



UNHEARD VOICES: THE WORKING LIVES OF RURAL WOMEN

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Agenda



Understanding the Rural Context

Description of Setting

Accessing Women's Stories

Relational Cultural Theory

Meta-themes

Career Resilience

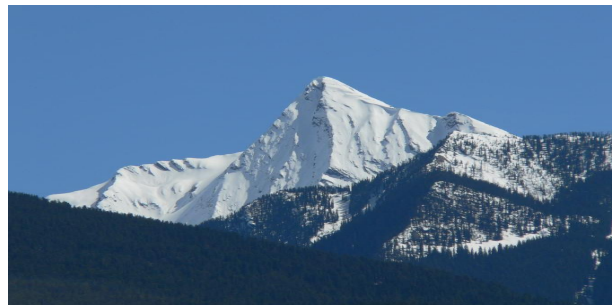
Macrosystems

Interventions

Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry 2008

“Being poor in rural Canada means more than just not having enough. It also means having to travel long distances to get enough.”

(p. 52)



Federal and Provincial Policy Agendas



**“The health and vitality of rural and northern communities hinges on federal and provincial policy agendas that seek to alleviate inequity stemming from geography, demographic, social and economic differences, while encouraging sustainable development.” (p. 1)
(Annis et al., 2007)**



Challenges Facing the Rural Poor

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (2006)

Rural Transportation and Rural Roads

- Transportation necessary for basic needs
- Absence can exacerbate impacts of poverty

Rural Health and Access to Health Care

- Shorter life expectancies and poorer health

Rural Education and Literacy

- 2007, 23% of people aged 20 to 34 in rural areas had less than a high school education

Government and Private Sector Services

- Greatly impacted by declining rural population

Employment Issues

- employment is often linked to low-paying service sector jobs that have few benefits.



Challenges Facing the Rural Poor

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (2008)

Immigration

- New Canadians face language barriers in rural areas

Gender Issues in Rural Canada

- Child care challenges and lack of well paying employment
- Increase in male suicide rates due to decline in male-dominated primary sector jobs

The Informal Economy

- Negatively impacted by population decline

Low Farm Incomes and its Consequences

- Farmers are increasingly seeking off farm work

Hardship in the Forestry Sector

- A single mill closure can have a devastating impact on single industry communities

Suggested Action: Employment and Training



- Targeting education based on demographics
- Assistance with cost of raising children
- Benefits for the many self-employed working poor
- Foster growth in sectors other than primary industry such as the cultural sector (Singh 2006)

Rural Women

- One in five women live in rural areas
- 14 percent of women are engaged in non-farm self-employment as compared to 11% of women in urban areas (2001)
- Recent growth in self-employment in rural areas has tended to be in the less financially secure own-account category (du Plessis, 2004).





Rural Practitioners

*What kind of role do you currently play
in your location in rural Canada?*

What barriers stand in your way?

Settings



- Populations of settings vary from 350 to 1800
- Growth rate of less than 4%
- Accommodation & Food Services; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Retail
- Less than 30% of population are employed year round
- Average total income for men is 15% higher than the average total income for women

Settings

- >75% of women earn less than \$30,000/yr.
- Unemployment rate was 18.4% for youth aged 15 to 24
- 28.5% of families in the area earned below \$30,000 in annual income.
- 70% of women were or had been single parents.



Rural Women's Stories



- Relational Cultural Theory
- Possible selves maps
- Life-lines
- Life-space maps
- Future projections
- Meta-themes
- Career Resilience
- Macrosystems
- Interventions



Relational-Cultural Theory

- Theory incorporates an understanding of gender in the study of human psychology.
- Goal of development is forming growth-fostering relationships
- Nurturing and care giving are gendered responsibilities in our society.
- Nurturing and care giving are relationship building skills.

The Critical Role of Relationships

The Iron Triangle of Life



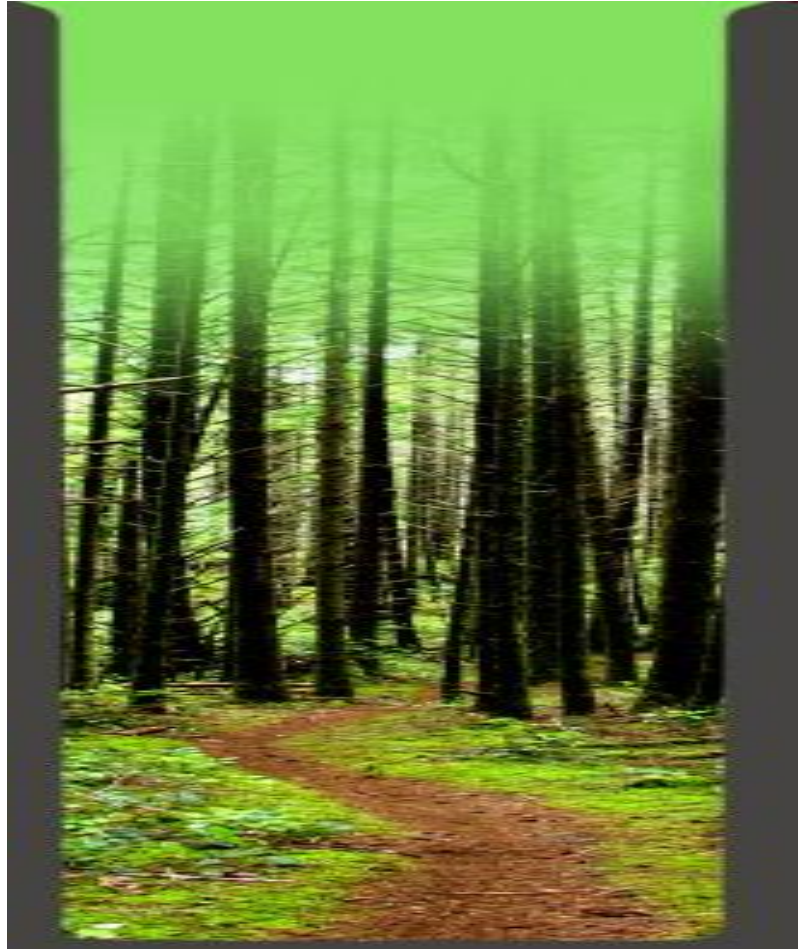
- Although the work of building and sustaining relationships has been devalued, it is critical to the functioning of all aspects of life:
 - in the home
 - in the community
 - at school
 - in the workplace

Relational Values

“Therefore, building communities of resistance and resilience—where alternative relational values are prized and where people support one another in becoming agents of change—is essential to the full realization of growth in connection for all people” (Jordan, 2000, p. 56).



<http://www.pathstothefuture.com/>

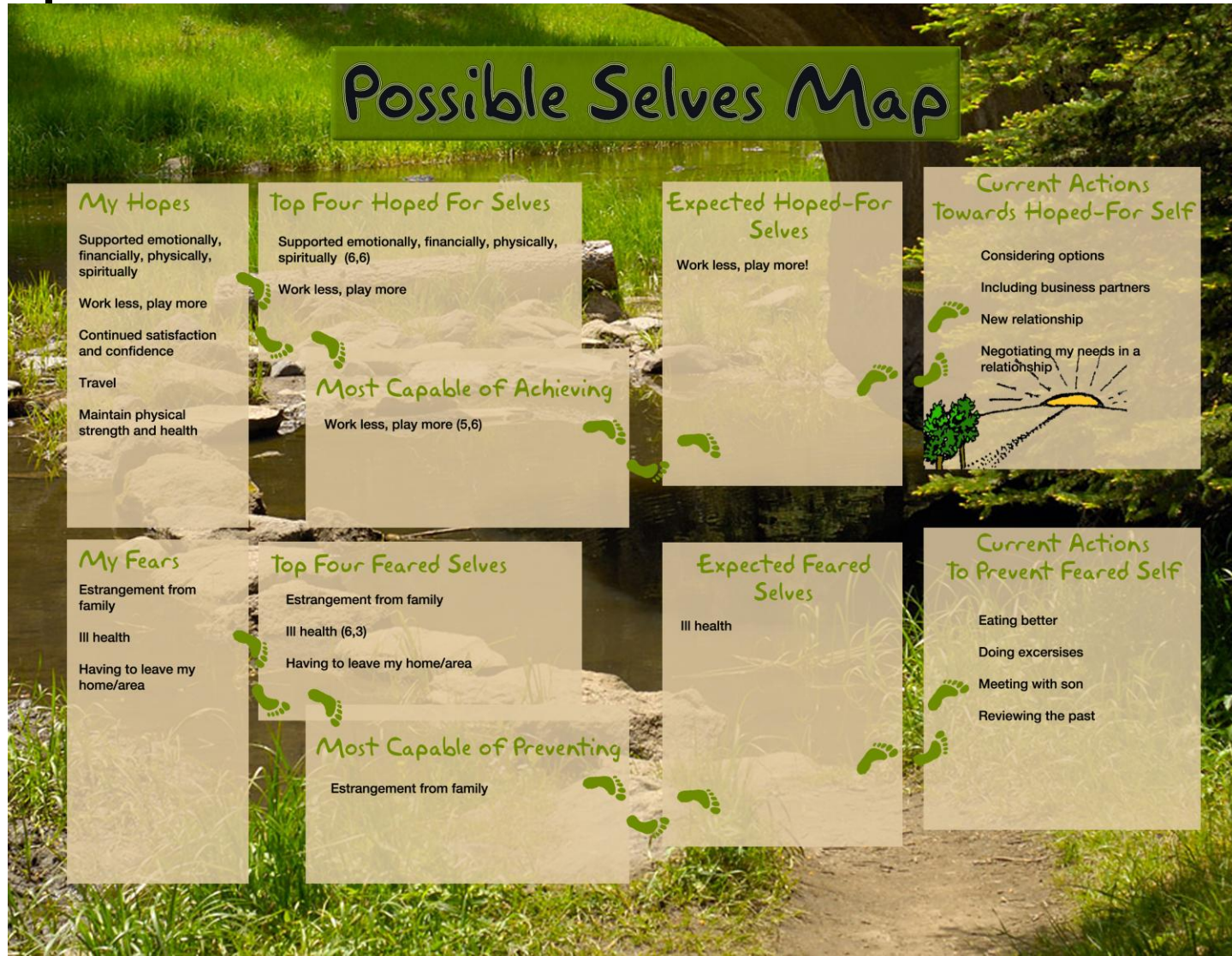




Possible Selves

- Future-oriented, personalized component of self-knowledge
- Constructed through self-reflection and use of imagination
- Represent the hopes, expectations and fears of people considering their future
- Standards by which one gauges current behaviours or information
- Act as motivators to attain goals and avoid fears
- Procedural knowledge to guide behaviour

Possible Selves Mapping





Important Hoped-for Selves

20	Spiritual student and guide
20	Acceptor of life passages
20	Happy
20	Be a mother
40	Be supported: emotionally, financially, spiritually, physically
40	Work less, play more
20	Find a Partner
20	Be a Mother



Important Feared Selves

20	Critical illness or death of child or partner
20	Abandonment by partner
20	Being lonely
20	Stop learning
40	Estrangement from family
40	Be in Ill health
20	Have a broken heart
20	Being Single

Life-lines

“You need to claim the events of your life to make yourself yours”

- Highlighting key events, self-defining memories, turning points
- Reviewing important periods/events
- Assessing impact
- Illuminating patterns and themes

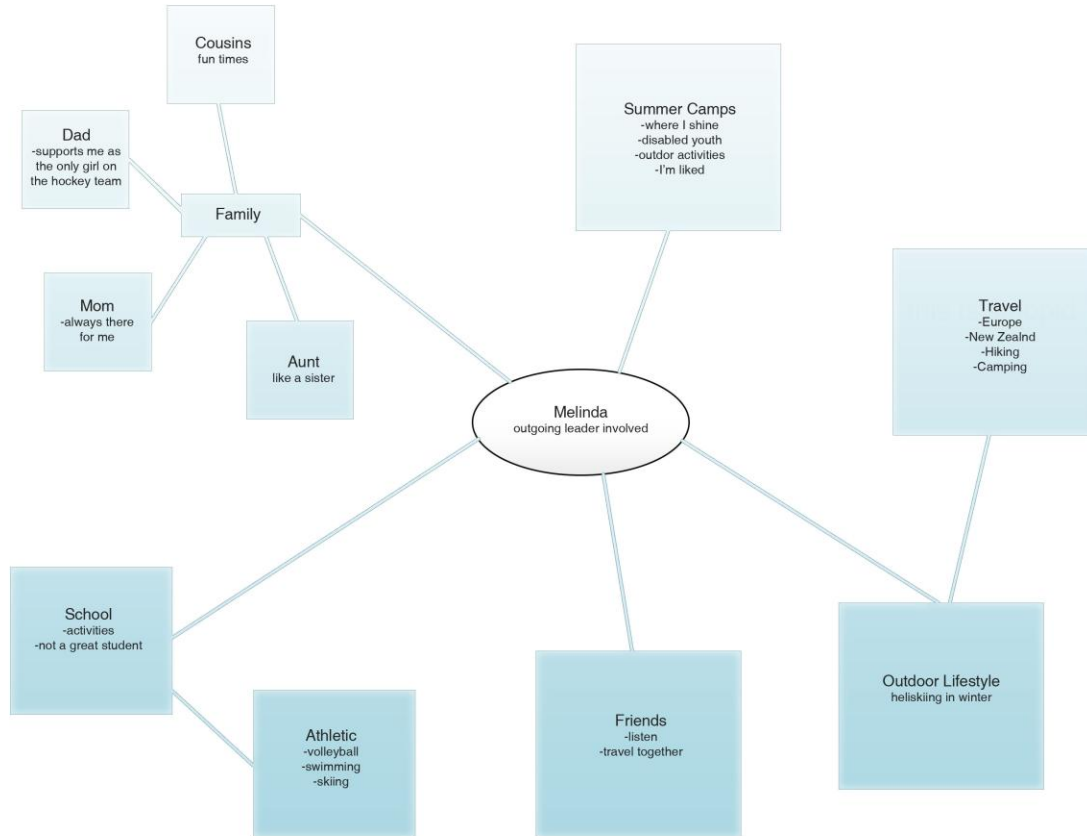




Lifespace Mapping (external resources)

- Provide a perspective on the self, including supports and strengths, obstacles and needs
- Provide both a macroscopic and microscopic views of the individual
- Act as a permanent record – allows youth to return to the map for review and to gain a long-term perspective
- Begins with a circle on the paper labelled with name

Life-space Map



Appendix D: Lifespace Map

Future Projections

- Think about top hopes and fears for the future
- What would happen if you did nothing from now on to achieve your hopes and prevent your fears?
- Imagine moving towards your goals and successfully avoiding your fears
 - Two years
 - Five years
 - Ten years





Future Projection

In my last relationship it wasn't really an option to be here and now it's becoming more of a possibility and I'm seeing that possibility for the first time. It would be nice to be near my family especially if I'm having children. And then in ten years, I imagine hopefully I'll still be around here and helping to take care of my parents (20's)



Future Projection

Pretty much the same, with hopefully a bit less work and a bit more play. I'd like to read more... and develop that intuitive wisdom that I feel like I have... Work on this relationship that I have that's very different than any relationship I've had in the past (40's).



Future Projection

In two years time definitely looking at finding a home, not just a physical house, but the location of the land- Yeah, I sort of feel that that's part of my calling somehow but I don't know how that's going to unfold. And closer family ties. So in five years: doing more to help others, more financially secure and able to travel and speak more easily. And still very active in ten years, but content. Always looking for relaxing, exploring

Age 50

Metathemes



"Three-fourths of a penny for your thoughts.."

The Pink-Collar Ghetto

"And there just isn't the choice in a rural community to—like in a city there's a place for everybody, there's all different areas, from technological to physical and you don't think twice about seeing a female carpenter or computer expert or whatever. And here, in a small town like ours, you can be a teacher, you can be a nurse, you can be a waitress, you can run your flower business. It's same old, same old, pink ghetto." (Lynette)

Metatheme: Community Support Systems

“My acquaintances, my clientele, those people that I still call friends but we don’t necessarily hang out socially all the time, but they’re very important. I feel I’m supported, I’ve got this huge net of people that I know, even though we may not be close, I could still say, ‘I need ten bucks’ and they would give it.” (Alexis)

“Without women in the community? Well, I wouldn’t know it. I wouldn’t know a community at all. (Laughter) I wouldn’t know anything about it. I would feel no connection, whatsoever. I would try to feel it, to the land. But I’m not sure, there’d be no relationship.” (Martha)





Metatheme: Concern for the Future

“...the loss of MD, right, because everybody needs their health issues addressed at one time or the other...the driving to [nearby town] for everything that you need to be taken care of...then the closing down of the mill in [nearby town] that happened last year...so loss of jobs a very jittery kind of situation within the logging community... fear that we might become on the verge of becoming a ghost town.” (Susan)

“I had to get off welfare, that’s the worst thing I could have done is get pregnant and go on welfare, you know, like in my mind I may have made it worse but I felt my family saw it as a really bad thing to do, to continue to collect social assistance and to not go and work continually.” (Martha)

A Moment in Time – Concerns of younger women

Over the past 3 years prior to my research and one year into the research project out of the small cohort of those aged 17 to 21:

- 3 youth died in one car accident
- 3 youth died in a second car accident
- 1 youth died in a skiing accident
- 2 youth died in an avalanche
- 4 youth suicides

Plus an increase in mental health issues - hospitalized for severe depression /manic behaviours/drug overdoses





Rhizomes



My life began as a tiny seed, fragile and delicate.
Unnoticeably, my roots reached down and took hold.
As the years went by, they grew stronger and stronger,
Nourished by the love of those around me.
Fed by snow-capped peaks and spirited rivers,
Fueled with warmth and shelter.

In time, a rhizome formed, stretching and spreading,
Traversing over well-known fields and valleys,
Reaching for untrodden pathways, unexplored terrain.
Branching out and seeking new sustenance,
Excited by free-living exploits
Ferretting out unknown sources of stimulation.

Entwining with other roots and branching into complex
patterns,
Surprisingly, out of this seemingly convoluted mass,
A variegated, multifaceted plant – surfaces.



People Dimension: Resilience within their Community

- Individuals must have a strong sense of self and determination
- People must feel optimistic about the future of the community.
- There is a spirit of mutual assistance and co-operation in the community.
- People must feel a sense of attachment to their community.
- There is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels.

Identifying Strengths / Barriers

- Identifying Strengths:
 - What will support her hoped-for selves?
 - What will diminish her feared selves?
 - Lost Selves

- Identifying Barriers:
 - What will get in the way of achieving hoped for selves?
 - What will diminish feared selves?





Addressing Lost Selves

Consider your future as you imagined it before [major life event].

Try to remember how you imagined your future to be.

What sorts of things did you hope for and dream about for yourself?

Think of this as your “best possible life” or your “happily ever after,” if you had been able to achieve it. Please write a description of the things you imagined. Be as specific as you can.

Consider the life you imagine the for yourself currently, and in the

future. What sorts of things do you hope for and dream about? Imagine

that your life has gone as well as it possibly could have. You have

worked hard and achieved your goals. Think of this as your “best

possible life” or your “happily ever after.” Write a description of

Naming Personal Strengths

<http://www.dependablestrengths.org/about.htm>

- Uncovering a skill, talent, or quality
- OR describing a time when you did something that you were proud of
- Facilitating the story-telling process
- Mapping positive strengths



Identifying Key Relationships

- What relationships are going to influence her career choice?
- What relationships are going to be influenced by her career choice?
- What relationships does she need in place to make her choices work?



Relationship with Nature



- Provides individuals with a sanctuary for healing, a place to achieve new perspectives and to embrace new possibilities.
- When saturated with chaos and stress, the physical environment offers a sense of place, of rootedness.
- Expands the definition of mental health from an emphasis on individual autonomy to include the capacity for experiencing mutually enhancing relationships and reciprocity with nature.
- The natural world presents another external protective factor.
- If our relationship with the natural world is healthy, then our human relationships are likely to be healthy as well.



Resource Dimension: Resilience within their Community

- Employment in the community is diversified beyond a single large employer.
- Major employers in the community are locally owned.
- The community has a strategy for increasing independent local ownership.
- There is openness to alternative ways of earning a living and economic activity.
- The community looks outside itself to seek and secure resources (skills, expertise and finance) that will address identified areas of weakness.
- The community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy.



Ideas for Creating Jobs

Need Support in the areas of:

- entrepreneur support services
- self-employment strategies
- entrepreneur network facilitation

Community needs to carry out feasibility studies and needs assessments:

- community-owned venture development
- co-operative employment partnership
- joint ventures
- nonprofit enterprise development
- outside entrepreneurial recruitment
- worker-ownership

Rural Practitioners



What suggestions do you have for career practitioners working in rural communities in terms of:

- Their roles
- sustainability of community
- Working with rural women

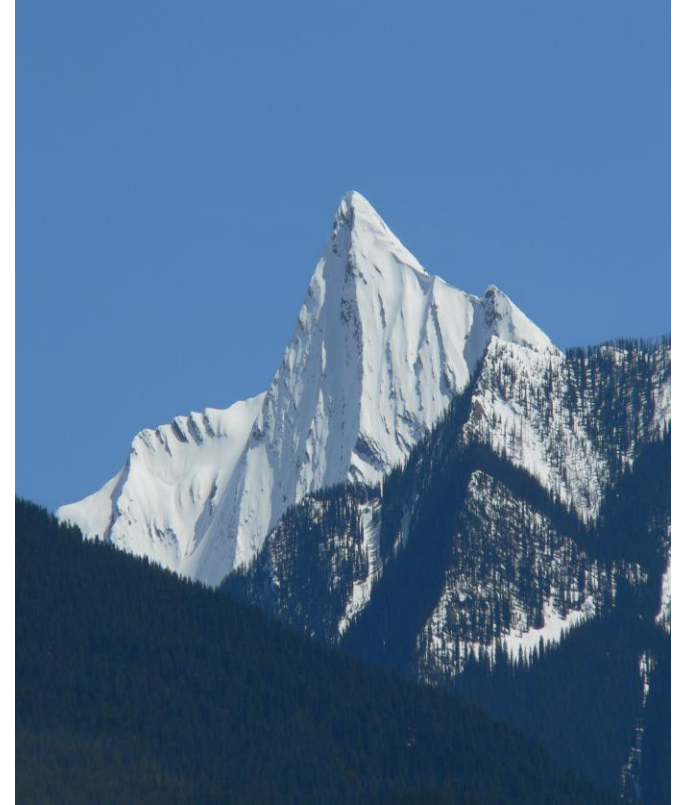
I am the mountains that have endured the passage of time.

Mineshafts cut through me and my once pristine green quilt has been shaved in places so that my carefully made soil spills down rushing streams into the valleys below.

My ridges are not quite so sharp and my pointed edges have been filed by the wind and rain and snow.

I am all that is tenacious, persistent, robust, and hardy.

I am the backbone of British Columbia, rated high among the beauties of the world.





Rural Resources

The BC Rural Network - Building Stronger Rural and Remote Communities in British Columbia

- <http://www.bcruralnetwork.ca/>

Rural Alberta's Development Fund

- <http://www.ruralalbertasfund.com/>
- <http://www.communityfuturescanada.ca/>

Rural Team Manitoba

- <http://ruralteammanitoba.cimnet.ca/cim/170.dhtm>

Canada's Rural Partnership

<http://www.rural.gc.ca/RURAL/display-afficher.do?id=1230057084263&lang=eng>

Rural Women Making Change

- <http://www.rwmc.uoguelph.ca/page.php?order=country&p=12&pg=2>

Nova Scotia Rural Communities Foundation

- <http://www.ruralcommunitiesfdn.ca/>

PEI Rural Alliance

http://www.peiruralalliance.com/PEI_Rural_Alliance.html



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