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University Engagement with the Community through Physical Activity Opportunities: Lessons Learned from a Community Charter Guaranteeing Access to the University Recreation Complex

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Abstract

Universities recognize they have a civic responsibility to engage and enrich the community in which they reside. This study looks at a community engagement project undertaken at one university that was intended to address significant recreational needs within the community while also furthering academic initiatives. As part of the appeal to various levels of government for financial support to build a campus recreation complex, senior administration at the University promised to engage marginalized community members through implementing a charter to enshrine open community access.

This research was a cross-sectional exploration of one university's engagement with the community through sport and physical activity, with the overall intent of understanding the implementation of the University's Charter and how this has worked to address some of the issues related to marginalized groups living in the inner-city. Interviews were conducted with four university members who, in their various roles, have held some level of responsibility in the implementation of the Charter. Clarke and colleagues' (2017) Situational Analysis was used to deconstruct interview transcripts, code, and develop themes. After listening to the voices of the participants, three major themes, as well as nine sub-themes, emerged from the data.

Keywords: community engagement, inner-city, recreation, sport

Introduction

Over the last quarter century, academics have increasingly encouraged the importance of community engagement by universities, especially those universities located in urban centers where researchers have noted the potential value of university-community partnerships. By facilitating access to diverse university resources and ensuring that universities are responsive to public issues, university-community engagement efforts will benefit both universities and the communities in which they exist (Bruning et al., 2006; Warr & Williams, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have argued that building partnerships between institutions of higher learning and community organizations, located in marginalized inner-city communities, can be a sound strategy for generating ongoing scholarship opportunities that meet the social, financial, civic, and educational needs of the community (Cohen & Yapa, 2003), and for teaching social justice (Merrett, 2000).

Some institutions of higher learning do recognize the benefits of being engaged in the communities where they reside. They have attempted to integrate the university into the community, promoting a notion of seamless university and community interaction by granting access to university facilities. However, for many universities, engaging the community is not always a straightforward process (Allahwala et al., 2013). Holland and Ramaley (2008) suggest various approaches (i.e., routine, strategic, transformative) that a university can take to engage with the community better.

To develop strategies for community engagement, this mid-sized, primarily undergraduate University located in central Canada has embraced the inner-city through a wide variety of initiatives following an approach that Holland and Ramaley (2008) would identify as "strategic" in nature. Specifically, in 2009 under the leadership of the president, the University developed and released a position paper specifically focused on the need for the University to increase community engagement through a broad-scale approach that would not only concentrate on academic learning and research, but also include service-learning projects to address social, economic, and cultural needs. In the years immediately following the release of the position paper, many new community engagement initiatives were added to existing programs the University had already developed (Hall, 2022). One initiative, that became a focal point of this University-wide quest to better engage with the community, was the development of a new physical activity facility that had the explicit intent to not only serve the needs of the growing university population but also serve the needs of the local non-university community members. According to campus security, the surrounding community is generally seen as an undesirable place to live, and the population is quite transient. It is a common starting point for immigrants and refugees. Very few students reside in the neighborhood apart from the residence building. The neighborhood is perceived as dangerous by many students and is thought to be inhabited by gang members. It was believed that creating such a facility could offer significant potential to

serve the public good while providing many positive opportunities for increased university-community engagement by increasing community access to sports and physical activity while engaging the faculty and students in programming.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the current investigation was to examine and report on the university-community engagement process concerning the creation and use of this physical activity facility. Specifically, the study aims were to seek an understanding of how community engagement has been operationalized utilizing the newly created university recreation complex, and what specific community populations are the university engaging with through this physical activity facility. Additionally, we aimed to gain insight into what factors have most influenced the success of this community engagement strategy and what barriers have existed for the university to engage the community through this facility. To construct the recreation complex, substantial funding had to be obtained from various levels of government, and an agreement, or charter, to enshrine community access to the Recreation complex was an obvious way to justify the use of public funds to build the facility. Overarching our research were issues related to the implementation of the charter.

Community Engagement and Where Physical Activity Might Fit In

Overview of Community Engagement

Perhaps the most widely adopted definition of engagement that has emerged reads: "Community Engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Holland & Ramaley, 2008, p. 33). This was certainly reflected in the initial discussions with the funding partners as the foundation for constructing the facility.

This definition and the work by Boyer in the 1990s (1990; 1996a; 1996b), laid the foundations for much of the literature on university-community engagement that has been produced since, including the four components of university-community engagement (*student learning, curriculum transformation, community-defined priorities, and knowledge production*) that have been suggested by Ostrander (2004). Other work by Jackson (2008) has conceptualized what he calls the "CUE (Community-University Engagement) Factor," which is portrayed as a dynamic triangle of community-university engagement framed *by community-based experiential or service learning, community-based research, and community-based continuing education*. Although both scholarly works address most aspects of university-community engagement, neither provides a clear place for the role of physical activity and sport.

It is possible that physical activity and sport could be part of Ostrander's (2004) civic engagement. However, physical activity and sport have not been clearly articulated. It could form part of the university-community engagement component of *community-defined priority* or *other elements of community-university engagement* (e.g., volunteerism, facility access, resource mobilization) that Jackson (2008) alludes to within his dynamic triangle. The reasons behind this lack of specific attention given to the role of physical activity and sport as a medium for university-community engagement could have to do with potentially a lower prevalence of use and the possible lack of perceived value that such community engagement may offer a university. It has been argued that preferences may exist for universities to most actively support community engagement initiatives that are calculated to have institutional benefits (financial, reputational, and status) rather than those contributing to generalized social beneficence" (Warr & Williams, 2016, p. 24). In essence, many "Universities look out for the main chance, seeing how they can yield a return to themselves on their investment in activities, whether that return is in terms of money, reputation or position" (Barnett, 2007, p. 31). Thus, it is possible that providing surrounding communities access to physical activity facilities and sports may not be viewed as valuable by some universities. However, exposing community members to the university through sport and physical activity may increase the uptake of post-secondary education by youth exposed to the university in what many might perceive as an enjoyable format.

All this being said, this does not mean using sports and physical activity as a medium for university-community engagement has not been beneficial. Hart and colleagues (2009), Hart and Northmore (2011), Jacobs and colleagues (2016), as well as Warr and Williams (2016) all provide support for various uses of sport and physical activity as part of a university-community engagement strategy if the university believes that physical activity and sport can be used to help generate valuable university-community engagement. Such beliefs would appear to exist in the context of the University at the center of this present study.

The University Context

Situating the university within the community provides context for appropriate engagement opportunities. Warr and Williams (2016) suggested that; "[p]artnerships with disadvantaged, marginalized and under-resourced communities, which require considerable investment of time, have become ever more difficult to justify within institutions" (p. 24). The university where this study took place, happens to be in an area where the surrounding community would commonly be considered all these things (i.e., disadvantaged, marginalized and under-resourced). However, within this local inner-city community, there are numerous organizations dedicated to supporting various populations such as youth, indigenous people, immigrants, seniors, etc. Although the University has been involved in community engagement for many years, in a vast assortment of ways, the increased attention given to university-community engagement over the past two

decades has prompted the University to consider ways that go far beyond simple efforts to coexist in shared/neighbouring spaces (Hall, 2022). This includes ideas related to using sports and physical activity to help engage the surrounding community.

Nation and colleagues (2011) noted that universities provide distinct approaches to community-engaged youth violence prevention. One issue that has plagued the inner-city neighborhood in which the University is situated for years has been juvenile delinquency (Mackenzie, 2022). Juvenile delinquency is believed to lead to more complex adult deviance and crime (Hirschi, 1969). It has been more than a half-century since Hirschi first proposed his seminal theory on preventing juvenile delinquency through involvement in conventional activities. Hirschi suggested that youth protect what they are part of, providing a mutually beneficial exchange of resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The youth are no longer merely located in a community but become part of it. The often-untapped sports and physical activity resources of a university provide an abundance of engagement opportunities for youth to join sports teams, be physically active, and engage in various sport-related programming. It appeared to the architects of the charter that this idea might provide a sphere of protection to areas of the campus, independent of existing security services. Considerable research has investigated juvenile delinquency and the potential role of sports since 1969, and recently a meta-analysis completed by Spruit and colleagues (2016) argued that involvement in sports can help safeguard against juvenile delinquency providing the sports environment consists of elements that guarantee a positive and safe experience for the participants. It was envisioned that the recreation complex could provide such an environment.

Another issue faced by the community surrounding the University has been a lack of access to suitable spaces for the community to be active and meet (i.e., places that offer enough room for large groups to gather; and offer facilities that allow for specific forms of physical activity; are indoors and thus allow for activities to still occur during the notoriously cold winter) (Casson et al., 2019). Universities typically have lots of space, and some of that space, including physical activity and athletic facilities, may sit unused outside of regular university hours. The University recognized both this issue and the fact that it has spaces that could be regularly made available to the community without impacting the normal academic and athletic functions at the institution. The recreation complex and the corresponding community charter are evidence of just that.

The University Recreation Complex

The concept of the recreation complex was initiated around 2004 when the senior administration at the university began pitching the idea of engaging marginalized members of the community as part of the appeal to various levels of government for financial support for university expansion to build a Health and Recreation Complex, a fieldhouse with fitness facilities, a gymnasium, and several multipurpose rooms. Construction began in 2012 with an opening mid-November in

2014 as a way to create a building, leveraged with public funds, that would serve the needs of the university in terms of academic, recreational, and varsity athletics programming while providing the local community with what was included in the initial conceptualization from a community engagement perspective as well as providing a stream of revenue to support the operational costs associated with running and maintaining the recreation complex.

The university describes the recreation complex as "the most significant recreation and wellness facility ever created in the inner-city community". Funding for the project was provided by **t**he province, the city, numerous community partners, the university students' association, and university athletics. The university athletes compete in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport system, U sport. The recreation complex offers a variety of sports and recreation opportunities to community members of all ages at minimal cost to participants.

The facility is 168,000 square feet and provides new indoor training and practice space for all the University varsity sports teams, particularly soccer. It can also accommodate numerous other sports, such as baseball, ultimate, flag football, and track and field, as well as community and cultural events. It comprises:

- a large multi-use artificial turf field (three cross-fields),
- a four-lane rubberized sprint track and jump pit,
- retractable batting cages for baseball,
- a multi-purpose room,
- a gymnasium with a climbing wall,
- Locker rooms with showers, and
- a student lounge.

The Athletics Department currently supports approximately 300 neighborhood youth under the Inner-City Junior Athletics umbrella, which includes boys' and girls' basketball, soccer, and wrestling teams. The recreation complex is also the new home for the Spence Neighbourhood Pow Wow Club and the Adventure Kids Summer Camp, which attracts 1,200 inner-city children annually. The day camp allows children to participate in engaging activities with an indigenous focus. These are only a few community programs to which the facility has opened its doors.

The Recreation Complex Community Charter

With an eye to developing a university-community engagement policy, the management team, consisting of internal and external members with expertise in recreation management and community needs, presented a proposition on the potential of university-community engagement. The concept was to serve the public good by increasing access to sport and physical activity for the community, which is at the heart of the community charter. Over the course of several years, following town hall meetings and in collaboration with community partners, a unique

community charter was developed with a broad coalition of 18 youth-serving agencies and community stakeholders. The final charter was written in 2012 to tackle some specific disadvantages manifest in the inner-city and promote sustainable health and recreation through the development of partnerships with youth advocacy agencies in the inner-city. It has seven overarching principles:

- openness,
- inclusivity,
- accessibility,
- respect,
- development,
- accountable, and
- sustainability

The community charter enshrines that approximately one-third of all the available time at the recreation complex is dedicated to use by the community. A major part of the university's community and public engagement activity is developed and promoted through the recreation complex community charter. It is this community engagement through access to physical activity and sport at the University that the present study has been designed to investigate.

Research Method

Participants

Based on Seidman's (2006) criteria of *sufficiency* and *saturation*, it was decided to attempt to interview all six of the people who were directly involved in the development, implementation, or both of the charter. Ultimately, only four participants were available to be interviewed, all involved at various stages of the charter's development or implementation. The initial team of six was hired by the University early in the project to provide expertise on facility development and get the recreation complex functioning. Three of the interviewees have since moved on to opportunities outside the University. Although saturation may not have been reached, with information missing from the remaining two potential participants, there was still sufficient data to draw some preliminary conclusions. This process of implementing the charter was directly responsible for the style of university-community engagement related to the community's use of the recreation complex. No demographic data was collected from participants as such information was unrelated to the study aims.

Procedure

Approval for this research was obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Board (HE # 04581). Using Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Seidman (2006) as a guide, semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interviews were chosen as the best way to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the people who were tasked with the implementation of the recreation complex charter. The six identified potential participants were contacted through e-mail or phone and asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview.

The interview questions were developed based on the study's aims and followed suggestions for creating an interview guide by Corbin and Strauss (2015). The interviews were conducted in a small boardroom in the recreation complex and lasted 60 – 90 minutes. Each interview was digitally recorded using dual digital recording devices placed at different distances between the researchers and the participant to capture the nuances of speech and to provide a secondary source of audio if both participant and researcher spoke at the same time. The clearer of the two recordings was sent to a transcription service for transcribing. The use of dual recordings proved invaluable as most of the transcriptions had some level of unintelligible data for the scribe, which the researchers could fill in. The transcribed and verified text was then analyzed and converted to data. Once the data was transcribed, the principal researchers verified the transcriptions by re-listening to the audio recordings to check for accuracy before analyzing the data. The winnowing process was conducted independently by the two researchers and then combined into one package.

Data Analysis

Transcripts were coded following the methodology outlined by Clarke and colleagues (2017) for situational analysis and then analyzed to produce the findings. Considering the ontological and epistemological aspects of situational analysis made it an appropriate method to investigate the operationalization of the recreation complex charter. This has produced a relevant situational analysis of current issues for management to address. Our discussion highlights how this research method may contribute to more effective social policies within the local community while also meeting the demands of those charged with the management of the recreation complex.

The data analysis process involved open coding, highlighting chunks of the transcript with different colors corresponding to themes that emerged in the early stages. Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing the various phenomena found in the text. Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph, etc., is read in search of the answer to the repeated questions; what is this about? What is being referenced here?

These labels refer to things like particular communities, levels of leadership, issues, participation barriers, society, etc. Part of the analytic process was to identify the more general themes that manifested instances of organizational or institutional leadership, sport and recreational activities, social relations, social outcomes, etc.

Next, axial coding was conducted. Axial coding is a process of relating codes (themes and groups) to each other through a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. To simplify this process, rather than look for all the relationships, the emphasis was on causal relationships and fitting the codes into a basic framework of thematic relationships.

The final step in our analysis was to selectively code the themes to develop a model of how community engagement was working. Selective coding involves choosing one category as a core theme and relating other categories to that theme. The essential idea was to develop a storyline around which everything else is wrapped.

Results and Discussion

Linking the community engagement to the educational content, university students from the Bachelor of Physical and Health Education program introduced inner-city children and youth to some of the entertaining new cooperative games and sports they were learning in class such as Flickerball, Omnikin, Sabakiball and sports like Ultimate frisbee.

One of the participants commented, "*The charter makes a commitment and it really defines the relationship between the recplex and the community who we engage and it specifies that one-third facility time will be set aside for community use and that there will be mechanisms like the community advisory committee who will help to ensure that whatever we set up, through structure, through programming, through staffing, meets the spirit of the charter and is in keeping with the spirit of the charter and really act as our guide going forward to make sure that what we're doing is in keeping with the spirit of the mandate of the charter. So, it talks about that third commitment, it talks about the advisory community*" (P2).

Three major themes emerge from the data. The participants identified several distinct "communities within the inner-city" that participated in activities in the recreation complex. Second, the participants identified "leadership" as a primary determinant of success, both internal and external to the university. Finally, they articulated a series of issues or "barriers to participation" in University community engagement in the recreation complex.

Communities Within the Inner-City Theme

The primary community the participants identified were simply children and youth. "Children and youth" appeared 46 times in the transcripts. Next were refugees from a variety of countries dividing this demographic along cultural and linguistic lines. New Canadians make up much of the community accessing the facilities. It was suggested that: "*among the 60 partnerships that we have; it's not just a one-time – it's not just like – you know, the recplex has been open for three years, and it doesn't mean that they've been here the three years. You know, we have new groups coming up, but we don't see it as a one-and-done whenever we start with a new agency, community group, or community leader. We're really interested in making sure that participants have the opportunity ongoing participation, whatever that means*" (P1).

A variety of ethnic groups have been identified as residing in the inner-city. It includes African, Asian, Hispanic, and South Asian populations There appeared to be a willingness on the part of external funding agencies to engage in discussions around support for these marginalized populations in the inner-city. "*There is not a foundation out there, no matter what they fund, that you probably couldn't have discussion with when it comes to inner-city children, youth and families, new Canadians as well*" (P4). However, significant funding has yet to materialize from the discussions.

Although included in the group "children and youth" the indigenous population was also noted as a group worthy of mention. "*We have had some successes with aboriginal population*" (P3). Specific programs such as the Pow Wow club were explicitly targeted to the indigenous community residing within the inner-city.

Appealing Activities

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings was the fact that those charged with operating the recreation complex were constantly asking the external members of the management team about what various demographics would find appealing from a physical activity perspective. This resulted in ongoing adjustments to the programmatic offerings. The managers felt it was important to "*engage the community by providing access to these physical activity facilities and programs that they might engage with*" (P4). This led to a discussion regarding the times available for community use. "*I think there would probably be more of a recreation family feel to something like an after school, after supper program*" (P3). It was also important to offer activities familiar to the immigrant/refugee populations. "*We were engaging the community in a sort of a smaller level with the youth team and stuff*" (P4). However, after some discussion with the community users, one of the managers exclaimed, "*African soccer, it's a lot of fun!*" (P2).

This led to more discussions with potential user groups to determine what they considered appealing activities.

Leadership Theme

All participants shared their perspectives on leadership, both internal leadership within the university, and external to the university through a coalition of interested groups. They discussed leadership within various organizations and identified specific individuals who stepped up to fill a void and take on a leadership role.

Internal Leadership

It was assumed by university administrators that once access to the recreation complex was granted, leadership and group organization would follow. Unfortunately, without available infrastructure in place, there were no organized teams or groups that could apply to make use of the opportunity. The university was able to step up and find synergies between the community needs and the needs of students by providing experiential opportunities to put what they had learned into practice. "*If a group did not have a leader and we would use our athletes as coaches, mentors, things like that*" (P3). As synergies began to emerge, the true value of university-community engagement began to emerge. As the programs grew it became apparent that the university could provide initial leadership support, but that program independence was the goal. Throughout the process, "*we put the kids or the leaders of the communities first*" (P1). By providing leadership training and opportunities to members of the community, they were able to move the programs toward independence.

External Leadership

It was seen as imperative that governance include community members "*it's a mix of university and community representatives. It was just about a 50/50 kind of a split*" (P2). As programming opportunities emerged for which the university had no experience or ability to support it was noted: "*We heavily rely on community agencies to implement the programming*" (P1). However, some additional education from the university's part was still required. The community's understanding of the relationship between physical activity and health was tenuous at best. "*Community agencies and local leaders [are] starting to understand the importance of physical literacy*" (P1). In addition to designing age-appropriate programming, the university was also able to partner with Sun Life Financial and provide a program designed to provide high-school age students with knowledge and understanding of the simple, everyday things they can do to improve their health and food choices. This was a unique combination of practical hands-on

educational nutritional programming combined with various physical fitness/activity components.

Barriers to Engaging the Community Theme

It was difficult to determine the order to present the issues and barriers to participation that emerged from the research. One could present them in the rank order of the issues and barriers that were most easily ameliorated. However, it was decided to present them in the rank order of greatest concern to the participants.

Financial

Financial concerns were the number one issue among the research participants. Concerns were raised regarding the cost of operating programs, the ability or inability to raise funds, and the overall economic climate. These financial concerns are also related to many of the other identified issues and barriers to participation. Although additional funding would not eliminate these additional barriers, it would go a long way toward minimizing them and substantially changing the appearance of the barrier.

"*With money, you could do a lot, a lot more, faster*" (P1) became a common theme. As noted earlier, although many funding agencies voiced interest, nothing significant had yet emerged to support most of the unfunded programs. However, "*programs that are well funded, that have our inner structure, where if they need funds they can access it, but they access it on their own and they're not coming to the university saying, 'we need you to fund this'*" (P2). What seems to be of interest to potential funding organizations is usually linked to marketing opportunities rather than being entirely philanthropic. Program and/or team naming rights, uniforms, and initial equipment purchases were well received, but "*you have to up your program and staff to do that as well. But really it comes down to basic issues like liability, safety, supervision*" (P2). Supervisor (coach) education, training, and certification; liability insurance as well as ongoing equipment maintenance and replacement were not of significant interest to funding partners.

A distinction was drawn between the community-use teams and the other users of the recreation complex in the revenue-generating time slots. "*Like, most club teams are kind of, you know, you pay a fee to play … that barrier of financial*" (P3). This was a barrier to integrating the two program areas where there was the future vision of an integration of common sports or activities together between existing programs and those developed through the initiatives embedded in the Charter. It is anticipated that over time, some of the community use programming may become financially viable and move from community use to revenue-generating programs.

Temporal

The concept of ⅓ of the time for university use (sports teams and academic use), ⅓ of the time for revenue generation, and ⅓ for complimentary community use was fraught with issues from the start. University usage was generally restricted to daytime use from Monday to Friday. The Sun Life program functioned well over the lunch hour, but that was one of the rare interactions with the community while classes were in session. Evening hours and weekends were seen as prime revenue-generating times and were therefore not available for community use. "[We looked] *for free space for the time that the facilities weren't being used*" (P3). The prime hours for the community users conflicted with the prime revenue-generating times. "*It was just assumed that the university would eat up the one-third time that the community would have in the facility and that the other two-thirds would pay for it*" (P4). By eroding some of the revenue-generating time the management team "*focused on ways that we can work with our third of time that we use for community*" (P2). It is anticipated that over time some of the community use programming may become financially viable and move from community use to revenue generating.

Transportation

Another concern that emerged from our research was that many of the inhabitants of the inner-city did not have adequate transportation to access the recreation complex regularly. Most do not drive or have access to a vehicle and are often unwilling to use public transportation either because the busses do not run on a frequent enough schedule during the evening or they feel unsafe waiting at a bus stop.

Many after-school sports programs provide transportation to get their participants to the venue. However, these are revenue-generating programs, and some of that revenue funds transportation in terms of small buses or multi-passenger vans. The management team had to "*beg, borrow, and steal to get it going. Like, literally, like we were begging for busses. You know, 'Can you transport us today?' basically, right? Like one week at a time to try to make it happen*" (P1). There is a glimmer of hope as large vehicles traveling around the inner-city provide a marketing opportunity for funding agencies to demonstrate their philanthropic side. However, most agencies want to focus on specific programs and not simply provide generic transportation. "*We know that transportation for outside groups … it's a big barrier*" (P1). There is potential here and with a little creative thought may source an organization interested in solving one large piece of this puzzle.

Safety

Although the case for the use of public funds to construct the recreation complex was built, to some extent, on Hirschi's (1969) *involvement hypothesis* suggesting that adolescents with too much free time become delinquent and the notion that involvement in structured activities consumes much of that free time, therefore, reducing the potential for delinquency. The theory (acknowledged by Hirschi) has some flaws (see, p. 190). By bringing inner-city adolescents into the recreation complex, Campus Security noted; it provided gang members a ripe environment for recruiting. That said, the general assessment was that the initiative is still positive but there are additional safety challenges. The management team acknowledged, "*If you don't create a welcoming space that allows them to be themselves and have fun off the get-go, they might never come back*" (P1). "*We need to make sure it's a safe environment*" (P2). The management team voiced concern that the recreation complex might be "*developing a reputation as unsafe*" (P2) and a high priority had to be placed on ensuring that did not happen. Initially, the University was able to provide security simply through the existing security staff on campus. Unfortunately, with some increase in personnel and additional hours, this increased the cost, and the University will need to procure the funds to offset this increase to avoid impacting its primary mission.

Linguistic Challenges

The refugee population that inhabits the inner city rarely speaks either of Canada's official languages which provides a significant challenge when trying to promote sport and recreational activities to this group. In addition to the child and youth participants "[we need] *translators, time for parents*" (P1) which in turn increases the need for resources. Refugees need translators so that their desires can be understood and then programming can be tailored to those desires. Once again, it is hard to find funding for translation and some languages pose more challenges than others in terms of simply finding people to do the work irrespective of the cost.

Nutritional Needs

Keeping a group of impoverished adolescents fed became an unexpected issue. Participation in sports and recreational activities presents organizers with nutritional and hydration demands. Unlike other users of the recreation complex facilities these groups do not come with snacks and sports drinks. There are water fountains within the recreation complex, but water alone does not meet all the requirements of an active body. In many of the programs, there is "*food inclusion*" (P1) but once again there was generally a cost involved in feeding a large group. Through the Sun Life program participants were learning how to properly chop vegetables, mix ingredients, and eat some foods outside their experience. In addition, through the University's Kinesiology and Applied Health program, students were able to gain valuable practical experience by

providing an opportunity "*where parents had the opportunity to go next door and receive food counseling*" (P1). "*If you wanted to really get the community involved, you would maybe … have some food involved*" (P3). Nutrition and hydration considerations must always be included in any physical activity initiative.

Factors Contributing to Successful Community Engagement

To reiterate the findings of Clifford and Petrescu (2012) Placing an "internal" value on the activities of the community groups by ensuring that they do not always receive the least desirable or unusable one-third of the time. Placing an "external" value on the varied community groups by ensuring everyone has a place at the table and shares in decisions made about the programs in which they engage. They used the university's presence and power to improve access to funding for ongoing program issues as identified through this research. Finally, placing a "personal" value on members of the University engaging with the community by recognizing alternative forms of scholarship similar to the recognition received for supervision of Honours or graduate students. Otherwise, the entire endeavor may be seen simply as the purview of senior administration.

Limitations

This study specifically only considered the voices of those charged with the implementation of the recreation complex Charter. The voices of those who use the recreation complex (USport athletes, students, intramural players, community groups, etc.) have not been addressed but will form the basis for a subsequent study.

Conclusion

The results from this study demonstrated that at this University, successful engagement with the inner-city community appears to be easiest with youth and immigrant/refugee populations. Furthermore, strong leaders from the community partners were key to developing effective and sustainable community engagement. Finally, it is sad, but virtually all the barriers faced at this University concerning engaging the community through physical activity could be eliminated with additional financial resources.

Opening the doors to the community is simply the first step in full community engagement, especially with marginalized members. Using physical activity as a medium to engage the local inner-city community appears to be effective and beneficial, at least in this university's context. Perhaps the most important thing discovered was that although visionaries conceived the recreation complex and its accompanying charter, the lack of recognition and acknowledgment of the barriers, nor any clear plan on how to address them, provided a significant impediment to

the initial implementation of the concept. However, with some strong leadership on the part of the recreation complex staff and some novel ideas from faculty members who already worked closely with the inner-city groups, the program has an illuminated if not yet bright future.

This article presents an option to demonstrate the constructive role that sport and physical activity can play in convening groups of people and uniting their efforts around a common mission. In the case of the University, it was recognized that engaging the community through a physical activity medium could further academic initiatives while also addressing significant recreational needs within the community. Based on the results from the present study, although not without its challenges, the potential for university-community engagement to serve the public good by increasing access to sport and physical activity is possible. It can be of considerable value to both the university and the community in which it engages.

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