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Building Community:

Recreation Development Challenges for Isolated Communities

Caroline Sparks

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recreation is an essential ingredient for healthy communities. Recreation development is influenced by varied forces and factors. Isolated communities possess characteristics and demonstrate patterns of recreation which set them apart from their distant, urban neighbours. Although facing a number of unique challenges to recreation development, communities tell stories of successful initiatives and strategies. Based on the author's experience and perspective, this paper offers a brief introduction to some of challenges facing isolated communities and identifies several examples which support healthy, community recreation development.

An isolated community is characterized by more than geographic distance and a small population. It may require a boat or plane to leave the community, and access to services and facilities is limited. Employment opportunities may be few, and social or health issues may be more apparent. Stories from isolated communities describe how people, groups and governments do come together and using recreation as a vehicle, address challenges with the goal of building stronger and healthier communities.

Recreation development challenges can impact isolated communities across the country, or several communities in one region. Isolated communities often face financial

challenges to recreation such as insufficient funding for operations and maintenance, high liability insurance premiums, and restrictive funding criteria. Small and isolated communities frequently face human resource challenges which can include hiring and retaining qualified recreation staff, recruiting and supporting community volunteers, minimizing burnout, and enabling training opportunities. People living in isolated communities may face barriers to recreation participation related to transportation, access to personal equipment, or cost. Support to build relationships, enable healthy lifestyle choices, and address social issues—within the context of local culture—needs to come from families, communities and governments.

From a common understanding of the nature of isolated communities in Canada, the opportunities to support recreation development become clearer. There is no correct answer to any one of the challenges communities may experience. The process of recreation development needs to be community-driven, but is more likely successful when policy, strategies and programs are aligned with a community's needs and capacity. To encourage further discussion, this paper offers several promising examples: a federal funding program for facility renovations; a multi-year funding agreement between several levels of partners; a post-secondary program offering a certificate in rural recreation; projects which distribute recreation equipment to isolated communities; and the national emphasis on the after-school time period supporting children and families.

Keywords: community, recreation, isolated, remote, rural, North

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INTRODUCTION

Recreation plays a key role in developing vibrant communities. Recreation fosters personal health and supports community-wide social, economic and environmental well-being. Recreation touches on many aspects of our lives; weaving a network that supports and strengthens people and the places where we live.

The role that recreation plays, and the ease with which a supportive recreation environment evolves, varies from community to community. It is influenced by a variety of dynamic, community characteristics such as people, resources, public policy, geographic location or infrastructure. A concerted effort from a network of people, groups, organizations and governments is needed to develop a supportive community recreation system. Isolated, rural or remote communities possess unique characteristics, distinct from their urban counterparts, which present challenges for recreation development.

WHAT IS AN ISOLATED COMMUNITY?

Prior to discussing the challenges facing recreation development in isolated communities, a common understanding of “isolated community” is desirable. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2008) provides a simple definition of “isolated” as remote or lonely. However, a web search portrays a variety of interpretations for “isolated” and demonstrates its use interchangeably with the terms “rural” and “remote”.

Geographically, “rural”, “remote” and “isolated” refer to communities located in non-urban settings; approximately 95% of Canada’s land mass is non-urban. The Public Health Agency of Canada (2009) describes “remote” as communities with year-round road access, yet located more than 350 km from the nearest service center, while “isolated” refers to communities without year-round road access. Sutherns, McPhedran & Haworth-Brockman (2003) offer the description of a remote community as one which is accessible by air and without phone service. In their report on remote and rural women’s health, these authors associate “rural” with having a small population base, limited access to public and private services and facilities, and the need to drive to get anywhere. Regardless of the precise definition, it can be acknowledged that most communities in the three territories, and a number of communities in the northern regions of the provinces, are rural, remote or isolated.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

When considering the various definitions, it becomes evident that isolated communities possess distinct characteristics to urban communities. Weather and environment can impact the magnitude of this isolation. For example, during summer months it may take three hours to drive to the nearest major centre. However, winter months or inclement weather conditions can increase the time required to four or five hours. Conversely, during winter months, some communities in the Northwest Territories become more accessible due to winter/ice roads.

As well as a smaller population, isolated communities tend to have different demographics to urban areas. The percentage of those under the age of 19 and over 60 tends to be higher, while the percentage of working-aged adults is lower. In many isolated communities, the proportion of Aboriginal people is higher than in urban settings; while the proportion of immigrants is lower (CIHI, 2006). Slack, Bourne & Gertler (2003) note that remote communities typically have higher unemployment rates, lower levels of formal education, and a lower average income per capita.

Isolated communities may exist because of a single or limited economic driver such as a resource-based industry of mining, fishing or forestry. As a result, the potential for employment and economic growth is limited. In some cases, a large gap in income distribution emerges with specialized workers being paid significantly higher than other workers (Slack, Bourne & Gertler, 2003). Moreover, the boom-bust nature of resource-based economies can lead to a rapid influx or decline of residents in a community and be accompanied by a variety of societal and infrastructure-related challenges.

Different patterns of health and health-related behaviours are evident in isolated communities. In a report on the health of rural Canadians, higher rates of mortality, injury and interpersonal violence are noted, along with more people reporting health-risks such as overweight or obesity and smoking (CIHI, 2006). Across the North¹, significantly higher expenditures per household on alcohol and drugs than the Canadian

¹ Where “North” appears capitalized, it refers to land north of the 60th parallel: Nunavut, NWT and Yukon.

average (Sparks, 2009) are a cause for concern. Regardless of the definition or characteristics used to describe an isolated community, isolation implies much more than simply a remote geographic location.

For the purposes of this paper, isolated refers to communities exhibiting a combination of the following characteristics:

- Access to public and private services and facilities is limited.
- Accessing a major service centre requires time and money.
- Access may be by air or boat only.
- The community is said to have a small population.
- Climate and weather may compound the sense of isolation.
- The economic base may be weak or variable, while opportunities for employment and/or advancement to senior positions are limited.
- Social and health issues may be more apparent.

RECREATION IN ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Recreation patterns and preferences in isolated communities show some apparent differences to urban recreation patterns. Recreation may involve individual or independent activities and is usually less structured or unorganized. Group or team activities may not be popular due to low rates of participation, small numbers in specific age groups, and/or no opportunities for competition as other communities are too far away. Subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, berry picking and community-

kitchens may be commonplace in the community. Cultural events, community gatherings and celebrations contribute to the sense of community. Arctic sports, Dene sports, fiddling and jigging—traditionally developed for small indoor spaces such as igloos; continue to be a popular form of recreation. During long winter months, the community hall, natural-ice arena or school gyms provide communal indoor space while outdoors is the space of choice during long summer days.

Each small and isolated community has at least one recreation story to tell. Stories such as Jordin making it to the NHL, an at-risk youth becoming employed as a river guide, or an Elder managing diabetes through a walking group, help bring a community together. The path of recreation development in isolated communities does have its ups and downs. The successes each community creates are often a result of the tenacity with which they face the challenges.

This paper introduces some of the challenges facing recreation development in isolated communities. The discussion is general and does not intend to disregard or minimize the differences between communities across the country. As community recreation is shaped by forces and factors both within and outside of the community, an isolated community in northern Quebec may experience recreation quite differently to a Yukon community; and will likely have a different story to tell. By listening to these stories, we learn to appreciate the role recreation plays, and the challenges faced, in isolated communities. Positioning the stories in a national context may identify the opportunities and strategies which could address some of the challenges.

CHALLENGES FACING ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

The challenges facing isolated communities are multi-faceted and impacted by a complex set of factors and forces. For example, challenges might originate from “outside”² as in the case of changes to a federal funding program. Challenges may emerge following a community crisis such as a fire which destroys a community’s only recreation facility. Global changes like an increased focus on childhood obesity may influence community recreation development. Geographic location can limit access to equipment such as skates, hockey sticks and wrestling mats, or make it difficult to attract seasonal pool staff.

Results of a recent environmental scan provide insight into some of the challenges facing Northern communities. Conducted with support from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association’s *Everybody gets to play*TM initiative, the *Northern Environmental Scan* (Riessner & Sparks, 2006) gathered information from justice workers, recreation directors, youth workers and educators about the barriers to recreation participation facing children and youth living in low income situations. As shown in Figure 1, an analysis of the data found the most pressing barriers to recreation participation in the North to be lifestyle choices and social issues; poor family support; lack of volunteers; relevant program funding; and poor government support. Since conducting this scan, ongoing work has reconfirmed that these factors are also significant challenges facing community recreation.

² “Outside” is a common term referring to urban centres in southern Canada.

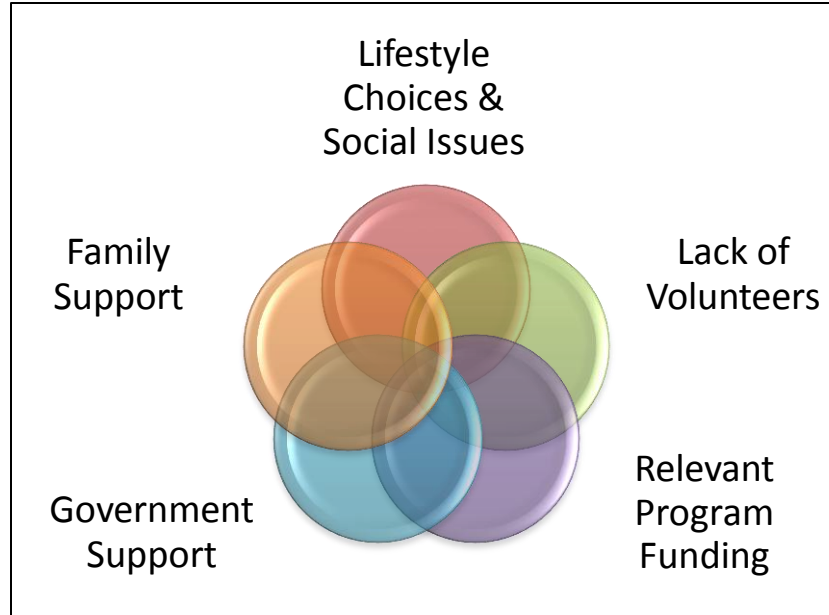


FIGURE 1: NORTHERN BARRIERS TO RECREATION PARTICIPATION

Planning and evaluation of various recreation projects in the Yukon have consistently identified similar challenges. A recent survey of Yukon's rural communities asked recreation leaders to describe the challenges to delivering successful after-school programs (Sparks & Duke, 2011). As shown in Figure 2, the top challenges identified are staff, volunteers, funding and parental support. Communities often mention that access to school facilities and rigid rules about school bussing present additional constraints to sustaining community recreation programming.

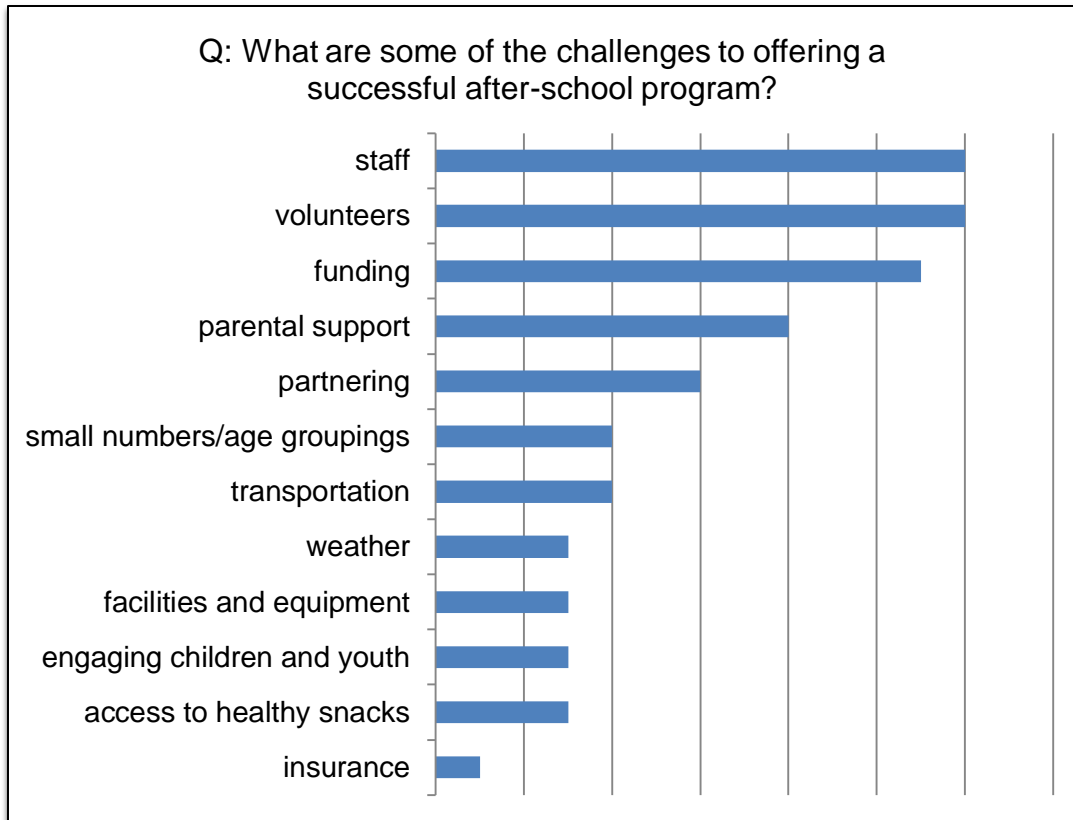


FIGURE 2: CHALLENGES IN DELIVERY OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Sources such as those described above have provided some background for the ensuing discussion. As a cursory web-search for related literature uncovered very few results, informal information sources contribute to the perspectives presented. Informal sources include information gathered by the author through discussions with recreation professionals and volunteers; through community consultations and workshops; and through the process of planning and evaluating community-based recreation initiatives in the North. Figure 3 identifies the challenges discussed which are by no means exhaustive. Rather, they reflect the perspective of the author at the time of writing.

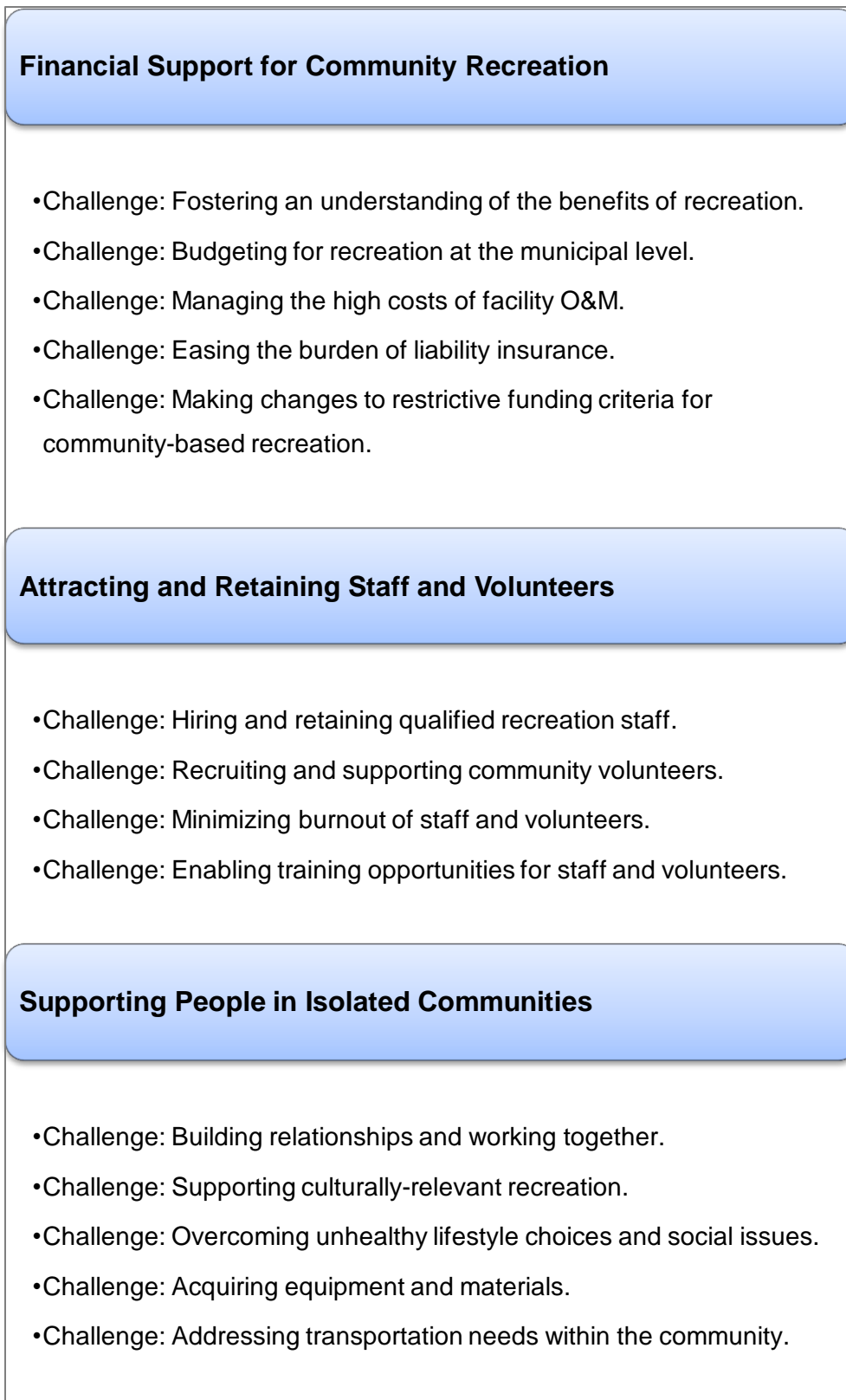


FIGURE 3: CHALLENGES FACING ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY RECREATION

Challenges:

- **Fostering an understanding of the benefits of recreation.**
- **Budgeting for recreation at the municipal level.**
- **Managing the high costs of facility O&M.**
- **Easing the burden of liability insurance.**
- **Making changes to restrictive funding criteria for community-based recreation.**

Communities and councils who are unaware of the benefits of recreation, and/or outside agencies and governments who do not understand the realities of living in an isolated community, are challenges identified in the *Recreation Director's Handbook* (Manitoba, 2008). The *Northern Environmental Scan* (Riessner & Sparks, 2006) found that poor government support was a perceived barrier to recreation participation; poor government support refers to a misunderstanding of community characteristics, or the implementation of policy and programs which are not relevant to local needs.

Little regard on the part of governments or outside agencies for the benefits of recreation can lead to poor support for recreation. Community recreation planning may not be undertaken, or budgets may be limited or cut. Proposals or grant applications for community driven initiatives may be turned down, or staff training opportunities denied. The challenge is to educate and inform decision-makers about the benefits of recreation in an effort to obtain their support. In isolated communities this challenge may be

compounded because community leaders and elected officials are hard to reach; their time is consumed with more pressing issues; or they are resistant to change.

Where community populations are small, so too is the tax base from which revenues are generated. Slack, Bourne & Gertler (2003) note that recreation expenditures per capita are higher in remote and rural communities. As the full cost of providing recreation facilities and services is rarely recouped through user fees and taxes; funds for recreation must be diverted from other sources. Communities may rely heavily on government transfers and payments to support the provision of public recreation services and facilities.

When transfer payments occur, they may be in the form of “block funding”. The challenge for decision-makers lies in allocating sufficient amounts to the necessities of sewer or water, while maintaining an adequate budget for recreation services and facilities. Unfortunately, when local governments do not recognize the benefits of recreation for their communities, or during times of fiscal constraint, recreation may become a lower priority on the list of essential community services.

Isolated communities usually have several recreation facilities. There may be a natural ice arena, a community hall, a seasonal swimming pool or curling rink, and parks and trails. This inventory of facilities, coupled with scarce financial resources, poses additional challenges since operations and maintenance (O&M) for these facilities can be high. Problems such as excessive wear-and-tear caused by extreme

climates; inappropriate facility design which may occur when building on permafrost; the expense of contracting outside specialists; or freight costs for building materials, stretch already tight O&M budgets. A rushed decision to build a new recreation facility because a capital infrastructure funding announcement was made, may lead to O&M costs which, over ten years, outweigh the short-term boost to the local economy.

Financial support of community recreation involves more than just municipal budgets. Support may be extended through funding agreements, loan of staff, joint use agreements, or other in-kind contributions. Community groups and sports clubs indicate that one aspect of operations requiring additional support is liability insurance. Since the 1980's, insurance costs have skyrocketed. The expense of liability insurance presents a significant burden to organizations that have a small number of participants or members and limited revenue.

Another challenge facing community groups and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) is the restrictive criteria of proposals and grant applications. Criteria often are not well aligned with the process of community recreation development. For example, a NGO receives one-year funding to plan, implement and evaluate a program for families. Just as the community begins to demonstrate interest in the program, the funding term ends and the program is ineligible for more funding as it is no longer a "new" initiative. Restrictive funding criteria drain the human and fiscal resources of NGOs. To compete for scarce funding, these groups may spend excessive time developing ideas, writing proposals and implementing new programs. The issue is

magnified when funding opportunities are announced well into the fiscal year and funding for a full year's project is released in January to be spent by March 31st.

Stories of successful recreation development in isolated communities illustrate that opportunities to overcome the challenges related to financial support do exist. For example, a long-term recreation plan may help establish a schedule and budget for the maintenance and replacement of facilities. Greater flexibility in economic stimulus programs and in the discretionary use of transfers may help address the challenge of costly facilities. Although short-term, through Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal Recreational Infrastructure Canada program provided funding to renew, upgrade and expand community recreation facilities while funding administered through the National Trails Coalition supported development and renewal of trails across Canada.

Making modifications to funding agreements and criteria can improve the potential for recreation to respond to the needs of isolated communities. Funding programs should support multi-year projects; should reward—not penalize—successful programs; and should provide sufficient time for groups to engage community. One example of a multi-level, multi-year funding agreement is the territory's Healthy Living Bilateral Agreement³ which enables the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon to support recreation in the Yukon's smaller communities. With an improved understanding on the part of decision-makers of how recreation benefits isolated communities, overcoming these challenges becomes more likely.

³ An agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Yukon Government Department of Community Services Sport and Recreation Branch and Department of Health and Social Services.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Challenges:

- **Hiring and retaining qualified recreation staff.**
- **Recruiting and supporting community volunteers.**
- **Minimizing burnout of staff and volunteers.**
- **Enabling training opportunities for staff and volunteers.**

Regardless of the field, a big challenge for isolated communities is hiring qualified staff. The field of recreation, where budgets are limited, is no exception. The only permanent, recreation staff in an isolated community is usually the recreation director. This person likely works long hours including weekends and holidays, and often assumes tasks associated with managing, programming, purchasing, cleaning, trouble-shooting, fundraising, driving, etc. In addition to recruiting a qualified individual with the energy to take on this extensive workload, isolated communities face the challenge of hiring seasonal, qualified pool staff.

When isolated communities encounter difficulty hiring qualified staff, they may opt to hire from within the community. The advantages include lower salaries, no relocation costs, and staff who are familiar with the community. The disadvantages may include staff with limited or no training, staff who require immediate certification (e.g. first aid), or staff with limited recreation knowledge. Officials responsible for hiring may not be familiar with the qualifications or training desired. Both northern Manitoba and

Saskatchewan have developed resources⁴ to help Aboriginal and remote communities recruit and manage recreation staff and volunteers.

When a community is able to attract qualified recreation staff, the challenge then becomes retention. It is well known that burnout and turnaround of recreation directors within a few years, or even a few months, is common. Retention becomes an issue when new recreation staff lack understanding of life in isolated communities or when unrealistic expectations lead to burnout. *The Recreation Director's Handbook* (Manitoba, 2008) states that “the recreation director wears many hats in your community. Much is expected of them at all hours of the day. Recreation director burnout is common” (p. 58). Sadly, burnout does not only happen to staff, but to volunteers as well.

Without volunteers, organized recreation opportunities would be very limited. Particularly in isolated communities, recreation relies heavily on volunteers. Volunteers lead the arts ‘n’ crafts night, coach badminton, hand out cake at Canada Day, brush the trails, drive Elders to an afternoon tea, pebble the curling ice, and manage the books for NGOs. However, an overdependence on volunteers may result in volunteer overload and/or volunteer burnout. *The Northern Environmental Scan* (Riessner & Sparks, 2009) found that “volunteer burnout” and “volunteers moving away” are significant challenges, particularly in communities of less than 3,000.

⁴ These documents are available on the Lifestyle Information Network at <http://lin.ca>.

A common condition found in small, remote communities is “STP”—the Same-Ten-People are the ones who seem to always volunteer. As it is often difficult to find people willing and able to organize events or to coach a team, volunteers may be recruited from professionals such as RCMP or teachers. Often these volunteers move away after a few years, leaving a legacy of unused equipment and sometimes facilities, and making it difficult to replace their enthusiasm, commitment and expertise.

Volunteer management, finding someone to recruit, train, and recognize volunteers, can be challenging and often ends up on the desk of the recreation director. Furthermore, the increased emphasis on risk management can make the delivery of volunteer-led activities more challenging (CPRA, 2009) and lead to a greater dependence on paid staff.

Training is an essential component of human resource development. It can help to minimize burnout and improve retention. Access to relevant training for staff and volunteers poses some challenges for isolated communities. Training offered in larger centres is costly in terms of both time and money. Parents with children at home may not want to leave the community. Employers may not always grant approval of leave for training purposes if the training or finding a replacement at work is too expensive. Some communities prefer to host their own training events to decrease the burden and cost.

Access to training which meets the needs and demographics of isolated communities must improve. Course materials should be written in plain language while

content needs to respect and reflect local culture. Volunteers need access to board training, risk management, proposal writing, and entry-level coaching. Delivery organizations must adapt on-site training to accommodate small groups of two or three. Although improved access to technology has created new methods for learning (e.g. webinars and videoconferencing), these methods must not replace opportunities for recreation directors and leaders from isolated communities to network face-to-face with their counterparts. For example, Manitoba (2008) brings together recreation directors and leaders annually for the Northern Links Recreation Workshop, the Recreation Connections Conference, the Recreation Conference for Community Volunteers, and/or the Summer Leadership Workshop.

Several post-secondary institutions have recently developed programs to foster knowledge for working in the field of recreation with Aboriginal and/or rural and remote communities. Canadore College in Ontario now offers a one-year Rural Recreation Certificate which has the flexibility of completion on-campus, online, or through distance education. As of September 2011, the University of Alberta is offering a Certificate in Aboriginal Sport and Recreation which students can complete as part of their degree program.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Challenges:

- **Building relationships and working together.**
- **Supporting culturally-relevant recreation.**
- **Overcoming unhealthy lifestyle choices and social issues.**
- **Acquiring equipment and materials.**
- **Addressing transportation needs within the community.**

Building relationships and working collaboratively with groups, agencies and government is essential to community development. It is not difficult in isolated communities to know who to work with; however, it can be difficult to know how to work together. In these communities, history is not forgotten; it can be hard to put aside. The challenge lies in building relationships based on community interests rather than on personal opinion. Working together takes time, and although it is often easier to work independently, the result of a team effort is much more rewarding.

In some communities, connections are established through a mechanism such as an Interagency Committee. These committees, with representation from social services, local Aboriginal government, education, justice, policing, recreation and health, usually meet on a regular basis and offer support and problem-solving for community-based initiatives. Other communities may have established joint use agreements between the school and recreation department.

Maintaining partnerships may be difficult as people change roles and move in and out of a community. Amongst key groups it can be challenging to build and maintain commitment, communication and a team effort. Courses in interpersonal and group skills; funding which is used to contract a facilitator for recreation planning; or sessions in board training are strategies which support effective cooperation and collaboration within a community.

Isolated communities are often Aboriginal communities or communities where Aboriginal people represent a large proportion of the population. As recreation means different things to different cultures, the challenge in isolated communities is to ensure that recreation development is culturally-relevant and respectful. The *Northern Supplement: Everybody gets to play™* stresses that a connection to local culture and values is a key factor influencing the success of Northern recreation projects (Sparks, 2009). More specifically, the need for female Aboriginal recreation providers, and for Aboriginal recreation programs which have a broad focus and allow sufficient time to establish, is evident (CPRA, 2009). The Northern Links website, a resource for community recreation leaders, provides some help to learn about facilitating culturally-relevant initiatives.

Social issues and unhealthy lifestyle choices present significant challenges for recreation development in isolated communities. For example, when northern residents were asked what would improve the well-being of their communities, a reduction in drugs and alcohol was seen to be the most urgent issue (Datapath Systems, 2007).

Alcohol and drug use, domestic violence, smoking, video games and gambling require multiple strategies. Unhealthy lifestyle choices and social issues, although evident across the country, are much more visible in small and isolated communities.

The introduction of high-speed Internet, television and electronic gaming into isolated communities poses additional challenges. One recreation director tells how ten years ago, fifteen youth would show up in the evenings to play floor hockey. Today, the gym is much quieter as youth spend their nights “on screen” and, as a result, may not even go to school the following morning. To build awareness of the time children and youth spend in sedentary activities, the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2011) make recommendations about screen time. However, the concern is that being “on screen” has already changed the nature of recreation in our communities.

Family support is another factor influencing the recreation participation of children and youth. Social or health issues, poor understanding of recreation benefits, low income, literacy levels or single-parent families may impact family support for recreation. On the part of parents, a lack of social skills to encourage children to get involved impacts participation in recreation across the North (Riessner & Sparks, 2006).

These issues illustrate recreation’s potential to significantly contribute to the healthy development of children and communities. The challenge is to create supportive environments which encourage healthy behaviours and counteract what can appear to be the social norm (e.g. drinking, smoking). The current emphasis on the after-school

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time period begins to address some of the lifestyle and social challenges in isolated communities. However, alcoholism, domestic violence and weak parenting skills impact children well beyond the defined timeframe of weekdays from 3:00 to 6:00 PM.

Recreation directors describe how they keep food available to feed hungry children and how they may be forced to call a local agency to drive home children who have not been picked up after the facility closed. The focus on supporting children and youth through after-school programs is valuable, but would better serve the realities of isolated communities by an out-of-school (afternoons, evenings and weekends) focus.

Access to transportation within a community presents a challenge. Lack of public transportation makes it difficult to encourage participation when communities are spread over a large geographical area, when a family does not own a vehicle, or when parents cannot (or do not care to) drive their children to and from activities. Buying a van is a potential solution; however, some communities are unable to fund the initial purchase, or when they do, discover that they do not have a reliable driver. Discussion of flexibility around school bussing to enable participation usually ends with concerns about liability and increased cost.

Being distant to major service centres makes it difficult to locate and buy personal equipment to participate in recreation and sport. Running shoes, skates, bicycles and helmets all need to be purchased outside. Shipping increases the cost of these items which may already be a burden for families living in low income situations. Furthermore, purchasing personal equipment online or by mail does not guarantee a

proper fit when it arrives. As most grants do not cover the cost of equipment deemed to be of a personal nature, many communities address this issue by collecting used equipment (e.g. skates, sticks and pads for a hockey program) and making it available free of charge to participants. In recent years, the private and non-profit sectors have developed a variety of initiatives to provide access to equipment in isolated communities. Source for Sports[®] stores in Ontario collect hockey gear and then distribute it to communities in northern Ontario⁵. Fiddling programs and donated fiddles have been part of Strings Across the Sky, a music initiative brought to High Arctic communities since 1988.

Children and families living in isolated communities face barriers to recreation which may differ to barriers facing urban residents. Recognition of these barriers can lead to creative responses and foster an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and community well-being.

⁵ Hockey Gear Drive for Northern Ontario Communities

CONCLUSION

From a common understanding of the nature of isolated communities in Canada, the opportunities to support recreation development become clearer. There is no single answer in response to any one of the challenges presented in this paper. Rather, what is important is that the realities of isolated communities are considered and are not lost amidst the larger, urban voice. Global trends, the economy, technology and the health of Canadians are major forces shaping the ways in which we approach community recreation development. However, we must also take time to listen to the local stories as they often tell what works in isolated communities and what does not.

In conclusion, several examples of promising directions and initiatives presented are worthy of a final comment. Although broad in scope, these provide an opportunity upon which the discussion of recreation development and its contribution to individual health and community well-being in Canada's isolated communities can be continued.

⇒ Commitments at a national level to coordinate efforts between different sectors have the potential to improve community recreation. The Yukon's Healthy Living Bilateral is a promising example of a multi-year agreement between the federal government, two territorial government departments and a NGO. The scope and quality of such partnerships will support recreation in isolated communities.

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- ⇒ The emphasis on childhood obesity and the priority placed on the after-school time period will foster a more supportive community environment for healthy lifestyles by improving access to recreation during the after-school time period.

- ⇒ Federal economic programs, such as the Recreational Infrastructure Canada program which provided funding to renew, upgrade and expand community recreation facilities, contribute to the maintenance of public recreation facilities.

- ⇒ Post-secondary recreation programs, such as Canadore College's Rural Recreation Certificate, focusing on Aboriginal, rural and remote communities, increase awareness of employment opportunities in isolated communities.

- ⇒ ACE (Active Creative Engaged) Communities⁶ focuses on rural community development through recreation. Most ACE communities are rural, not isolated. However, certain aspects of this initiative might present valuable lessons for other communities.

- ⇒ Private and non-profit sectors support recreation in isolated communities through programs, equipment and transportation. The Hockey Gear Drive for Northern Ontario Communities is delivered through Source for Sports® while Strings Across the Sky brings donated fiddles and fiddling programs to the High Arctic.

⁶ ACE Communities is an Alberta Parks and Recreation Association initiative.

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