

#### Curling and Rural Women's Health in Canada: A National Photovoice Study

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- Curling is central to many rural communities
   more than 28% of Canadian curlers live in communities with fewer than 10,000 people (CCA, 2008)
- Few health, recreation, or other resources exist in rural communities
- Rural people are less healthy and have shorter life expectancies compared to urban residents (CIHI, 2006; Romanow, 2004)



- Rural communities in Canada are feminized aging communities
- Rural communities tend to support men and boys in sports, to the exclusion or minimizing of women and girls. e.g. hockey
- How can curling and health in rural communities be enriched to include women and girls?

## Purpose of the Study

- To explore effects of curling on the health and community life of rural women
- To determine how health, sport, and recreation can be understood within the contexts of rural gender and community change
- To assess the utility of photovoice, an innovative participatory research methodology and method, in advancing research with rural women

#### The Research

- A national 4 year study in Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the North West Territories
- Social capital and ethnography methods (Chambers, 2000; Seippel, 2006)
- Photovoice developed for research with rural women; founded on feminist, critical consciousness, and PAR philosophies; facilitates inclusivity and empowerment (Wang & Burris, 1997)
- Rural definition: Populations living outside the commuting zone of urban centres with more than 10,000 inhabitants (du Plessis et al., 2002)

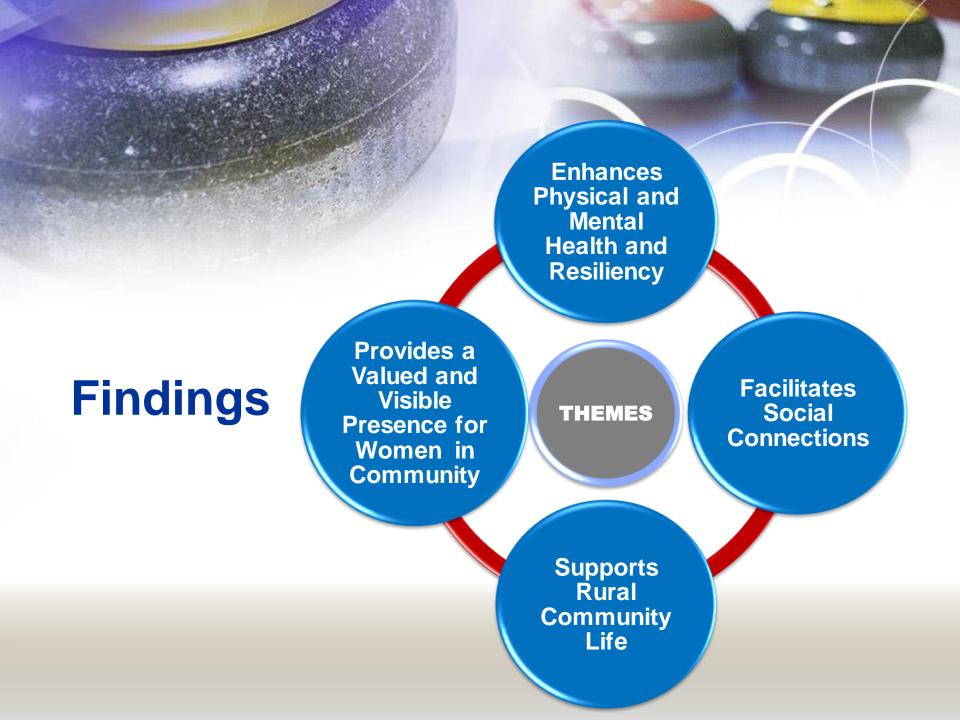


- 49 women and 3 girls, aged 12 to 75 years, average age range 50-60 years, from 8 rural communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and the North West Territories
- Location: Half lived on a farm/acreage (5 to 30 km from town) and half lived in a town (300 to 5000 people)
- Education: Ranged from Grade 7-8 (2 children,1 adult) to Post-secondary education (26)
- Marital status: Majority were married, 12 were single
- Curling experience: Ranged from less than two years to 16 or more years



# Method

- Camera orientation session, then 2 weeks for picture taking and log book recording, then focus group session to discuss photos
- 955 photos taken; 52 log books with information
- Participants participate in analysis. Several strategies used for analysis of photo, log book, and focus group data (Leipert & Smith, 2008; Oliffe et al., 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997)
- NVIVO used for data management



### **Enhances Physical and Mental Health**and Resiliency



"Curling really motivates me to keep in shape. It really does. It's a big motivator."

-F., 64 years old, retired school teacher

#### **Facilitates Social Connections**



"...curling people stick together. My son is 18 now and he will tell you that [his curling friends are like] family."

-L., 43 years old

#### **Supports Rural Community Life**



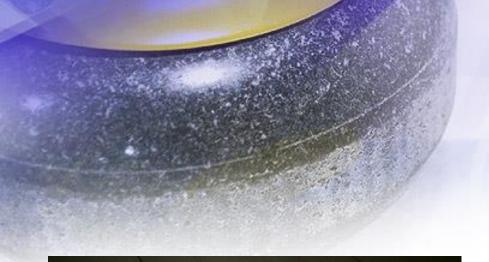
"The curling club is such a big part of the community especially in a small rural town like ours."

-K., 24 years old

## Provides a Valued and Visible Presence for Women in Community



- Women's contributions (food, organization, etc.) were visible and valued
- Need for expanded gender roles e.g. women as icemakers





## Believe/Inspiration Hope for the future

"...seeing that on the ice makes you think that one day we could actually be there [at the Olympics]"

- E., 17 years old



- To enhance curling for rural women and girls:
  - More coaching and support in schools and curling rinks include as part of school programs
  - More celebration of the curling achievements of girls and women
  - Maintain day curling to enhance participation by rural seniors (who are predominantly women)

#### Findings and Recommendations

- Increase valuing of curling, similar to hockey, in small town Canada; need external support for survival and sustaining of small clubs e.g. CCA, Sport Canada
- Increase media attention to curling in international (e.g. Olympics, world competitions), national (e.g. CBC), and local (e.g. newspapers, billboards) venues
- Further research on the health and community effects of rural sports such as curling is clearly indicated

#### **Findings and Recommendations**

- This research significantly enhances understanding of how gender and recreation intersect to influence rural women's health, social capital, and rural community change, development, and sustainability.
- Photovoice methodology greatly enriched recruitment, data collection, analysis, & dissemination
- Nursing education should include learning about photovoice, and rural health, for research and practice, ideally with experts in the methodology and rural practice.

#### Selected References

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