Initiative on the New Economy

Communication Tools and Resources in Rural Canada:
A Report for Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia

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Highlights

This report provides a comparison of the availability of various communication tools and resources in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia with those present in the other research sites of the Initiative on the New Economy Project across Canada.

Compared to the national sample, Tumbler Ridge does not offer a variety of competitive sources for Internet service. However, residents and businesses can access the Internet through DSL, wireless technology or modem via PRIS (Peace River Internet Society). Due to Tumbler Ridge’s Internet advantage, residents may access university transfer and continuing education web courses on-line.

Tumbler Ridge is one of the sites participating in Industry Canada’s ‘Community Access Program’. There has been an increase from four to six terminals for free public access terminals at the Tumbler Ridge Public Library since 2003. Public Internet access has been particularly important in Tumbler Ridge for families affected by social and economic restructuring stemming from mining layoffs in 1998, as well as the announcement of the closure of the Quintette mine in 2000 and the Bullmoose mine in 2003. Public Internet terminals are used to search for alternative employment opportunities, as well as retraining programs. The community has seen a significant increase in the number of public computers, from only 4 in 2003 to 22 in 2005. This is due to the expansion of public access terminals around the community.

Tumbler Ridge residents and businesses have access to the Tumbler Ridge News local newspaper and a regional newspaper. The Tumbler Ridge News is online at: http://www.tumblerridgenews.com/. However, the other local newspaper, the Tumbler Ridge Observer, ceased to exist in May 2005. In addition, Tumbler Ridge residents and businesses have access to two local newsletters. These newsletters include Around the Ridge and Tumbler Ridge Community Arts Council Community Events.

There are slightly fewer bulletin boards in Tumbler Ridge when compared to the national sample. This might not be surprising given that Tumbler Ridge has a variety of other options through which to communicate, and that Tumbler Ridge was a planned instant town that concentrated development and meeting spaces in a core to enhance social interaction. What is different, however, is that the average number of messages posted, particularly for community events, commercial postings, and informal economy postings, is much higher when compared to the national sample.

For Tumbler Ridge, the average number of informal and outdoor gathering places, halls for public meetings, and annual events are above the national sample. These have increased significantly since 2003 with the opening of new dining establishments and new agreements with local service groups and the school district to use their facilities for community activities. The community offers more annual events when compared to other sites across Canada. These annual events have enabled residents to build relationships that can be transformed into social
capital when needed. In fact, these networks and relationships were mobilized after the Quintette mine closure announcement in 2000 to facilitate the restructuring of the community. The community does have a range of rooms available for public events within the Community Centre.

Tumbler Ridge has a solid foundation of communication services that play a key role in building partnerships and networks between businesses, volunteer organizations, and residents. This foundation includes access to high speed Internet, a local newspaper, bulletin boards, and a range of annual events. Together, these communication services and networks have played an important role in the social and economic restructuring of Tumbler Ridge.
Initiative on the New Economy - About the Project

The Initiative on the New Economy (INE) project of the Canadian Rural and Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) works closely with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business organizations, and decision makers to identify factors that contribute to building capacity in rural and small town places across Canada.

Capacity is the ability of people residing in a place to mobilize their assets and resources to cope with stress and transition, or to capitalize on opportunities. Such capacity is built from trust and relationships grounded in institutions, organizations, businesses, and services alike. The Initiative on the New Economy (INE) project is built on four key themes to explore capacity including local governance, communications, services, and the environment. This report explores the relationship between communications and capacity.

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) has been conducting research in 32 rural and small town sites from across Canada since 1997. These sites form a type of “rural observatory” in which aspects of the Initiative on the New Economy (INE) project may be examined. The sites participating in this project reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and include forestry and mining towns, farming communities, and tourism towns. Furthermore, some of these places are located adjacent to metropolitan areas, while others are more isolated.

A map showing the location of the communities is attached to the end of this report. Five dimensions relevant for rural communities were used in selecting the sites:

- the extent of exposure to the global economy;
- the relative stability of the local economy;
- the adjacency to large metropolitan centres;
- the level of social and institutional infrastructure (high or low capabilities); and
- the extent to which the site is lagging or leading on a number of socio-economic variables (including incomes and employment).
About the Communications Inventory

In the summer of 2003, researchers visited 22 sites across Canada to collect information on the various communication resources, tools and technologies present in each community (a communication inventory). In the summer of 2005, the researchers made repeat visits to collect updated information. Visits were also made to two additional communities.

This extensive exercise has resulted in an inventory of the various communication resources, tools, and technologies in each community, as well as information about what has changed in the community over time.

Data were collected of the following items:

- Cable television and community programming
- Direct broadcast satellite
- Internet service provision and access
- Public Internet access (CAP sites) and usage
- Community websites
- Local, regional, provincial and national newspapers
- Community newsletters
- Community radio
- Community bulletin boards
- Interpersonal communication (gathering places, events, meetings)

In this report we provide a comparison of the presence of various communication tools and resources in Springhill with those present in the other research sites across Canada. Specifically, each table includes a comparison with:

- the 24 communities across Canada;
- the 9 communities in Western Canada;
- the 11 communities which have leading economic outcomes;
- the 13 communities which have lagging economic outcomes;
- the 17 communities which have high levels of capacity for taking action;
- the 7 communities which have low levels of capacity for taking action.

In terms of the rural observatory and for the purposes of comparison to other communities in it, Tumbler Ridge has leading economic outcomes and higher capabilities for taking action.
Availability

Copies of all site reports on the communications inventory were distributed to participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on the INE website (http://nre.concordia.ca) and on the Communications Theme Group website (http://www.mta.ca/rstp/nre.html).

Copies of various presentations and working papers resulting from the information collected in the communication inventory are also available on these websites.

For further information about this report or other information about the communications inventory please contact David Bruce, Communications Theme Leader, or one of our theme team members:

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Site Description – Tumbler Ridge, BC

Tumbler Ridge is British Columbia’s newest town, founded in association with the province’s last resource development ‘mega project’. Located on the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains in northeastern B.C., planning for Tumbler Ridge and the area’s coal mine developments began in 1975. The local economy was originally developed around two open pit coal mines, Quintette and Bullmoose, whose markets were Japanese steel mills.

The Provincial Government, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, managed the design and development of the community. Extensive efforts were put into the design, layout, and servicing of the town site. The community opened in 1986.

Although diversification of the local economy was part of the concept plans for the community, Tumbler Ridge faces some challenges. For example, it is not on a ‘thru’ highway, as road access comes via separate roads from either Dawson Creek or Chetwynd. Recently established provincial parks and protected areas, together with extensive snowmobile, cross country skiing, and hiking trails, offer possibilities for tourism development. A local firm was recently granted a short term timber license to develop a value added wood products mill. In 1999, the Quintette coal mine closed. In 2003, the Bullmoose mine closed. As a result, the town has undertaken a wide range of diversification activities which have included eliminating the town’s debt, securing services funding from the Provincial Government, re-selling most of the houses owned by the coal mines, and supporting new economic ventures. Among these exciting new ventures is a museum society working to develop Tumbler Ridge’s rich dinosaur finds as part of a tourism strategy.
The Importance of Communication in Rural Communities

Communication is an important element when we think about a community’s development trajectory. It is not “just” talk; rather, effective communication can mobilize people to take action. For example, many rural communities have difficulty in getting people involved in local politics, in serving on councils, in taking an active role in the public operation of their region. However, by using the right methods of communication delivering an effective message, residents develop into citizens as they become aware of local issues and learn of opportunities for participation.

Communication Metaphors
But what is communication? There are some helpful metaphors we can use to help us understand the role of communication. We can think of communication as the glue that holds a community together. Communication within a community can bind the people to each other. A community can “talk to itself”, although this does not mean that it will find consensus on all issues. However, in order to facilitate this important process, a community needs to have access to the right mix of communication tools this will allow for further interaction.

We can also think of communication as oil that acts as a lubricant for developing community togetherness, or social cohesion. Just as patterns of trust and cooperation are important for economic trade, patterns of communication help to lubricate social relations.

Communication can also be thought of as a web - the lines of influence and interaction.

The purpose of communication is to build and maintain the connections of trust necessary to link members of the community. The web is the relationships that exist in the community, and the web facilitates an exchange of information. If there is no web, there can be no exchange. The web also includes the types of communication tools available in the community influencing the communications content. For example, a community television program will create a different kind of web than a school newsletter or a community website on the Internet or a bulletin board at the local post office. But they are all webs.

Communication in Action
There are many ways to see communication in action. The transfer of messages or programs (the content) through the use of some type of communication medium is important. This is dependent upon the type of medium used (the local newspaper versus a website), who is sending the message, to whom, and so on. Think about how a municipal council communicates with residents.

Seeing communication as “ritual” suggests that communication is about the maintenance of a community over time. Through communication, communities are created, maintained, and transformed. Communication is a way of reminding us of who we are, of “where is here,” of working out problems, of celebrating identity. Think about the ritual of reading your local newspaper every week, and how that reaffirms the images you have of your community.
The audience for communication may be internal or external. This relates to the intended receivers of the messages and information. Sometimes we are communicating with people in our own community, and sometimes we are communicating with people in other places. The choice of communication technologies may be different for each case, and there may be different intentions (perhaps the local paper for reaching local people, and a website for reaching potential external investors).

Communication can also be inclusive or exclusive. This refers primarily to who participates in the communication process and the development of the content. Many forms of mass communication tend to be exclusive, as there are significant barriers to participation in the dialogue. A casual conversation at the doughnut shop, on the other hand, can be much more inclusive.

There are different levels of interaction in communication as well. At one extreme, we see many examples of one-way communication – radio, television, and the newspaper. Interactive communication, such as that at a public meeting, builds into the process a requirement for many to offer their interpretations and arguments.

The number of participants can also vary. Communication can be one-to-one (a chat at the water cooler), one-to-many (a municipal politician speaking to a Rotary luncheon), many-to-one (watching television at home) or many-to-many (a healthy town meeting, whether it is in person or through a webcast, where all participants shift between sender and receiver roles).
Communication Tools and Resources Analysis

Internet Service

One communication tool available to communities is the Internet, which can be used for a variety of communication purposes and functions, such as e-mail communication with others outside the community, posting community or business information on websites aimed at an external audience (such as information about property for sale, festivals, etc.), or providing information for use within the community (such as copies of council minutes and agenda, community events schedules, etc.) The speed of the Internet connection available in a community can affect the kinds of information that can be posted, and transactions that can occur. In addition, having a variety of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) - the companies who sell Internet service - to choose from can help to keep the cost of access to a minimum.

The variety of ISPs has not changed significantly since 2003, although residents, businesses, and institutions have a choice of at least three ISPs on average when considering Internet connection. Communities with leading economic outcomes and those with high capabilities have more choice compared to communities with lagging outcomes and low capabilities (Table 1).

Broadband, defined as high-capacity Internet service (capable of transferring large amounts of data including audio and video), is available to 50% of the communities. More of the leading and high capability communities have broadband access, suggesting that communities which could benefit from high-speed access (lagging and low capacity sites) to improve their economic situation and to take advantage of education and training opportunities over the Internet currently do not have access, placing them at a disadvantage. Almost 40% of the communities across Canada have some portion of their community excluded from access to the highest available speed of Internet service, up from 32% in 2003.

In Western Canada, the number of ISPs remains the same from 2003 and thus below the national average. Furthermore, the number of sites with broadband access has decline from 63% to 56% and a larger percentage of communities have some portion of their residents excluded from highest speed (25% in 2003 to 33% in 2005).
Table 1: Internet Service Provision in Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Western Sites</th>
<th>Tumbler Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Leading Sites</td>
<td>Lagging Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # ISP’s per site</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # ISP’s per site</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with Broadband</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with Broadband</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% With Part of Community</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded from Highest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed (2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% With Part of Community</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded from Highest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003 (N=22 sites), Summer 2005 (N=24 sites).

With one Internet Service Provider, Tumbler Ridge does not offer a variety of competitive sources for Internet service. While residents and businesses can access the Internet through broadband, part of the community continues to be excluded. Due to Tumbler Ridge’s Internet advantage, residents may access university transfer and continuing education web courses on-line through the Northern Lights College, or institutions outside the region.

Public Internet Access

Several years ago the federal government launched the Community Access Program (CAP) to provide funding assistance to help most rural communities develop some form of public Internet access. Over time, provinces and territories became funding and delivery partners. Most CAP sites have been located in libraries or schools, and there is a wide variety of programs, services, hours of availability, and fee structures for use, from community to community.

Most communities (83%) have a least one CAP site location, and several have more than one
location in the community. Over half of low capability communities now have access to at least one CAP site, while high capability areas have experienced a slight decline since 2003 (Table 2). A significant increase of CAP sites was found among leading communities (78% to 91%), while lagging communities experienced a drop from 85% to 77%.

On average, most CAP sites have six computers available for public use, up from four in 2003. Lagging sites, however, only have an average of five computers, while leading, leading and low capacity sites have higher than average numbers of public computers. Another measure of access is “persons per public computer”. There is some variation across different types of communities. CAP sites in both lagging and high capability communities have a smaller number of persons per public computer, suggesting that they would be able to provide greater frequency of access for interested citizens. In every case except low capacity sites, the number of persons per public computer has fallen since 2003. When we look at average number of users per week, we see that the greatest demands on CAP site usage are found in communities with leading economic outcomes and those with higher capabilities. This suggests that more needs to be done in other communities to attract potential learners and users to make use of the communication resources offered by the CAP site.

CAP sites in Western communities have a lower number of computers and persons per public computer ratio than the national averages, but a higher percentage of CAP sites (89%). During the summer months, Western sites were found to have a lower number of users while in the winter they have a higher number, compared with national averages.
Table 2: Public Internet Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Leading Sites</th>
<th>Lagging Sites</th>
<th>High Capability Sites</th>
<th>Low Capability Sites</th>
<th>Western Sites</th>
<th>Tumbler Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with Public Access (2003)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with Public Access (2005)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # of Public Computers in Site (2003)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # of Public Computers in Site (2005)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Persons per Public Computer (2005)</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Users per Week, Summer (2003)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Users per Week, Summer (2005)</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Users per Week, Winter (2003)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Users per Week, Winter (2005)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003 (N=22 sites), Summer 2005 (N=24 sites).

Tumbler Ridge is one of the sites participating in Industry Canada’s ‘Community Access Program’. The community has seen a significant increase in the number of public computers, from only 4 in 2003 to 22 in 2005. Residents are able to have public access at the local CAP centre based in the library, TRENDS employment society, Northern Lights College and KC’s
Dollar Store and More. Public Internet access has been particularly important in Tumbler Ridge for families affected by social and economic restructuring within the community. Public Internet terminals can be used to search for alternative employment opportunities, as well as educational and retraining programs.

**Municipal Use of the Internet**

Municipal websites can provide valuable information about the community to both its residents and its potential visitors. For those communities with widespread Internet access, having a municipal website is an easy way to provide or search for information on local events, services, and news. This is especially important in rural areas where people tend to be more spread out and perhaps have less daily interaction with other interactive forms of communication.

On average, 58% of communities have an official municipal website. Communities with leading economic outcomes are somewhat more likely to have an official website than lagging communities, while high and low capability sites are near the average. Just over half of Western communities have an official municipal website.

Often, communicating with an elected official can be difficult. The use of email by local councillors can make it easier for their constituents to make contact and voice their comments or complaints. On average, 92% of communities had the capability to contact elected officials electronically. In Western Canada, all of the communities are able to contact their councils electronically. In terms of the response that residents receive, 89% of elected councils communicate electronically with residents.

**Table 3: Municipal Use of the Internet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Tumbler Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Leading Sites</td>
<td>Lagging Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with an official Municipal Website</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with Ability for Residents to Email Elected Officials</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Elected Councils Communicate Electronically with Residents</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tumbler Ridge has a comprehensive municipal website that provides information for residents, visitors, and businesses. Residents also have the capability to contact their officials through email.

Newspapers

The presence of a local newspaper (usually a weekly publication) is an important communication tool in a small community. In most cases, the entire community receives the paper in one way or another, and it therefore becomes an important tool for sharing local news, social events, results of sports and school activities, and advertising for local businesses. When a local weekly paper does not exist, communities may be dependent on other weekly newspapers as a communication tool - a column or a page about the community may appear in a neighbouring community’s newspaper, for example. Without a local news avenue, it is rare that sufficient local news and information is carried in larger regional and provincial papers.

Since 2005, the number of communities with a local newspaper has fallen to 17%. Newspapers were more likely to be found in communities with leading economic outcomes and with high capabilities, suggesting that these sites are more likely to have the resources and initiative needed (Table 4). In most cases, these communities also have larger populations which can sustain or support the needed circulation to pay for the costs of producing the paper. All communities have access to at least one regional newspaper. Western sites have seen a slight fall in the percentage of communities with a local paper, but are above the national average with 22%.
### Table 4: Presence of Local and Regional Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Western Sites</th>
<th>Tumbler Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Leading Sites</td>
<td>Lagging Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with at Least One Local Paper (2003)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with at Least One Local Paper (2005)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with at Least One Regional Paper (2003)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with at Least One Regional Paper (2005)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003 (N=22 sites), Summer 2005 (N=24 sites).

Tumbler Ridge residents and businesses have access to one local newspaper and a number of regional newspapers. The Tumbler Ridge News is online at: http://www.tumblerridgenews.com/. However, the other local newspaper, the Tumbler Ridge Observer, ceased to exist in May 2005. With a population of about 2,000, Tumbler Ridge has a solid foundation of newspaper media to serve its local businesses and residents.

**Newsletters**

Community newsletters can also play an important role as a communication tool, especially in the absence of a local newspaper. These are often produced infrequently or only a few times per year, usually by a volunteer group, and usually free of charge. Almost 80% of the communities across Canada have at least one newsletter, and these seem to be especially important in communities with lagging economic outcomes (Table 5). Since 2003, the percentage of communities with a newsletter has increased for all leading or lagging, and high or low capability sites, perhaps indicating the increased importance of having newsletters to fill a communications void left by the loss of local newspapers over the past two years. Among the Western Canadian sites, newsletters have become increasingly important as the percentage with a least one newsletter rose from 63 to 78%.

Some communities also benefit from the availability of community newsletters which originate in a neighbouring community but which also contain local items. This is the case for 42% of the
In addition to a local newspaper, Tumbler Ridge residents and businesses have access to two local newsletters. These newsletters include Around the Ridge and Tumbler Ridge Community Arts Council Community Events.

**Meeting Spaces and Community Events**

Places where people can gather to meet and talk formally and informally, and to celebrate the life of the community and its citizens and organizations are extremely important as a communication tool. Without places for people to gather, there are limited opportunities for sharing. These may be places which are used for other purposes (such as restaurants, bars, the post office) but where people communicate with one another while doing something else. These may also be more formalized places like community or church halls, which are booked and reserved for planned
meetings or events. These places may also be outdoor spaces which by their design or location facilitate communication.

Equally important are community events, which ritualize the life of the community and offer an opportunity for the community to present images of itself - an annual festival, an annual parade, an annual church supper, etc. These provide ways for the community to express who and what they are. By extension, the act of celebrating provides a venue for participants from the community to interact with one another and with visitors.

Most communities have a variety of formal and informal meeting spaces, with a slight increase in venues over the past two years (Table 6). Lagging and low capability sites have a lower than average number of halls for social events, but a higher than average number for public meetings. Since 2003, Western sites have seen an increase in the number of informal and formal meeting places, as well as annual events. On average, communities have eight annual events, with those in leading and low capability communities reporting a slightly higher number of annual events on average.
### Table 6: Meeting Spaces and Annual Community Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Western Sites</th>
<th>Tumbler Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Leading Sites</td>
<td>Lagging Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Informal Gathering Places (2003)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg# Informal Meeting Places (2005)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Outdoor Gathering Places (2003)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Outdoor Gathering Places (2005)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Halls for Public Meetings (2003)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Halls for Public Meetings (2005)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Halls for Social Events (2003)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Halls for Social Events (2005)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Annual Events (2003)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg # Annual Events (2005)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NRE Communications Inventory, Summer 2003 (N=22 sites), Summer 2005 (N=24 sites).

For Tumbler Ridge, the average number of informal and outdoor gathering places, halls for public meetings, and annual events are above the national sample and have increased significantly since 2003. Cashmere’s, the Golf Course Restaurant (under new management), Ridge Café, and Vinnie’s Video and Food Court are all new eating establishments, and the District of Tumbler Ridge has entered into an agreement with School District #59 to allow community groups to use schools after-hours for community events. The golf course, Flatbed...
Park, the community centre and local churches also serve as local meeting places. Notable among the events held in the community are the Ridge Ramble cross-country race and biathlon, sled dog competitions, Grizzly Valley Days, the garden tour, Red Ribbon Days, Dino Days, and the weekly walk/run events. It is important to note, though, that Tumbler Ridge was a planned instant town that concentrated development and meeting spaces in a core to enhance social interaction.
Potential Communication Opportunities

Tumbler Ridge has a solid foundation of communication services that play a key role in building partnerships and networks between businesses, volunteer organizations, and residents. This foundation includes access to high speed Internet to anyone in the community, two local newspapers, bulletin boards, and a range of meeting places and annual events. Together, these communication services and networks have played an important role in the social and economic restructuring of Tumbler Ridge.

The key questions that everyone in Tumbler Ridge should be asking of themselves, and of the organizations they participate in, include:

• Are we making maximum use of all of the communication tools and resources available to us?

• Are we effective in developing the content of our messages?

• Are we reaching the right people with our message, or should we look at different communication tools and strategies?

• How can we maximize the opportunities available to us not just from new communication technologies (the Internet), but also from the informal gathering of people throughout the town?

• Are there opportunities to use new forms of communication in our community, such as establishing a community radio station?

There are many opportunities to enhance our communication practices. By assessing your answers to these questions, perhaps new ideas and solutions will become apparent, and provide improved economic and social outcomes for Tumbler Ridge.
Sources of Interest

Books


CRRF Reports
These reports are accessible through the project website of the Initiative on the New Economy: [nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca).


**Internet Sources**

Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, [www.crrf.ca](http://www.crrf.ca)


New Rural Economy. [nre.concordia.ca](http://nre.concordia.ca).
