

Recreation in Remote Communities: A Case Study of a Nova Scotian Village

Jackie Oncescu

University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
j.oncescu@uottawa.ca

Brenda Robertson

Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada
brenda.robertson@acadiau.ca

Abstract

With diverse living conditions and distinctive natural environments, remote rural communities typically foster a unique way of life, which are often displayed through leisure activities. As rural communities feel the effects of globalization and population decline, the leisure styles of community residents change. This paper examines recreation in the lifestyles of rural residents living in remote communities. The purpose of this study is to highlight the unique lifestyles of rural residents in the fishing village of Newport, Nova Scotia, Canada. Specifically, this study explores the leisure styles of community members in one remote community over a 30-year period during which time the economy has changed from being dependent on resource extraction to resource appreciation. Data were gathered using multiple techniques, including content analysis, focus groups, and key stakeholder interviews. The findings indicate that community members are not engaged with one another, as each cohort in the community indicates varying leisure pursuits. There is a strong level of individualized recreational activities for the youth and young adult males, leading to segregation from the community. The senior cohort group provides recreation for itself, while adult men and women appear to have limited to no time for recreation, due to work, family, and household obligations. The residents of Newport report placing high value on community recreational activity, yet no segment of the population is willing to provide the leadership to facilitate recreational opportunities. We conclude that individualized pursuits, coupled with the limited recreational opportunities in the community, have limited the sense of community cohesiveness in Newport. Further research is needed to find out whether this is the case with other rural communities in Canada.

Keywords: rural communities, leisure styles, sense of community, cohesion

1.0 Background

Little research has been conducted recently on the recreational pursuits and lifestyles of those who live in remote communities. During the 1980s and 1990s, various researchers explored aspects of lifestyle in rural communities but few have explored the topic in communities considered to be remote due to their lack of easy access to urban amenities. Such communities typically exist in order to supply society with necessities through activities such as forestry, mining, oil production,

and fishing. The quality of lifestyle in such remote communities is dependent upon the ability of residents to have their needs satisfied and is closely linked with the recreational opportunities made available to residents (Arnott & Duffield, 1980; Long & Kieselbach, 1987). The quality of the recreational experiences can represent the difference between mere survival in such a community or a rich, satisfying lifestyle (Allen, Long, Perdue, & Kieselbach, 1988).

Rural communities in Canada face challenges that affect traditional ways of life. The economy of most rural communities is based upon resource-extractive industries, which are more vulnerable to the negative fluctuations in the markets, technological changes, neoliberal government policies, and globalization (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Smithers, Joseph, & Armstrong, 2005; Goetz, 1999; Wotherspoon, 1998). These forces are changing rural Canada's social and economic landscape. Changes that have occurred with the greatest impacts upon recreation within such communities include a decline in volunteerism, improvements in transportation and communication, and consolidation and centralization of social services (Scott, Park, & Cocklin, 2000; Smithers et al., 2005).

As these communities change, so does access to recreation or the way the recreation is experienced, which calls into question the quality of life afforded residents today and the sustainability of such communities, which are essential to the well-being of the rest of society. Research shows that recreation is being experienced differently than in the past in rural communities. Dempsey (1990) emphasized the importance of sport and recreation through a 17-year study of a rural community in Australia. The results found that sport and recreation in rural communities had brought residents together and developed a sense of cohesion. However, recent centralization has forced services and facilities related to social and civic organizations to close. These types of closures negatively impacted the social capital needed to sustain future recreational opportunities. Similar results were identified in a study by Scott et al. (2000), who found that recreational activities offered through a local recreation centre diminished and negatively impacted the sense of community (Scott et al., 2000).

1.1 Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to explore recreation as a component of the lifestyles of residents in the remote fishing village of "Newport," Nova Scotia, Canada. (In order to protect the anonymity of the village and of the study participants, the fictitious name of Newport has been used.) The isolated nature of this community offers a distinct setting for recreation and leisure pursuits. Given the recent changes experienced in remote communities brought about by factors related mainly to technological advancements, this study sought to explore recreation over a period of time, as the community has undergone a period of transition. This case study describes the leisure styles of community members 30 years ago and at the present during which the local economy has changed from one with a primary focus on resource extraction, where natural resources such as fish, forests, and

minerals are harvested for commercial gain, to one focused on resource appreciation, where visitors come to appreciate and enjoy the natural resources of an area, including the flora, fauna, and scenery, and thereby contribute to the local economy through the purchase of local goods and services.

The objectives of the case study are to explore the following: (a) the recreation styles experienced by various cohorts in a remote community 30 years ago and at present; (b) current barriers to recreation; and (c) the relationship between recreation and community cohesion. Specifically, the intent of this case study is to better understand the role that recreation plays in the lifestyles of a remote community.

2.0 Community Description: Newport, Nova Scotia

Newport is a remote fishing village in Nova Scotia, Canada, with a population of 250 year-round residents. Although the community is not located geographically far from an urbanized area, it is the only community on an island, which is situated off another island requiring two boat and ferry crossings to reach the Mainland. For over 200 years, the lifestyle of this community has revolved around the fishing industry. The small island has a rugged coastline, which is home to a variety of plant, marine, and bird species. The diverse natural environment enabled the community to establish an ecotourism industry during the mid-1980s in the midst of a sustained downturn in the fishery. Local amenities presently include a local library, community hall, school, post office, store, two churches, fish plant, restaurant, seasonal lodge, and boat tour operations. Thirty years ago, when the population was significantly larger, there also existed a high school, an active fire hall, a grocery store, and a bank.

3.0 Recreation and Rural Canada

Today resource industries are experiencing a decline in production, resulting in high unemployment rates and reduced services and amenities, including access to transportation, which has forced younger generations to relocate (Gabriel, 2002; Malatest, 2002). As young people leave rural communities, sustainability concerns are raised (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003). Increased costs for delivering basic infrastructure and services in rural areas and reduced populations in those communities make it difficult for the government to justify providing funding to support community programs in semi-remote communities (Goetz, 1999). This has led to the disappearance of the rural livelihood and subsequent out-migration of the younger generation, leaving only an aging population to sustain the community.

The problems facing rural communities are complex and embedded in geographic location, declining populations, and urbanization (Miller, 1993). The current challenges faced by rural communities have transformed them from cohesive self-sufficient entities into places where residents seek to access resources and services in other communities (Miller, 1993). The results are a reduced sense of community cohesion and a reduced ability to mobilize collective action necessary for successful community renewal (Miller, 1993). Leisure research has contributed to our understanding of the changes, mainly resulting from advancements in communications and transportation technology, occurring in remote and rural communities. Many people experience their sense of, and connection to, community through engagement in recreation.

Challenges facing rural communities have resulted in changes to community recreation opportunities that helped build a sense of community cohesion in the past (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006). These changes arose from (a) disengagement and disinterest in the local community, (b) improvements in transportation and communication, and (c) consolidation and centralization of services, such as grocery stores, post offices, banks, and schools (Scott et al., 2000; Smithers et al., 2005). Consequently rural residents are required to travel outside their community in search of satisfying recreational opportunities, therefore spending less quality time together in their own community.

Various researchers have reported that the quality of life for people living in rural communities is directly related to recreational opportunities and styles (Arnott & Duffield, 1980; Long & Kieselbach, 1987; Middleton, 2000). Recreation broadens the content of rural life in a variety of ways by (a) providing opportunities for socializing; (b) enriching the lives of retirees; (c) providing individuals with self-discovery, personal and family enrichment, enhanced family solidarity, and help fostering healthy personal adjustment; and (d) providing a strong base for youth to pursue recreation and leisure activities during their future adult lives (Long & Kraus, 1983).

Unlike their urban counterparts, rural communities have limited funding for recreational services and rely upon themselves and other community members to facilitate opportunities rather than access structured programs (Lasley, 1987; Tefler & Wall, 1994; Glyptis, 1989). Rural community survival is largely connected to a sense of civic responsibility and volunteer leadership. Participation in recreation and other community activities enhances civic engagement, which is important in addressing community needs (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Deschamps, 1981).

However, rural communities face numerous challenges that limit community engagement and leadership. According to Riley & Arnold (1995), rural communities struggle to recruit volunteers to organize recreational activities, leaving the same few individuals to do all the work, which results in burnout. Other challenges include (a) increases in transportation costs, which reduce the distance that certain people are able to travel to access needed resources (Long & Kraus, 1983; Thompson, Rehman, & Humbert, 2005; Warner-Smith & Brown, 2002); (b) out-migration, leading to smaller populations (Long & Kraus, 1983; Miller, 1993); and (c) declining populations, causing tax-payer resistance to funding construction and maintenance of recreational facilities. Compounding these challenges is the fact that rural residents often do not accept responsibility for facilitating meaningful recreational opportunities for themselves and their neighbours (Tefler & Wall, 1994).

Recreation can greatly enhance the quality of lifestyles in rural communities. However, declining populations, youth migration, declining civic engagement, and centralization of community services and resources in remote communities adversely influence recreation, which calls into question the quality of life in such communities. As a result rural residents travel greater distances to access resources and services than they used to; when they leave their own communities for such resources and services the time available to them to engage with others in their communities becomes limited. The decline in recreational opportunities and social participation in rural communities has reduced civic engagement, which has been highlighted as a critical element to addressing community needs and enhancing the quality of life in rural communities (Arai & Pedlar, 2003).

4.0 Methods

Of all the research reviewed prior to commencing this study, the work of Arnott and Duffield (1980) appeared to best address the issues under investigation in this research. Therefore, the following propositions, which they developed, served to inform the development of key questions for the current study.

1. During times of economic change, traditional lifestyles eroded, weakening community cohesion. The breakdown in cohesion negatively affected access to recreation.
2. Typically men in isolated communities spent their time supporting their families, so the time for recreation was not an issue. Women were disadvantaged because of their commitment to the family and home. Seniors, children, and youth had the most free time for recreation but were least able to facilitate recreation for themselves.
3. Emigration was a challenge for community cohesion and recreation because industrial changes critically reduced the number of participants required for certain activities within the community.
4. The young and more economically active residents were moving to the urban centres in pursuit of employment, while some individuals from urban centres were moving to rural areas seeking a more traditional way of life. These newcomers brought new attitudes and habits with them that could jeopardize community cohesion.
5. Tourism was developed as a means of attracting outside visitors and increasing recreational opportunities. Arnott and Duffield found that such recreational opportunities did not necessarily address the needs of local residents or were too expensive for locals to engage in.
6. Isolated communities often developed a unique identity associated with a particular form of recreation. With the influx of immigrants, increased exposure to outside media, especially to television, threatened some of the unique aspects of traditional life. Increasingly, the residents wanted more diverse recreational opportunities, but lack of volunteers to offer such experiences led to frustration and weakened cohesion.

A case-study approach was used to gain an in-depth look into the lifestyles of residents of Newport, employing multiple methods of data collection, which included content analysis of newspaper columns, articles, and books about the community, semistructured interviews, and focus groups. Due to Newport's unique location and small population, a purposive sampling technique was used. Two community leaders, with considerable knowledge of both the local residents and the culture of the community, expressed considerable interest in the study. Their services as key informants were employed. The key informants were crucial to identifying individuals who could contribute to the study. Multiple methods of data collection were used to provide insight into the community and the influences on leisure styles of residents, including community social history, economics, and migration, as well as the role of community services, including recreation.

Community history was key to understanding the development of community recreation over time. A content analysis was carried out on existing print sources containing material related to the lifestyles of residents, including books and a local weekly newspaper. Various themes emerged from this analysis, which served

to inform other components of data collection. Interviews were conducted with six key community stakeholders, all of whom were service providers, including representatives from the religious community, educational system, health care, commercial sector, tourism, and community services. Stakeholders participated in semistructured face-to-face interviews, in which they were asked about their perceptions of recreation within the community and about how change was affecting the lifestyle of the community. They were also asked about who made what contributions to the community's recreational opportunities.

Immigration has impacted the community, and a significant wave of urban dwellers has moved to rural communities in pursuit of a slower-paced lifestyle. Two focus groups were held, each with six participants. Data were collected on reasons for moving to the community; an identification of expectations and transition issues; perception of the leisure styles of the community; and perceptions of societal changes and the impact on lifestyle.

4.1 Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze newspapers and books in the early stages of the study. Local newspaper articles from 1975 to 1995 and two books on the community provided detailed historical data about the community over the past 30 years. These data were coded and then used to inform development of the interview guides. The coding process began with a thorough reading of all relevant newspaper articles and books pertaining to recreation and community cohesion in Newport. Once all documents were read the first author generated a list of all topics. Similar topics were then clustered together. The topics were then abbreviated as codes and compared to segments of the original documents under review. Once all codes were identified, the researcher categorized the codes using descriptive wording. Similar categories were then grouped together.

As for the semistructured interviews and the focus group data, a process of open coding involved reading the various texts and categorizing similar actions, events, and experiences. Next, linkages and relationships within and between the categories were examined. This stage of analysis gave attention to causal conditions, contextual factors, and intervening or enabling conditions related to recreation participation. The core categories and developed themes guided the final stage of analysis in which the data were scanned for cases that illustrated the relationships or concepts representing the themes.

Inter-rater reliability was also used to verify appropriateness of codes and validate constructs that emerged from the data (Creswell, 1998): An additional researcher independently reviewed the data, developed similar codes for segments of the data, identified similar categories in which the codes fit, and placed similar segments of data into categories. These categories were (a) snapshot of a community in the 1970s, (b) a community during transition, and (c) recreation in the community today.

5.0 Findings/Themes

5.1 Snapshot of 1970s Recreation in the Community

During the 1970s most working residents of Newport were employed in the fishing industry, whether it was on the water or working in the local fish plant. Although men dominated the fishery, the women and children supported the industry by

helping out with any work that needed to be done. Women generally assisted with bookkeeping and other administration duties. The children carried out duties related to net mending, maintaining traps, and assistance on the boat during fishing trips. Fishing shaped the lifestyle of the entire community, especially during the primary fishing season, which ran from November to May. During the off-season, fishermen prepared for the upcoming season by mending nets, traps, and boats. The primary season was the busiest. However, the fishermen stayed active year-round by fishing other stocks. The comments below highlight the busy lifestyle of the fish industry.

“The fisherman year is six months of continuous go, go, go. There is a month or two in the winter where they get a little bit more time, but they’re still on the time clock that they were on before. They are still up early, they are still checking the weather: Can we go out or not? They are still getting prepared, still getting bait ready.” —Business owner

“Years ago, you worked every day, because you had dry fish, scallops, lobster, haddock, and all kinds of fish. There were boats in here, it was a thriving place.” —Local fisherman

Newport was a thriving community during the 1970s. Those involved in fishing worked every day of the week because the industry was booming, leaving little free time. With a prosperous industry, Newport residents were financially stable. One local fisherman observed:

“It was a thriving community. It was so busy. There were 500 people here. They all had new vehicles. Their houses were kept. There were young people that had nice cars, and a lot of stuff was paid in cash.”

Although Newport was a bustling fishing village, residents still made time to enjoy activities in which everyone participated. Recreation activities and events were organized through community clubs, churches, and schools, and were all run by volunteers, mainly females. A review of the regional weekly community newspaper from the time identified myriad community recreational opportunities that catered to the needs of children, youth, adults, and seniors. These included communitywide events for everyone, activities catering to adults, including couples and women, and youth-centred activities.

The community events included holiday celebrations, annual festivals, and social activities. Community members ran events to mark annual holidays, such as Valentine’s Day dances, Halloween haunted houses, Christmas concerts, and Memorial Day services, which brought young and old together. In addition, a number of festivals were planned to celebrate and honour the community’s history and heritage. Festival activities included boat races, fishing competitions, parades, and community meals. Many of these festivals enhanced a sense of community connectedness and pride.

In addition to community events, there were plenty of adult activities. Personal development courses related to self-enhancement were offered in Newport by the

Mainland area colleges. There were regular social events to bring adults together, including dances, dinners, and potluck suppers. Newport residents also enjoyed a variety of sports activities, including baseball and softball, skating, and trips to hockey games outside the community. The women in the community also hosted their own events and programs, such as women's fitness classes, a rug-hooking group, and Tupperware parties.

To address the recreational needs of children and youth, the adults organized groups such as Cubs, Scouts, and Brownies, as well as a reading club at the library. Other activities available to youth and children included rollerblading, swimming, street hockey, basketball clinics, bowling, and baseball. Regular social gatherings to bring youth and children together included dances, hot dog and pizza parties, camping weekends, conferences, puppet shows, and preschool story hours. Certain special events and holiday celebrations catered to young people. Among them were an annual Children's Day event, which involved bicycle parades, contests, games, and bike races; Christmas concerts and caroling; and Halloween activities.

Regular fundraising events were held for repairs and costs involved in operating the local community facilities, which included the community centre and library, a location in which many of the recreational activities and special events took place. Newport made good use of the buildings that existed within the community. The community centre, fire hall, church, school, and library were all used regularly for recreation in addition to their primary purposes. Community members also congregated frequently in one another's homes for recreation. This was especially important for Newport's younger generation. Judy, an older community member, explains:

“The young people used to get together in their home[s]. They would have gone to somebody's house on Saturday night and they would have played games and had refreshments ... that was a common thing to do. They were all together.”

Women of the community facilitated recreational activities not for themselves but for all others in the community. Men were assigned tasks that involved such activities as facility and equipment repairs and setting up for events, in which they willingly participated as time permitted. Other than the occasional leader or speaker brought in from outside of the community, it appears as though residents were well able to take care of their own recreational needs from within the community. All indications were that during the 1970s and early 1980s residents enjoyed full and satisfying leisure styles shared with others in their community. However, the positive lifestyle experienced in Newport during the 1970s was to change drastically as a result of various factors that occurred during the mid-1980s.

5.2 A Portrait of a Community During Transition

The mid-1980s saw a marked decline in the fishing industry and an increase in ecotourism, which greatly impacted life on the island.

Decline in the fishing industry. The fishing industry was traditionally the primary economic base for Newport but has substantially declined over the past 30 years. Employment opportunities have been lost as a result and the community has been negatively affected. Several of the community members that participated in the

study said they felt the decline in the fishing industry had negatively impacted the sense of community in Newport. As such, providing for the economic, social, and recreational needs of the younger generation has become difficult. The declining economy has forced some members of the younger generations to leave the community to find employment elsewhere. The community's concerns are highlighted in quotes from several of the study participants such as the following:

“Fish stocks have collapsed and that is pretty much it. I don't want to blame the government, because a lot of the older fishermen knew it was coming, but they could have stopped themselves. If the fishery was strong, there would be lots of jobs, lots of opportunity, and you would see a lot larger community.” —Local fisherman

“Numbers show that the youth are not staying here, because of other opportunities that are taking them away and lack of opportunity here. There is a lack of opportunity here and opportunity there. I leave in the wintertime because I have nothing to do.” —Community service provider

“The failure of the fishery has made the community more difficult to live in. If not for this, it is a great place to live. New means of financial support must be found if the next generation is to have any chance to stay.” —Retired fisherman

Development of ecotourism. With a long rugged coastline, thick brush, and marshlands, Newport is home to an abundance of unique plants and wildlife. Thousands of migrating and native seabirds and marine life, including whales, visit the island annually. Naturalists and tourists visit the island specifically to see birds, whales, plant life, and rock formations. During the mid-1980s, the ecotourism industry started to develop in Newport when outfitters began to offer nature-based experiences for summer visitors. Many of those involved in the ecotourism industry also work in the fishing industry. Some of the off-season fishermen have developed ecotourism businesses, which are operated by entire families. The ecotourism season, which runs primarily from June to September, keeps the community busy hosting visitors from around the world. Since the mid-1980s the increase in ecotourism has had a positive economic impact on Newport.

Some residents believe that the increased number of tourists visiting the island positively impacts the community. The increase in tourists has contributed to Newport's economic development by increasing income for the community businesses. The following quotes attest to that sentiment:

“They are foreigners. They will be gone after Labour Day [tourists]. They [community members] got work that is important, a means of income, so it's looked upon as good.” —Community service provider

“Some people in the community are benefiting, and there are some businesses that are clearly dependent on the tourism.” —New community member

Newcomers. A third element influencing the town’s transition is the onset of newcomers to the community. Due to the ecotourism development, newcomers became attracted to the community and decided to stay. Some of these newcomers came to Newport for employment opportunities while others came to enjoy the natural environment and lifestyle. Due to the influx of newcomers, Newport experienced changes to its traditional way of life. Newcomers provided Newport with new community initiatives because of their fresh ideas, insight, attitudes, and energy. Generally speaking, newcomers were well received, and existing residents appreciated the time and effort newcomers put into the community. Often these individuals found that this was a way to get involved in the community. Below are examples of how four newcomers felt about their involvement in the community:

“The biggest impact I probably had was giving a break to someone else who was doing it [coaching]. There was a coach that was doing badminton, who has two kids in hockey. I basically gave him a break during the winter, and so he has one less thing to worry about.” —Retired community member

“After I was here for two to three years, I became a [leader], and people were right on my back helping every time.” —Retired community member

“I don’t think it is necessarily that you bring something special to the island or that you have any kind of impact, because they automatically involve you—you are joining with what already is there.” —Retired community member

“Having come from away, you can see the trees, but if you live in the forest you can’t see the trees. Sometimes I would say something because I saw an opportunity and they didn’t see it, but having been from away you picked up on it. If you mention that opportunity to someone, the wheels start moving and they appreciate it.” —Retired community member

5.3 Snapshot of Recreation in the Community Today

Today, Newport’s population is about half of what it was 30 years ago. Although the fishing industry has declined, it continues to dominate the lifestyle of many residents. With the peak fishing season operating from November to May and the ecotourism season running from June to September, Newport is once again busy year-round. The thriving ecotourism industry has enabled the community to expand services to support the increase in population during the summer, including

the development of bed and breakfasts, inns, restaurants, walking trails, whale cruises, and gift shops. Between the two industries, the community maintains a steady pace year-round; however, the summer season provides a more relaxed lifestyle for residents, who are involved mainly in the fishing industry. Two residents, a young father and a community service provider, respectively, describe the off-season:

“Everybody is either on vacation or just relaxing after the busy season. The fishing season ends at the end of May. These guys fish from the end of November to the end of May and they get some ugly weather. They go out in some pretty nasty weather, and by the time that is all over with, they are just ready to lay back.” —A young father

“If you talk about the islands, I considered them laid back. Nobody is in a hurry in the summer. Everything is just fine. You see some fishermen getting ready, putting out some lobster gear. Someone is going fishing. Tourists are cruising by. The fall gets a little bit more hectic, starting to get anxious. Summer is really laid back and relaxed.” —Community service provider

As a result of being busy at different times of the year, residents are spending less time together as a community and recreational opportunities have greatly declined. It appears as though no one within the community is accepting responsibility for facilitating recreational opportunities as in the 1970s. With the disappearance of organized sports and recreational activities in Newport, many residents now look outside the community to satisfy their recreational needs. The quotes below illustrate the community’s frustrations:

“The adults had a baseball team—I don’t know what happened to that, but it fizzled out. When I came here, it was the men who had the baseball team. I know they did a lot more then, because I think they had a lot more people that didn’t work. They used to have Newport Days. We used to have a lot of stuff around here.” —Young father

“There is far less than there used to be. There used to be soccer in the community. There used to be Little League. There used to be swimming lessons in the community, those sorts of things. And those things are becoming less and less.” —Community service provider

“Organized clubs such as Brownies and Scouts used to exist but over time have been phased out. If community members want to be part of those

types of activities now, they travel outside of the community.” —
Community service provider

Youth activities. The decrease in availability of recreational opportunities has had varying consequences for different cohorts of the population. Children and youth were most affected, as they often require guidance and support to engage in positive recreational activities. Several participants involved in the study acknowledged that youth today lack access to meaningful forms of recreation. Community members expressed concern that there were no longer enough children in the community for age-appropriate activities, and lack of leadership meant that no one in the community was willing to take responsibility for facilitating recreation for the young people of the community. The following quotes represent the community’s concerns for the youth:

“You look at the school with primary to six; there are fifteen kids last year. That is all the kids in the school. And this year there is even going to be less. There is not a large number to pool from. The average age on the island is forty. That is where I think the problem is for recreation for kids. There is not enough people to do it.” —Community service provider

“There is a problem here ... you don’t have the adult supervision, where the parents would take the time tonight and go over there for two to three hours to supervise.” —Young mother

The recreation currently available in Newport is generally provided by an outsider who makes the effort to plan and implement recreational activities, whether it is volunteer or profit driven. For example, during the summer months, outside agencies offer day camps in the community for children. The camps are well attended, and residents say that they think the camps are important and positively affect the youth and the community as a whole. Although both youth and adults valued these types of recreational opportunities, no one within the community appears willing to assume leadership. The lack of leadership in the community is described by a community service provider:

“They [community] lack ownership. The recreation programs that are in existence are run by somebody else in another community. They want to get recreation in their own community but have yet to find somebody to enable them to do that.”

The lack of group activities for youth has fostered pursuits of more individualized and sedentary forms of recreation. The age of technology has reached the community, and youth spend a great deal of time in front of television and computer screens. The growth in ecotourism has led to improved access to the community, which also makes travelling to the Mainland more viable than in the past. In order to participate in organized recreation, parents (mothers in particular) report spending a good deal of time transporting their children out of the

community to the closest urban area, which is nearly 4 hours round trip, depending upon weather conditions.

Adult activities. Just as organized community recreational opportunities for youth have declined over the past 30 years, the same is true for adults. However, adults today report it challenging to find free time for recreation, because they seem to have more responsibilities inside and outside the home.

“Summer is the type of thing where you work around the house, and a lot of people are busy there. Fall you got getting ready for the lobster season and hunting. Winter lobster season hits; most people are tired and working hard. So it is kinda hard to get enough people to do certain things.” —

Community service provider

Most of the young men who chose to stay in the community work in the fishing industry, so that during the fishing season most of their time is occupied, leaving little time for recreation. They tend to earn large incomes, which allow them the economic freedom to frequently leave the community during the off-season. As a result, many of the young single men are somewhat disconnected from the community, by virtue of satisfying their recreational needs elsewhere. When satisfying their needs within the community, their activities often involve drugs, alcohol, partying, and the irresponsible use of all-terrain vehicles, which frustrates the other community members.

As for the young women in Newport, time for recreation is limited. Lack of education leads to many staying at home and becoming mothers at a young age. The ecotourism service industry, however, has opened up job opportunities for some women. For women who work outside the home and look after their families’ needs, finding any free time in which they engage in recreation is rare. The economic freedom the men have through the fishing industry does not apply to the women. Often, responsibilities for children’s recreation are left to the women, which leads to frequent travel to other communities and limited time for their own recreation. The quotes below represent the situation for women in the community:

“The young stay-at-home mothers don’t have the education, don’t have the jobs, and don’t have any recreation opportunities.” —Community service provider

“Honestly I don’t really do much recreation. I go to work, I have two kids, and that pretty much occupies my time on weekends.” —Young mother

Middle-aged adults are the drivers of the economic activity of the community. For the males, many own their own fishing boats or have significant responsibility attached to their jobs and report little free time. When not on the water, there is always work to be done, such as repairing equipment. Their lives centre around their work and spending what free time they have with other men hanging about the wharves. Many of the new jobs created by the ecotourism industry are filled by middle-aged women. Significant job responsibility in addition to domestic responsibility leaves little free time for this group either.

Thirty years ago Newport residents were better able to satisfy their needs and provide services through active clubs and organizations that hosted events and recreational activities, which were primarily facilitated by women. Before the development of the ecotourism industry, women volunteered their free time in the community. Primarily through women's work, Newport enjoyed an array of social, recreational, and cultural activities that served to foster a satisfying lifestyle for all residents and a sense of community cohesion. Today Newport has few structured recreational opportunities, due in large part to women's joining the labour force in order to support the new economy. However, women's roles in the home have not changed—they are still responsible for the family and the household, even if they are employed full time. Despite these significant changes in women's lifestyles, the lifestyles of other community members have seen limited changes, except that there are far fewer organized activities in which to take part. Although other cohorts within the community have free time that could be used to assume leadership roles with regard to providing recreation within the community, none have taken on such responsibilities. As a result, Newport is now dependent upon outside agencies to meet its recreational needs and has lost some independence and autonomy. As community members look to outside resources to fulfill their recreational needs, they fail to recognize their own assets. It appears that Newport residents have not been able to fill the now vacant roles that women used to occupy, leading to fewer recreational activities.

Senior citizens constitute the most active group in organized recreation. Seeking companionship that they do not necessarily get from their busy family members, they seek it with one another. They have claimed the community hall as their own and run daily activities for themselves. Occasionally they organize trips outside of the community to participate in events. There was little evidence to suggest that this group had an interest in facilitating recreation for other cohorts. That is, they seemed more interested in facilitating activities for their own social group, rather than for the broader community.

“I think the only ones that do anything are the seniors. They have a quilting thing ..., then they have crib games Monday and they go over there [community hall] and play pool.” —Active community volunteer

“I know the seniors group here sometimes will combine with the seniors group on the other island, and they will go on trips together. So they are probably covered; they cover themselves pretty much.” —Active community volunteer

“Many of the seniors do not facilitate recreation experiences for others in the community, only for themselves. With access to pool tables, a large hall, and card games, these activities and facilities are not shared with the younger generation. Often permission to use these facilities and activities are denied by the seniors. The seniors tend to dominate the hall and limit access to other groups in the community.” —Active community volunteer

6.0 Conclusion

Remote communities are essential to Canada's social, environmental, and economic well-being. The natural resources extracted from rural regions contribute to 50% of Canada's exports (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009). Through these industries Canada can sustain a strong economic base that benefits both rural and urban regions. However, rural communities are faced with challenges that have resulted in the out-migration of the younger generation and an overall decline in the population. With a shrinking tax base, an aging population, and inadequate infrastructure, local governments struggle to provide the basic services and resources needed in remote communities, which compromises the quality of life.

This case study draws attention to how recreation has contributed to the quality of life in remote communities. The findings suggest that if the community fosters positive diverse recreational activities, there is a greater chance of developing healthy, cohesive communities. Cohesive communities foster a greater sense of community satisfaction among residents, which improves community well-being.

It became apparent through this study that if residents of rural communities are to sustain healthy, vibrant lifestyles, recreational opportunities need to be available in the community. Realistically, for recreation to take place in remote communities local leadership is needed. Although women once provided recreational activities in the community, a deep void has been created by female involvement in the workplace. This void in leadership appears to have had a negative impact upon individual and community lifestyles, especially for the younger generations, who have been forced to seek recreation elsewhere. Increase in travel to outside communities has limited the time residents spend in the community engaging with one another, thus weakening community cohesion.

In the past, recreation served as a vehicle to bring all sectors of the community together for a common purpose. There was a wide range of activities and events for children, youth, adults, and seniors. Community fundraisers, festivals and events, and active social clubs brought the community together. This appeared to facilitate intergenerational understanding and respect and to enhance the sense of cohesion felt among community members. The community took initiative to meet the needs of its residents through fundraising events that provided resources for programs and upgrades to recreational facilities.

Although all cohorts of the community have ways of filling what free time they have, the quality of the lifestyles seems lacking from what it was in the 1970s, causing many to leave the community in search of meaningful experiences. With dual economic industries in fishing and ecotourism, Newport residents have less free time to engage with one another. In particular it appears as though the lifestyles of the women have been most diminished, as they report that free time for them is nonexistent. Young adult males frequently leave the community to engage in recreation or to participate in more deviant behaviours within the community that frustrate other Newport residents. The limited leadership among the adult population has left young people's recreation unattended and resulted in increased travel to outside communities to meet their recreational needs.

Despite having been proactive in the 1980s by working to ensure the economic future of the community through development of the ecotourism industry, residents seem to not have accepted responsibility for other aspects of community survival.

The importance of rural communities to Canada's economic stability has been highlighted, but rural policy development needs to consider the social fabric of these communities as well. Life in rural remote communities can be challenging, but the research presented here has indicated that through recreation and community events life in rural places can be fulfilling for all.

7.0 References

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