Inter-municipal Partnerships and Community Identity:

A Case Study of the Pictou County Wellness Centre

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSRACT

Community identity is a concept involving a web of relationships whereby a committed group of people emotionally identify with a shared set of values, norms, meanings and history. When municipalities co-operate, concerns among stakeholders can arise that potentially lead to a sense that interdependence among municipal partners can threaten a community's independence and correspondingly community identity. The main goal of this study was to understand how the development of an inter-municipal partnership associated with the provision of a centralized multi-use recreation facility affected community identity among partnering communities. This goal was accomplished by exploring the case of Pictou County. Municipal leaders, members of the public, and local persons of influence were interviewed to gather their impression of the implications of an inter-municipal partnership for community identity.

An interpretivist viewpoint guided this case study. One-on-one interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and broken down into different themes to capture the impact this case had on community identity. Findings were organized into three sections: (1) concerns about the partnership, (2) anticipated benefits, and (3) the overall implications for community identity.

The findings of this case study revealed a shift in identity within the region in which the partnership took place. Although residents in each neighbouring municipality had a strong sense of community identity, the case illustrated a general shift toward a regional identity that was beginning to emerge. Study participants understood why some members of their communities were threatened by the inter-municipal partnership under investigation, but explained how the partnership created benefits that outweighed the negative impacts of co-operation. In particular, stakeholders believed the economic benefits of the partnership overshadowed any concerns about

transparency or public input. This has allowed a shift in the tradition ways recreation services have traditional been offered in the county. Now instead of each municipality working as independent services providers they are now starting to work more interdependently to provide services for the municipalities.

This case helps add to the body of literature involving inter-municipal partnerships and provide the opportunity for future research to be conducted on topics such as geographic identity and intersectionality. As well, the case provides insight to future practitioners when they are conducting research to understand that citizen participation is important in a project like this but it may be less significant than if the primary interest, such as economic interests, of the community members if initially managed. Addressing these interests should help lessen the chance of resistance forming later in the project.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The drive to reduce health care expenditures and promote preventative health has led provincial and local governments across Canada to develop targeted campaigns to persuade individuals to be more physically active. Ontario's *Active 2010*, for example, is aimed at creating opportunities for Ontarians to get involved in quality sport activities and participate in daily physical activity. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia has taken a targeted approach to the promotion of physical activity with its "Physically Active Children and Youth" (PACY) campaign, an initiative designed to address inactivity among children. Comprehensive strategies, such as these and others initiated by the provinces, have become conventional approaches to advance the individual health and well being of citizens.

Despite their best intentions, however, these campaigns have been criticized for focusing on individual behaviour without accompanying investment in infrastructure. Bercowitz (2000), in particular, has argued these campaigns advance a neo-liberal agenda that focuses on restricting the size of government by shifting responsibility to the individual through the promotion of behaviour change, as opposed to financing targeted social investments that provide resources, such as facilities, to encourage and enable increased activity. Achieving greater activity levels among community members seemingly requires public investment. Norman, et al. (2006) revealed the availability of recreation facilities is positively related to physical activity levels, particularly among adults. Accordingly, if increased physical activity is truly an aim of government, government must invest in recreation facilities.

Recently, a remarkable ideological shift in economic thinking has taken place (Lewis, 1993), brought on by the state of the domestic and global economies. The federal and provincial

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governments have financed a number of large-scale projects, including recreation facilities, to "stimulate" the economy. As a result, several local communities across the country were granted funding to support "shovel-ready" initiatives, many of which translated into new sport and recreational infrastructure. The end of the recession, however, appears to be leading toward the adoption of fiscal austerity measures, which means the political willingness to finance facilities may be limited, if not absent, in the foreseeable future. This development is only buoyed by recognition among taxpayers that the construction of local recreational facilities brings with it, not only capital expenditures, but also ongoing operating expenditures. That is, new facilities can become "white elephants" whereby taxpayers are forced to cover the ongoing operating costs associated with the facility (Cashman, 2002). In short, the current economic and political climate has obvious implications for the construction of new facilities.

The cost of infrastructure can be particularly prohibitive for most small communities, thereby introducing fiscal constraints that preclude such projects from advancing. The current economic and political climate only exacerbates these constraints. If facilities are to be built, small municipalities will likely need to look to alternative schemes to finance these projects. Inter-municipal partnerships, formal joint delivery arrangements involving one or more municipalities, offer a possible solution (Glover, 1999; Glover & Burton, 1998). I aim to explore this alternative form of service delivery in this project and how the development of new facilities may impact smaller communities' identities.

Small communities, like their larger counterparts, are experiencing increased demand from residents for recreation facilities to promote living healthier lifestyles (Powell, et al., 2007). Presumably, interest in pursuing alternative funding schemes such as inter-municipal partnerships will therefore continue to grow in popularity. If so, professionals need to understand

the implications of such arrangements in order to weigh alternatives rationally and plan accordingly. Few studies have explored inter-municipal partnerships (Glover, 1999; Slack, 1997), thus making this study particularly relevant to current practice.

To provide structure to this thesis, a theoretical framework must first be established. Change theory in accordance to Kotter & Schlesinger (1979), will be used as this theoretical framework and will allow me to better understand peoples' perceptions toward this case. Change theory is based upon the notion that people accept change in a variety of ways and at different rates (Rogers, 2003). In many cases, change can be reflected in a negative manor due to the fact that many people are fearful of the uncertainty associated with change. Due to this, change can often create tension and bring forth forms of resistance, both passively and actively (Hultsman, 1995). Much of what takes place involving the development of a new facility revolves around changes that will occur with each municipalities' identity.

With the establishment of change theory as the theoretical framework, the focus must shift to other literature relevant to this topic. Much literature has been written on community, community identity and how each may be established. Etzioni (2000) states that a community is made up of a web of relationships among individuals and these relationships often intertwine and reinforce each other. This definition plays a role in how community identity may be devised. Many characteristics are involved in the makeup of community identity including Puddifoot's (1996) fourteen dimensions of community identity, Arnstein's (1996) citizen participation research, community involvement and equal participation in decision making processes and also place and community attachment.

There has been very little research aimed at understanding the effects an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a recreational facility has on the local identities of the partnering municipalities involved. What has been acknowledged is how partnerships may be established and successful between different sectors such as public to private arrangements as well as how co-operation plays a crucial role in the development of inter-municipal partnerships. The research conducted by Glover (1999) and Slack (1997) provides literature on what has been explored in terms of inter-municipal partnerships. By choosing to collaborate, as opposed to "compete" or "go it alone", municipalities must adjust their modes of operation accordingly. For example, in cases where a cost-sharing agreement is in place, at least one municipal partner must direct its residents to access facilities in its neighbouring community, thereby giving up control over the direct provision of the facility and indirectly broadening its residents understanding of their locality. This latter result speaks to implications for community identity. Does the centralization of the facility create tensions among partner communities? Does a broader conception of community develop among partner municipalities? Do past identities subvert a working partnership? Do residents even care if a facility is located outside of their municipal boundaries? These and other questions will be explored in this study. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the planning, development, and implementation of an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a centralized multi-use recreation facility affects community identity among partnering municipalities. By understanding how community identity is involved and affected by the development and planning process of a centralized facility, municipal leaders and the planners responsible for developing these facilities in other communities, will be able to relate back to this research and use it to address similar issues.

Research Questions

Several research questions should be addressed that will help the researcher explore the situation in greater depth. These questions include:

- What are the major underlying issues or themes, surrounding the workings and implications of an inter-municipal partnership in the planning and development of a new multi-use recreation facility?

- What is the reaction of elected officials, community members, etc. to a cost-sharing agreement between municipalities?

- Is community identity among partnering municipalities an issue? If so, what areas in the community are being impacted that make up a community's identity? (i.e. closure of existing facilities, redistribution of resources?)

To address these questions, this research will focus specifically on the implementation of a new facility in Northeastern Nova Scotia. In March 2009, Pictou County, Nova Scotia received $22 million from the federal and provincial governments to help construct a multi-use facility (Government of Nova Scotia, 2009)**.** Pictou County is made up of five distinct towns surrounded by a number of smaller communities, which make up the Municipality of Pictou County (Appendix A). In the planning stages, it was decided the location of the facility would be centralized within the county to provide access for everyone. This facility will consist of a fitness centre, aquatic centre, gymnasium, community rooms as well as a double-rink sports stadium

(Government of Nova Scotia, 2009) (Appendix B)**.** As the facility comes closer to completion, stakeholder perceptions are becoming clearer. This study will focus on these perceptions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

With change theory as guidance, there are several essential aspects that must be addressed when dealing with this case study. First, a brief background behind partnerships and how they were typically used by business and administrations will be addressed. Next, the concept of inter-municipal partnerships is relatively new, but will be a critical part of the literature. Third, and equally important as the second concept, is that of community, identity and community identity. Each of these will be defined and provide details as to what may be expected when issues of community and community identity are investigated. Finally, several smaller issues that play a role in community and community identity will be identified. These include things such as citizen participation, community involvement and equal participation among community members. As well, a community's built environment will be examined, along with the role of both place and community attachment. All of these concepts will be based upon change theory and will help provide this study with a theoretical framework. This framework will allow me to explore the purpose of this case study which is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the planning, development, and implementation of an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a centralized multi-use recreation facility affects community identity among partnering municipalities.

Change Theory

Change theory will guide me as I aim to explore stakeholder perceptions of an inter-municipal partnership. I will tentatively use it as a theoretical framework to help me comprehend peoples' perceptions toward the case. This section of this chapter will focus on change theory (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979) and its relevance to my thesis research.

Rogers (2003) suggested members of a community will accept change in different ways and at a variety of different rates. Some individuals may oppose change because they are uncertain and fearful of what this change may mean for the future (Karim & Kathawala, 2005). Puddifoot (1996) argued people are often concerned about change, thereby framing it as a change for the worst. Resistance toward the development of the cost-sharing agreement under investigation, if any, will presumably come in one of two ways, either passive or active, according to Hultsman (1995). First, passive resistance may take several forms, including the community giving support, but failing to implement the changes, procrastinating, and/or withholding information. Second, active resistance may come in the form of being critical, starting rumours and even engaging in acts of sabotage toward the project. Municipal leaders need to address this issue of change proactively so that resistance does not flare up.

In an effective inter-municipal partnership, partnering municipalities should regard their strategic alliance as a change from an organizational perspective and consider how it is handled in that context. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) believed people within an organization are most resistant toward change because they feel they will lose something of value as a result. In the case of Pictou County, members of each community may feel this change will disrupt community identity through the changing nature of the relationship among partnering municipalities. To manage change within the community successfully, Gill (2003) argued leadership is required insofar as the initiative must be properly planned, organized, directed, and controlled. Leadership, therefore, is something that warrants attention in my thesis research.

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) devised six methods that managers adopt in situations involving change. First, education and communication involves educating members about the change before actually taking action. To do this, ideas are communicated with members to

ensure partnering agencies appreciate the logic behind the change(s) being made. Second, participation and involvement requires outside members to be active participants in the change and to be involved in all aspects of the change situation. Third, facilitation and support are most useful when the change occurring causes feelings of fear and anxiety. By showing support to members, this fear and anxiety over the change can be diminished, creating a smoother transition. Fourth, negotiation and agreement is typically important when the change occurring causes one party to lose out as a result of the change. Negotiating helps to reduce any resistance that may occur due to the change. Fifth, manipulation entails the use of very selective information and the conscious structuring of events. Similarly, co-optation can take place, which involves giving a member a desirable role in the design or implementation of the change so that they agree with the change. Sixth, explicit and implicit coercion exists when members are forced to accept the change by being threatened either explicitly or implicitly. These six methods can be used to help prepare the members of each community for change. They represent techniques that deserve consideration when discussing the cost-sharing arrangement with study participants.

An additional theory that I feel may appear in the perceptions of the participants is exchange theory, as addressed by Kotler (1984). Much of the background information that deals with the notion of exchange was traditionally centred primarily in the marketing field (Bagozzi, 1975). As defined by Kolter, exchange is transaction between two parties where each party acts freely, on their own individual interests. The goal of this transaction is that each party maintains equilibrium through the direct exchange of equal rewards (Kotler, 1984). In this case study, it could be suggested that each community is looking for equal benefits from the new facility, compared to the others of the county. These communities are each putting forth financial commitments toward the development, so wanting equal benefits appears to be rational. This

situation can best be described by what is known as a cost-benefit relationship among exchange theory (McDonald, Noe & Hammitt, 1987). These authors characterize this relationship by stating that the increase in the costs associated with a project will be balanced by the benefits the project will present. If the cost-benefit relationship does not appear to be equal, administrators providing the opportunities for the exchange must either decrease the costs associated or increase the benefits. It will be important for all members involved in the development of the new recreation centre, including municipal leaders, to recognize the importance of exchange theory and how it can influence people's perceptions of the facility.

Partnerships

Although little research has been conducted on inter-municipal partnerships, much has been studied relating to public administration literature involving partnerships, giving us further insight into the benefits and challenges of these arrangements. Originally, partnerships were used specifically within the private sector where they were seen as strategic alliances or joint ventures between two parties (Kernaghan, 2008). In recent years, however, there has been an increasing awareness of how partnerships may be used to improve public services. Most view these new public-private partnerships as a benefit to both sectors (Hodge & Greve, 2007). Both the public and private sectors have specific qualities, and if their resources are combined, there is an expectation a partnership can generate increased benefits for all parties.

There are several definitions that are considered when discussing public-private partnerships, but Van Ham and Koppenjan's (2001) definition provides the most clarity. They define public-private partnerships as "co-operation of some sort of durability between public and private actors in which they jointly develop products and services and share risks, costs, and

resources which are connected with these products" (p. 598). It must be understood that both parties are in this partnership together and on equal terms in the sense that both will have to bear any risks involved (Hodge & Greve, 2007), which is why trust is an important issue to consider. Similarly, this issue of trust can be related to what is involved in an inter-municipal partnership.

Inter-municipal Partnerships

Glover's (1999) research on a cost-sharing agreement among municipalities in Alberta and Slack's (1997) research on inter-municipal co-operation represent the only published studies in our field, to my knowledge, of an inter-municipal partnership in a recreation context. These studies highlight several issues that emerged among the partnering communities, such as financial concerns that created tension. Even so, Glover's research argued that having communities find ways to work more as partners can lead to benefits the entire region could reap. Similarly, Slack's (1997) research on inter-municipal co-operation discusses how municipalities are able to work together sharing both expenditures and revenues to help provide benefits to these municipalities that would otherwise be unobtainable.

Glover's study, in particular, mentioned two benefits of inter-municipal partnerships: First, he argued a key to a successful partnership is the geographic proximity of the partners. He suggests that if the relative distance is too far apart, the benefits of creating the partnership begin to decline. In his study, citizens of rural areas agreed to partner because they were located next to the urban areas in which they used recreation facilities and services and therefore felt justified in sharing the costs. In the case I intend to study, the location of this new facility is centralized, which makes proximity a potential concern for many community members. The goal of the facility is to provide people with a greater opportunity to take part in physical activity, but this may not happen because of location issues. According to Norman et al. (2006) proximity and

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availability of recreational facilities can be directly related to the levels of physical activity in which adults participate. Residents' proximity to transportation arterials (i.e highways, bus route, subways), can play a role in how desirable a destination, such as a recreation facility, may be. The "sector model" helps explore this idea whereby the closer people live to a major transportation artery, the easier the access to a certain destination (Getis, Getis, & Fellmann, 2006). However, access to the facility by those living further from the main transportation artery, will be disadvantaged in the sense that they will need to travel farther, which may discourage them from using the facility and decrease their physical activity participation. This point is also supported by Burgoyne, Woods, Coleman and Perry (2008) who reported that access to facilities, influences a person's physical activity behaviour patterns. Proximity to the location of the new recreation facility may be a concern among some residents of the county and their perception of this may become evident in the findings of the case study.

Second, Glover argued inter-municipal partnerships are beneficial if each partner has a resource required by the other. In the case study he conducted, Glover (1999) noted the rural areas were able to provide financial resources to the urban areas through revenues generated by business taxes. In return, the urban areas were able to provide the members of rural communities with facilities and services they sought. Thus, taking part in a cost-sharing partnership increased the benefits of both parties and was regarded as a welcome course of action.

Though Glover's (1999) case study provided many benefits to inter-municipal partnerships, it noted two specific challenges. First, the details of the partnership were difficult to articulate, thereby leading to confusion and differences in interpretation. To help address this criticism, Glover suggested the parties involved establish a process to help resolve any future confusion or conflict.

Second, sorting out decision-making in a network structure is challenging. Once the inter-municipal partnership profiled in Glover's (1999) case study was established, members of the rural area, who were providing funds to urban facilities and services, were left out of the decision making process with respect to how facilities operated. A successful partnership, Glover suggested, should ensure involvement throughout the partnership is equally available to all. Otherwise, the arrangement will become one-sided, and the weaker party will surely remove themselves and their resources from the partnership.

Slack (1997) defined inter-municipal co-operation as expenditure sharing whereby municipalities cooperate to provide services and generally share the costs associated with the delivery of the service. As well, inter-municipal co-operation may also include cases of tax sharing where municipalities share tax bases or tax revenues even where there are no expenditure-sharing arrangements.

Slack (1997) believed governments at all levels are seeking ways to cut costs and one of the main ways to help reduce costs is to engage in expenditure sharing with another party or in this case, another municipality. He argued that a major benefit of this approach would be that if two or more municipalities are able to combine to deliver a service, then a larger population is able to be served and costs associated can potentially be reduced. As well, cooperative purchasing, sharing of facilities and equipment, and even sharing of personnel may also be considered in reducing costs within municipalities.

Slack (1997) also suggested, however, that some negative aspects of inter-municipal co-operation may emerge. Although sharing expenditures can be beneficial, it can also make it difficult for taxpayers and consumers to know who is responsible for service delivery resulting in potential service disruption (Slack, 1997). Confusion about political accountability among

municipalities and boards may also create problems of accountability and co-ordination and can result in inefficient resource allocation.

When trying to establish partnerships of any kind, one main issue that often emerges is that of trust and authority. Trust between partners is critical to the success of a long-term partnership and without trust, it will be difficult to even establish a partnership (Tate, 1996). Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) defined trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (p.712). This definition can be applied to the trust that must be established between municipalities in order for them to achieve success.

Like trust, establishing authority within the partnership is important. Authority deals with power and how each partner is able to work together and maintain a balance in power. Unequal power and authority within a partnership has the ability to not only create barriers for success, but can also lead to the dismantling of the partnership (Tuten & Urban, 2001).

To help smoothen the partnership process, Slack (1997) offers suggestions, in accordance with the National Association of Towns and Townships (1989), as to what factors municipalities should look at when trying to arrange partnerships. They are as follows:

• It is necessary to describe the service that is to be provided and to specify the desired level of service. As part of this description, there should be a list of the activities, functions, equipment to be used and other service-related factors.

• The financial responsibilities of each party need to be specified. In particular, it is necessary to identify how the costs are to be allocated among local governments. As discussed in more detail below, costs are generally allocated on the basis of population, services received, capacity used, assessed value or some combination of these. In-kind contributions, such as the use of equipment and labour in lieu of cash, should also be specified.

• It is necessary to specify who is liable for damages that may result from the service

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provision. The contractor should be required to carry liability insurance.

• There are issues of acquisition and ownership especially in cases of joint purchase or production arrangements. It is important to specify how joint property and equipment will be allocated when the contract is terminated.

• The length of the agreement and the procedures for terminating it also need to be established at the outset.

Outside of the field of recreation and leisure, there is very little literature surrounding inter-municipal partnerships. What does exist is literature on public-public partnerships and how they have been used as a technique in water management (Hall, 2000). The use of public-public partnership is one way of working together rather than allowing privatization to occur. Privatization has been shown to deliver poor results in terms of recreation service delivery (Eagles, Havitz, McCutcheon, Buteau-Duitschaever, & Glover, 2010; Crompton, 1999). Resistance to privatization may play a role in having municipalities work together.

Despite its contribution to the literature, Glover's (1999) study did not address the implications of an inter-municipal partnership on community identity of each partner. To fill this gap, I aim to explore this topic in my thesis research. To do so, I will first need to understand community identity and its complexities.

Community Identity

Community is clearly a relevant construct in the context of this study – first, because the partnership under investigation in this study involves several small communities, and second, because the implications for community identity is of central interest. Accordingly, my discussion of community identity begins with a definition of community. Etzioni (2000) described community as "a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals,

relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another" (p. 361). He viewed it, moreover, as "a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity to a particular culture" (p. 361). In Etzioni's view, then, identity is a salient dimension of community. In Barker's (2004) words, identity refers to "a cultural description of persons with which we emotionally identify and which concern sameness and difference, the personal and social" (p. 93). Accordingly, for the purposes of this thesis, I understand community identity as a web of affect-laden relationships in which a committed group of people emotionally identify with a shared set of values, norms, meanings, and history (Etzioni, 2000). This definition complements the way Puddifoot (1996) operationalized community identity. He believed it encompassed fourteen dimensions:

1. Members' own perception of boundaries, and key topographical/built features of their community.
2. Members' own perceptions of key social/cultural characteristics of their community.
3. Members' own perceptions of the degree of physical distinctiveness of their community.
4. Members' own perceptions of the degree of distinctiveness of key social/ cultural characteristics of their community.
5. Members' own perceptions of the special character of their community.
6. Members' perceptions of their own affiliation/belonging/emotional connectedness to location.
7. Members' perceptions of their own affiliation/belonging/emotional connectedness to social/cultural groupings/forms.
8. Members' perceptions of others' affiliation/belonging/emotional connectedness to location.
9. Members' perceptions of others' affiliation/belonging/emotional connectedness to social/cultural groupings/forms.
10. Members' own reasons for identification (or not) with the community.
11. Members' own orientation to their community.
12. Members' own evaluation of the quality of community life.
13. Members' perception of others' evaluation of the quality of community life.
14. Members' own evaluation of community functioning.

Primarily, dimensions one through nine deal with distinctiveness, and identification. Distinctiveness, in this context, refers to how a community is perceived to be different from

other communities in terms of territorial and/or social features (Puddifoot, 1996). Identification refers to a community's "perceived sense of affiliation, belongingness, and emotional connectedness to a physically delineated area, or to characteristic social forms or practices of its members" (p.332). Dimension ten provides members of the community an opportunity to express their emotional connectedness towards the community. Dimension eleven continues to examine, in greater detail, community members' orientation to their community. Dimension twelve explores community members' own evaluation of the quality of community life. Dimension thirteen takes into account community members' perceptions of others' evaluation of community life. Finally, dimension fourteen strictly involves the evaluation of community functioning. These dimensions of community identity have been cited by other authors, including Tartaglia (2006) and Lewicka (2005). Both authors reference Puddifoot to help provide background and support to their studies on sense of community and community place attachment. Along with these dimensions created by Puddifoot, however, Gotham (1999) argued community identity should also be regarded as the "collective portrayal" of a particular neighbourhood or community in the political arena, which can span a spectrum of activities, from city council hearings and town hall meetings to forms of direct protest. It is felt that many of these dimensions created by Puddifoot and the comments stated by Gotham may be presented in this case study and in particular, the dimensions associated with both distinctiveness and identification.

In the context of an inter-municipal partnership arrangement, community identity may be conceivably affected by a number of things. First, a lack of involvement of community members in the decisions made by a community will presumably have an impact. This involvement most often can take the form through citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969). However, it is important for inter-municipal partnerships to examine if or how equal participation is present among all

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members of the community. Finally, inter-municipal partnerships should understand the built environment of a community, including both place attachment and community attachment and what role it plays within each community.

The involvement of the community members in the community planning and development process refers to citizen participation. Involving citizens in the decisions made by a community can help reduce tensions among members (Arnstein, 1969). Likewise, when dealing with multiple municipalities, all communities involved must feel as though they are an important part of the decision making process in order to reduce friction within the partnership. Thus, I would assume valuing citizen participation, can help foster support from the community for an inter-municipal partnership.

Arnstein's (1969) classic "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" reveals there are several levels of engagement through which citizens contribute to the planning process. At the bottom of Arnstein's ladder, a stage referred to as non-participation, citizens play a minimal, if any role in the decisions made for the community. Toward the middle, a stage known as tokenism, the citizen participation increases and allows members to have more say in the decision making process. Finally, at the top of the ladder, during a stage called citizen power, citizen participation is at its highest and the members of the community have full say in the decision making process of the community. This latter stage incorporates citizens' preference in polices formulated by the community and also allows members of the community to understand how difficult the decision making process is on community leaders (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Irvin and Stansbury also suggest that the higher the rung on the ladder, the greater the support from the community members. For community planning and development to reach its fullest potential, these top rungs of the ladder should be the communities' primary objective (Arnstein, 1969). It will be

interesting to explore how much, if any, citizen participation has taken place in the planning and development process of the centralized recreation facility at the centre of my thesis research.

Despite the importance of citizen participation in the planning process, community members rarely participate equally in the discussion of a community's identity (Campion & Fine, 1998). Issues and concerns regarding recreational services are often addressed by professionals who are effectively experts in charge of planning, developing, and implementing programs for members of the community (McComas & Carswell, 1994). Too often, professionals simply make recreational decisions and report these decisions back to the community, rather than involve the community as genuine contributors to the process (Barnes, Rodger, & Whyte, 1997). Adoption of this approach can lead to decisions that are not supported by segments of the community. Entering into a project or partnership agreement without consultation with the community could lead to potential divisions. Moreover, for those citizens who do engage in the planning process, they often represent a small portion of the community, making the feedback collected hardly representative of the larger community (Campion & Fine, 1998).

Community members presumably want to feel as though they are part of the decision making process because the built environment of a "community of place", including its recreation facilities, is often meaningful to them and can have implications for the identity they construct for themselves and their community. Tuan (1974) discussed this relationship in terms of place attachment, which he described as being comprised of residents having affective ties with the community's material environment. Omoto (2005) supported Tuan's notion by stating that sharing time and experiences at certain events or facilities within the community can help to invoke a sense of connectedness for community members. These types of emotional ties contribute to the development of a community's identity (Long & Perkins, 2007). Place

attachment, therefore, may emerge in the findings of this study, as each partnering municipality has several existing recreation facilities that contribute to its identity. With the development of a new shared facility, the risk of closing some of these facilities is very real, which means some communities could lose key components to their identity. This possibility may create negative perceptions toward the new recreational facility. As Gotham (1999) noted, when a place of strong value is threatened within a community, it can be used as a catalyst for the members to come together and create resistance against the threat.

Similar to place attachment is the concept known as community attachment (Brown, Xu, Barfield, & King, 2000). This concept consists of two different categories: "rooted in place" and an "indicator of social change". Community attachment which is rooted in place refers to a person's sense of belonging in a locality, creating a sense of loyalty within the person. Two indicators of this are age and the length of residence of a person. According to Kasarda, and Janowitz (1974), when describing indicators of social change, community attachment may be reflected through the length of residence and other emotional elements. Such elements may be made up of friendship, kinship and formal and informal associations within the local community. Community attachment, interestingly, is tied to recreational participation in community. According to Baker and Palmer (2006) as "length of time residing within a community increases, individuals tend to experience a higher level of community pride and tend to be better educated in terms of the availability of recreational and civic opportunities available to them in their communities" (p.401). In summary, both place attachment and community attachment appear to focus on the emotional bond people feel toward their community of place. Accordingly, as I move forward in this thesis, I will refer to place attachment and community attachment simply as *attachment*. These issues of community identity and all that is related to it, including attachment,

will presumably play a role in the perceptions of the members of each of the communities under examination in this thesis.

In this particular case study, the close proximity of the long-time neighbouring municipalities may have implications for their residents' openness to the partnership arrangement. In my view, the perceived distinctiveness of the community and how strongly the members identify with the community (Puddifoot, 1996) can be affected by the creation of a partnership that possibly changes the character of the relationships among the participating municipalities. As long time rivals, sharing built features, some of which may not reside geographically within the traditional boundaries of participating municipalities, may disrupt how a community identifies itself. If community identity is formed around differences between "us" and "them", what happens when "they" become "us"?

Conclusion

The concepts of both inter-municipal partnerships and community identity are the two leading pieces of literature surrounding this case. Each of these concepts also has smaller issues that may prove relevant with this case study. This literature, along with the theoretical framework exploring change theory, will help introduce questions that will be necessary to achieve the purpose of understanding how inter-municipal partnerships involving the provision of a recreation facility, impacts community identity.

Chapter Three: Methods

To get at the issue of community identity, I used a qualitative approach in this study. Community identity is a complex construct, and so I believed a qualitative approach positioned me closer to capturing this complexity through the collection of rich data. Qualitative research can be used to obtain intricate details about a phenomenon such as the feelings, thought processes and emotions involved (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this case, community identity was a large focus of the study, and by using qualitative research, the events, thoughts and feelings of the community could be explored in depth (Maxwell, 1998). This study, therefore, included questions about the impacts of the cost-sharing agreement on each community, how each municipality changed to successfully implement partnerships and what impacts it had toward each community's identity. The data collection process involved interviewing certain members within the research site and was an inductive process built from my interpretations and identification of themes (Creswell, 2007).

My intentions were to ask different members of the municipalities what their thoughts and overall perceptions regarding the development of this new centralized recreational facility and whether (or how) they believe it would impact each community's identity. Gaining a greater understanding of the people's perspectives helped me explore different issues or themes that may have facilitated or inhibited the development of this new facility.

By selecting a qualitative approach, I also chose to conduct the research from an interpretist's viewpoint. Interpretivism is an epistemological approach that requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meanings people have attached to their own actions and behaviours (Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2009). Creswell (2009) stated that, in this philosophical worldview, "the researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have

about the world" (p.8). In this study, I was simply trying to gain a greater understanding of how the people involved in the situation interpreted what is taking place and what underlying issues they may have toward this case. This topic warranted exploration so that other communities can learn from it.

To fulfill my stated purpose, I believed a case study was the most appropriate research methodology. The communities involved make this case particularly unique because each community has a long established community identity and collaboration in the form of an inter-municipal partnership has the potential to adjust each community's identity. Case studies, as stated by Stake (1995), are a type of strategy used by a researcher to explore an in-depth program, event, activity or process on a specific individual or on a group. Stake adds that time and access are usually limited within case studies, so it is important to choose a case that is easy to get to and hospitable toward the purpose. Information for the case is typically collected using an assortment of data collection techniques. The case study format appeared to be the most appropriate choice for this research project because the research is dealing with an in-depth event and process that is unique compared to past studies. Each of the towns has been self-sustaining in the past and the idea of sharing funds and resources has the potential to create conflict between the towns. The current project in which the case study was focused upon is still in the planning and development stages, making it good timing to conduct the study. Feelings and perspectives among citizens, municipal leaders and others involved in the project were still fresh, providing the case with extremely rich data. The data collection process consisted of conducting and analyzing face to face, semi-structured interviews to gain a greater understanding of the perceptions evident within the research site. More details about these procedures and approaches will be provided below.

The main focus of this research was to understand how an inter-municipal partnership impacts upon community identity. To address the purpose of this study, the research site had to meet certain criteria to ensure its relevance. These criteria were: (1) communities with longstanding relationships and a history of direct provision, as opposed to collaboration; (2) the presence of more than two partnering municipalities; (3) an agreement organized around the provision of a centralized recreation facility; and (4) smaller communities within a close proximity to one another. Based on these criteria, Pictou County in Nova Scotia was selected as the case at the centre of this thesis research.

Recently, Pictou County was given $12 million by the federal government and $10 million by the provincial government to help construct a new multi-use recreational facility (Government of Nova Scotia 2009). These funds appear to have emerged after the 2009 Stimulus Package created by the Canadian Federal Government. Included in this package were renovations to a local arena in Trenton, as well as the building of a new outdoor track and field facility located in Stellarton. These factors, in addition to being a long time resident of the area, provided me with a focus point for the research and the proposed area met the requirements needed to conduct the research.

Pictou County is made up of five distinct towns surrounded by several smaller communities that make up the rest of the county. There is a rich history within the county where each town became self-sustaining and established its own identity. Each town has developed its own downtown core and consists of many of the same facilities including restaurants, banks, schools and recreational facilities. Accordingly, communities have cultivated and competed against one another in a zero sum game for the finite resources made available to them (Nunn &

Rosentraub, 1995). An example of this competition for resources is found in the local tourism industry, which has become an area of focus for several of the communities, including Pictou and New Glasgow. In the early 1990s, Pictou, located on a harbour (See Appendix A), developed its waterfront area as part of its downtown core to attract more tourists. Realizing it was possibly losing tourists to Pictou's new waterfront, New Glasgow followed suit by developing its own waterfront on the East River to help attract tourist back to its downtown core. This competition is not only associated with municipal politics, but is also evident in sports within the communities. Being located in relatively close proximity to one another provides the opportunity for towns and schools to play one another in several sporting events. This competition has brought forth expressions of civic pride and friendly rivalries among towns and its members, which has presumably carried over into other areas, including the development of this new recreational facility. The competitive nature that exists among the towns may factor into the development of this centralized recreational facility, which shall be shared by all communities in the county.

The overall population size of Pictou County, according to Statistics Canada is approximately 46085 residents (StatsCan, 2006). The five towns consist of New Glasgow (pop. 9,455), Stellarton (4,720), Pictou (3,810), Westville (3,805) and Trenton (2,740). The remainder of the county is divided into three subdivisions classified as A, B and C with population sizes 6,415, 6,100, and 9,040 respectively. Each community has several existing recreational facilities of their own (See Table 1).

Table 1: Recreation Facilities in Pictou County Relative to this Case Study					
New Glasgow	Stellarton	Pictou	Westville	Trenton	County
Arena	Arena	Arena	Arena	Arena	Arena
Gymnasiums[12]	Gymnasiums[1]	Gymnasiums[1]	Gymnasium[1]	Gymnasium[1]	Gymnasiums[1]
Fitness Centre (x2)[2]		Fitness Centre[2]			
Swimming Pool[2]		Swimming Pool			

([1]Located in local school facilities)
([2]Located in YMCA)

Geographically, Pictou is located noticeably further away from the rest of the towns, approximately 20km and areas located within the county subdivisions may be further away than that. (Appendix A). Each of the municipalities is outfitted with its own council that helps make decisions on behalf of the community members they represent. As well, each of the municipalities will play a large role in the planning and development of this new facility.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-depth, face to face interviews were conducted by the researcher in the data collection process. Several parties within the research site were asked questions that explored each participant's perspective on the development of a centralized recreation facility, and the establishment of an inter-municipal partnership and community identity. Some of questions asked included: (See Appendix C for full Interview Guide).

- What's your impression of the new recreation centre being built in Stellarton? Is it a good thing for Pictou County? Is it a good thing for the town in which you live?
- Do residents from your town have a unique identity versus residents from neighbouring towns?

- Are you worried, as someone from (insert town), that the construction of a new recreation centre whose cost is shared, but centred in one town, will lead toward a new regional identity?

These questions were intended to help explore the purpose of this study by understanding how the arrangements came together, how members around the community feel towards this new development and how the community identity of each town may be impacted.

Purposeful sampling or judgment sampling was used to select participants. According to Marshall (1996), this sampling technique is the most common and involves the researcher seeking out the most productive sample able to answer the proposed research questions. The sample of this case study included municipal council members, power brokers and other residents of Pictou County. I intended to conduct interviews with one member from each of the five town councils as well as one member from the county council. Potential participants were sent invitations via e-mail or phone to ask whether they would like to participate in this study. However, both Stellarton and Westville town councilors were notified, but either declined or failed to respond to repeated invitations. Their lack of inclusion in the study is a clear limitation of this research. Nevertheless, each of the actual participants from the various municipalities were well informed about the case, given that many of the decisions made involved these individuals. As well, they were representatives of their own municipalities, thus how they responded presumably reflected the perspectives they had heard from many of their constituents. In addition, I intended to interview one or two members considered power brokers within the community (i.e. large company executives). In this case, I identified power brokers as individuals who had positions of influence in the community, outside of the political arena. I chose to involve these members because they had invested much in this project, including

significant financial support. I was given the opportunity to interview a key member of one of the larger businesses within the region, which had been heavily involved and was an initial advocate for the new facility. Finally, I interviewed a local reporter covering the ongoing development of the project. It was felt that the reporter would have a wealth of knowledge surrounding the case, without having a direct influence on the decisions being made surrounding the project. Moreover, the reporter was expected to provide a bigger picture of the impact of the partnership/facility. It should be noted the participants were all male and over the age of thirty-nine, thereby resulting in a sample older than the median population for the area. This outcome, however, reflects the fact that the sheer bulk of municipal councilors are male and over forty years old. Even so, it does introduce a limitation within this study. Table 2 provides a profile of the interviewees:

Table 2: Participant Profiles

Name:	Sex:	Age:	Length of Residency in Current Town:	# of Family Generations that Lived in the Region:	Role within the Community:	Approx. Distance from New Facility:
Nathaniel	M	64	60+	3	Elected Official	5 KM
Matthew	M	47	3	N/A	Administrator	15 KM
Andrew	M	60	60	4	Elected Official	50 KM
John	M	52	29	4	Elected Official	7 KM
James	M	42	38	7	Citizen (Power Broker)	12 KM
Peter	M	39	39	4	Citizen	15 KM
Thomas	M	47	17	3	Citizen	17 KM

Gary	M	52	35	N/A	Elected Official	12 KM
Phillip	M	60	34	0	Other (Journalist)	6 KM

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to allow the interviewee to lead the discussion with the interviewer probing and facilitating the direction in which it proceeded. This discussion helped encounter the perceptions and experiences of the interviewee and helped to develop themes from the interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and once completed they were transcribed word for word and then analyzed using a series of coding techniques consistent with the procedures outlined by Daly (2007). During the first phase of the coding process or the open coding phase, each transcript was read through thoroughly. As well while reading through each of the transcripts, memos were written and initial codes applied. After the initial codes were created, the second phase of creating meaning units was conducted. After these units had been established, all of the codes were placed into separate word documents to help organize the codes. From this point, themes were identified, given names, and provided with a general statement to help describe and capture the essence of each theme (Willig, 2008). The last stage was to establish quotes from the interviewee to explain the theme and gain a better understanding of community identity and how it was being experienced in this case study. Finally, each of the themes was compared to see what similarities or differences emerged.

While conducting the interviews, my main objective was to ask questions, including probing questions, to learn what perspective the interviewee had in regard to the development of the new centralized recreation facility, possible partnership agreements and potential changes to community identity. I was willing to engage in conversation and share my thoughts, if so desired by the participant, recognizing that my very presence would affect the respondents' comments. I

did not make it readily known to participants that I was a long-time resident of one of the municipalities because I felt such information would possibly discourage them from sharing their true perspectives surrounding the case, specifically their perspectives as residents of the towns neighbouring my own. However, if the participants asked me where I was from I disclosed this information.

My approach to interviewing led to some interesting and in-depth discussions, thereby providing me with rich data on the topic. As mentioned earlier, I am a long time resident of one of the towns, and I am familiar with the region and many of the residents. This connection to the county presented the possibility of what some might regard as researcher bias. However, consistent with many qualitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), I embraced these biases, recognized no research can be value free, and believed my role in the research contributed to the richness of the data collected. Even so, I carried out a process of reflexivity (Bryman et al., 2009). In short, I ensured that the values of my research process were addressed and made explicit.

As mentioned earlier, I am a member of the Town of Pictou, but have immersed myself in all municipalities of Pictou County through the participation of numerous sports and recreational events. Given my lived experiences, I understood both positive and negative perspectives that could be associated with this new project. I felt this balanced perspective would play an important role in my research process.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Authenticity

As an ethical researcher, I endeavoured to address the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data collected. According to Bryman, Teevan, and Bell (2009), trustworthiness and

authenticity are made up of a combination of four components consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Bryman, Teevan, and Bell stated credibility asks, "how believable are the findings and did the investigator allow personal values to ruin any chance of intersubjectivity?"; transferability asks, "do the findings apply to other people and other context?"; dependability asks, "are the findings likely to be consistent over time?"; and conformability asks, "would another investigator reach the same conclusions?" (p.23).

For this research study, each of the four components was explored. First, to have credibility, I used a technique called respondent validation. That is, I provided each participant with an account of what was transcribed and interpreted during the interview and allowed the participant to make further comments. These comments were used as additional data to be analyzed. Second, to address transferability, I produced a thick description that involves a rich, detailed account of the participants' experiences. Third, to address dependability, I kept a complete record of all that was done during the research process. An auditing approach will be adopted, where problems encountered, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, etc. will be recorded. And fourth, to address conformability I endeavoured not to sway the conduct of the research and the findings derived from it by having peer reviews conducted, primarily by my thesis committee.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The following chapter examines the findings from the data I collected from residents and municipal leaders within Pictou County. Each interview was transcribed word for word, analyzed, and its germane information broken down into separate codes. The codes were then used to organize the data into relevant themes. These themes are presented in this chapter. After analyzing the data, it became clear to me there were both positive and negative perceptions of the partnership under investigation. Accordingly, I begin this chapter by focusing on the former, then moving on to the latter, and finally concluding with details of how participants believed the partnership impacted upon their community identities.

Concerns about the Partnership

Many of the interviewees discussed their concerns about the cost-sharing arrangement to jointly construct and finance a new recreation and wellness centre in their region. These concerns had the potential to impede the advancement of the new facility and were important to address to ensure the ultimate success of the partnership. In particular, participants worried about (1) the fate of existing facilities; (2) the financial implications of the partnership arrangement; (3) the location of the new facility; (4) the origins of the project; and (5) the communication process. These concerns are a subtext to what participants described as the implications for community identity, and therefore warrant some description. What follows, then, are details about each of these concerns.

First, a few participants expressed their own concerns and the concerns they had heard from others about the fate of their municipality's existing recreation facilities. In building a new facility, some participants were initially worried existing facilities would be in jeopardy of closing due to an anticipated decrease in user demand. Gary, a town councilor, was concerned from the beginning:

> Ah, there was a lot of negatives come from the town because the first thing they thought, we were gonna be selling the pool (Interviewer: Your town specifically?) Oh, big time! Our town. Ah, and that's the residents because they thought we were gonna end up, ah, closing the pool, ah, we got a little Y here, closing the Y and, ah, and all this kinda stuff...

He added,

> …the biggest fear is a lot of people are going, "why do we need it, and what are we gonna lose?" They're all scared they're gonna lose something they already got in their backyard. And like I said earlier to ya, no one wants to lose anything, no one wants to change.

Similarly, Andrew, also a municipal councilor, discussed two specific concerns by two different municipalities regarding recreation facilities:

> Some of the municipalities had concerns over their existing facilities, such as, such as their rinks…The town of Pictou had a pool. Ah, there is, you know, New Glasgow had a concern as far as their, ah, ah, Glasgow Square. What is this facility gonna do to their Glasgow Square? Pictou had a concern in regards to, ah, ah, the DeCoste (Entertainment) Centre.

Peter, a junior high school teacher, believed the fear expressed was already present and the plans for a new facility just brought that fear to the surface. In his words, "It must be just that fear of what they have to lose rather than thinking about what they have to gain…That's the fear I think

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people already here have. That it's not much but you don't wanna lose what you have either."

Based on the participants' statements, a major concern regarding the new partnership was the future of existing recreational facilities within the region. This concern warranted attention from those making decisions about the partnership arrangements to ensure full co-operation from each partner.

Second, similar to most publicly-funded infrastructure projects, the financial implications of the new facility were voiced as concerns by participants. The target of these concerns was economic in nature and divided between operating and capital expenditures. With respect to the former, participants like Andrew worried about "the operating deficit getting out of control." Correspondingly, for Matthew, an administrator for one of the municipalities, there was a need to know before the facility was built that any operating deficit would be addressed "equitably" among the partnering municipalities. John, a municipal councilor, along these same lines, noted the concern constituents had about "making sure the facility made money." Phillip, a newspaper reporter for the county, noted he felt residents had financial concerns because "they are worried that this will be a white elephant," and will not produce the necessary profits. As for capital expenditures, Thomas, a planning technician for Pictou County, noted the fear of exceeding anticipated costs: "They say it's gonna cost whatever," he commented. "Hopefully, that's what the cost will be, and this deed transfer tax better pay for it." Peter felt the financial concerns, from the beginning of the project, reflected residents' concerns about their own towns' finances before taking on this new project. He added:

> I hear Trenton, umm you know their certainly not a wealthy municipality by any means.
> You know they fight for what they have and ah their recreation departments and different
> things that they do have and initially I heard numbers of 1.6 or 1.2 million or so on that
> each municipality was suppose to contribute initially and you gotta think for a little

municipality like Trenton that that's gonna be ah a big chunk out of their budget that they would have to contribute so um you know. Up front that's gotta be a big hit.

With each town having its own financial concerns, being able to understand how the funding for the operation and capital expenditures was critical to answering any uncertainties associated with funding the project. Alleviating these concerns was an important step in the partnership.

Third, the location raised questions about the *public* benefits of the facility. As Andrew put it, "I guess one of the drawbacks will be the location. Ah, it's not gonna serve all the residents within the county as much as it's gonna serve the, ah, probably, which I would say, probably sixty percent". In other words, not everyone saw themselves benefiting from the construction of a new facility. Phillip felt the location restricted people's use because of transportation issues:

> It's built in a place right now where you have to drive to get there, and I think they have to find a way to, ah, marry, ah, alternative transportation, ah, to motor vehicles into this whole how this thing works. I mean, it's walking, biking and mass transit.

Like Phillip, James, a power broker within the county, discussed transportation issues and how the location of the old YMCA and rinks in the communities presented participants with the opportunity to walk to the facilities, whereas the location of this new facility seemingly hindered people's access:

> The only issue I see, that hasn't seemed to have come up, is that it should be a problem for the walk up traffic to those. Now what I keep getting told is nobody walks anymore. But ah, ah, you know, the Y was originally located where it was, walk up traffic from what was lower income areas of New Glasgow. Ah, and the rinks, use to be all set in downtown or close to downtown locations because nobody got driven to the rink, they carried their gear and walked to the rink.

For members of Pictou and the county located the greatest distance away from the facility, concerns about time constraints were equal to their concerns about transportation:

> For everybody, umm, it's not, it's not an easy thing to travel the ten or fifteen. It doesn't sound like much, but for me it's not an issue, but I know there are others that they wouldn't take their kids across the causeway to, to use those facilities. (Peter)

> …a lot of people aren't gonna travel the causeway in the winter. I mean, anyone that lives on this side knows what its like and when you're on this side. We're not just dealing with Pictou, you're dealing with River John, Toney River, Caribou, Scotsburn, Durham… (Gary)

Gary's comments implied the town of Pictou would not be the only community affected by the distance. Several other smaller communities and their members needed to find means of transportation to access the facility. These issues of transportation were evidently a great concern to the communities located a greater distance away and needed to be addressed in the project plans.

Fourth, several of the participants mentioned concerns about the origins of the project. They felt the project was conceived from higher levels of government, the local business community, and other people of influence within the county. Local councilors used phrases such as "it was shoved at us", "they were throwing it at the table", and "it was outside of our hands", thereby suggesting they were not primarily in charge of the project and certain decisions. Andrew shared his concerns about the project:

> It was a, it was a project that came down, basically from, instead of a project starting from the bottom and working its way up, this one came basically from, from the top down…this way we have to, the money was announced and then we had to do the, do the ground work, ah it's, it's overall, it was probably, and I think it was a feeling out there

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that it was ah, you know ah, not the best way to, ah, to actually, ah, do a project, but it was outside of our hands and we had to deal with it the way that, it had unfolded.

Similar to Andrew's comments, Matthew acknowledged the project did not originate from within council or the general community, but rather the business sector of the county:

> And, ah, again this project really came from the private sector, it really wasn't, the Aberdeen was on the radar, a big blip on the radar screen, but a wellness centre was sort of talked about but not really the big blip on the radar. But the corporate community came together and, ah, sort of championed the cause initially and then came to the municipalities and said here's, and this was when we were going through all this stimulus funding, from the Federal government. (Matthew)

Gary comments implied the project's origins were heavily pushed upon municipal councillors, and decisions were rushed as a result. He added,

> And, ah, now see, first when this was put down to us, it was shoved at us, and it scared a lot of us, and I'm talking every town. Like it was the, ah, the business people. They ah, you know you had Sean Murray, Tim Horton's. You had John Hamm. You know they came to our, to council and they basically, you know, were throwing it at the table…The government's gonna give us all this money and this is what we want and this is gonna be good for the county. And we're all backing up, yeah, what's it gonna cost us? And we couldn't get the answers, and it, it scared the crap out of us, right. And I, I'm talking Pictou and the rest…because it was like, we all felt it was pushed. And, ah, and I were, it was just they wanted us to sign, it was everything go, go, go. Let's get going or you're gonna lose the money and we had to put the breaks on and we needed answers right

The comments made by Gary, Matthew and Andrew reveal the project did not originate from the town councils within Pictou County. Given the origins of the plan, the towns were uncertain of what the project entailed and were unable to provide information to community members about what was taking place. To further complicate the situation, the funding provided by the provincial and federal governments was in jeopardy if an agreement could not be

established by a certain date. This provision caused a "push" from the business community toward the councils so that the funding would not be lost.

In retrospect, involving the councils in the partnership from the outset would have allowed each party to better understand the plan for the project and would have reduced any feelings of being "pushed" into making decisions with minimal knowledge to support these decisions.

Finally, the communication process associated with this partnership was disconcerting to some participants. Thomas believed officials associated with the project were not sufficiently forthcoming:

> I think it was a little too secretive. Right from the very beginning, I mean it was, like you can't find too many people on the street that know exactly what's going on with the wellness centre. (Interviewer: Even now?) Even now. Yeah. So. Should they maybe had a few public meetings and stuff like that? Yeah.

Gary believed the lack of information shared with the municipalities in the early stages of the project negatively impacted upon the transfer of information to the public, causing uncertainty and dismay among community members:

> Every municipal unit, the people, the councilors and mayors that were there, we were all, a big question mark right. And that's what was scaring us. And when us, when we're being scared, and the people are asking us, well naturally we can't give them answers, so they're going, what the heck are yas getting involved in something ya don't know nothing about? And we were still waiting for the answers right. (Gary)

Should another project be initiated in the future, a better communication plan would likely be more effective in gaining public support. As Andrew stated, "Ah, if we had an opportunity to do it from the ground up, it would have probably been, ah, better communicated." James agreed:

> I think the community will always want more information, and if you ever survey anybody, communication will always be the biggest problem in any organization or community…If we want, if we were to do it again, a better communications plan would have made sense. (James)

Like any project, communication played a vital role. The communication plan involved in this case was clearly not as effective as was needed. A lot of questions remained unanswered due to gaps in the communication process. Thus, the case illustrated the importance of developing a thoughtful communication plan among all parties involved to minimize gaps in communication and their associated problems.

This first section has explored concerns about the partnership that were commonly discussed by participants during the interviews. Though concerns were identified, participants were surprisingly supportive of the partnership, perhaps because of their particular role within the county and with their respective town. The section that follows gives a better sense of why this strong support was evident.

Anticipated Benefits

After examining the concerns in the previous section, this new section will concentrate on the anticipated benefits of the partnership. Each benefit discussed conceivably had implications for perceptions of community identity within Pictou County because it enhanced each

community's individual identity and also contributed toward a positive outcome for the entire region. In particular, this section will focus on six potential benefits mentioned by participants: 1) Co-operation; 2) Provincial Competition; 3) Attracting New Community Members; 4) Economical Generation; 5) Facility Upgrades; and 6) Healthcare Advancements.

First, several participants felt the wellness centre presented the municipalities, the business community, and the general public with an opportunity to enhance co-operation within Pictou County. Examples of co-operation among the towns were minimal in the past. However, the plans for this new facility sparked a new co-operation among municipalities and the municipalities began to realize the benefits of co-operation.

The planning and development of the new wellness centre enticed the participating municipalities to meet with each other and discuss different ways they could work together to not only provide funding and support for the project, but also to continue to work together to generate greater benefits for the entire county. Several of the participants discussed how the municipalities began to work together as a result of this project and how co-operation was a positive outcome of the initiative. In Andrew's words,

> When you deal with six municipalities, there's always some, ah, you know, some concerns. Ah, and there was in this here situation. But, ah, the six municipalities worked together to, ah, deal with those concerns and, ah, and come to a solution that is, to a positive solution.

Gary, too, saw this co-operation as positive, stating that "…it puts us together, ah, makes us more as one" and that " as long as there's something we all have in common, something we're shooting for and keeps us working together, then I think things will be a lot smoother, a lot easier…". Matthew, too, discussed the greater potential of working together: "I think going

through that type of negotiating process with your neighbours, you get to know your neighbours a lot better, right. So then that becomes good for yourself and your neighbour." Increases in co-operation by working toward common goals were seen to benefit the entire region and not just a few municipalities.

Many of the participants thought the initiative sparked further co-operation among the participating municipalities and would continue to do so. Andrew believed the wellness centre was an example for future projects insofar as "it shows that by working together what we can do." Matthew and John talked about how the municipalities working together provided additional cost-sharing and service sharing agreements within Pictou County. In Matthew's words, "we're doing a lot of projects with our county cousins then what I think has probably been done in the past, just because we went through this intensive negotiation with the wellness centre". Along the same lines, John commented, "it's a model that we will use, ah we have a Pictou County Shared Service Authority, which is set up now, um and ah the cost-sharing in it and the cost-sharing in the wellness centre are similar." This co-operation increased the opportunities for municipalities to take on larger projects that would otherwise have been inconceivable.

The initiative led the participating municipalities to explore additional ways to co-operate financially. Highlighted among the examples listed was the deed transfer tax. Matthew explained, "This new deed transfer tax, which is an aggregate fund, which everyone is funding in, right, so that, and we think it will work right, hopefully it will, so then there would be no bearing on the municipal tax rate". He added, "these communities would still have the ability to borrow money, to do other important capital projects." This financial co-operation was positive for the region insofar as it provided a model of funding that could be used for future projects.

John continued by explaining how the deed transfer tax was set up as "a financial scheme I guess, for lack of a better word, that was worked on to try and make it fair and equitable to everybody." Nathaniel, a municipal councilor, further explained,

> …the formula's based on, it's not just based on the number of people in your community, or your tax base. It's all, it's a very complex formula which also includes how close you are to, where you're ah, physical distance, geographical distance your community is to the, ah, the centre.

This form of financial co-operation allowed communities to take advantage of facilities throughout the region, while equally supporting the funding process and reducing financial pressures on individual municipalities.

It should be noted, however, that Westville was the only municipality that had not fully adopted the agreement for the new facility. Financial concerns were an issue within the town, but it had still agreed to participate in the building costs of the facility. Matthew explained Westville's financial involvement in the agreement:

> Westville is not in the operations of it. (They're only in the building?) They're, they're only in the deed transfer tax, so they're not in the wellness centre, they don't, they're not signatory to the wellness centre. They're giving their deed transfer tax, from my understanding, over the term of the mortgage right, but they don't want to be a signatory to the wellness centre operations. So they don't wanna have their proximity counted in the ah, in any potential operating taxes. (Okay) And they feel, just because they feel, you know their proximity would be a higher percentage I suppose for them, and they feel their financial situation is so tenuous now that they can't expose themselves to that type of risk.

Although Westville is not in full agreement with the project for financial reasons, it appeared they too understood how the new facility could benefit Pictou County and encourage financial co-operation through building costs and the deed transfer tax.

Second, the new facility and partnership was expected to make Pictou County more competitive with its neighbouring counties. As Andrew said, "it makes us competitive with our neighbours in Colchester and Antigonish." When Thomas was asked to expand on his comments, he explained, "…you go to the other communities, there's some beautiful, beautiful facilities and we have nothing." John mentioned Pictou County was losing out on hosting events within the county given there was no facility large enough to house them: "They was a ah, two conventions last year that went down to St. F.X. and they were held by organizations from New Glasgow. And they went down to St. F.X. because there wasn't any place here." By bringing the new facility to Pictou County, there is no question that it will allow them to be more competitive with neighbouring counties and allow them to benefit from this increase in demand to the region.

At least one participant discussed how provincial competition was affecting growth within the local business community. James commented on how potentially high-end employees of the larger businesses within Pictou County were not willing to move to Pictou County due to the lack of infrastructure advancements within the county. This deficiency, according to him, was forcing businesses to move offices to areas that provided such facilities, resulting in lost opportunities for Pictou County:

> One of the big issues with the economic development issue is that many, many local companies have creeping executive offices outside of the area because they have had a hard time trying to hire people here. Sobey's and Crombie Developments and Empire, now have a Halifax office that they never did before just to house the people that were not willing to move to Pictou County for, because they needed the right schools and the right recreation and other things for their kids, and they couldn't find it in Pictou County. (Right) Well, we've just lost those salaries to our area, we've lost those car sales to this area, we've lost those restaurant meals to this area, we've lost that, that community support. (Uh huh) Ah, we've done the same thing. We've got executives in Moncton and Halifax. Scotsburn's done the same thing. They've got executives outside of the region. (James)

Similarly, John talked about how new doctors "are looking at facilities in the area that they can send their patients to go to get physiotherapy, that they can go themselves, that their spouses can go to, and not have to go to the big city to find things." With this project, the business and health communities will be provided with much needed infrastructure, which will appeal to new members and keep local businesses from moving to these larger areas where members' needs can be met.

The third benefit expected to be derived from this new partnership was its potential to attract new residents to the communities and serve as a "drawing card" or a "magnet" for the community. The ability to attract and retain people within the county can be connected to how well community identity in Pictou County was perceived by outside members. Many participants also felt the building of the new facility would help the county attract new residents and retain old ones. Phillip, mentioned, "this (facility) is going to attract a lot of people" and create "a beehive of activity within the community." Thomas, too, agreed that the facility had the opportunity to "attract young families here" and felt that if the area "can draw some people in here, hopefully good things will happen in each town." An increase in the number of members living within the region can provide financial benefits but also help improve resources, such as recreation programs, that may be decaying due to decreases in demand.

The business community also understood how the facility could attract new members to the region. James provided his own personal perspective on what was taking place within the county in terms of attracting members and how it could benefit Pictou County:

> …we don't necessarily retain those executives when they leave. So you want to be able to build the infrastructure and other things within this facility so that when they retire, which a lot of them will be in the next while, (uh huh) that they feel comfortable that they

have access to culture, sports, recreation that will keep them here, keep them occupied, keep them paying taxes in this community as new people come in.

He continued by saying,

If I can hire senior level employees or Michelin can or Scotsburn can, or the Health Authority can, some of those people are going to choose to either shop or eat or live in this region and we have to realize that ah, even if they don't locate directly in Pictou, it's going to benefit us. It's going to add to the tax bases of the region, it's going, they are going to help the stores and the businesses that are located here. They're going to help where we work, and help build that base.

By building this new facility, Pictou County enhanced its liveability for residents, which presumably was positive for the local economy. Indeed, the opportunity to attract and retain members to Pictou County presented several benefits to different sectors of the region. The municipal government, business community, and healthcare community all appeared to gain from this new partnership and the development of the new wellness centre within Pictou County.

Fourth, the new partnership and development was viewed as a potential "economic generator" for Pictou County. John stated "you can not put 35 million in infrastructure, okay, into a small community like this without it being a benefit to the community." He continued to say that, "we have 35 millions dollars more of infrastructure in, for the six municipalities to use and the six municipalities are working together to make it work." James thought the new facility would save the county money and provide it with the chance to generate more money by increasing demand in the area: "Um, from a county perspective, ah it should save us money, ah, if the municipalities ah, do the business cases, ah, there are probably a couple of rinks that should be closed. Ah, would save them hundreds of thousands of dollars a year." The government

funding, along with the money believed to be saved due to new efficient technologies within the facility, provided Pictou County with the potential opportunity to generate more money for the region that can be used toward future projects.

Next, many of the participants who were interviewed mentioned the potential the facility had to create economical spin-offs. As Nathaniel noted, the "benefits are to the greater economic community." John and Matthew provided testimonials about how they felt the arrangement and facility could create economic spin-offs in the area:

> The convention centre coming in here will probably have a spin off of another hotel. Right. There'll probably be another hotel that will be coming up in place. There'll probably be another food ah you know restaurant or whatever that will come in because of this…(John)

> I think there probably would be economic spin off to it as well. Um, you know, you're attracting ah, more events that you couldn't attract to Pictou County before, so I'm sure that's gonna mean something to ah, restaurants and hotels and campgrounds, that type of thing. Making us a destination community. (Matthew)

The building of this new facility will provide the county with different opportunities to improve upon their economy. As suggested, it will provide the county with millions of dollars in new infrastructure, it possesses the opportunity to save the county money and also brings with it the opportunity for greater spin-offs within the county.

Along with economic generation, a couple of participants felt as though the new facility would provide the area with greater advancements to its healthcare system. John thought the new facility would help address the need to increase healthcare within the region:

…there's no modern facilities, right, as far as the Y and everything is concerned and exercise and all the different stuff like that. The physiotherapy people were saying that they wanted a, the water ahh, the physiotherapy for the water for the pool and they ah spa (Yeah) and that sort of stuff. That that's one of the things that is lacking here for them for recovery purposes, for a lot of patients.

James, on a different note, believed that the facility provided residents with a greater opportunity to become active and decrease health risks by participating in activities and programs the facility offered:

> There's no way we can sustain health care in this region, unless we get people healthier and the way to get people healthier is to try and make sure we have the infrastructure to ah, and the access so that people can get involved in sport, recreation or loc, low impact sports…its suppose to make us healthier, economic benefits as well, but its suppose to make us healthier so that they don't have to hire as many doctors (yeah) and ah don't have as high health care costs…

Presenting Pictou County with the opportunity to better facilitate physical activity positioned it better to advance the health of its residents and possibly reduce demands on its healthcare system and hospitals.

Finally, the development of the new recreation and wellness centre appeared as though it would provide the region with infrastructure advancements. Much of the infrastructure within the county had aged, and participants expressed that the new facility would grant the county an opportunity to re-develop many of its recreational facilities under one facility. Phillip explained:

> They wanted this facility because they needed to build something new, something that had the technology that goes with building a facility like this in the 21st century.…it's going to help the community umm, its going to allow this facility to fulfill the potential that the other facilities in the county, that are used for hockey for instance, could never do…

He continued,

> I think this is the best chance to build a facility that's tailored to what the demands of the public in Pictou County have looked like over the years and ah tilting the facility to ah something that was just an entertainment centre or a arts centre wouldn't have that same ah same odds of succeeding.

Like Phillip, Peter offered his opinion on the matter, saying "I just think of the fitness centre part of it and the wellness part of it is something that it, we're so ya know, it's something we need so desperately to maintain pace with areas outside of Pictou County that umm it's just kinda one of those things that you've been hoping for and wishing for for years...". James felt the facility would also improve existing facilities in need of upgrades. He said "It's going to make the Y more, ah, hopefully make the Y more sustainable, with a better more efficient facility, which in turn should make the Pictou Y more, more sustainable…". The building of this new facility allows the region to possess state of the art technology and infrastructure that can benefit anyone who wishes to take advantage of these resources.

Conversations with the participants, revealed several associated benefits. Areas such as, increased co-operation, provincial competition, attracting new community members, economical generation, healthcare advancements and facility upgrades were all expressed as ways this project benefitted the county and all of its towns. The next section will explore community identity and how this project and partnership potentially influenced a shift within Pictou County.

Distinguishing Identities

Pictou County consists of six different municipalities and several smaller communities within them. These areas were established decades ago and have since developed into individual self-sustaining communities, with individual identities different from that of their neighbours. This independence grew to the point where competition was common and led to the mentality, "what's ours is ours", as stated by Gary. However, based on the interviews conducted, it appeared as though a shift in this mentality was occurring. Each community accepted that greater benefits could be achieved if co-operation was established with their neighboring municipalities. Many participants felt this co-operation had the potential to create a more regional identity to the area, which could potentially impact each community's individual identity. This final section, *Distinguishing Identities*, examines how the participants viewed identity within the county, and whether they felt this new facility and the collaboration between municipalities was helping or hindering individual community and regional identities.

Individual Communities

The history of Pictou County revealed that each individual town was important to the region as a whole and that residents were extremely loyal to their individual towns. When Nathaniel was asked if community identity was present within Pictou County, he responded by saying, "Nowhere more so then Pictou County. Haha, you know. Yeah. I think, umm, I think every municipality doesn't have to fear losing their identity." The various community identities established in each of the towns stem from each municipality's unique heritage, features, and characteristics, including their recreational infrastructure. However, the development of a new

wellness centre that required inter-municipal co-operation forced residents to confront the

relationship between their individual community identities and their broader regional identity.

Intuitively, given the long-standing history of these municipalities as unique and separate

entities, I expected there to be resistance to the idea of a joint venture, yet the planning and

development stages of the initiative revealed generally positive reactions.

As mentioned, each of the municipalities boasted a rich history. Phillip, a long time

newspaper reporter for the county, believed the histories of the towns influenced current

identities shared by residents and different attitudes that pervade in relation to the other

municipalities:

> …yes, there's a different attitude. I think there's a nostalgia in Pictou that, ah, I think, ah,
> is all very well, but is not going to allow the, ah, on its own, allow the town to survive.
> But, ah, yes, there is, ah, a different attitude among west Pictou residents in general and
> in, ah, people who live in Pictou, and, ah, I think it goes back to the fact that it was the
> original town, and it was the preeminent town in the county and was the county's seat,
> still is, and, ah, they [Pictou residents] didn't like it when New Glasgow, ah, got ahead of
> them and, ah, got so many more services.

He continued by saying,

> There has been a general intransigence and distance between Stellarton and the other
> municipal units. Times that they have just not shown up for events that called for all six
> municipal units to be represented. Ah, it might be innocuous events, it might be just
> proclamations and things like that, but there has been a resistance on the part of
> Stellarton…I think there's a certain, ah, chauvinism on their part that they can be as good
> as anywhere else because they're showing off that business park, the Albion park, and
> they're thinking that they're gonna be as good as New Glasgow…I think they've always
> had this longstanding hatred or resentment or suspicion of New Glasgow that they want
> everything and that they wanted it.

Having grown up in Pictou County, I am well aware of the relationships that have taken place in the past between residents and municipalities and agree that this has played a large part in separating community identities.

Although history plays a very strong role in each of the municipalities, many participants argued much of community identity talk was influenced generationally. James felt the implications for community identity were a concern that would disappear as the younger generations grow older. He thought the older generations within the area were attached to the idea of individual community identity and were unwilling to view it differently, despite changes that were taking place within the region:

> I think you'll find that some of its demographic, if you look at the age break, as you get into the older population, they're more worried about losing identities…I would say that we're going to grow out of that. And that you're probably looking at a break point, and I don't know where that break point is, probably fifty some years old plus, that are still very adamant that it's, you know, that it would be just terrible for us to combine services with somebody else. And that's because if you look, if you look back twenty years, there were violent rivalries in all kinds of sporting events and in business. We all had thriving down towns with our grocery store competing against their grocery store and, ah, you know, our bicycle shop competing against their bicycle shop or whatever it happened to be. Or our, there used to be several newspapers. Our newspaper competing against their newspaper, and that, you know, the fact that the New Glasgow Bombers versus the Pictou Maripacs would draw, twelve, thirteen hundred people every Saturday night for a junior B game, and there would be fights afterwards every time, talked to, ah, how people built their perceptions of their communities and what they felt of the others communities…I don't think you'll ever lose the town's particular identity, as I said with Bedford and other areas. But they're the ones that still see the others as enemies.

Similarly, Thomas, felt an inter-municipal partnership, like the one under examination, would no longer be much of a concern in the near future, and gave credit to the establishment of new high schools within the region for setting the stage:

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It's just old time politics and stuff. Even when I went to school, in high school and stuff, you know, there was always the rivalries at the different high schools. That's why I think it's gonna be a lot different over the next few years as as, ah, the high schools get older…I think there's a lot of that, ah, you know, "I'm from Westville" or "I'm from New Glasgow", and I I think, I think the the two new high schools will change that…

In short, the rich history within Pictou County was an important pretext to understanding and appreciating the various community identities in the region. However, according to the participants, loyalty to a community identity was largely driven by an older generation of residents. In talking with participants who span the generations, it became clear the inter-municipal partnership under examination in this study was able to balance their community and regional identities without making them feel one was threatened by the other.

Having six municipalities in such close proximity to one another not surprisingly created a sense of competition between and among the municipalities. With the economy in a recession, this competition turned into a fight for resources and survival. Peter felt each town was simply trying to protect its own identity and resources instead of concentrating on the collective benefits. In his words,

As you know growing up in this area, we have five or six little towns or municipalities or communities or however you wanna put it, and everybody's fighting for their own little piece of the pie, regardless of what the issues are, and instead of kinda working together to make something happen, everybody's kinda stand off-ish and kinda looking out for their own…Everybody's kinda protecting their own little identity and community. We've been in this area for years and years and years where everybody kinda has their own culture and their own way of doing things and I don't think that's gonna change any…

If the attitude among the municipalities remained competitive, Peter felt self interest among the towns would have negative implications for the local economy.

Though he acknowledged other residents did express their concerns about inter-municipal co-operation having implications for their town identity, Matthew felt these people were giving too much credit to the partnership. He suggested too much was being placed on the significance of infrastructure and that members of the community should take into account other components that define community identity. Matthew explained,

> Like, does that [the new facility] really define community? Like, does that really define, is it, you know, is it, ah, is culture part of your community? Is Scottish dance part of your community? Is Gaelic language or whatever the language, part of your community? Like, there's other driving factors that defines community…but I think there's other things above and beyond sort of physical things that define a town. Like, I said before, maybe it's the culture of the town, it's your heritage, your history…

In other words, just because a regional facility was built did not mean it would cause any threat to a town's identity. To Matthew, facilities played no role in shaping collective identity among residents. For him, community identity would not and did not change.

Participants, such as John, emphasized that the new facility was not meant to take away from individual community identities within the county. John believed community identities would always pervade:

> Um, there's always a Trenton, right. There's always a New Glasgow. And there are entities in each one that are truly Trenton or that are truly New Glasgow, and that's fine. And the people identify with certain things in a town and certain facilities and certain restaurants or certain, you know, and that's Trenton. Right, its always Trenton. No, that's Westville, its always Westville. Like you know, that sort of thing. And people identify with that. Right. People, I'm from Westville. I'm from Trenton. That will never change. Right. Oak Street is gonna be Oak Street Trenton sort of thing, right. That's where I grew up that's where its gonna be. But there's ah, that ent, that identity will always be there. Nobody's taking that away.

Similarly, Andrew felt, as important as community identity was to residents, the partnership would not impact upon it in any significant way.

> You know, ah, I'm from River John, I'll still be a River Johner. If you're from New Glasgow, you'll be, you know, classified from New Glasgow. It's not gonna, it will not change the identity of the ah, of ah the areas surrounding it or anything else.

The centre was viewed as an initiative aimed to provide benefits to the entire region of Pictou County. Placing the facility in a central area, within the municipality of Pictou County, was meant to reduce concerns that one specific municipality would reap the benefits of the facility. Each community was expected to maintain its own sense of community identity, and the new facility was not expected to influence that identity negatively.

Participants associated each community identity with the older generations within the towns. As a result, they urged me to consider other implications of the partnership. In particular, they championed the notion that the new facility would give the county an opportunity to provide its residents with a state of the art facility. Community identity, they argued, would continue to exist, and they urged residents to be patient before concluding that the new facility would take away from their own town's identity.

Regional Identity

The participants made it clear that each municipality had its own identity, making each uniquely different from its neighbours. They acknowledged, however, that some community members believed the development of the new partnership and the construction of the new wellness centre would take away from community identity within the region. However, they

stressed the partnership, in their view, was a positive shift from traditional standards and stereotypes within the county. Several participants saw the partnership as an opportunity to maintain a strong sense of community identity within each of the towns, while also creating a strong regional identity for Pictou County. I will explore this perspective in this section.

A strong regional identity, the participants pointed out, originated with other examples of inter-municipal co-operation that predated the arrangement to cost-share the new wellness facility. In particular, they pointed out the amalgamation of the local high schools in 2004, which reduced the number of schools in the region from seven to three. Each municipality no longer had its own high school, and adolescents were forced to integrate with neighboring community members. This occurrence, similar to the case involving the wellness centre, was not an easy transition at first, but over the years generated greater acceptance. John argued this transformation benefitted the development of the wellness centre and helped the county co-operate more efficiently:

> They don't care if the person's from New Glasgow, the person's from Stellarton or where the person's from. They're either a good person or a bad person. Right? Or a person they like and they wanna be friends with or a person they don't like and wanna. Has nothing to do with where they're from. Right? And that's what we gotta get over here. Like that's, I really think and the schools have done well over the last five years to get past that. Right? They really have and, and the kids are coming through and you know. They're coming out with I'm from Pictou County. Right? Sort of thing. I'm from New Glasgow, that's fine. Right? Or Trenton or Pictou or wherever, Westville, Stellarton. I mean, it, it, it's fine.

James too suggested that a change of attitude was developing among residents:

> I think it started with the schools, ah, the, now that we have three high schools. Ah, the two larger high schools have started breaking barriers because no longer are those folks from another community the enemy. They were always the enemy in sport, or the enemy

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in dating girls, to the enemy in whatever it happens to be…Ah, but now, you're all together, you're all, you all have a, hopefully a common school spirit, or you know each other. Ah, suddenly they're not the enemy. They're just the folks you went to school with. And as those people are growing up, and many of them are adults in this community now, ah they don't necessarily have such ah, ah strong attachment to ah, their little local piece of land that they grew up on, they have an attachment to their community.

With the amalgamation of the high schools in the past, the younger generations have started to realize the members of the neighboring communities are quite similar to themselves and have begun to break away from the way older generations viewed the neighbouring communities. This shift was perceived as a positive one by participants insofar as it was regarded as an opportunity to reduce tension among the towns and encourage more collaboration.

As this generational shift continued to take place, many of the participants also acknowledged that Pictou County itself deserved an identity because it too was viewed as a community, albeit a larger one. Matthew commented saying, "You know, yes, there are several communities in Pictou County, but Pictou County is a community. So don't you want to promote Pictou County as a community?" He believed there was no longer any separation among neighboring communities and that "there's a real blending in the upriver towns. (Uh huh) I mean, you know, you have a sign on one side that says New Glasgow and on the other side it says Trenton." Likewise, Thomas stated, "I'm from Pictou County. I grew up on the west side of New Glasgow but I'm from Pictou County." Along with Matthew and Thomas's comments, John argued Pictou County ought to have its own community identity, one that was separate from each municipality's community identity:

> But we're all one. We're, like that's the entity that everybody has to sort of gather around. And that, yeah where I live in this town and I'm very proud to be from there and

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that, and be the mayor of (town) but I tell ya, ah you know, I'm a Pictou County person. Right? I'm here from Pictou County, everything I do is for everybody in Pictou County. It is for the (town) people, but it is for everybody else…Like you know, but in most cases when you ask anybody, and that, if you're outside the province or if you're outside this area, where ya from? "Oh, I'm from Pictou County" Right? You know, because it encompasses it all. It really does, and that. And the people are all alike, right? They all have the same attitudes…When I'm away and I go to Toronto for work and that and when I'm up away and somebody asks me where I'm from, the first thing I say is I'm from Pictou County. Right? And then once, say, oh Pictou County, I know where Pictou County is, and then you say well I'm actually from this town.

The development of this new partnership between the municipalities was seen as an opportunity to move toward building a broader identity that reflected the entire county. The wellness centre was seen as something that could be used as a symbol to show what could be accomplished when each community was willing to co-operate and assist in projects that would benefit members of the entire region.

Participants were adamant that each municipality within Pictou County retained its own unique community identity and should never be asked to shed that identity altogether. However, when considering Pictou County as a whole, as I listened to participants' comments, it struck me that a regional identity was still maturing. For centuries, each community cherished its own identity and resources, which translated into an attitude of "what's mine is mine". However, the new high schools appeared to have created a shift in attitudes among students that in turn is beginning to transfer into the different municipalities. Some participants realized the municipalities were "building towards a new identity" (Gary), one that was representative of the entire region of Pictou County and by doing so were beginning to understand what could be achieved by co-operating and working toward common goals. As Phillip stated, "Each of the communities here are going to recognize that they have a gift and that they're worth promoting

and sharing at the same time." These statements by the participants show they were willing to embrace an identity that could encompass the entire region. To the participants, this new identity was able to exist and provide positive outcomes for the region without creating threatening feelings toward each town's community identity.

In the next chapter, I will return to my original purpose and research questions and discuss the findings in relation to existing literature with the intent to draw out the significance of this research. In so doing, I will concentrate on the partnership's implications for community identity.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

  The purpose of this thesis was to gain greater understanding of how the implementation of an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a centralized multi-use recreation facility affected community identity among stakeholders within partnering municipalities. To help explore this case study, several research questions were addressed and used as a guide by the researcher. These questions consisted of:

1. What are the major underlying issues or themes surrounding the workings and implications of an inter-municipal partnership in the planning and development of a new multi-use recreation facility?
2. What is the reaction of elected officials, community members, etc. to a cost-sharing agreement between municipalities?
3. Is community identity among partnering municipalities an issue? If so, what areas in the community are being impacted that make up a community's identity? (i.e. closure of existing facilities, redistribution of resources?)

Summary of Findings

  After analyzing the data collected from the interviews, the findings were reported under three areas of focus: (1) concerns, (1) benefits, and (3) implications for community identity. First, several participants discussed their concerns about the partnership. Chief among the concerns they listed was the lack of communication with the municipal partners and residents. The project was viewed as a top-down decision that largely excluded the municipalities in the initial discussions. Participants, however, believed this process-related concern (and their other concerns) would not play a significant role in threatening community identity. Ultimately, the municipalities were brought on board as partners in the arrangement, and so feelings of disconnect to the project were effectively addressed and mitigated.

Second, participants spoke to the benefits associated with the partnership agreement. Increased co-operation among the municipalities appeared to be the greatest outcome associated with the partnership. However, attracting new businesses and members to the region and increasing economic generation also appeared to be significant benefits. In the end, participants indicated these benefits outweighed the costs of the partnership. That is, the benefits seemingly led to feelings of confidence in the partnership arrangement and a belief that any regional identity that emerged would not threaten the community identities associated with membership in each municipality involved in the agreement.

Third, a shift appeared to be taking place within the county in terms of how members viewed community identity. While an older generation of residents continued to pursue the idea that each community was to look out for itself and therefore ignore the possibility of working together with its neighbouring municipalities, younger generations began to shift their attitudes toward partnering with the understanding that each community could continue to have its own unique identity, while still working together to promote a regional identity. Regional identity, according to Paasi (2002), refers to the "collective narrative on who and what 'we' and 'our region' are and how these differ from others" (p. 146). This chapter builds on these particular findings by attempting to understand how they emerged.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss my findings and how they relate to the literature with the aim to answer the research questions that guided my research. I will begin by first discussing the role interdependence, trust, and acceptance played within the case. Second, I will explore how communication and transparency was implemented within the case and how it could be improved. Next, I will examine how many of the concerns within the project began to

diminish as the partnership evolved. Finally, I will end with a discussion of how and why

community identity was able co-exist with a regional identity.

On Interdependence, Trust, and Acceptance

In this thesis, I endeavored to gain an in-depth understanding of how the planning,

development, and implementation of an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a

centralized multi-use recreation facility affected community identity within partnering

municipalities. However, the findings suggest little to no impact on community identity in Pictou

County. Many of the participants viewed this outcome as positive for the region, with only

fleeting concerns expressed. In this sense, there were important findings in terms of the

emergence of a regional identity and its ability to coexist with existing community identities.

The original idea behind building a new recreational facility within Pictou County came

from the local business community, which believed the initiative would produce a necessary

asset to the county. Once the facility was granted government funding, the business community,

which was comprised of advocates and boosters of the project, urged the municipal councils to

support the endeavour. The six partnering municipalities eventually entered into an agreement to

form an inter-municipal partnership that required each municipality to contribute financial

resources to pay for the construction and operating expenses of the new facility (Glover, 1999).

This arrangement was similar to Slack's (1997) description of inter-municipal co-operation that

involves municipalities sharing revenue and expenditures to provide public benefits that would

otherwise be unobtainable. In the Pictou County case, the inter-municipal partnership allowed

each of the municipalities to provide its residents with access to a new recreation facility, but it

also created an innovative financial arrangement that could be used as a template for future projects.

Even though co-operation was evident in Pictou County prior to this inter-municipal partnership, the creation of a financial template for future projects was especially unique. That is, Pictou County did boast co-operation among communities to amalgamate local secondary schools, but the schools fell outside of the purview of municipal government and were instead under the jurisdiction of the county school board. Thus, technically speaking, it was more of an arrangement of the school board, as opposed to an arrangement involving partnering municipalities. Likewise, the county YMCA represented an initiative driven by a not-for-profit agency, not the municipalities within the county. Accordingly, the inter-municipal partnership under investigation in this study was the first of its kind in Pictou County and therefore challenged the standard operating procedures of each partnering municipality. Prior to the partnership, each municipality acted autonomously to provide recreation services. Thus, the shift to partnership coincided with a shift in the fundamental way public sector recreation was provided in the county.

Not surprisingly, then, some issues of concern surrounding the new partnership and the new multi-use recreation project arose from municipal councils and members of the community at large. These issues and concerns were typical of cases that involve changes to standard practices. As mentioned in the literature on change theory (see Rogers, 2003), people often accept change differently, and some view change in a negative manner because it can create fear that stems from the uncertainty brought on by the change (Karim & Kathawala, 2005). The inter-municipal partnership represented a change for each municipal partner from *independence* as a service provider to *interdependence* in the form of cost-sharing to jointly provide a service. Van

Ham and Koppenjan (2002) underscored the adjustment each partner must undergo with the transition from a hierarchical decision-making structure to a horizontal network in which authority is less clear. Interdependence, as noted by Mohr and Spekman (1994), refers to when firms join forces to achieve goals, but are still dependent from one another. An interdependent relationship presumably provides mutual benefits, thereby allowing any loss of autonomy to be diminished through expected gains (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). This shift was reflected in Pictou County as the municipal partners began to embrace the partnership arrangement only after their concerns were alleviated or overshadowed by the potential benefits of the joint venture. In short, as soon as trust was established, the partners welcomed the partnership arrangement.

According to Edenlenbos and Klijn (2007), movement from a hierarchical to a horizontal structure requires the establishment of trust. They argued trust is an important coordination mechanism in the development of horizontal relationships. Presumably, it comes with the understanding that the benefits of joint efforts outweigh what could be achieved by acting alone (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). For the partnering municipalities in Pictou County, the notion of benefits "outweighing what could be achieved alone" reflected the partners' self-assurances that their municipalities would not be negatively impacted upon by the new facility. That is, they were confident, with an acceptable joint-financing arrangement in place, the new facility posed no threat to their own existing facilities or to an increase in taxes to their ratepayers. Trust, in other words, represented a trust, not so much in their partners, but rather in their joint capacity to fund the project and make it sustainable without resulting in any negative impacts to themselves. This understanding of trust is possibly unique to inter-governmental partnerships insofar as public sector agencies/units are perhaps less likely to view other public sector agencies/units as true competitors that could threaten their operations. By contrast, commercial sector strategic

alliances often involve competing firms that partner for mutual gain. Trust among these commercial partners is premised upon the notion that competitors can work together without achieving gains at the expense of partnering firms (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). In this sense, this case study demonstrates the difference between public sector partnerships and commercial sector partnerships when it comes to trust.

The discussion thus far about trust, however, may explain stakeholders' acceptance and embrace of the inter-municipal partnership in Pictou County, but it does not necessarily explain why such an arrangement would impact upon community identity. Uncertainty about the sustainability of existing facilities due to the opening of the new regional facility introduced the possibility of the closure of existing facilities, which was met with concern by loyal users, at least initially. Because the regional facility was located outside of the communities in which the threatened facilities were located, residents initially internalized the threat to their facilities and viewed the regional facility with suspicion. Assuming the facilities were important features of their community, the threat to the facilities translated in a potential threat to community identity. This concern is consistent with the literature insofar as Long and Perkins (2007) noted residents develop affective ties with their community's material environment, such as recreation facilities, and form emotional ties to amenities that ultimately define their "place" (Tuan, 1974). Threatening the existence of facilities to which residents are attached can, presumably, threaten community identity.

These concerns were primarily an issue in the early planning stages of the project. Over time they were addressed and became less significant. Presumably, the development of trust among the partnering municipalities and their community members helped resolve these concerns. Keeping existing facilities open reduced people's concerns that their community

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facilities would be in jeopardy of closing. The partners were able to devise a solution that allowed all existing facilities to currently remain open. With this solution in place, the trust between councils and members of the communities improved, which silenced concerns surrounding existing facilities.

Of course, financial concerns were also evident in this case study. However, like the concerns surrounding existing facilities, the partners were able to work together to come up with a solution. During the early stages of the partnership, members of various communities were uncertain of how the capital and operating costs for the new facility would be managed. Many believed the facility would force local councils to drive up current tax rates within the county, a thought that was viewed negatively by participants. Once the specifics about the funding of the project were announced, questions and concerns about the operating costs were voiced by members of the communities soon became resolved. Kuklinski, Riggle, Ottati, Schwarz, and Wyer Jr. (1993) noted when there is a lack of information present, citizens will naturally base their judgments on the consequences of the action at hand. In this case, the lack of information in the early stages allowed the citizens to make judgments about issues such as increases in taxes that proved to be a non-issue in the end. This financial concern was evident in the findings when Steve mentioned that many residents were concerned that the facility was not in a position to make a profit and would turn into a "white elephant" with which the county would have to deal, a concern supported in the literature by Cashman (2002). However, like the concerns surrounding the closing of existing facilities, as the partnership progressed, several ideas for funding were discussed by the partners, which led the six municipalities to adopt an alternative funding arrangement known as a deed transfer tax. According to Crompton (1999), this type of arrangement is typically used to finance the costs of ongoing operations and maintenance of a

facility. The rationale behind a deed transfer tax was to provide an alternative source of funding

through the selling and purchasing of property so that the general property tax within the region

would not increase. Once this new tax was implemented and understood by residents within the

county, concerns about financing the project were reduced because residents understood the

project would have no negative financial implications for taxpayers, other than those involved in

a property transaction. Again, a potential threat was mitigated, thereby leading to greater

acceptance of the arrangement, the facility, and the regional identity associated with positioning

Pictou County as a united community.

Improving Communication and Transparency

Before moving onto the subject of regional identity, it is worth mentioning one issue that

could have been handled more effectively: communication. According to Vishwanath and

Kaufmann (2001), a lack of transparency occurs "if access to information is denied, the

information given is irrelevant to the topic, the information if misrepresented, inaccurate or

untimely" (p. 42). In the beginning of the project, the business community, which advocated

strongly for the new facility, failed to include the municipal councils in the initial discussions

about the facility, even though the municipalities were crucial to the success of the arrangement.

The business community believed it had to take the lead on the project because it felt the

councils would be unable to reach a mutual agreement due to their independent agendas. As a

result, the funding announcement from the government emerged from seemingly nowhere and

understandably drew many questions from both the municipalities and the public. As mentioned,

this lack of transparency and communication had the potential to subvert community support for

the project because it created unnecessary fears about the future of existing facilities and uncertainties surrounding the costs and financial implications of the project. This finding can be related to the literature on the topic of relative advantage. According to Greenhalgh, Robert, MacFarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, (2004), "if potential users see no relative advantage in the innovation, they generally will not consider it further" (p. 13). In this case, the business community possessed a wide range of knowledge regarding the new facility. Therefore it possessed a relative advantage over the community members insofar as it was able to appreciate the benefits of the project based on the information it had. Community members, by contrast, concentrated on the negative implications of the partnership because they had fewer details to understand the value. Had the business community adopted Kotter and Schesinger's (1979) advice by educating and communicating, and provided the residents with the same relative advantage, than fewer concerns would have arisen. They argued that change is better dealt with if the change is communicated effectively to all parties, including what the plans for the project entail and how it will be managed. Following this advice would have allowed the public to hear directly what was taking place or would have at least provided the councilors with the information regarding the project that was needed to answer questions from the public. However, little information was given to the local municipal councils, which denied them the ability to answer questions from the public. This lack of transparency only helped reinforce the initial uncertainties and concerns raised by the public. Not until later in the development stages of the project was sufficient information made available to the public regarding their concerns. This result may be best understood by consulting the literature on diffusion of innovation. As observed by Flood and McCarville, (1999) individuals continue to fear a change until the personal consequences and implication are made clear. Incorporating the education and communication method in the early

development stages of this project would have been desirable because the local councillors and community members would have better understood the plans, objectives and goals of the new project and would have been able to clear up some of the questions and uncertainties voiced by the public.

Once the project was announced publicly, the municipalities themselves communicated poorly with their own constituents. In my view, they incorporated the second rung on Arnstein's ladder, "therapy" (Arnstein, 1969), to reach out to their publics. The objective of this rung is not to allow participants to actually engage in the planning stages, but rather to leave it to "powerholders" to tell the participant what will occur. This concern was voiced in Thomas' interview when he suggested the plans for the wellness centre appeared to be "secretive", and he suggested more public meetings would have helped improve the situation. In this case, however, the public's involvement in the project was minimal, and much like literature from Barnes, Rodger, and Whyte, (1997), the councils simply made many of the decisions and reported them back to the members of the communities. Although citizen participation may not have been fully implicated in this case, it appears as though the amount that was involved in this case was all that was needed to garner public support. As Krishna (2003) stated, more citizen participation is not always better then less. Often when multiple parties are involved (e.g., members of the public), micromanaging can often occur, which is a cause for failure in most cases (Krishna, 2003). In this case, after people voiced their concerns and opinions, no other meetings were held and the project continued on as scheduled without any addition forms of resistance.

The Diminishment of Concerns

Even though concerns were voiced about the partnership arrangement, they appeared to diminish over time and participants identified several benefits. Two, in particular, seemingly provided the county with the greatest impact. First, participants came to increasingly value co-operation among the municipalities. The inter-municipal partnership profiled in this thesis represented a significant step forward in terms of cooperative behavior within the county. While there were examples of co-operation within the county in the past, such as the amalgamation of the high schools, the new facility represents co-operation on a larger scale that involves several independent councils working toward one common goal. The amalgamation of the high schools was a cost saving initiative that was implemented by the regional school board. This differs from this case because the multiple municipal councils agreed to work together to provide service provision to its members through the use of a new funding technique. Perhaps what made this partnership work particularly effectively was the implementation of an effective strategy to pay for the capital and ongoing operating expenses associated with the project. The one percent deed transfer tax proved to be particularly effective because it affected only people buying and selling property within the county. By working together and sharing the cost of the facility, each municipality gained a new community resource they would otherwise be unable to fund independently (Glover, 1999). Once the capital costs of the new facility were covered, the deed transfer tax was to shift toward funding future projects throughout the county, which could lead to different scenarios for inter-municipal co-operation.

Second, participants recognized the potential of the project to attract newcomers to the county. The business community actively championed the project because it thought the project would help it attract new employees to the area. Florida (2002) forwarded this tactic, noting that

people, particularly those who belong to the "creative class", are more likely to move to a region because of its geographic features, attractions and amenities, as opposed to because jobs are available. The construction of a new state-of-the-art recreation facility, then, was meant as a modest effort to advance this strategy. Attracting and retaining employees was believed to be crucial to keeping businesses located in the county. Keeping businesses in the county was important insofar as it offered residents employment and generated revenue for the municipalities in the form of corporate taxes. All told, the idea of building a new state-of-the-art facility was meant to improve the image of Pictou County. Presumably, if the image of a community improves, than community identity is bolstered. If the image that improved was regional, than perhaps it helped open people to further embrace their regional identity.

The possibility of attracting new members to the region, retaining current residents, and recruiting new employees underscores the heightened role economics played in contemporary public sector decision making. The creation of a new partnership arrangement and its associated shift toward a new regional identity was indicative of the region valuing its economic interests over its social or cultural interests. As mentioned, the history of the county was characterized by the independence of each municipality and competitiveness among the neighbouring communities. However, economic concerns led the communities to embrace the notion of working together to achieve economic goals otherwise unachievable if pursued independently. In doing so, they seemingly agreed to collectively place less value on their parochial interests and join together in a regional effort to generate mutual economic benefits. Economic interests, in other words, appeared to trump long-standing social interests and cultural codes of conduct with the announcement that funding would not come from taxpayers directly, but rather from a new deed transfer tax. Camerer and Fehr (2006) discussed this transition in values in their discussion

of "economic man". This conception of modern individuals refers to when a person remains

indifferent about outcomes or behaviours, as long as their own economic well-being remains

unaffected. In this case, once economic concerns were addressed sufficiently, concerns about the

partnership and new facility were no longer at issue because taxpayers' economic well-being

remained unaffected. This outcome perhaps reflects a larger trend that has emerged over time in

North America, probably since the 1970s with Proposition 13 in Califorina (see Crompton,

1999), whereby economic interests drive public sector decision making and are prioritized when

setting social goals.

The Co-existence of Community and Regional Identities

After analyzing the data from this project, it appeared as though participants retained

their sense of community identity, but also enlarged their sense of regional identity. Many of the

participants felt older generations were more resistant to the idea of a regional identity. This

finding was not surprising, given that Brown, Xu, Barfield, and King (2000) revealed that age

and length of residence play a large role in community attachment. The older generation in

Pictou County grew up during a time when each town was self-sustaining and competitive with

its neighbours. Local sporting events presumably fueled the sense of competition between towns,

creating strong rivalries that carried over into many aspects of the communities. According to

participants, this tension pervaded and so an arrangement that involved inter-municipal co-

operation was perhaps too unconventional to those long-time residents. Working together with

previous competitors may have been difficult to accept due to the lack of trust that was present. It

is important that trust be established when dealing with complex decision making situations

(Edenlenbos & Klijn, 2007). Interestingly, the notion of remaining independent seemed to be changing with the changing attitudes of different generations. According to Bengtson (1971), people born within the same time period tend to share common experiences. Sharing experiences, such as historical experiences, while one matures creates "orientations" that can be quite different between younger and older generations. A generational divide was seemingly apparent within Pictou County.

Admittedly, this shift toward greater tolerance for inter-municipal co-operation had been underway for several years, before the new facility was built. When seven high schools within the county were amalgamated into just three, the change was accompanied by a greater acceptance for co-operation among the communities that made up the county. Students within the schools were mixed with students from neighbouring municipalities, which reduced the intensity of traditional rivalries between and among the communities. This change in service provision, I suspect, helped advance the co-operation process among municipalities. As younger generations aged, they became more involved in each community, thereby opening themselves up to identifying themselves as a member of the county, someone with a broader affiliation shared by peers. The advent of this secondary school co-operation presumably developed into a greater appreciation for the benefits of the municipalities working together as partners. Moreover, for economic reasons, the growing trend among municipalities is to increasingly characterize themselves as members of a larger economic region. This shift is consistent with what Florida (2008) described as a movement toward "mega-regions". By becoming one larger region, these municipalities evidently better positioned themselves to compete against other larger economic cities and regions.

Because the participants failed to see any negative implications to their sense of community, they were willing to embrace their regional identity. The concept and significance of regional identity was unanticipated within this study. Nevertheless, the pursuit to enhance it was evidently one of the main objectives driving the new recreation facility project and the creation of this new inter-municipal partnership. Little research has been directly focused on regional identity that involves the uniting of several municipalities. However, Paasi's (2003) research provided some insight on the concept of regional identity. According to Paasi, regional identity consists of several miscellaneous elements including: ideas on nature, landscape, the built environment, culture/ethnicity, dialects, economic success/recession, stereotypic images of a people/community, both of 'us' and 'them', and actual/invented histories. Each of these elements has been discussed at some point throughout this case, thereby supporting the notion that regional identiy is relevant and salient to participants. As mentioned earlier, Paasi (2002) viewed regional identities as "collective narratives on who and what 'we' and 'our region' are and how these differ from others" (p. 146). This definition helps frame our understanding of the developments that unfolded in this case study.

In the past, individual community identities were embraced by residents of Pictou County, arguably over their regional identity. However, this case revealed these community identities now co-exist with a regional identity. The co-existence of multiple identities is commonly examined in other fields of inquiry (i.e. Feminism, Minorities). A term often used to describe this co-existence is *intersectionality* (Knudsen, 2006). According to Knudsen, intersectionalitiy is defined as "a theory to analyze how social and cultural categories intertwine. The relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality are examined" (p. 61). In the present study, geography is especially relevant to intersectionality. The

co-existence of community and regional identities have always been present, but their relationship has changed. Whereas it might be argued the relationship was somewhat uneven and tumultuous in the past, it has become better accepted and

In my view, the peaceful co-existence of regional and community identities in Pictou, at present demonstrated (once again) the primacy of economic interests within the region. Previously, each community existed independently as an economic silo, but in recent years their independence from one another became increasingly difficult to sustain. Due to the increasing economic challenges each municipality and region as a whole faced, residents put aside their own individual community interests and came to accept their regional identity as something that would help generate the most positive outcomes for their communities. As seen in Florida's (2008) work, the combination of community interest is become more and more common in what he describes as mega-regions. These regions understand that by massing together their talents, innovations and markets, that this will help generate greater economic growth and development within that region. I feel this is related to the circumstances taking place within Pictou County.

Conclusion

To conclude, the inter-municipal partnership evidently provided the county with more positive outcomes than negative. The partnership led to the generation of additional funding for projects within the region without raising taxes for the majority of ratepayers. By building and promoting this new facility, new businesses and new residents were expected to be attracted to the region, an outcome, in turn, that was expected to help boost the local economy. The

partnership marked an important shift seemingly taking place within the county whereby

regional identity was being advanced and embraced more than ever before.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude this study, this final chapter will first provide a quick overview of the study and then review and discuss the key topics that surfaced within the discussion chapter. Next, the limitations of this study will be identified and discussed to provide an explanation as to how these limitations were factored into this case study. Third, recommendation for future research will be suggested so that future practitioners will be able to use this case study to assist in their own research and will be able to further examine issues that arose from the findings. Finally, the final thoughts of this case study will be reported and provide closing comments regarding the entire case study.

Overview of Findings

In this study, the business community advocated for a new wellness centre, but failed to effectively involve at the earliest stages of the negotiations other parties whose participation was crucial to the successful implementation of the project, notably the six municipal councils within the region. This lack of engagement left councilors with insufficient information to pass onto their constituents. As a result, uncertainties arose among councilors and community members. These uncertainties had the potential to create threatening feelings toward the project, such as its implications for existing recreation facilities, which were tied to residents' sense of place and arguably their community's identity. It is my belief that concerns will always arise within a project when a change is involved. However, I also feel these concerns can be managed if the change is communicated properly in the planning stages of a project. By communicating changes effectively, concerns should be addressed early enough that the chances of resistance forming

will be significantly reduced. Had the business community involved the municipal councils more effectively, there likely would have been fewer concerns among residents, concerns that had the potential to subvert the project.

Although the communication process was not as efficient as what the literature suggests, the partnership was still able to reduce concerns from the public. They were able to achieve this by addressing the economic interest of the residents. The economic status within the county has become tough so the major interest of the residents has shifted, now focussing more on economics. Once the funding scheme for the project, the deed transfer tax, was implemented, the residents realized that this would not impact their local tax rates and therefore reduced their additional concerns for the project, allowing it to further advance.

The study did demonstrate many positive outcomes of the project, though. Arguably, the biggest benefit of the initiative was the partnership that formed. Building a new facility required the co-operation of several parties, including members of the business community and local municipal councils. In the past, such co-operation was less common. However, having collaborated successfully on the new facility, regional co-operation appears to be more likely in the future. From an economic perspective, working together further promises to create several opportunities for Pictou County aimed at stimulating the local economy.

It can also be seen how the emergence of greater co-operation among the municipalities created a new perception within Pictou County. While local history revealed each municipality as self-sustaining units whose constituents boasted a strong sense of community identity, the embracing of a regional identity reflected a significant shift in values. Survival of each community meant embracing inter-municipal co-operation and positioning the region as whole

as a united economic entity. In accepting this change, regional identity became, not a threat to community identity, but rather a complement to it. In this sense, municipalities that wish to advance similar kinds of partnerships ought to consider positioning these projects in the minds of stakeholders as efforts to advance local and regional economic interests. Doing so will likely mitigate concerns more effectively and presumably lead to great support.

Finally, this case provided some insight into the shift in how public recreation services were provided within the region. Initially, each town provided its own services, but with the new facility and newly developed partnership in place, a shift towards providing services co-operatively emerged. The partnership created a change from the traditional independent service provider to a more horizontal or interdependent service provider among the municipalities. It is important, for future considerations, to realize that interdependence can only be successful among the partnering municipalities if a sense of trust, a sense that had never been present in the past, is effectively established. In this case, the municipalities were able to establish trust by working together and creating an effective funding arrangement for the project. Through this arrangement, trust was earned because each community felt the arrangement was fair, no town would be negatively impacted, and no town would be at risk of raising taxes on everyday taxpayers to fund the project. Addressing these issues suggests the establishment of trust among public sector partners is different from how trust may be viewed between partners in the commercial sector. That is, in the commercial sector, trust is often viewed as a notion that each competitor is able to work together without achieving gains at the expense of partnering firms (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). This finding should be considered by future practitioners and researchers when dealing with issues of trust in the different sectors.

Limitations

There were two main limitations that were present within this case study:

1. All participants were male; no females were interviewed.

One main limitation to this study is that all nine participants for this case study were male, which meant I failed to gain a female perspective. Even so, the participants did speak to their general impressions of how the public reacted to the inter-municipal partnership, and no one, not surprisingly, mentioned any gendered differences in constituent responses. Future research on inter-municipal partnerships should be more sensitive to gendered perspective, though.

2. From the six municipalities within Pictou County, the researcher was unable to interview two municipalities.

I interviewed nine different participants from many areas within the county, but the municipalities of both Westville and Stellarton opted not to be interviewed. Despite repeated efforts to interview members of both of these town councils, the recruits either declined to be interviewed or did not reply to the interview invitation. Their lack of participation suggests any generalizations of the findings herein should be tempered. Future researchers, when faced with similar challenges, may wish to seek out other important members of the municipality to receive at least some prospective from that area (i.e. public members).

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this case study provide guidance to researchers. This study adds to the body of literature on inter-municipal partnerships and recognizes a need for research on

geographic identity and intersectionality. It also enriches our understanding of the process of decision making. These insights support the idea that in most case community members should be involved in the planning and decision making processes and by minimizing public involvement, the chances of drawbacks and resistance within the development process may be significantly increased. However, it should be acknowledged that, despite concerns about transparency and public involvement, stakeholders came to support the project. This finding suggests economic interests evidently outweigh concerns about citizen engagement. Presumably, as long as economic concerns are addressed, public support will follow. This finding is disconcerting, albeit insightful to municipalities engaged in such partnerships. Though transparency may be less of an issue for residents, I would argue municipalities ought to make a bigger effort to be transparent to generate even greater public support.

Practitioners can gain a better appreciation for how community members wish to be involved in the planning, development and decision-making processes within a community or regional project. Things such as a lack of education, communication and citizen involvement can cause negative experiences for members of the community, creating areas of uncertainty about issues such as one's community identity. However, they should first identify the primary interests that are involved in the project. By doing so and addressing these interests, it may prevent other forms of resistance later in the process. Had the planners understood the economic interests of the project and addressed related concerns in the initial phases, I believe the other concerns would not have played as significant of a role.

Final Thoughts

When I first set out to explore this case I was initially wondering what impact this new recreational facility would have on the members of Pictou County. Having lived in the area my whole life and heavily involved in many sports and recreation, I was able to understand why this new project, and the partnership associated with it, could have both positive and negative implications for the county. However, it was not until after several discussions that it soon became evident that this case would be able to study a relatively unexamined topic. This realization led me to the idea that this new facility, and the partnership that was being devised to support it, could have implications for community identity. By being so independent from one another in the past, several townspeople had developed rivalries that made co-operation among the towns difficult to achieve. However, my study has shown that these rivalries are diminishing within the county as residents come to appreciate the economic benefits of co-operation. The harsh economic times have led residents to value their economic interests over social and cultural interests. As well, the economic conditions within the county are making it harder for individual towns to finance their own projects, thereby forcing them to consider alternative funding options. With these challenges, the findings of my study showed that people within Pictou County are shifting their attitude to become more acceptant of the idea that the county can support individual community identities, but can also promote Pictou County through a regional identity. In my opinion, this transition within the county is a huge step in the right direction and should allow each of the towns to survive economically by working together regionally.

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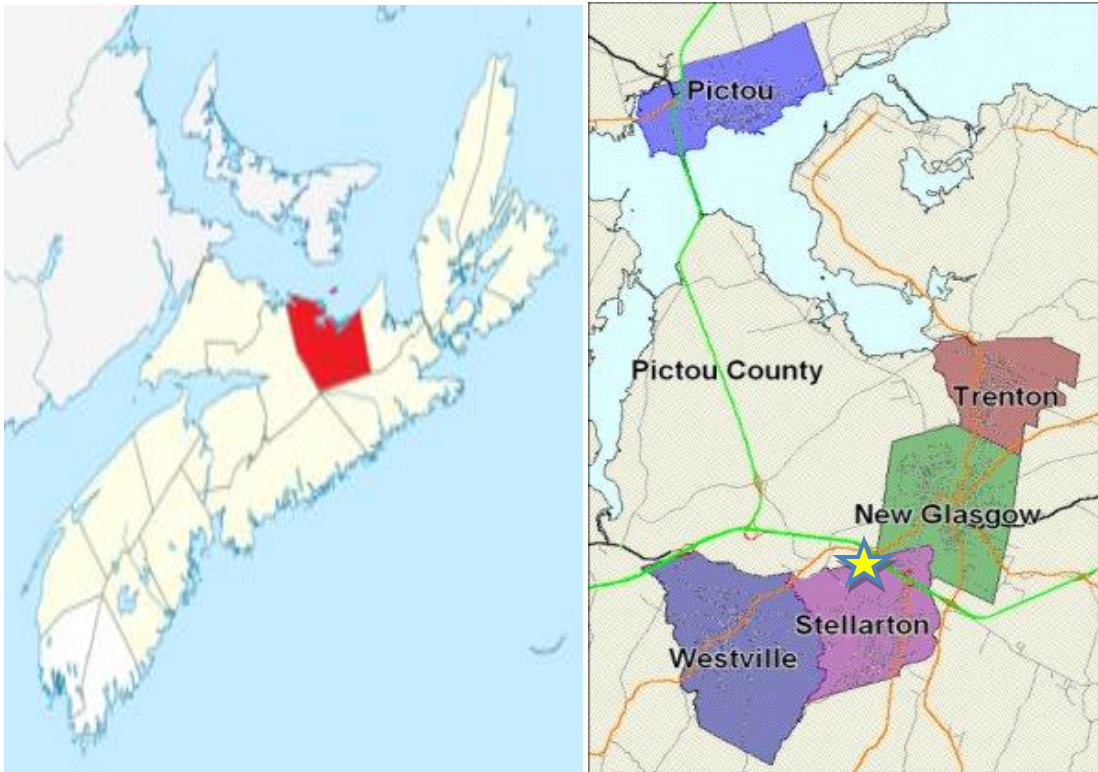
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Appendix A

Pictou County, Nova Scotia

Appendix B

Pictou County Wellness Centre Blueprint (Initial)

GROUND FLOOR
CONCEPT PLANS

PICTOU COUNTY SPORT
RECREATION & WELLNESS CENTRE

Appendix C: **Interview Guide**

Impressions of the New Centre

1. What's your impression of the new recreation centre being built in Stellarton? Is it a good thing for Pictou County? Is it a good thing for the town in which you live?

2. What are the benefits, if any, associated with the new centre? *Who*, if anybody, benefits from the centre?
    *   Do you think folks from the neighbouring towns see it the same way?

3. What are the drawbacks, if any? *Who*, if anybody, loses out with the construction of this new facility?
    *   Do you think folks from the neighbouring towns see it the same way?

4. Does it matter that we're talking about a recreation centre? Would you feel differently if we were talking about a different facility? (e.g., the mall, theatre)
    *   What, if anything, makes a recreation centre different or significant?

5. Are you happy with how the plans to build the centre have unfolded? If so, why? If not, why not?

6. In your view, is the cost-sharing arrangement to support the recreation centre fair to all of the participating towns equally? What's in it for each town? Do some towns benefit more or less than others?

7.   How do you feel about the location of the facility? Are there any concerns among stakeholders about the location?
    *   Does the location have any impact upon residents' impressions of where they live?

Implications for Community Identity

8. Do residents from your town have a unique identity versus residents from neighbouring towns? What does it mean to be someone from Pictou versus New Glasgow? Does it mean something else to be from one of the other towns? Do you think residents from the other neighbouring towns see themselves as belonging to a unique community?

9. Does the construction of a new recreation centre have any implications for your identity as someone from (insert town)? Would you feel differently if the facility was located in (insert town)?

10. Are you worried, as someone from _____, that the construction of a new recreation centre whose cost is shared, but centred in one town, will lead toward a new regional identity? Would a regional identity be a bad thing? Does the new centre endanger existing local identities?
    *   What implications, if any, will it have for how others will look at your community?

Demographic Survey

Please take a few minutes to fill out this brief survey before we begin the interview. The information collected from it will assist me in reporting general demographic information about the individuals who participated in this study. Your name and identity will remain confidential in any reporting of this information.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. If you have any questions about this survey or need clarification about what's being asked, please let me know. Feel free to skip over any questions you wish.

1. Are you Male ☐ or Female? ☐ (choose one)

2. In what town do you currently reside? (choose one)

   Pictou ☐   New Glasgow ☐   Stellarton ☐

   Westville ☐   Trenton ☐   Pictou County ☐

3. What is your current age? _____ years

4. How long have you been a resident of the town in which you currently reside? _____ years

5. How many generations of your family have lived in this region? ____ generations

   - My family's arrival in Pictou County dates back to _____.
     (insert approximate year)

6. What best describes your role within the community in which you live? (check whichever response options apply to you)

   Elected Official ☐   Citizen ☐

   Administrator ☐   Other ☐   _____
                                          (please describe)

7. Approximately how far away do you currently live from the new recreation centre?

   _____ kilometres

Consent Form

I am aware that the case study, 'The Impact of Inter-municipal Partnerships on Community Identity: A Case Study of the Pictou County Wellness Centre' involves a research component led by Masters Candidate J. Cory Fraser, under the supervision of Dr. Troy Glover, of the Recreation and Leisure Studies Department at the University of Waterloo. I have decided to participate in the case study and its research component, having read over the *Information Letter*. I have had an opportunity to receive any additional details I have wanted about the research. As a participant, I understand my comments and answers will be audio recorded and that I am welcome to decline answering any questions, if I so choose. I accept that direct quotations from comments I have made during the interview may be reported in a research report or publication, but my identity will remain confidential, unless I indicate otherwise. I was informed no quotations will appear in the summary report, which will be provided to all participants, and only anonymous quotes will be used in publication of the research findings. Although the researcher will protect my identity in every way possible, the small population of the county may still make it possible for others to identify me based on my comments.

I agree to allow myself to be audio recorded and was informed the audio recording will be kept confidential. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time by informing the researcher of my withdrawal. I also understand this project has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University Waterloo and I may contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca if I have any concerns or questions about my participation in this study.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any publication that comes of this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date : _____

Information Letter

Dear [insert research participant's name],

My name is Cory Fraser and I am a Master's Candidate in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Troy Glover. This study is part of my thesis project that is examining how the planning, development, and implementation of an inter-municipal partnership involving the provision of a centralized multi-use recreation facility affects community identity among partnering municipalities. In other words, how will municipalities working together to provide a recreation facility affect how communities identity themselves from surrounding communities. This study is intended to help provide insight into the planning and development of similar projects in the future. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about this topic.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Should you agree to participate, it would involve a forty-five to sixty minute interview at a location and time that are convenient to you during which we can chat about your understanding and perspectives involving the development of the new recreation and wellness centre. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be asked to complete a short demographic survey (i.e. sex, age, current town residence) and the study results will be shared at a later date. There are no anticipated risks associated with this project. Nevertheless, although the questions are quite general (for example, What are the benefits, if any, associated with the new centre and does the construction of a new recreation centre have any implications for your identity as someone from (_____?), you may decline answering them, at any time during the course of the interview. Moreover, you are free to withdraw your participation at any time before or during the interview, with no questions asked by informing the researcher of your withdrawal.

To make the most efficient use of your time, I will, with your permission, audio-record our conversation so that we can concentrate completely on our discussion without having to pause to record your comments. The audio recording will be kept confidential and you will be given the option to use your name or be provided with an alternate name to maintain confidentiality. Once transcribed, the interviews will be stored for one year in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the University of Waterloo. A transcript of the conversation will be provided to you, and you are welcome to change, omit, clarify, and add comments to it. With your permission, you agree to let me use quotations with the provision that I will make no mention of your identity. Your identity, and any reference to you, will remain completely confidential. Interview transcripts, like audio recordings, will be stored for one year in a locked filing cabinet in my office. Although I will protect your identity in every way possible, the small population of the county may still make it possible for others to identify you based on your comments.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (902) 771-0944 or by email at jcfraser@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Troy Glover at (519) 888-4567 ext. 33097 or email at tdglover@healthy.uwaterloo.ca. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Warmest regards,

J. Cory Fraser, M.A.   Troy D. Glover, Ph.D.

Verbal Script for Telephone Recruitment

Hello, my name is Cory Fraser. I'm a Master's Candidate in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Troy Glover. This study is part of my thesis project that is examining the impact the new recreation and wellness centre may have on the community identity within each municipality in Pictou County. This study is intended to help provide insight into the planning and development of similar projects in the future. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about this topic.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a forty-five to sixty minute interview at a location and time that are convenient to you during which we can chat about your understanding and perspectives involving the development of the new recreation and wellness centre.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, under Dr. Susan Sykes at the University of Waterloo.

If you are interested in participating, I will provide you with an information letter, which provides more specific details about the study. Also, could you please let me know of two possible times that may work for you as well as a location and if you have to cancel your appointment, please email me at jcfraser@uwaterloo.ca or call me at *902-771-0944*.

Thank you,

Cory Fraser

Verbal Script for E-mail Recruitment

Hello, my name is Cory Fraser. I'm a Masters Candidate in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Troy Glover. This study is part of my thesis project that is examining the impact the new recreation and wellness centre may have on the community identity within each municipality in Pictou County. This study is intended to help provide insight into the planning and development of similar projects in the future. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about this topic.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a forty-five to sixty minute interview at a location and time that are convenient to you during which we can chat about your understanding and perspectives involving the development of the new recreation and wellness centre.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, under Dr. Susan Sykes at the University of Waterloo. You may contact her at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca if you have any concerns or questions about your participation in this study. However, the final decision to participate is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at jcfraser@uwaterloo.ca or at *(902) 771-0944* with two possible times and location preference. I will then send a confirmation email, and provide you with an information letter, which provides more specific details about the study. If you have to cancel your appointment, please contact me at the email address or phone number provided above.

Thank you,

Cory Fraser

Feedback Letter

University of Waterloo
2110 Burt Mathews Hall
Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1
(902) 771-0944
Email address: jcfraser@uwaterloo.ca

Dear [Insert Name of Research Participant]:

Thank you so much for participating in the case study, 'The Impact of Inter-municipal Partnerships on Community Identity: A Case Study of the Pictou County Wellness Centre'. I truly appreciate your support for the study and your willingness to commit time to sharing your views with me.

I entered this thesis with this purpose in mind: to try and gain a greater understanding of how the planning and development of a centralized multi-use recreation facility may facilitate or inhibit community identity among several municipalities. Undoubtedly, your insights contributed to the achievement of this goal. They have already made an invaluable contribution to the final analysis of my thesis.

[Insert brief description of findings]
If you wish to receive further details about the outcomes of my thesis, please contact me at the e-mail address or phone number listed above or my supervisor Dr. Troy Glover at (519) 888-4567 ext. 33097 or email at tdglover@healthy.uwaterloo.ca. I would be delighted to share with you a summary of the completed project. Given the current status of the project, I suspect the final report will be available by [insert date].

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567, Ext., 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Finally, I would once again like to thank you for your participation in my thesis project.

Warmest regards,

J. Cory Fraser, M.A.   Troy D. Glover, Ph.D.