova Scotia's gateway to geographic information about Nova Scotia. Geographic data access is its goal.

Types of Data

- GeoNOVA encourages the creation of corporate geographic information resources - collected, maintained, and distributed at accepted standard levels and shared amongst users within the Province to support decision-making and reduce duplication of effort.
- Geomatics Centre is a “data facilitator”, working with different data custodians – leaving data collection to the “experts”. For example: NSPower – transmission line location data; NS Environment - Permits for quarries.

Features

- The ability of users to easily access geographic information within the Province. Internet access is one of the means selected to achieve this goal – www.geonova.ca

3) Erica de Sousa - Between the Land and Sea Database Coastal Communities Network

General

- The database was developed in response to a shared need of communities and governments for statistical evidence of the value of rural and coastal communities in Nova Scotia.
- It has become a tool for “seeing the challenges” in rural NS. For example, the trend of economic decline in certain communities indicates a need for policy change.

Types of Data

- Demographics
- Marine data
 - Businesses
 - Boar builders
 - Aquaculture
 - Fish landings
 - Vessels

- Wharves
- Immigration
- Migration
- Employment
- Income
- Housing
- Education
- Tourism
- Labour force
- Aboriginal populations

Possible Uses

- GIS mapping in 79 coastal clusters and four zones
- Evidence for useful decisions by communities and governments

Accessibility

- Access through Coastal Communities Network via CD ROM.

4) Wendy Arbuckle - Community Web Portal for Pictou County - Pictou County RDA

- Separated into five towns and outlying rural areas
- Why? For people to access information about their communities
- Outside use too - For potential businesses to see what's in the area already.

5) Wendy Robichaud – NS Regional Public Libraries

- Libraries provide a critical access point for NS public. For example, 3000 people/week in Downtown Truro branch alone, with numbers on the rise.
- Information is important, but we also need to know it's there!

6) Kate Humpage – Community Information Database – Canadian Rural Secretariat

General

- A Community Information Database is being developed for all provinces and territories.
- The Rural Secretariat is also attempting to develop a National Rural Research Network.

Types of Data

- About 100 indicators in six categories – community performance, demographic adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, shared environmental stewardship, engaged populations and institutions and smart approaches to rural infrastructure.

Features

- Information will be available in tables, maps and charts according to each province and territory.
- Possible to overlay other data sets. For example, Community Counts data or CCN data.

Accessibility

- Database is in the testing stage. Test sites will be engaged in early 2005.

7) Brian Segal – Antigonish Area Partnership (AAP)

General

- Business and community oriented contract with ACOA.
- One goal: a useable template for other communities.
- In AAP, business leaders decide what data is important and how to interpret for outside interests to use. Technique used to “mask the data” - putting data into a business case format but not compromising people’s private interests.
- Many partners – including community counts, businesses, academic and health care providers.
- Social data is just as important as more traditional “economic” data – considering all aspects of society will provide the best healthy and sustainable foundation for a prosperous business climate.

Possible Uses

- Benefits to province: economic & social benefits by providing many different types of data sets. This will mostly be data you can’t get from Statistics Canada.

Accessibility

- Some data will remain within partnership, some free access. To be determined.
- Relevant data is hard to access. For example, students aren’t included in census data.

8) Martin Kaye - Annapolis-Digby Coastal Resource Database Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre (MRC)

General

- The database was created to help manage fixed gear quotas, the new fishery and to support a coastal resource mapping project. Once created, the question became where to house it? This was the beginning of the Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre.
- Introducing GIS within the fishing community: We had to show it to folks to gather interest. For example, in developing a local beach management plan – what would have taken six to eight months to assemble (maps, charts, and tables) was completed within a week and had polluted beaches closed within a month.

Accessibility

- MRC has been getting requests from community members for information. We have been trying to make links with other data providers.
- It is important to get the data down to the grassroots level AND teach community members how to use it.
- Possible corporate partner – COGNOS Software. Apparently it allows three to four different databases to “talk to each other”. This information is very preliminary and I need to find out more.

9) Malcolm Shookner – Rural Report – Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project

General

- In 2001, the RCIP Indicators WG asked the question: How can we “paint the landscape” of rural NS? Originally the idea was to issue a “report card” – but instead, a statistical profile of NS was developed. We tried to get the data as “close to the ground” as possible. Getting community-level data was difficult.
- The Rural Report was developed before NS Community Counts. RCIP provided a catalyst to develop a prototype of Community Counts for use in promotion and partnership development.
- Now that the landscape has changed, RCIP might not produce a Rural Report part II; instead it will most likely support efforts to make data more accessible to communities through electronic formats, i.e. NS Community Counts.
- RCIP may produce an analytical report, e.g. looking at trends – depending on what RCIP Indicators WG decides.

Types of Data

- Data is compiled under five subject headings: Demographics, Economy, Environment, Education and Health.

Features

- Each chapter follows the same format: a list of “Fast Facts”; statistical information for selected indicators (using maps as much as possible); discussion questions to provoke reflection and possible “next steps” for community groups.

Accessibility

- Two printings of paper document (600 copies total) for wide distribution – especially to publicly accessible locations. For example, Libraries, Community Health Boards, RDAs and municipal offices.
- Available online – www.rualnovascotia.ca in sections for easy download.

3.2 Data Users

7) Lynn Adams – Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)

General

- ACOA’s Community Economic Development efforts focus on enabling communities to make their own development decisions. Increasingly, this involves access to data and tools for analysis.

Types of data

- Labour market
 - Employment
 - Participation rates

- Skills levels
- Seasonality
- Diversification
- Demographics

Possible Uses

- Internal
 - Program decisions
 - Policy research
 - Advocacy
 - Advice
 - Horizontal initiatives
 - Strategic planning
- External
 - Community capacity building
 - Community planning
 - Advocacy
 - Partnership building
 - Communicating decisions

Accessibility

- Internal accessibility less of a challenge than for external partners.
- Gaps still exist. For example, demand-side labour market data.
- The challenge is how to enable communities to access and analyse data for their own planning purposes.

10) Martin Kaye – Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre (MRC)

Types of Data

- We have a need for information from other sources (besides MRC database). For example, DFO information on harbours. For example, catch data history, environmental data and aquaculture leasing.

Possible Uses

- Data for oil spill preparedness plan.

Accessibility

- Liability issues (access to information is a huge challenge)
- Addressing project-only staff vs. continuing staff model. Created the **associated staff model**. This model is based on creating geographic systems partnerships: For example, one partner has responsibility for keeping the MRC database current and usable. In return, all clients needing GIS services get forwarded to this partner.

11) David Bruce – Rural and Small Town Programme – Mt. Allison University

Types of Data

- Use of data for community projects involves a mix of data sources, including surveys, interviews, census, and municipal data.
- From the census
 - Community profiles
 - Topic-based tabulations
 - Custom-tabulations
- From Stats Can and federal departments and agencies
 - Small area data profiles
 - Housing (CMHC)
 - EI claimants (HRSDC)
- From provincial governments
 - Social housing supply and waiting lists
- From municipalities
 - Property tax assessment records
 - Building permit data
- We often use statistics that are “out of the ordinary” to get a more holistic picture of a situation:
 - Indicators of Community well-being – Agriculture Canada
 - Canadian Centre for Justice statistics
 - National pollutant release statistics
 - Municipal water use database
 - National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (useful for determining environmental health of an area)

Accessibility

- Access is generally good, though there are high costs related to custom tabulations.
- Some data have access rights in relation to the holder of the data.
- There are many gaps in the data as most sources don't go to the community level. For example, social housing data only goes to a county level.

12) David Fullerton – Enterprise Development Centre – St. Francis Xavier University

General

- The Development Centre helps individuals and groups to start a business or assists those that are already established. We see our role as guiding people through a process from a business development perspective.

Types of Data

- Usually focused around business related questions. For example, statistical summaries for communities and sector surveys. We are often looking for the business opportunities. For example, what type of business should they start?
- Census data
- Whatever data is needed in relation to that type of business.

Possible Uses

- Type, size and location of a business.

Accessibility Issues

- It is hard to get information at the community level.
- Dial-up vs. high-speed is a challenge for downloading large amounts of information.
- Knowing what is out there and knowing where to send people.
- Quality of data. For example: TargetNS states that there is a law firm in Antigonish with 200 employees – this is not true.
- Timeliness – getting the right information when you need it.
- Difficulty analyzing or interpreting – people lacking the skills.
- Individual differences in analyzing the data.
- Community-level data not available because it is not there or suppressed due to confidentiality.

12) Brian Segal – Antigonish Area Partnership (AAP)

Types of Data

- The AAP is working with businesses to define the kinds of indicators that are needed. To fill in the gaps, AAP is conducting a “Service in the Community Survey.”
- Being a private enterprise, we are accountable to investors – this keeps us well-organized.

Accessibility Issues

- We ask the question: “How do we get the data you need?”
- Validity – can we trust the data?
- Keeping it current.

13) Kevin Quinlan – Truro Campus – Nova Scotia Community College

General

- At NSCC we are constantly asking the questions: “What’s the difference between data and information?” And “What can be turned into knowledge that is useful for us?”
- NSCC is a data user, generator and provider.

Types of Data

- Economic data
- Population trends
- Education levels
- Enrollment patterns – post-secondary in NS and Canada – comparing to other institutions
- Population figures
- Internally we track things like employment rates, whether people stay in NS or move away and where graduates end up working (what different types of employers).

Features

- Centre for Geographic Sciences (COGS) (Annapolis Valley) – Geographic Information Systems. The centre is moving towards a “Centre for Rural Living” focus.

Possible Uses

- At the COGS Centre, examples include working on flooding issues and creating a database on productive vineyards.
- COGS has an established partnership with Dalhousie graduate student programs.

15) Ashley Bouchie – Guysborough County Regional Development Authority

Types of data

- GIS data
 - Sustainable aquaculture tool using coastal series maps for the province
 - Guide book for trails, dive sites and paddle routes
 - Mineral rights database
- Sector data
 - Fisheries
 - Tourism
 - Technology
- Demographics
 - Access through Stats Can website

16) Ishbel Munro – Coastal Communities Network (CCN)

General

- CCN began out of the fisheries crisis, but now its mandate is much broader. CCN is a multi-stakeholder community-based organization with over 275 members reflecting the diversity of rural NS.

Types of Data

1. Data connection with the RCIP project. CCN often gets requests related to the Rural Report
2. Between the Land and Sea database was initially created to “prove” the state of coastal infrastructure losses and the health of coastal communities in rural NS. For example, making the connections between safety and the number of wharves or “safe havens” available during storm surges.

Possible Uses

- Many uses for data including: Funding requests, strategic planning, business planning

Accessibility Challenges

- Integrating data from different sources
- Getting data that is down to the community level
- Keeping it current
- Keeping it alive (sustainability)

- Training to develop skills
- Ishbel's Dream: GIS database that has all resources available at the touch of a button
- Dial-up vs. high speed
- Cultural profiles are a challenge
- Sharing knowledge and information is important – linking, creating a hub.

17) Ben Sivak – Dalhousie GIS Centre (former employee)

Accessibility

- Access to human expertise is important – especially for manipulating and interpreting data

18) Ed Light – GeoNOVA Program – Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations

Accessibility

- “Metadata” is important – data about data – GeoNOVA has developed a metadata search engine – BUT, it is only as good as the information that researchers provide. For example, sources of data, methods of collection & where the data is located.
- GeoNOVA has a metadata editing tool specifically about Nova Scotia.
- Liability: GeoNOVA has been asking the questions: Are liability issues (freedom of information and privacy) always barriers to data access? Do people sometimes use liability as a smokescreen? To address these kinds of questions, GeoNOVA is hosting a workshop in Jan/Feb 2005 for those working with this problem. As a courtesy, Ed will include RCIP Data Forum participants on the invitation list. If you would not like to receive this information, please let Ed know directly.

19) Mark Poirier – Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations (SNSMR)

Types of Data

- Civic address file
- Parcel layer (property mapping)
- Assessment roles and OASIS Neighbourhoods Annual Tabulation
- Municipal infrastructure mapping, planned areas and zones

Possible Uses

- Amount of new development – new lots, new homes, new businesses
- Population and household estimates
- Patterns of development
- Community economic growth indicators
 - New sales and services
 - Land uses
- Walkability indicators for wellness through fitness
 - Inter-connectedness of street network
 - Number and location of services outlets
 - Sidewalks
 - Streetlight distribution

- Community capacity for concentrated development
 - Sewer and water mains
 - Serviceable areas
 - Treatment plant capacity
 - Commercial zones

Accessibility

- SNSMR data is available to the general public for individual inquiries.
- Tabulation by community (General Services Area or OASIS neighbourhood) would not violate confidentiality.
- OASIS Neighbourhoods are not available in digital form.

20) Chris Bryant – NS Department of Economic Development

General

- Information is important for the development of Nova Scotia. This was the early emphasis of Service NS and RDA's. For example, the creation of business directories.
- The document *Opportunities for Prosperity* asked: "What is the state of NS?"
- The *Business Climate Index* was developed.
- Target Nova Scotia website was designed for site selectors to answer business-related questions. While there are problems associated with this model, it is important to recognize that it is a step in a process towards better data collection and provision.
www.targetnovascotia.com
- In our department, we try to use the notion of "unique communities" rather than "rural vs. urban."
- Government is a user and provider of data.

Accessibility

- With the new Provincial CD Policy there are information challenges. The emphasis of the proposed CD Policy is that communities will take the lead on development and government facilitates and supports. Data/information needs to be available to communities when they are making plans for action.

21) Greg Landry – NS Department of Economic Development

Accessibility

- Collection of data is expensive. Cooperation is needed.
- Validity is important. Call Centre example for City A and City B: Contract went to City B because population figure on a business development website for City A was 10,000 instead of 100,000 (forgot a zero!)

22) Kelly Nauss – C@P and IT Program – Colchester Regional Development Authority

Types of data

- Real estate - available properties
- Labour market information

- Population stats
- Business stats
- www.targetnovascotia.com (demographics, available real estate, education levels, quality of life, industry information, business directory, tax information, etc.)
- www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=/en/ns/lmi/statistics/lfs_index.shtml&hs=ns0 (monthly Stats Canada Labour Force Survey results by category for the 5 economic regions of Nova Scotia) Can also be access from the HRSDC website
 - Working age population 15+
 - Labour force
 - Employment
 - Unemployment
 - Unemployment rate
 - Participation rate
- Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre 1-800-668-1010
 - Research lists of suppliers and manufacturers
 - Information on government programs and services related to business
 - Guide to market research information
 - List of names search companies
 - Research specific business profiles

Possible uses

- Business owners or potential owners may determine whether or not to open a business in the area based on the types of data listed above.

23) Dennis Pilkey – Nova Scotia Community Counts – NS Department of Finance

Accessibility

- Partnerships and training to support the data infrastructure are the keys to success. Especially for feedback on usability and usefulness. For example:
 - RCIP Project
 - Provincial Fluoride Mouth-Rinse Program
 - Development of an employment-education-income combined indicator
 - Healthy Beginnings Program
 - Recreation Facility Planning
 - Antigonish Area Partnership

24) Andrea Caven – Community Trainer & Policy Entrepreneur – CCN & RCIP

Accessibility

- Data needs to be relevant to community groups.
- Communities need the skills to know what data to use and how to use it.
- It would be useful to know what projects are happening in province – past & present. This would be important information to share with community groups as RCIP workshops on using research for policy change are delivered.

4. Discussion

4.1 Determining what data communities need

- It is interesting to see the progression of data collection from a national level to community level in the past 20 years.
- The prevailing mentality in government and society needs to be that data is always changing – it is not a snapshot deal. Funding priorities need to recognize this as well.
- There is data, then information, then knowledge...how is it used? Who determines what data gets used? Who's doing the interpreting?
- Forums such as this are important to get the perspectives of others so that decisions are made more holistically.
- Genuine Progress Index (GPI) Atlantic example from Glace Bay: The community wanted everything in terms of data. The big learning was that it is important to have the data you need, but not everything. Is there a core set of data that could be developed? A core group of providers? For example: GeoNOVA, Community Counts...then this small group “looks around” every once and awhile to see how the landscape is changing in relation to this core set?
- Having a common “data set” is tricky because of the uniqueness of any given moment, issue and characteristics of a particular community.
- There could be a regular general “call-out” for types of data needed.
- There are a lot of different “indicator initiatives” going on across the country. For example, the business vitality index and community vitality index in BC.
- There needs to be follow-up to see the effect of programs to provide data access. Is the “evidence-based” mindset becoming more accepted? This type of evaluation needs to go beyond a current Auditor General role. It needs to look more at the social aspects of society. For example, effects on child poverty.
- Major role of community groups in data collection and usage is data interpretation.
- The secret of data collection and interpretation is focusing on areas of common need. Each community group should create a “shopping list”, compare it to a common list and do the common needs first.
- There are two major sets of information: 1) Public policy development and 2) Private sector development.

4.2 Improving access to data for communities

- Financial cuts to data research and development have happened and there are more on the way. The political will for support needs to be there. How do we create the political will?
- To get the attention of politicians, you need something that motivates them politically. It's almost like you need to create the "live or die" scenario. This is always the case for the private sector! Emphasize the value of information and marry the value of a healthy private sector with the value of a healthy public sector.
- Idea: Publish a series of Op Ed pieces about who is using data and why. To support these specific bits you will also need to have a general discussion piece about "What data do communities need?" Also, emphasize the importance of good and accessible data from the ground up.
- Nova Scotia has a good track record in terms of community development and community innovation. We need to "toot our own horn" more often. We need to advocate for ourselves in areas such as these that don't get much coverage. To do this, we need to do some strategic planning. Not just around data accessibility issues, but in other areas too. For example, global warming plans - none in NS vs. comprehensive plan in Scotland. Bottom line: Planning for our future needs to happen in partnerships.
- Is there a list of NS data sources? There is a "meta-data dictionary". At present count, there are approximately 400 government sources of data (data custodians). Sources are catalogued according to a "metadata standard". For example, type of data, how to download, where to get it. The metadata standard is keyword-based. Contact GeoNOVA for more information.
- The meta-data dictionary is a good start, but the number of data sources is potentially infinite. E.g. RCIP Project Policy Change and Research Activities database.
- "Evidence-based decision-making" can be tricky. For example, by putting facilities in community A instead of community B might contribute to the demise of community B. Another example: a customer sales tape is not the best indicator of who was served. It is an exit survey. Perhaps a better research question is: "Who are we not serving?"
- Data is a building block – people are an important part of the process.
- Having a critical perspective of the effects of data usage is about getting people more involved in development and decision-making processes in society.
- While this Forum is essentially about data, it is also about people, processes and technology. These are the four key parts to the management of any issue.
- Example of a NS minister's trip to Iceland: While driving on a road in bad shape, the driver (from Iceland) remarked that it was going to be fixed in two years. When the

minister asked how the citizen knew this, it was because of a citizen's based process to determine public policy through research and implementation.

- Decisions are going to be made one way or the other. The question is, do we want the evidence or not?
- Politicians don't ignore evidence (when it's there); they sometimes just make different decisions than you or me based on the evidence.
- We can't expect politicians to make decisions if they don't have the community-level data. Right now, most Stats Can data only goes down to county level.
- Evidence for decisions is not only for politicians, it is for communities too.
- Maintaining staff resources to keep data current are a challenge.
- GeoNOVA is involved in a project combining static data with live-streaming of data.
- Building community partnerships is a key solution to the staff/volunteer shortage. For example, the associated staff model (see page 10).
- It would be great if there was one "hub" for access to data that was community-based, community-driven & made it easy to add data.
- When funding for research is granted, a deliverable should be public access to the information gathering and storage processes as well (i.e. documenting metadata processes). This needs to be integrated into current funding standards.
- There is no such thing as "free data" – it is more...who pays? For example, Department of Finance Construction Activity report – used to be \$35 per copy. Costing too much to collect compared to amount sold. Once it was provided free on the Internet, 7000 downloads per month! This speaks to the role of Government in data accessibility. The goal should be: "Free to the end user".
- In keeping data provision sustained, there are two priority areas of concern: 1) Access and use of information and 2) Succession planning.
- It is important to distinguish between the roles of data custodian (data warehouse) and the dissemination of data (being a data "broker"). With this distinction, it is possible to create partnerships and let specialty groups handle their areas of expertise.
- Broadband access needs to continue. C@P program has grown well in NS. The importance of these sites for community access needs to be talked up.
- It is essential to put ourselves in the shoes of community people – capacity in data development and interpretation is important.

- Having a broad directory of databases would be extremely useful for knowing what's available (the "meta-data dictionary").
- Learning institutions are a valuable resource.
- Idea: Issue a press release about this meeting – highlighting issues and examples that were discussed. For example, information infrastructure is important or else youth out-migration occurs (without chat rooms!).

4.3 Ways of integrating and linking data sources

- COGNOS software links databases together. For example, could be extremely useful in coastal zone management. Applicability to the issue of connecting different databases is questionable – Martin will continue to look into it.
- Nova Scotia Community Counts will link data sources, but not integrate them.
- Integration of data is tricky business and won't necessarily achieve the result of "getting the data you need". Often it is the format of how that data is collected or presented that is the issue, not whether or not data sources can be linked or integrated.

4.4 Opportunities for collaboration

- GeoNOVA and Community Counts are already collaborating.
- It would be interesting to organize a Data Forum around "communities of practice" vs. geographic location.
- What can we do together based on what we know individually?

5. Summary of Possible Action Items

The following actions were identified as follow-up to the forum:

1. Develop common indicators or data sets that all communities can use and reflect common areas of data needs.
 - Nova Scotia Community Counts development
 - RCIP Community Training
 - CCN Learning Circles
2. Data providers have further discussions about linking data sources and making them accessible to communities.
 - GeoNOVA data warehouse – role-based access
 - Nova Scotia Community Counts

- Directory of databases (meta-dictionary)
- 3. Send a message to decision-makers about the importance of data for decision-making at community and policy levels.
 - RCIP Project
- 4. Extend broad-band Internet access to rural communities for sustainable development.
 - RCIP Rural Policy Forum
- 5. Support extension of funding for C@P program.
- 6. Build community capacity for using databases.
 - RCIP Community Training
- 7. Recognize the role of Coastal Communities Network in mobilizing and supporting communities to interpret and analyze the meaning of data.
 - Learning Circles
 - RCIP Community Training
 - Partnerships with colleges and universities
- 8. Publish a series of Op Ed pieces about who is using data and why. To support these specific pieces, have a general discussion piece about “What data do communities need?” Also, emphasize the importance of good and accessible data from the ground up.
- 9. Send out a news release about this Forum with good examples of community uses of data, importance of C@P sites and training for business development and community development.
 - RCIP Project
- 10. Organize a future Forum to continue the discussion and promote collaboration.
 - RCIP Rural Policy Forum (February 17-19, 2005)
 - Conference on Innovative Communities (Fall 2005)
- 11. National Rural Secretariat can work with forum participants to pilot test its database and include them in its National Rural Research Network through the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation.

6. Final Comments

Malcolm Shookner thanked the participants for their presentations and ideas. A report from the forum will be distributed to all participants and other interested people. The RCIP Indicator Work Group will review the results of this Forum at its meeting on December 2nd and make recommendations about the role of the RCIP project in follow-up as identified. The RCIP Policy Work Group will receive a report on the policy issues arising from this forum and integrate them into the Rural Policy Forum in February 2005.

Appendix 1 – Participant List

***Telephone area code is 902 unless otherwise indicated*

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ORGANIZATION/AFFILIATION	PHONE	E MAIL
Adams	Lynn	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency		Lynn.Adams@acoa-apec.ca
Arbuckle	Wendy	Pictou Regional Development Corporation		wendy_arbuckle@yahoo.com
Barr	Todd	Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project	494-3094	todd.barr@dal.ca
Bouchie	Ashley	GCRDA		ashleybouchie@gmail.com
Bruce	David	Mount Allison University	506-364-2395	dwbruce@mta.ca
Bryant	Chris	NS Dept. of Economic Development	424-3545	cbryant@gov.ns.ca
Caven	Andrea	Coastal Communities Network	895-0422	amcaven@eastlink.ca
deSousa	Erica	Coastal Communities Network	494-1689	esousa@dal.ca
Fraser	Janine	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency		janine.fraser@acoa-apec.ca
Fullerton	David	St. FX University	863-3363	dfuller@stfx.ca
Humpage	Kate	Rural Secretariat	613-759-7106	khumpagek@agr.gc.ca
Kaye	Martin	Bay of Fundy - Marine Resource Centre	638-3044	martink@bfmrc.ns.ca
Kilbey	Dr. Nigel	Frontier Open University	895-7250	frontieropenuniversity@yahoo.ca
Landry	Greg	NS Dept. of Economic Development		
Light	Ed	GeoNOVA Program	424-0173	lighted@gov.ns.ca
Munro	Ishbel	Coastal Communities Network	485-4754	coastalnet@ns.sympatico.ca
Nauss	Kelly	Colchester RDA	895-0578	knauss@corda.ca
Pilkey	Dennis	NS Dept. of Finance	424-6816	pilkeydw@gov.ns.ca
Poirier	Mark	NS Dept. of Municipal Relations	424-7922	mpoirier@gov.ns.ca
Quinlan	Kevin	NS Community College - Truro	893-5386	kevin.quinlan@nscc.ca
Robichaud	Wendy	NS Libraries & Coastal Communities Network	895-0235	seaceltns@yahoo.ca
Romanow	Paula	Carleton University	542-0862	paularomanow@ns.sympatico.ca
Segal	Brian	Antigonish Area Partnership	863-2072	bsegal@antigonisharea.com
Shookner	Malcolm	Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project	494-1590	malcolm.shookner@dal.ca
Sivak	Ben	Dalhousie GIS Centre	494-1689	bsivak@dal.ca

Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project
c/o Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre
at Dalhousie University
Suite 209, City Centre Atlantic
1535 Dresden Row
Halifax, NS
B3J 3T1

<http://www.ruralnovascotia.ca>

ph: (902) 494-1590

fax: (902) 494-3594