

An exploration of the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation  
within a social economy framework

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## Abstract

Volunteers play a significant role in providing important services to a community. Not only do these services create opportunities for community members to participate in a variety of activities, but they also offer numerous benefits for the individual volunteer. The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation regarding their contributions to community and personal well-being. This topic is investigated within a social economy framework in order to effectively understand the place of volunteering in community processes. Using a qualitative approach, 13 exploratory interviews were conducted with outdoor recreation volunteers in Whitehorse during the spring and summer of 2007. The open interview format allowed study participants the freedom to discuss how they felt their volunteer work contributed to their personal well-being, as well as to the greater community. A modified snowball sampling technique was easily applied combining community referrals and systematic cold calling. Interview transcripts were coded to organise passages under common themes. The findings from this study are grouped under five areas of interest: *Lifestyle and Sense of Identity, Personal Benefits, Community Benefits, Pressure, and The Influence of Money*. It was found that individuals receive benefits such as increase knowledge, social connections, and empowerment from volunteering in outdoor recreation and that the community receives these benefits through their work. These benefits relate to the social economy through their contributions to community development and exchanges in social capital.

Keywords: Outdoor recreation, volunteer, community, social economy, social capital

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is about the volunteers of Whitehorse, Yukon who generously give time and energy to support outdoor recreation activities in their community. Some of these volunteers are heavily involved in one particular activity, while others are engaged in a variety of organisations in different capacities. They volunteer to support their children, spend time with a friend, respond to a community need, develop personal skills, meet new people, return a service, or just have fun. For these people, volunteering has a valuable presence in their lives and they appreciate the time they spend giving back to the community.

Outdoor recreation includes activities that often depend on the support of volunteers in order to provide services to the community. Outdoor recreation activities are undertaken in the outdoors during one's leisure time and are based around the freedom to choose and relaxed state-of-mind with which the participant approaches the activity. There exists a discussion surrounding recreation, sport, and leisure that explores the differences between these activities based on elements such as setting, activity type, and competition. Some may argue that many of the activities represented in this study are not truly outdoor recreation since they include levels of competition and occur in unnatural arenas such as soccer fields or baseball diamonds; however, the volunteers in this study identify a wide variety of sport and leisure activities to be part of the field of outdoor recreation. Volunteers with outdoor recreation activities can fulfill a variety of roles from coaches and supervisors, to construction workers and delivery people. Yukon's vast landscape of mountains, rivers and thick forests, and rich wilderness resources provide an excellent setting for many different outdoor recreation activities that

require the support of volunteers. Often volunteers will support outdoor recreation activities to return a service from which they once benefited, to connect with others, or stay involved in an enjoyable and fun activity. Regardless of the various reasons for volunteering, volunteers are residents who come together to give to the community. Many organisations depend on volunteers to provide skills and services that allow for the successful delivery of a programme. These organisations are then able to better serve the greater community through the support and labour of volunteers.

Yet volunteering can also serve the individual in providing many personal benefits. Through volunteering individuals can commit to a community service that provides them with a sense of identity based around their volunteer work. Volunteering can also provide individuals with new skills and knowledge that have the potential to help them in other areas of their lives. Yet, perhaps most importantly, volunteering creates an important space for the development of social relationships with other community members.

Though people might volunteer to support their individual needs, the greater community also benefits from their services. In the Yukon, volunteer rates are higher than the national average with 52% of the territorial population volunteering through a formal organisation (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 53). Yukon's volunteers also donate the second highest average number of volunteer hours out of all of Canada's provinces and territories. Much of this volunteer work is given in support of sport and recreation; indeed, sport and recreation groups constitute 21.2% – the largest section – of the nonprofit and voluntary organisations in the territories (Statistics Canada, 2005, p. 19). Compared to other Canadians city centres, Whitehorse's relatively small population of

around 20,000 people and vast distance from other cities create unique challenges in the provision of various services. For this reason volunteers are instrumental in providing a variety of recreation opportunities to the community and volunteer rates are likely much higher than those reported in official statistics.

Volunteering can also benefit a community by serving an economic function. Volunteers can provide financial relief to organisations that do not have to pay employees for skills and services. Indeed, the number of volunteer hours donated by Canadians in one year has amounted to the equivalent of one million full-time jobs (Statistics Canada, 2007). Furthermore, volunteer-run events can also bring business to a community through such things as festivals, competitions, tournaments, and fairs, thereby contributing to the local economy (see Lavarie & MacDonald, 2007). These potential economic impacts can be of even greater significance for a community of a size and location such as Whitehorse, where there are limited social resources.

However, volunteer-based organisations have value beyond their economic contribution and that are not necessarily quantifiable within a traditional market economy. Volunteer-based organisations can act as community builders that create locales for civic engagement. By becoming engaged in these organisations, volunteers learn more about other neighbourhoods and concerns affecting their community. This awareness increases participation in public discussion regarding community issues (Jones, 2006). Civic engagement increases access to social resources from which the community can benefit.

When using conventional frameworks it can be difficult for societies to understand the importance of organisations that do not directly contribute to the

monetary-based market economy. Clearly, however, volunteer-based organisations have value to individuals and communities outside of their measurable contributions to the economy. Investigating volunteerism within a social economy framework allows us to consider the value of nonprofit, volunteer-based organisations outside of the traditional market paradigm (see Fasenfest, Ciancanelli, & Reese, 1997). The social economy is a multidimensional framework that encompasses organisations with common economically sustainable and pro-social mandates. By working at a grassroots level, social economy enterprises and organisations can help to support community needs and effectively address local problems. Social capital is a communal resource that can be used by members of the social economy to facilitate action. Volunteer-based organisations are at the foundation of the social economy providing important services to the community. Investigating volunteers within a social economy framework allows a deeper focus on how their contributions benefit themselves and the greater community.

The purpose of this study is to explore the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation on how their efforts contribute to individual and community well-being. As members of the social economy, volunteers stand to benefit from their connections with community members and involvement with social issues. Outdoor recreation presents a unique case study within which to investigate contributions of volunteers to the social economy. Focusing on volunteers in outdoor recreation demonstrates how activities have value and contribute to the social economy. Much of the interest in the social economy has focused on topics such as social services, education, government, public policy, and entrepreneurialism, but there has been little emphasis on recreation (see Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, n.d.; Jones, 2006; MacKinnon, 2006; Painter, 2006;

Quarter, Sousa, Richmond, & Carmichael, 2001). Further, by interviewing volunteers with outdoor recreation organisations we can understand volunteering in the social economy from a bottom-up perspective. Much of the research regarding social economy seeks to understand the place of social economic processes at the organisational, societal or international levels. This broad reaching approach can overlook the specific elements within the social economy from which communities and individuals can benefit. My research, however, approaches the social economy by speaking with the people at its foundation: volunteers. By surveying the people involved in the delivery of service to the community we can develop a different perspective on the diverse objectives and accomplishments of social economy organisations.

Data for this project were collected in the community of Whitehorse, Yukon. The large number of volunteers and the city's unique physical location make Whitehorse the ideal location for conducting research regarding outdoor recreation. Though the city is primarily populated by English-speaking Canadians, there is a strong First Nations presence in the City and a very active and vibrant francophone community (see Yukon Executive Council, 2006). There are a wide variety of recreation activities going on in the City throughout the year from dogsledding and canoe races to marathons and bike relays. Many of these events are highly publicised and receive immense support from community members and local businesses. For these reasons Whitehorse is an interesting location for studying relationship between recreation and community dynamics.

This study was conducted as part of The Social Economy Research Network for Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa), a regionally focused network that conducts research relevant to the social economy in the north and provides information needed for

governments to undertake realistic programme and policy development. By exploring the experiences and ideas of outdoor recreation volunteers in a northern Canadian community, particular insight can be offered regarding the social economy in the north. The literature reviewed in the following chapter explores aspects of volunteering, social economy, and social capital in order to appropriately frame the context of this research. The third chapter explains the research approach and methods of data collection followed by a description of the data analysis procedures. A detailed report of the topics covered during volunteer interviews is provided in the chapter on findings. The fifth and sixth chapters connected these findings with other research and literature and provides insight into its meaning and possible implications. Findings from this research highlight the personal and community benefits derived from volunteer work.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research explores the views of volunteers regarding the personal and community benefits of their participation and attempts to situate these perceptions within a social economy perspective. Getting involved and volunteering with recreation activities is one of the ways that residents can contribute to the social economy of their community. Volunteering plays a significant role in contributing to the common goals of the community as well as fulfilling an individual's need for self-direction and freedom of choice (Burden, 2000). Volunteers build social connections by becoming involved in community activities, and research has shown that these social networks can, in turn, help to combat many of the social problems afflicting our communities. The literature surrounding volunteerism outlines a variety of motivations that provide us with an idea of the benefits volunteers expect from their service, and explores the idea of volunteerism as a form of serious leisure.

In order to investigate the relevance of volunteerism within a community, the research is framed in a social capital and social economy context. The social economy covers a range of activities that can be identified by their common pro-social and economic goals and methods of practice. Social capital is created, sometimes, during the interactions that take place within the social economy. Volunteers contribute to these processes by interacting with fellow community members and contributing services and skills to community-based organisations. This complex relationship, as well as the concepts behind social economy and social capital, has been explored through research in various fields of study and will be outlined in the following chapter.



The term social economy often refers to a theoretical approach developed by utopian socialists that was being used at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century during a time of great political, social, and economic debate in Europe (Restakis, 2006). Much of the literature regarding social economy and social capital has pointed to Alexis De Tocqueville in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as being the first to formally consider the economic and political significance of social relationships. Many researchers agree that it was De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* that began to articulate the importance of social connections as a contributor to economic processes (Foley & Edwards, 1996; Glover, 2004; Hemingway, 2006). A century later the idea of social economy re-entered popular discussion when economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi characterised social relationships by the way they integrate economic behaviour. Polanyi believed that one's economy is inherently submerged in one's social relationships (see Evans, 2006). It was also Polanyi's interpretation of reciprocity that hinted at the concept of social capital (Evans, 2006). Social capital is generated from synergies in social relations that facilitate action and can occur in the social economy (Coleman, 1988). It is on this foundation that academics have begun to investigate the interactions of social capital and of social economy.

Both the social economy and social capital are reliant on the voluntary nature of social organisations. A social organisation is an enterprise, association, or project that contributes to a community through the provision of products and services. Often these projects are based at the grassroots level and, through sharing common social and economic goals, work to fulfill community needs. Most social organisations, even those with paid staff, rely heavily on the contributions of volunteer labour (Quarter, 1992). As volunteers in their community, residents have the opportunity to gain personal benefits

from their work while contributing valuable resources to the community. Volunteers build social relationships, gain skills, and work towards community development through exchanges of social capital and contributions to the social economy. This exploration of the literature surrounding volunteerism, social economy, and social capital provides a framework for the investigation of the contributions of volunteers in the field of outdoor recreation to individual development and the community.

### *2.1 Volunteers and volunteering*

Volunteers and volunteer activities contribute to community and individual well-being because of the variety of services and outlets for activity they provide. Historically, the value of volunteer-based organisations and other such social organisations has been measured on a financial basis; yet, these organisations contribute many services to society that cannot be measured using monetary values (Painter, 2006). By investigating the benefits of social organisations researchers can approach the social economy from a more holistic perspective. Painter (2006) suggests that through surveying the people who deliver these services a better evaluation of their influences can be developed. Since volunteers provide services that are valuable, though not necessarily monetarily measurable, their perspectives may provide insight into programme efficiency and the effectiveness of social organisations at meeting objectives (Fasenfest, Ciancanelli, & Reese, 1997; Painter, 2006).

This study investigates the thoughts and feelings of volunteers because of the perspectives they offer in examining the role of outdoor recreation activities within a social economy framework. Organised recreation is a highly social form of activity that often involves support from many volunteers working together to make an activity

possible. Volunteers contribute many different services to a community without financial gain (Henderson, 1985). These people are under no obligation or requirement to provide these services but often commit considerable time and energy to their volunteer work. Volunteerism is the concept of people helping people and contributing the public good (Henderson, 1985), and is a core foundation of the social economy (Wilson, 2000).

In Canada, volunteering plays a large role in communities: more than half of all nonprofit organisations depend *entirely* on volunteer labour (Statistics Canada, 2005). These organisations provide extensive services to Canadians while facilitating a strong connection to the community through individual participation (Statistics Canada, 2005). Across the country 11% of Canadians volunteer with organisations related to sports and recreation contributing 18% of the total volunteer hours (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 33). Indeed, sports and recreation comprise the largest percentage of nonprofit and voluntary organisation categories, indicating the importance of the role of volunteers in this field.

Nonprofit and voluntary organisations also maintain a strong economic presence in Canada reporting \$112 billion in revenues in 2004 (including hospitals, universities, and colleges) (Statistics Canada, 2005, p. 11). The *2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering & Participating* indicated that 52% of Yukoners were volunteering with an organisation, surpassing the national total of 45% (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 53). Furthermore, nearly 70% of Whitehorse residents reported doing unpaid work in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007). The survey also described the desire ‘to make a contribution to the community’ and ‘to use one’s skills and experiences’ as the top two reasons for volunteering (Statistics Canada, 2006). These statistics provide us with an indication of the significant contributions of volunteering and volunteer-based organisations to

Canadian communities. In the Yukon, many residents are active in their communities as formal volunteers and through informal helping activities.

Volunteers can work to fulfill many needs in a community while simultaneously receiving personal benefits from their position. Understanding the relationship between volunteer service and benefits is crucial as communities become increasingly reliant on volunteers to provide programmes for residents. As the relationship between government and the needs of civil society evolves so too does the nature of volunteer work (Arai, 1997). As a community and the needs of its residents develop it is often impossible for continually changing governments to match pace with the demands. Volunteers are becoming increasingly important in helping communities meet their health, fitness, and recreation goals.

The motivations behind volunteering should be considered when investigating the impacts of civic engagement. Arai (2000) found that many volunteers are looking for the opportunity to make a contribution to their community, develop their own personal knowledge and skills, and form relationships with the people they meet. Group membership is also a valued aspect of outdoor recreation, providing an incentive for people to volunteer (Dennis & Zube, 1988). Similarly, Propst, Dayle, Jackson and McDonough (2003) found that many volunteers in recreation management are not necessarily looking for personal enjoyment or fun, but rather they believe that their participation will influence the decisions that affect their community and, therefore, them personally. Volunteers look for these outlets to increase their awareness of issues facing their community and to contribute to community development (Glover, 2004; Sharpe, 2006; Seippel, 2006).

Researchers have looked at volunteer motivation within a number of frameworks to understand their relationships and interactions that influence volunteer behaviour. Clary, Snyder, and Stukas (1996) describe one psychological approach to understanding volunteering by placing motivations to volunteer into six dimensions. Under this approach volunteering can serve a variety of functions from expressing one's values to meeting new people and gaining career experience. However, motivations for volunteering can also be influenced by factors such as values, family, responsibility, and personal interests (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997). The dimensions of a functional-based approach are of interest but need to be considered in conjunction with other possible variables.

Studies have found that personal values are strong indicators of volunteer motivations. Janoski, Musick, and Wilson (1998) found that attitudes were four times more powerful motivators for volunteering than frequent participation in community organisations. Thus, people who appreciated the values and principles of volunteering were more likely to serve than people who were enticed to volunteer for increased access to social resources and opportunities. To this point, Dennis and Zube (1988) found that instrumental incentives (benefits that will support the common good) were the strongest incentives for outdoor recreation volunteers. Personal benefits were also of value but were not significant predictors of volunteer behaviour as with the former (Dennis & Zube, 1988). Caldwell and Andereck (1994) also concluded that contributing to society was a primary motive for outdoor recreation volunteers, followed by benefits derived by social interaction.

Interestingly, however, Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) found the social aspects of volunteering and the desire to gain practical experience to be the lowest-rated motivations to volunteer in human service. These findings come from extensive empirical testing of motivation to volunteer models. Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen sought to explore the measurement of motivations to volunteer by considering different multi-dimensional models and their effectiveness. By testing the models with volunteers in human services and non-volunteers, Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen determined that many motives do not fit in a 2- or 3-dimensional model but, with few exceptions, can be considered on a unidimensional scale. Furthermore, Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's research demonstrates that motivations to volunteer are not distinct but are overlapping.

It is also interesting that Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's findings regarding motivations for volunteering in human services differ slightly from the findings of Dennis and Zube (1988) and Caldwell and Andereck (1994) regarding volunteers in recreation. This suggest that volunteers for outdoor recreation have many similar motivations as those with human services, but that there are also some key differences, such as the attraction to a social setting, felt by people who volunteer in recreation. The findings from Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's (1991) study with human service volunteers are similar to those regarding recreation volunteers in that the opportunity to do something worthwhile was the most highly rated motivation for volunteering. This altruistic motivation was also followed by a more personal, or egoistic, motivation: "volunteering for others makes me feel better about myself" (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991, p. 278).

Research regarding specific motivations with different types of services suggests that all motivations to volunteer could be grouped under two broad reaching categories:

egoistic or altruistic. By combining the findings from several different bodies of literature Han (2007) describes motivations to volunteer as either altruistic or egoistic. Altruistic motives encourage people to volunteer without any external incentives while egoistic motives reflect the personal benefits individuals received from volunteering. Under each of these headings motivations can then be separated into either organisational attachment or volunteer attachment for altruistic motives, and internal benefits or external benefits for egoistic motives (Han, 2007). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the separation of these areas of motivation and the examples of motivational elements that would fit under each.

	Motivation factors	Explanation of factors
Altruism (helping others)	Organization attachment (OA)	Pride and love of the organization/allegiance to the organization/the success of the event
	Volunteer attachment (VA)	Concern for others and society
Egoism (personal benefits)	Internal benefits (IB)	Gaining new experiences and career contacts & skills/feeling important and needed, career development
	External benefits (EB)	Getting free uniforms, food, and admission/ meeting and interaction with others/forming friendships

**Figure 2.1** A proposed model to measure volunteer motivation (Han, 2007, p. 111)

Though the separation of volunteer motivations into one of two general areas presents a clear and simple explanation of volunteering, there are many different variables at work that may not allow for a volunteer to fit distinctly into one category. This reflects the findings of Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) who conclude that altruistic and egoistic motivations for volunteering are not distinct from each other but rather are dynamic and overlapping. Therefore, one might be volunteering because he or

she wishes to give back to the community, but there also exists the possibility that at the same time the volunteer will gain something personally from that involvement.

The overlap of egoistic and altruistic motivations is significant because neither in isolation can explain volunteer behaviour. An individual's personal values greatly influence the role of volunteering, but Wilson (2000) explains that since people volunteer based on different values, they cannot be accurately generalised to predict volunteer motivations. Variations in these motivations and benefits occur across different volunteer settings (Silverberg, Backmann, & Backmann, 2000; Arai, 2000; Twynam, Farrell, & Johnston, 2003).

Another perspective regarding volunteer motivations seeks to understand whether volunteering is considered a work or a leisure activity. Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) suggest that different types of volunteer opportunities can be placed on a continuum between work and leisure, thereby accounting for multiple motivations and benefits. This continuum, as shown in Figure 2.2, provides a conceptual framework for understanding volunteering motives based on the above mentioned factors, rather than the function volunteering serves in an individual's life as described by Clary et al. (1996). For

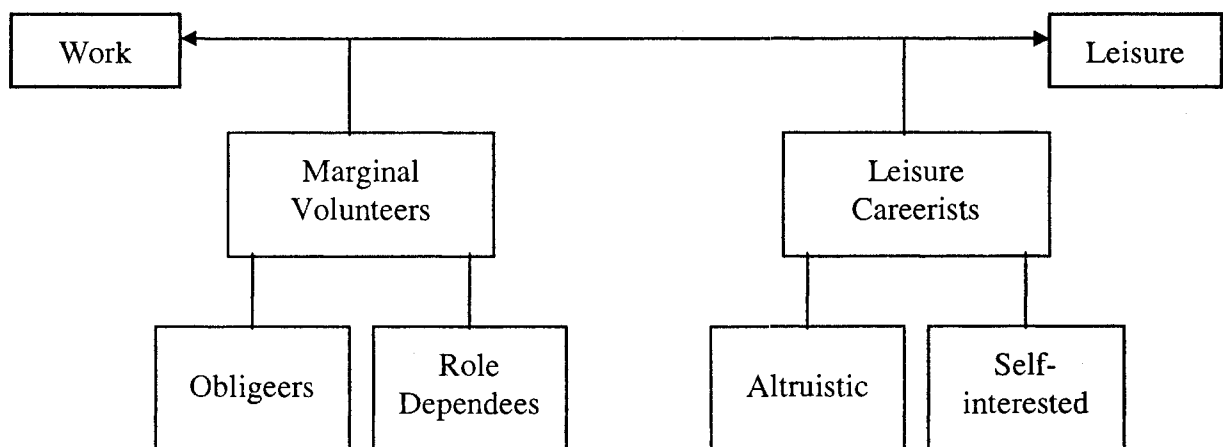


Figure 2.2 Volunteer types in sport on work/leisure continuum (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997, p. 13)



*Marginal Volunteers*, volunteer activities may be similar to work, whereas *Leisure Careerists* view volunteering as a form of leisure. *Obligees* are volunteers who feel obligated to give back to the activity because it is in need, they were recruited, or there is no one else. Though they may share similar feelings of responsibility, *Role Dependees* volunteer because their children or other family members are participants. At the other of the spectrum, *Altruistic Leisure Careerists* possess an intrinsic desire to help out, be involved, or work with others. *Self-interested Leisure Careerists* view their volunteer work as a form of leisure because they gain some personal development, extend their skill base, or extend their participation through their involvement (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997). As a result people who place their volunteer efforts between the two areas of work and leisure may be participating in a form of serious leisure. "Not only can recreation and leisure programs be supplemented and enhanced by the use of volunteers, but the act of volunteering can be a programmed leisure activity for the volunteer" (Henderson, 1981, p. 208-209). Therefore, a volunteer may be contributing formal, or serious, skills and energy to an organisation yet consider their efforts to be a leisure activity. Serious leisure is understood as an activity in which the participant has control over his or her level of contribution but which involves a certain level of commitment and obligation (Stebbins, 1982). Participants in serious leisure are making a contribution to their personal well-being as well as to that of the community.

Stebbins (1982) describes *career volunteering* as distinguishable from other forms of serious leisure because participants may be delegated specific tasks and because it possesses an element of altruism. These two components give volunteers a unique opportunity to contribute to society. Volunteering has traditionally been viewed as

'work' but it has the potential to fulfill intrinsic motivations as participants acknowledge the similar qualities of recreation and leisure and volunteer labour (Henderson, 1981). Based on this view, volunteering can be a leisure pursuit in which people are able to practice different forms of citizenship and contribute to the formation of social capital (Arai, 2000). More importantly, the services provided by people utilising volunteering as serious leisure contribute to overall community development and social economy.

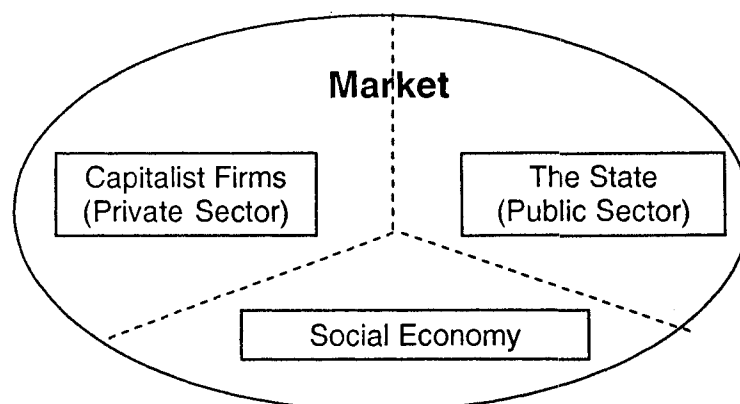
Volunteer work can serve individuals in a variety of ways while complementing their personal values and fulfilling individual needs. Volunteer-based recreation programmes are also valuable through their contributions to the community's social economy. Not only is recreation an active and enjoyable service provided to residents, but also it provides volunteers with an opportunity to become involved and engaged in social issues. Neamtam (2005) believes that investigating these programmes under the umbrella of social economy is necessary because governments cannot effectively direct all aspects of community services; there are simply too many factors to consider and government control would be inefficient. Volunteers with recreational programmes have the potential to contribute to community development through their involvement with social processes interactions within the social economy.

## *2.2 Social economy*

A variety of perspectives can be used to understand the idea of social economy and its functions. Regardless of the many approaches to understanding this area, a recognisable social economy has been operating within societies for many years (Favreau, 2006; MacKinnon, 2006; Neamtam, 2005; Painter, 2006; Quarter, 1992; SERNNNoCa, 2006). The various perspectives presented here contribute to a general

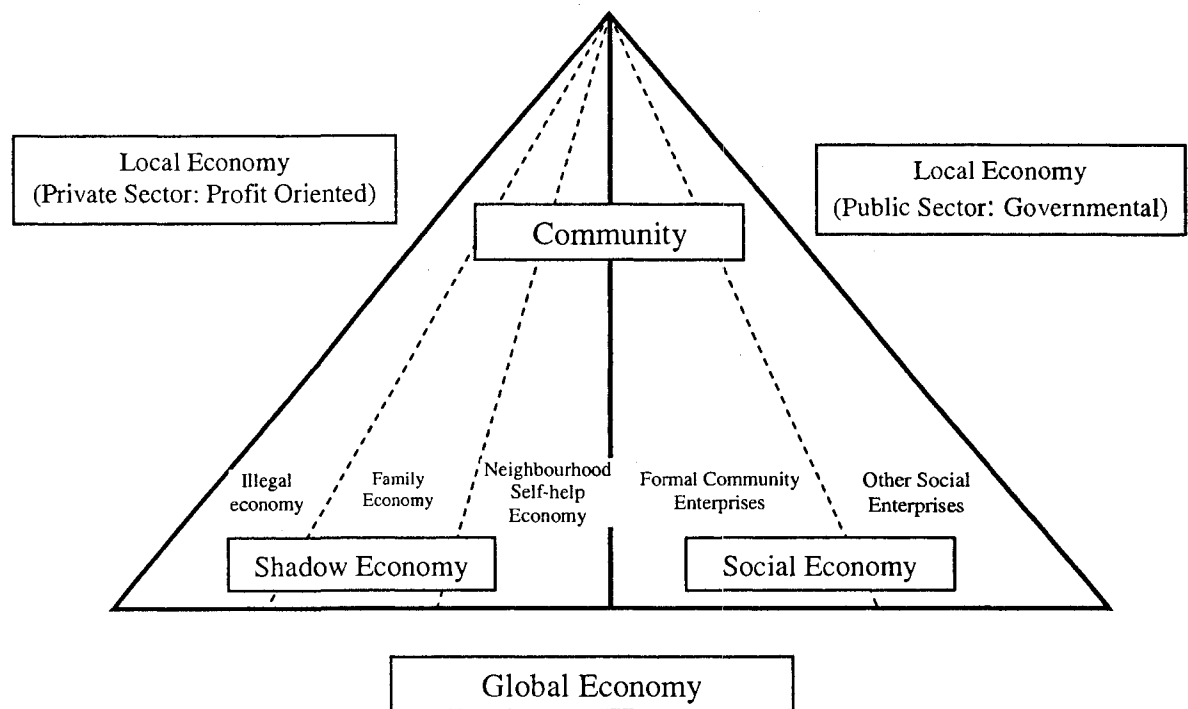
understanding of the function of the social economy rather than attempting to precisely define its properties; exploring the social economy from a variety of angles provides an appropriate forum for the investigation of volunteer contributions. The result is an understanding of the social economy as a spectrum of social organisations at work within a broad third sector that fills the space between and overlaps the edges of two areas of the traditional market economy: the public and the private sectors.

The broadest understanding of the social economy places nonprofit and cooperative organisations in the social sector rather than the public (governmental) or private (profit-oriented) sectors of the economy (Restakis, 2006). The social economy accepts both the social and economic value of organisations that function within a social mandate (Quarter et al., 2001). The relationship between these elements is demonstrated by Restakis' (2006) *Civil economy conception* in Figure 2.3. Restakis describes the civil economy as a *dimension* of the market to which the government, the commercial sector, and the social economy all contribute. With the government and private firms comprising the first and second sectors, the social economy blends aspects of each to form the third sector.



**Figure 2.3** Civil economy conception (Restakis, 2006 p. 6)

Evans (2006) terms this third sector the “community economy” and situates the social economy as a section of the economic processes at work at the local level. Figure 2.4 outlines the place of the social economy within a community economy context. This perspective allows us to consider the interactions between organisations within the social economy while understanding the connections of these organisations with elements, such as the government or private sector, outside of the social economy (Evans, 2006). Understanding the social economy as a broad third sector of the global economic system gives us the freedom to consider the many different ways in which individuals and communities can contribute to, and benefit from, social activities that have an economic function.



**Figure 2.4** The Social Economy and the Shadow Economy in the Third Sector (adapted from Evans, 2006, p. 50)

Evans' diagram indicates that the social economy and the shadow economy are subgroups of community economy within the third sector. However, it could be argued that neighbourhood self-help economies and family economies also provide valuable additions to the social economy. Supporting this possibility is the consideration of the social economy as a range of related activities that are evolving within the third sector (Evans, 2006).

It is possible to delineate the social economy as a spectrum of activities ranging from profit-oriented businesses to a relaxed commitment of individuals. It can be argued that the social organisations included on the spectrum blend social and economic values to support the needs of a community (LePage 2006; Quarter, 1992). Therefore, the potential exists for profit-oriented organisations to be included in the social economy so long as their functions are congruent with social and economic goals such as social justice and community development. Figure 2.5 is a representation of how a spectrum of social economic activity may be perceived. This theoretical spectrum could possibly include different representations of social organisations than are outlined here but it is important to note that, while all organisations included are supported by volunteer labour, the spectrum of activity is not indefinite. At some point the actions of an organisation or

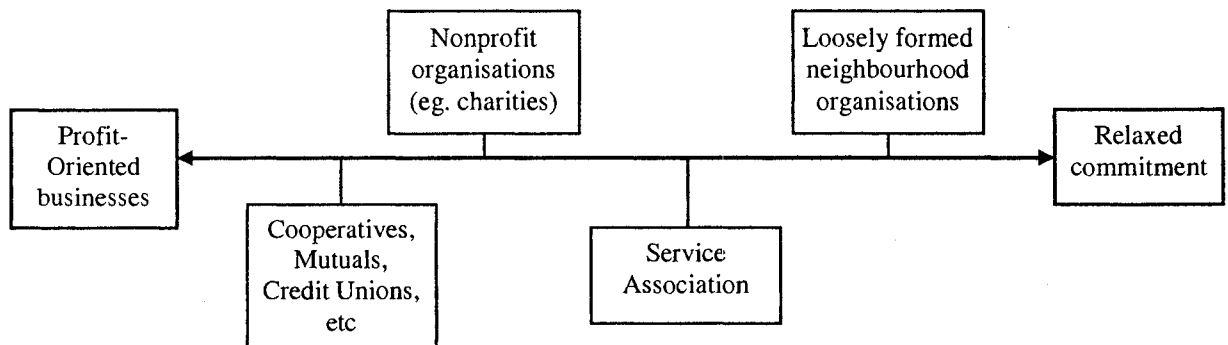


Figure 2.5 Possible delineation of social organisations along a social economy spectrum.

individual are no longer consistent with the goals of the community. Not all exchanges of services are beneficial to the greater good and, therefore, not all groups will fit on the social economy spectrum.

Representing the social economy as a spectrum allows it to include organisations in the business of producing goods and services if they manage their operations with social and economic goals in common (Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, n.d.). The social organisations that fall on the spectrum possess many similar traits including the support of volunteers at some level of their functioning. Volunteer commitment supports all of the social organisations located along the spectrum with a range of responsibilities including work within formalised organisations with distinguishable structures to the relaxed commitment of a group of neighbours to watch over each other's children as they play in the park.

Regardless of their place on the spectrum, or within the third sector, the mandates of the organisations themselves are ultimately the distinguishing factors of the social economy. Traditionally, an enterprise is understood as a business project established by entrepreneurs, but in terms of the social economy it can include a wider range of projects and organisations. Social enterprise is defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as any private activity that is conducted in the public interest for the attainment of certain social and economic goals (OECD as cited in Evans, 2006). Painter (2006) adds detail to this definition by describing social economic enterprises as citizen-led, community-based organisations that combine market and non-market resources to produce goods and services. In other words, social enterprises in the social economy are not government-based but work at the grassroots level to fulfill

community needs and contribute to the greater good. In fact, though the social economy can be understood as a larger economic framework, it can also be used as a synonym for social enterprises (Evans, 2006). Though many researchers consider the social economy to be a complicated system influenced by many different variables, Evans also understands the social economy as the sum of its component parts. Evans (2006) argues that the social economy includes not only formal service delivery organisations, but also emerging organisations that identify new approaches to addressing local problems. Through social organisations, volunteers have the opportunity for active engagement as citizens. They allow for individuals to become involved in activities that contribute not only to their own personal benefit, but also to the formation of collective networks that affect social processes (Arai, 2000).

Previously, governments have undervalued the benefits of participating in social organisations because of the difficulty in tangibly quantifying outcomes such as increased self-esteem, community empowerment, and relationship building. Similarly, “the value of recreation to overall community health is overlooked because it is more difficult to measure and quantify than traditional supply/demand” (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. ii). The traditional market economy framework is restricted to monetary measurement and does not accommodate the value of labour input, social power, and indicators of social inclusion or exclusion (Fasenfest et al., 1997). Whether the social economy is viewed a third market sector, a spectrum of activities, or the sum of component parts does not really matter so long as it is grounded in community dynamics and in tune with community needs (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005). Through social organisations volunteers have the ability to influence social norms, affect

communication and decision-making, and, most importantly, pursue individual interests while acting for the benefit of the common good (Braun & Caster, 2001). By placing social and human concerns at the centre of economics, social organisations have the potential to improve the quality of life in economic, political, and social dimensions (Restakis, 2006; Fasenfest et al., 1997). The social economy paradigm considers a wide range of possibilities and benefits collected from social organisations.

One of the principal distinguishing factors of the social economy from other sectors is the influence of volunteers and exchanges of social capital. While the formal economy depends on cash and paid labour, the social economy also utilises the resources and services provided by volunteer members (Quarter, 1992). As a result, the net assets of social enterprises are owned by no individual, but rather by the organisation itself, becoming social dividends and building blocks for social economy (Quarter, 1992). Community members need not necessarily benefit financially from their labours within a social economy (i.e. they are not paid), but their services contribute to the greater strength of a community. Additionally, through the formation of connections and relationships participants in the social economy are able to gain stock in social capital. Within the social economy, social capital refers to the value of social networks within a community (Putnam, 2001). Volunteers with social organisations have greater access to different types of social capital because of their involvement within the social economy. As a result, the recognition and utilisation of social capital can be an effective indication of personal and community benefits of volunteering.



### *2.3 Social capital*

Within the social economy there is a continuous exchange of goods and services between social organisations. The production and consumption of social capital creates channels that facilitate the actions of members within the social economy. Coleman (1988) uses social capital to define social action in terms of its function: a variety of components all contribute to some aspect of the social structure that assists in the movements and actions of its members. Members of various social networks make these movements possible through the collection and distribution of services and favours. Therefore, for social capital to be present and effective, the environment must host a certain level of trust so that the potential exists for favours to be reciprocated (Coleman, 1988). With these trusting relationships, individuals are able to receive the support and aid they need, thereby contributing to the overall health of the community.

Networks are created between individuals in almost any social situation; for example, coworkers in a business association, neighbours in a community group, followers of a particular religious faith, or volunteers working for an organisation. Network members can benefit from their involvement through such things as greater access to information, influence and control, and social solidarity (Sandefur & Laumann, 1998). However, the benefits derived from interpersonal relations can depend on the type of connections an individual has established. Putnam (2000) defines two types of social capital that arise from social networking based on the strength of the connection between individuals: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital ties individuals or groups together in a close-knit but rather exclusive network, while bridging social capital links assets and individuals that can generate broader identities and

reciprocity. A third form, linking social capital, has been suggested as a connection between different levels of power and social status groups (Evans & Syrett, 2007; Kay, 2006). The differences between these types of social capital are important because they can help to determine the functions and interactions of social capital within the social economy.

Since social networks to which community members contribute foster obligations of reciprocity the currency of social capital, unlike other forms of capital, is not of monetary value but lies in the structure of the relations between and among network members (Coleman, 1988). Therefore, an individual's stock in social capital is based on relationships and involvement with those processes. However, the systemic changes that occur within a fluctuating society affect the structure of the relationships that make up social capital, in effect, facilitating or constraining an individual's access to stock and benefits (Sandefur & Laumann, 1998). As a result, social capital has the potential to aid the movements of some people, while simultaneously inhibiting the progress of others.

Research regarding social capital has demonstrated that the wrong type or utilisation of social capital can have negative impacts on a community. Some researchers erroneously presume that the presence of social capital is automatically positive for the community; therefore, they may also conclude that poor community development is the result of a lack of social capital (Mouleart & Nussbaumer, 2005). Social capital does not arise solely within social economy and there is also the possibility that its presence can have negative effects on the greater community. Social networks are beneficial for those within that network, but can be ineffective or detrimental to community members who are not included (Putman, 2000). Furthermore, there are social networks that contribute

to social capital that impose negative outcomes on some members of society. For example, the Ku Klux Klan utilises a form of social capital for its purposes that, in turn, negatively affect the greater community (Putnam, 2000). Therefore, social capital can be beneficial or costly to an individual based on that individual's position within a social network (Glover, 2004b). For example, Woolcock (2001) explains that people with strong network ties are more likely to find jobs and be promoted, but that those ties have an equal power to discriminate against individuals outside the network.

Glover (2004b) has also explored the potential for negative outcomes when building social capital. Discrepancies in process can lead to unequal access to social capital and acts of resistance from community members not included in the social network. Kay (2006) adds that bonding social capital at a local level can cause a community to be less tolerant of outsiders and non-group members may be faced with unequal access to opportunities as roles are filled through social networking. In the majority of situations social capital is good for a community, but it has the potential to become harmful. Accordingly, the functions of social capital are not exclusive to the social economy. For example, exchanges of social capital that are not congruent with the goals of the social economy could not be placed on the finite spectrum of social organisations (Figure 2.5). Based on the research by Putnam, Kay, and Glover it could be argued that if a group's goals and activities do not contribute to the greater health of the community they are not included in the social economy. Social organisations must support core concepts of the social economy such as community empowerment and social justice (MacKinnon, 2006). Though the social economy does include the production and

consumption of social capital, social capital does not arise solely within the social economy.

#### *2.4 The place of social economy and social capital in an investigation of volunteers*

The multiple levels that can be used to understand social economy and social capital have made it difficult for researchers to distinguish the relationship between these concepts. Since the social organisations that make up the social economy simultaneously use and generate social capital, Kay (2006) suggests that social capital is a component part of the social economy. Therefore, social capital can unite social organisations together and contribute to the development of social economy. Woolcock (2001) argues that the definition of social capital itself is dependent on its context within the social economy. Perhaps, then, increased awareness of social capital could potentially unify our understanding of this broad third sector (Kay, 2006). However, while there appears to be a relationship between strong social capital and a strong social economy, there is little evidence that local social capital influences the emergence of social economy (Evans & Syrett, 2007). This is consistent with the understanding that the elements of social capital are not unique to the social economy. The social economy will not develop simply because of the presence of social capital: there are many additional factors to consider. Though social capital can contribute to communities and social economy, it must be used in conjunction with other forms of capital – such as human, financial, environmental, and cultural – to be useful (Kay, 2006). Together, these assets interact within community processes to contribute to social economy.

Understanding the relationship between social economy and social capital is significant in this exploration of the role of volunteerism because of the impact that these

systems have on individuals and communities. Putnam (2000) addresses volunteering patterns specifically as a central measure of social capital. However, he also clarifies that in regards to social capital there is a difference between volunteering *with* others and volunteering *for* others: social capital specifically refers to the network of social connections that form when acting *with* other people (Putnam, 2000). Volunteers create social networks through their involvement and participate in the distribution and utilisation of social capital stock. This interaction fosters a sense of trust and reciprocity within a community, thereby contributing to the local social economy. Social capital can be used to determine the value of participating within our communities and perhaps give us insight into its overall effects within the social economy (Arai, 2000).

The interaction between volunteers and social capital is just one of the ways in which volunteers are a major factor in the social economy. The social economy's blending of economic and social investment is actively supported by community members engaged in civic life. People who volunteer are exposed to a greater variety of public concerns and shared problems and, accordingly, are more inclined to contribute to discussion surrounding collective issues (Jones, 2006).

Increasingly, recreation services are relying on volunteers to maintain their programmes; therefore, many communities are faced with the challenge of stretching resources to fulfill greater needs (Silverberg et al., 2000). Leisure activities (such as outdoor recreation) provide a space for people to volunteer and become engaged in community processes (Sharpe, 2006). Hemingway (1999) found that social capital grows out of leisure activities that promote norms like autonomy, trust, cooperation, and communication. However, similarly to Putnam's (2000) belief, Hemingway argues that

community contributions cannot be made if the activity is not democratically administered: “*how* leisure activities are provided might be equally as important as *what* these activities are” (1999, p. 162). Programmes must be appropriately structured in order to provide meaningful citizen participation in policy and decision-making (Hemingway, 1999). In this way many recreation organisations become active members of the social economy by empowering residents while providing valuable services to the community.

Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations also provide a valuable service to communities by effectively contributing to community goals. The *2007 City of Whitehorse Parks and Recreation Master Plan* outlines several recreation objectives, from increasing opportunities for physical activity and healthy living, to promoting skill development and environmental appreciation, that can be met through the activities of outdoor recreation organisations (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). People who volunteer are helping the City to achieve its goals in ways that can have social and economic significance. They are supporting the government in its attempts to provide a variety of services to meet the community’s needs.

...participation in recreation or leisure activities contributes directly to the mental, physical, social, moral, and emotional development of each individual resident. Persons involved with such positive experiences are more open to learning and less susceptible to influences detrimental to the self and the community as a whole (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. 19).

The City recognises the benefits of participating in recreation for the community and volunteer help support those objects. Thus, volunteers in outdoor recreation organisations have the potential to contribute to the social economy while participating in the exchange of social resources.

In summary, an exploration of the role of volunteers in community processes is important in understanding volunteer influences and actions within the social economy. Residents may choose to volunteer for a variety of egoistic and altruistic reasons that often overlap, allowing them to contribute to both their own well-being as well as that of the community. Outdoor recreation provides us with another perspective from which to investigate the contributions of volunteers to the social economy. The literature has shown that variations in volunteer motivations and actions within various social organisations can in turn affect their involvement within the social economy.

Researchers and analysts have generated a number of different approaches to the way social economy can be defined and the elements that may be included in its framework. What is significant to this study, however, is recognising the function of social economy rather than attempting to classify the work of outdoor recreation volunteers within the multitude of definitions. The social economy consists of social organisations working to support the needs of a community. Social capital is simultaneously consumed and produced by the social organisations within the social economy (Kay, 2006). Social capital is generated from the relationships between individuals and built upon the concept of reciprocity. Through volunteer work and the construction of social relationships people have a forum for achieving social change on a macro-level; however, variations in volunteer motivations and benefits can affect differences in the production of, and access to, social capital (Arai, 2000). Research has shown that different forms of social capital can be beneficial or detrimental to community members depending on factors such as one's position, influence, and power within the network of connections. The social economy encompasses the intangible connections that

exist between people and organisations that work for the betterment of a community. Volunteers within the organisations that make up the social economy offer a unique perspective on the processes and the outcomes of social economic processes.



## Chapter 3: Research Approach

### *3.1 Strategies of Inquiry*

This research investigates volunteers with outdoor recreation activities and their views about how their involvement contributes to community and personal well-being and attempts to situate these views within a social economy framework. The research problem was approached from a qualitative perspective as described by Neuman (2006) in order to explore this topic and help to formulate and focus future investigations. Qualitative research focuses on the experience and its context rather than on measurement of patterns and statistical relationships in data. It is hoped that this research will provide a useful perspective on volunteerism and its place in the social economy.

Individuals develop personal and subjective meanings of their experiences that result in many different meanings of reality (Creswell, 2003; see also Patterson & Williams, 1998). Reality is a social creation developed within a symbolic discourse between individuals, groups, and the world (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). A social constructivist approach to research was chosen for this project because it accommodates the multifaceted relationships between different environmental elements – such as one’s physical, social, or economic situation – on an individual (see Morgan & Smircich, 1980). A qualitative analysis is needed to record the complexity of interactions and relationships in the variety of elements that influence the research environment (Bryman, 1984).

This research is a case study that focuses on outdoor recreation volunteers. In the approach outlined by Creswell (2003) and Neuman (2006), construct representations are based on the knowledge gained from a few specific cases whose actions can be connected

to larger social structures. Analytic induction was used taking into consideration the specific context of the community of Whitehorse and volunteers in outdoor recreation. This research is aimed at understanding how volunteers view their contributions to personal and community well-being, and might offer insights into other areas of social economy and volunteerism.

### *3.2 Setting*

This study was conducted in the community of Whitehorse, Yukon. Yukon Territory has a population of over 32,000 (Yukon Executive Council Office, March 2007) and is located north of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel between the Northwest Territories, Canada and Alaska, U.S.A. (Figure 3.1). Whitehorse, the capital, is the largest city in the territory with a population of just over 20,000 (Statistics Canada, 2007), comprising 67% of the territory's total population. Located on the Yukon River south of the famous Klondike gold rush town of Dawson, Whitehorse sits at the southern end of the territory just north of the British Columbian border. Yukon's vast area and small population mean that large distances separate communities and Whitehorse's two closest, sizeable neighbours are about 500 kilometres away with populations of less than 2,000 people (Yukon Executive Council Office, March 2007). Whitehorse is also relatively isolated from other major Canadian city centres with Prince George, British Columbia over 1,800 kilometres away, and Edmonton, Alberta and Vancouver, British Columbia more than 2,000 kilometres away as well (PR Services Ltd., n.d.).

However, Whitehorse's geographical situation in a northern landscape, allows for a variety of outdoor recreation activities to happen in the area. Nestled between the mountains and the river, many of Whitehorse's subdivisions are separated from the

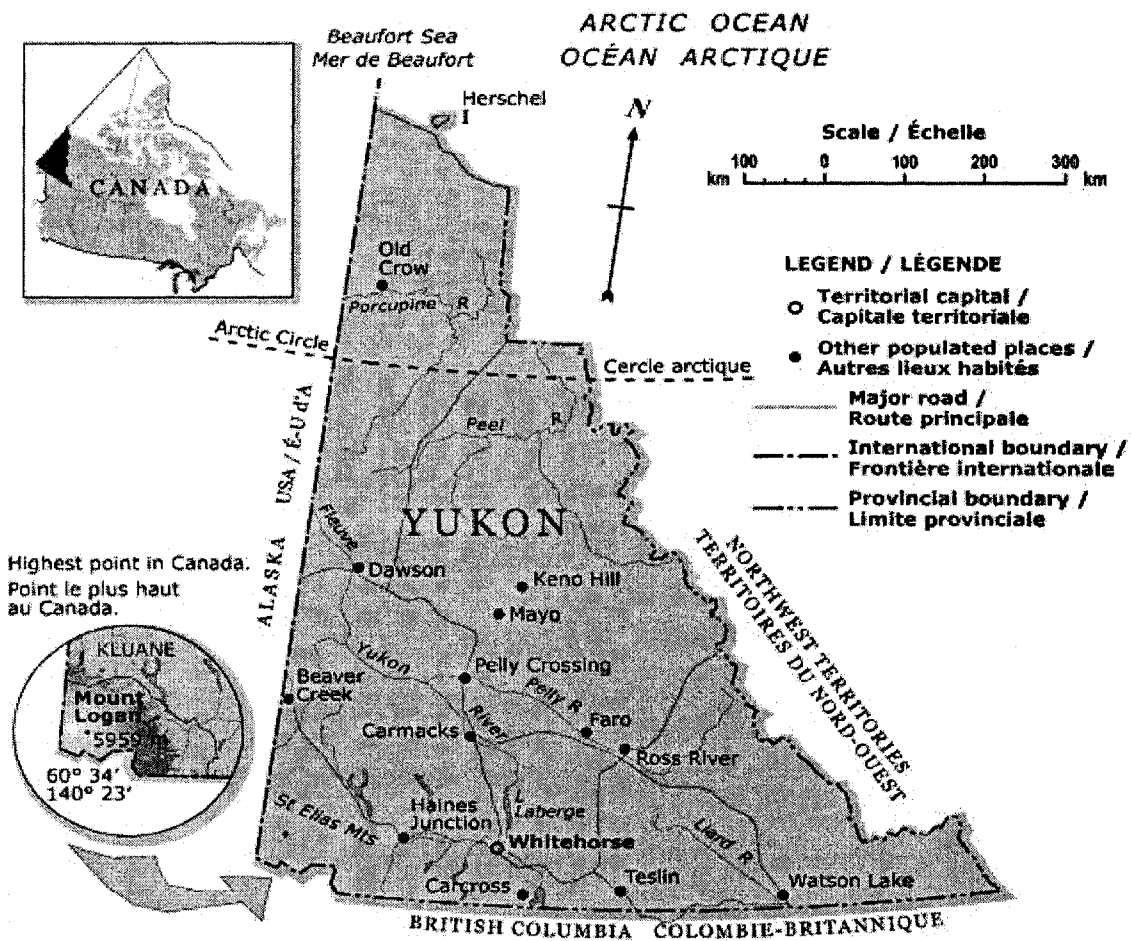


Figure 3.1 Map of Yukon Territory (Natural Resources Canada, 2006).

central downtown area by large gaps of undeveloped, forested land. These greenbelts are highly valued by local residents and there is a strong desire for residents to have formalised input into the planning and protection of these areas from development (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). The greenbelts have proven to be attractive natural spaces for joggers, dog-walkers, skiers, dog mushers, hikers, birders, and many other recreation enthusiasts. The ease of accessibility and proximity has made them popular features of this community (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

Whitehorse was established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as the terminus of the White Pass railway that brought travellers from Skagway, Alaska on the pacific coast to the end of the Whitehorse rapids where they could board steamships and carry on down the Yukon River. Historically, the population of Whitehorse has fluctuated greatly depending on the prosperity of the natural resources in the area. Today the government, education services, and the tourism industry largely employ residents of Whitehorse, though resource extraction is still prevalent in rural Yukon. Whitehorse is located on traditional Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation territory and people of aboriginal identity make up 19% of Whitehorse's residents. More than half of Whitehorse's population is, at minimum, third generation Canadian though 15% of people lived outside of the territory five years ago in a different country or different part of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007).

During my stay in Whitehorse it became clear that the outdoors and active lifestyles are highly valued by Yukoners. The *Active Yukon Monitoring Database* shows that nearly 41% of documented Yukon Sport Governing organisations are related to outdoor recreation and that 5% of the population is involved with recreation groups (C. Sparks Consulting, 2007). The City of Whitehorse offers a remarkable range of recreation opportunities to residents and facilities are well-used with high public satisfaction (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). Furthermore, even though the City is not the sole provider of recreation opportunities in Whitehorse, its recreation budget of \$180.00 per person is on par with the other Canadian cities of similar size (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p.ii). Given Whitehorse's small population, it is impressive that it was able to successfully host the 2007 Canada Winter

Games, an event that required huge infrastructure and human resources, primarily volunteer labour. Indeed, hosting the Games was a landmark for the city and a testament to its capabilities (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

Though the *Active Yukon Monitoring Database* provides a glimpse into the recreation trends of Yukoners, it only reports on formally organised sport and recreation groups and so keeping track of accurate participant numbers can be difficult. For example, the database reports that in 2007 the Yukon Ultimate Frisbee Association had 15 participants (C. Sparks Consulting, 2007); however, as a participant with the Frisbee Association for two months in the 2007 season, I witnessed days when more than two-dozen people played. Additionally, I learned that players informally maintain the public and unregulated disc golf course in town. From walking my dog through this area several times a day I know that there were groups on the course nearly every day, though this information could not possibly be represented in the *Active Yukon Monitoring Database* because of the lack of formal organisation or registration. Though the database can help to provide an indication of the recreation trends in Yukon, it is important to note that there are a considerable number of informal outdoor recreation opportunities present as well. The community of Whitehorse presents a unique situation to study volunteers in terms of community building and development. Its population is large enough to provide a variety of options and recreation opportunities for its residents while remaining small enough to effectively conduct a study on volunteers and their relationship with the community. Because of its small size volunteers may be needed to take on leadership roles and could potentially have a strong influence over community matters.

Research participants were chosen from adult volunteers with outdoor recreation activities in the community. Activities included in this research were generally, but not limited to, those that could be found on the Internet with up-to-date sites and through community listings. Included in this research are volunteers from the following areas of sport and recreation: adventure racing, alpine skiing, birding, broomball, canoeing, cross-country skiing, cycling, disc golf, dogsledding, horseback riding, mountain biking, orienteering, outdoor education, running, snowboarding, snowmobiling, soccer, softball, and ultimate Frisbee. This study specifically investigates the contributions of volunteers in outdoor recreation to community and personal well-being, so people who do not volunteer in outdoor recreation were not included.

### *3.3 Researcher position*

A qualitative research approach takes into account the influences that the researcher may have on study participants and data analysis (Patterson & Williams, 1998). As a qualitative researcher, I understand that my personal background and experience in a recreation activity or as a volunteer has the potential to change my interpretation of a study participant's story. As a researcher who is not a member of this community I have entered the research field site with an outsider's perspective; therefore, I am not an expert regarding issues, norms, understandings, and patterns in the Whitehorse volunteer community. However, through participation in several outdoor activities in Whitehorse, both as a participant and as a volunteer, I was able to gain insight and make informal observations in these areas. In addition to participating in volunteer-led hikes, rock climbing, birding and ultimate Frisbee, I spent over 80 hours from May to July volunteering at the Yukon Volunteer Bureau during which I had the

opportunity to familiarise myself with some of the facilities and services in the Whitehorse area. I also volunteered for the Whitehorse Triathlon and the Yukon River Quest (from the start of the race to the finish line in Dawson City). Through the Yukon Volunteer Bureau I became acquainted with the nonprofit community in the Yukon and built up my understanding of, and connections in, Whitehorse. Through this organisation I discovered opportunities to get involved and joined those activities as a participant and a volunteer, not as a researcher. This volunteering was not part of my formal research, but rather was a venue where I could be involved in community processes. During this time I spoke with many other volunteers, but did not make formal observations; instead this interaction allowed me to become somewhat immersed in my research setting. Getting involved with these activities and events made me part of the community and helped provide me with contacts, friends, and resources that allowed me to further my experience in Yukon. I experienced first hand the welcoming nature of Yukoners that so many participants mentioned in their interviews. This project is not participatory action research, but the time I spent in the community interacting with local residents allowed me to gain deeper insight into the significance of volunteering in the community and, therefore, should increase my understanding of the findings.

For this research project I have acted as an observer and facilitator of communicating the thoughts and feelings of the volunteers. My involvement in Whitehorse over three months in the spring and summer of 2007 has enabled me to build an understanding of the inner-workings of that community of people and develop a fraction of an insider's perspective. My place as an outsider researcher allowed me to collect data with minimal bias, while at the same time my participation in community

events has given me some insight to effectively learn from community members and construct my research.

### *3.4 Ethics*

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board and this research upholds ethical standards for conducting research involving human subjects. Participants were made fully aware of the purpose of the study, interview procedures, and their time commitment to participate and were each given a cover letter with information regarding the project as well as contact information for the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (Appendix A). Written permission was obtained from all participants on a signed informed consent form (Appendix B). At the time, I also provided my email address and local phone number study participants could use while I was in Whitehorse should they have any further questions or comments following the interview. The participant's transcript was made available to the individual for them to make any additions, changes, or clarifications to their interview they felt appropriate. Three study participants said they did not need to see their transcripts and the remaining ten reviewed and approved their transcripts with only minor changes to spelling and grammar. Anonymity has been maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifying features such as the name of the specific organisations for which the participants volunteered and their exact roles.

Additionally, a research license for this project was granted from the Yukon Tourism and Culture: Cultural Services Branch. In conjunction with the science license agreements, both the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation



were contacted about the proposed research, and each council gave permission to study in its traditional territory.

### *3.5 Data collection procedures*

Because of the complexity of interactions and variety of interpretations of reality that are present among a group of people, it is important for all information to be considered in context. This study used a modified non-probability snowball sampling technique to select participants. Under this approach, systematic cold calling was overlapped by snowball references from study participants. A basic web search of outdoor recreation activities in Whitehorse was conducted to learn in what areas people may be volunteering. Additionally, contact numbers and information were obtained from the City of Whitehorse publication *An Essential Guide to Services in Whitehorse 2006-2007* and the City of Whitehorse webpage. Potential study participants were contacted through their respective organisations by email or by phoning the general number, describing the study, and asking for volunteers. The snowball sampling technique was applied using community referrals and support from the Yukon Volunteer Bureau. By using both techniques the diversity of study participants and the activities they represented was increased. Furthermore, there was often overlap between the people recommended by study participants and those recommended by the recreation organisation during cold calling.

During my stay in Whitehorse from May 7, 2007 to July 18, 2007, I interviewed 13 volunteers in an attempt to gain an adequate range of responses and interpretations. Interviews began on June 5, 2007, giving me time to explore and gain an understanding of the community before speaking with study participants. Interviews lasted between 30

and 50 minutes and were designed in an exploratory format to allow participants the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings regarding their volunteer contributions. However, an interview guide was used in order to keep the discussion focused and provide direction if needed. Interviews were recorded digitally using a small recording device and then transcribed on the computer. Interview questions were based under the four following themes: volunteer experiences, volunteer motivations, volunteer work relationship to personal well-being, and volunteer work relationship to community. The outline that was used as the basis of all interviews is provided in Appendix C.

Participants in this study were involved in many different outdoor recreation activities that take place in all seasons. Additionally, data were collected from existing statistics, documents, and information that demonstrate the context and nature of outdoor recreation volunteering in Whitehorse. Such documents include the Bureau of Statistics' *Yukon Monthly Statistical Review March 2007* and the City of Whitehorse Department of Parks and Recreation *Active Yukon Monitoring Database November 2007* and *2007 City of Whitehorse Parks and Recreation Master Plan*.

### *3.6 Validity and reliability*

This research is exploratory and designed to investigate elements of the social economy from a bottom-up approach. From this perspective the social economy can be understood through the views of the volunteers who work within the community itself. By examining their views we can better understand the effects of volunteerism at a real-world, local level. The authenticity of this research is augmented by my interaction with community members as a participant and volunteer in a number of activities. Though I am not a community 'insider', this relationship with the research setting allows me to

accurately report on the feelings and perceptions of community members. Similarly, reliability is typically understood to measure the dependability and consistency of the findings; however, within a qualitative research setting there is strong emphasis on the value of the developing interaction between the researcher and the environment (Neuman, 2006). Reliability is difficult to judge within qualitative research and can be more easily determined after additional, follow-up studies are conducted to compare results. This does not mean that this research does not have value or does not accurately report on the thoughts and feelings of volunteers, but that additional methods of measurement would need to be employed to increase reliability.

### *3.7 Limitations*

Though the validity of this research is increased by my interaction with community members, the findings from this study are also limited by the brevity of my stay in Whitehorse. Spending three months in a study site is valuable, but it only provides the researcher with a limited perspective on the community and its members. It is important to consider that this research has been conducted by a community outsider who visited the study region for a brief period and, therefore, has a narrow view of the processes at work. Furthermore, my personal background as a participant or volunteer with a particular activity could influence the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

The snowball sampling process that was employed to gain some of the study participants may also limit this research. When volunteers referred other potential study participants, they were often people who possessed many of the same attributes as the referring individual. For example, parents would often recommend other parents who volunteer with their children's activity, or a retired resident would refer me to another

friend who was retired and volunteering in the field of outdoor recreation. However, since community listings were also used to make contact with outdoor recreation organisations, the diversity of research participants was increased to include volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and situations.

There are number of demographic variables that can affect a person's volunteer behaviour such as age, gender, family, income, employment, background, rural/urban background, among others. Since this research is exploratory it does not focus on any specific attributes of volunteers unless they brought up these elements during their interviews. This study could potentially be limited by the lack of specific consideration of the many different factors that can influence a volunteer's experiences. For example, research has shown that cultural upbringing strongly influences perceptions of community belonging and involvement (Kemmelmeyer, Jambor & Letner, 2006). This research does not consider the potential cultural variables between individual participants that may affect the findings regarding community connections. As a result, the findings from this study may be significantly different from a potential study that could be conducted in a multi-cultural neighbourhood of a major city. This may either help to solidify the results by controlling the number of variables, but it also may limit the areas to which the implications of this study apply.

This study did not include members of special populations as research participants. Youth volunteers and people with developmental disabilities were not interviewed in the study. Although research has shown that people with developmental disabilities often feel a special connection to their community through their volunteer work (Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche & Worsley, 2002), the ethical requirements of

this research limit study participants to independent volunteers of the age of majority. The investigation of the significance of volunteering for people with developmental disabilities is an excellent area for additional studies.

### *3.8 Data analysis procedures*

The patterns and structure of the information has determined how to effectively organise the data. A version of successive approximation was used to improve my understanding the data by continually moving between data and concepts. The cycling of collection and analysis allows for more effective movement from vague ideas and details to comprehensive analysis and generalisations (Neuman, 2006). Interviews were transcribed within 72 hours of the meeting, and transcripts were returned to the participants for further comment or clarification to be included in the study. Two participants said that they did not need to see the transcripts and gave their approval to use them, one did not reply when the transcript was sent, and the remaining ten study participants replied with either their approval or minor spelling and grammatical changes.

I began the coding process by reading the transcripts to uncover general trends and themes that were present. Using the coding approach outlined by Neuman (2006) and Glover (2004), areas of discussion were open-coded and noted as possible patterns bringing order to a largely undifferentiated mass of data. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) recommend grouping topics under broad headings, so initially 47 topics that were discussed by participants regarding their volunteer experiences were listed on a separate sheet and similar topics were then organised under larger, more encompassing headings based on their common characteristics. Ten topics were identified as broad headings in

the transcripts: social connections, personal gains, community benefits, need fulfillment, lifestyle, ownership, pressure, politics, money, and job related aspects of volunteering.

The transcripts were then read through a fourth time and passages pertaining to each of these themes were highlighted according their heading. Following another read to ensure that the categorisation was consistent, the highlighted passages were cut and pasted into ten separate files. At this point, transcripts were each given a unique font so that the separated passages could be traced back to the original transcript should further clarification be required or quotes be placed into context with the rest of the interview. The cut transcripts were then read again to ensure that all relevant passages had been found and placed into appropriate categories.

Once transcript passages had been placed into these ten themes, these areas were found to cover a range of topics that were too broad for in-depth analysis. Some themes were split into smaller more specific categories while others were completely dissolved and separated under other themes and sub-themes. This involved reading through the broad themes another three times in order to appropriately define smaller categories, deciding which passages needed to be moved around and then cutting and pasting those passages once again. Once this process was completed the transcript passages had been placed under one of 28 sub-groups under five themes that report on all the areas of volunteer work as discussed by study participants.

In January 2008 an interim report of the study's progress was prepared and submitted to the Yukon Tourism and Culture: Cultural Services Branch and as well as to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation. In June of 2008 I returned to Whitehorse to present the findings from the study to the Yukon Volunteer

Bureau, study participants, and other community members. The presentation was well received and many community members, government employees, and local media were in attendance. My findings were shared over the CBC radio and a local station, and CBC television and radio recorded the entire presentation including the question and answer period at the end. Community members seemed genuinely interested and there have been requests for more information and detail regarding the study. That information has been posted on the SERNNOCA webpage for all to access. A report will be prepared for submission to the Yukon Volunteer Bureau and its community partners and as well as posted on its website for full access.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter organises passages from the interviews under different themes to efficiently summarise and understand the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation. The interview passages have been combined into groups that appropriately represent the thoughts and feelings of study participants regarding volunteering but do not consider the specific meaning they may have in relation to the social economy. The findings have been organised this way to maintain the research focus on study participant views on volunteering in outdoor recreation rather than on social economy. In doing so, this study is able to approach social economy from a bottom-up perspective that does not limit our understanding of volunteering to social economic elements.

In order to be able to effectively analyse the views of volunteers it is important to have a basic understanding of some of their characteristics. During the sampling process attempts were made to interview volunteers from different types of outdoor recreation activities (i.e. sporting versus non-competitive) and from different seasons (cold weather and warm weather activities). All study participants volunteer for at least one outdoor recreation activity and many volunteer for several different recreation activities as well as in other social economy sectors. Of the study participants interviewed, six were employed by the government, two were in the education system, two were in the trades, one was self-employed, and two did not say. Eight study participants were female and five were male, and eight study participants were parents, two of whom were single parents. Table 4.1 provides a list of study participants and the volunteer contributions they mentioned during the interview process.



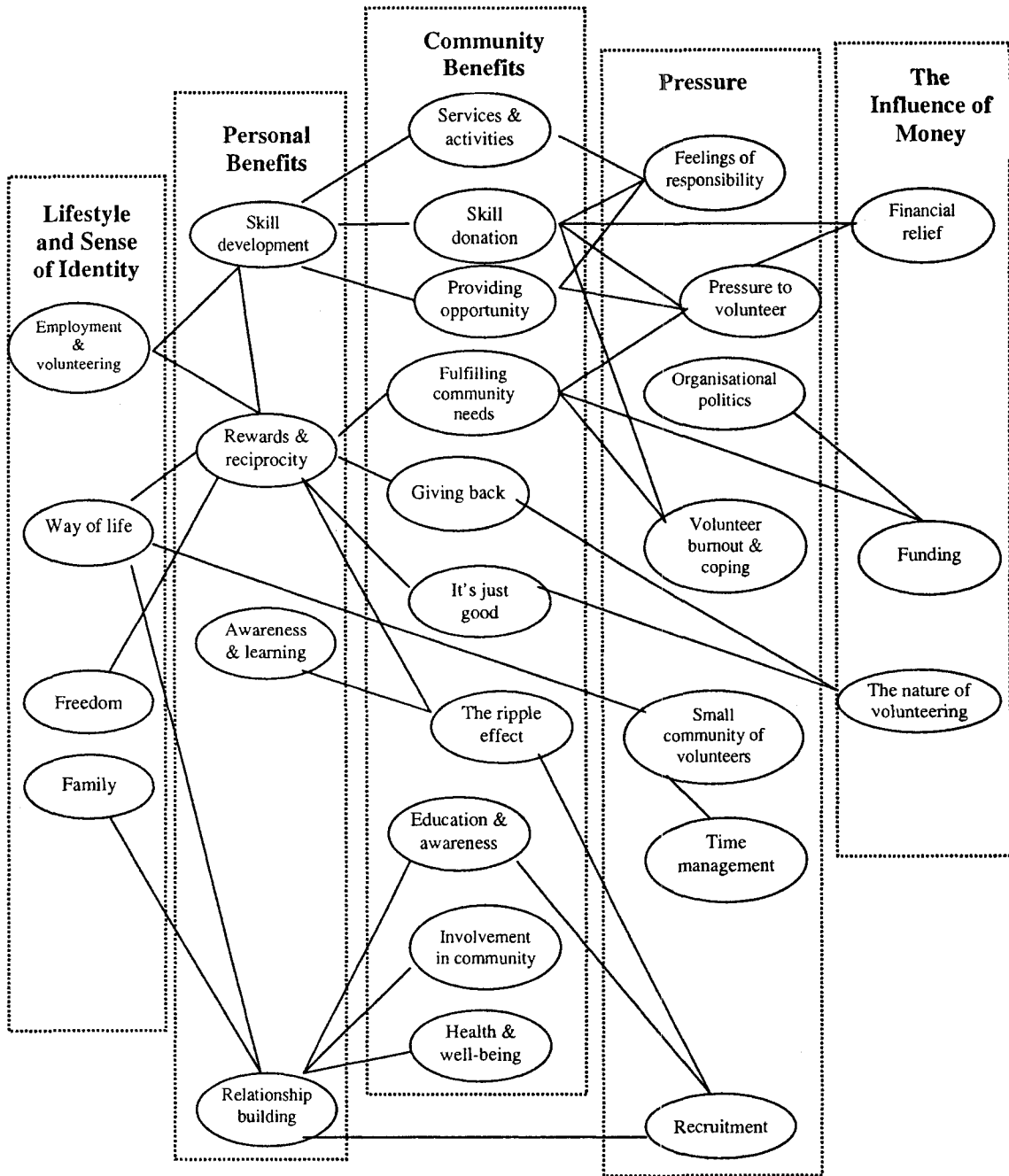
	Gender specific pseudonyms	Outdoor recreation activities for which this participant has volunteered	Other recreation activities for which this participant has volunteered	Volunteered during recent Canada Winter Games
1	Sherry	Cycling, Running	Curling	Yes
2	Sally	Horseback riding	Speed skating	Yes
3	Susie	Dogsledding		No
4	Stephanie	Canoeing, Dogsledding		Yes
5	Sandra	Soccer, Canoeing, Biking, Birding, Millennium Trail project		Yes
6	Mike	Cross-country skiing, Mountain biking, Running, Biathlon		Yes
7	Chuck	Snowmobiling		Did not say
8	Judy	Outdoor education, Backpacking, Canoeing, Hiking, Alpine skiing	Martial arts	Yes
9	Richard	Mountain biking, Ultimate Frisbee, Disc golf, Snowboarding		Yes
10	Jane	Cross-country skiing, Orienteering		Yes
11	John	Broomball, Softball	Hockey	No
12	Hayley	Running, Adventure racing	Aerobics, Fitness classes	Yes
13	Bob	Soccer	Wheelchair basketball	Did not say

This summary includes those volunteer experiences study participants felt were important to mention during their interviews. Furthermore, since Whitehorse was recently host of the 2007 Canada Winter Games, the potential exists for the volunteer demands of this event to influence the findings from this study; therefore, whether study participants volunteered for the Canada Winter Games is included as well.

Study participants explored a variety of topics regarding their motivations and experiences as a volunteer in outdoor recreation and also how they found their volunteer

work related to community health and personal well-being. The findings from this study are grouped under five major themes: *Lifestyle and Sense of Identity*; *Personal Benefits*; *Community Benefits*; *Pressure*; and *The Influence of Money*. Figure 4.1 represents the division of topics under each of the five themes and how they relate to each other. It has been developed to display the different elements of volunteering in outdoor recreation and their connections.

The *Lifestyle and Sense of Identity* theme explains volunteering as a way of life as well as family involvement and how formal employment plays a role in volunteer work. The theme *Personal Benefits* includes aspects of volunteer work ranging from personal skill development to personal rewards and relationship building. Volunteering was a highly valued activity and was often an integral component in the lives of study participants. The third theme, titled *Community Benefits*, discusses various ways in which volunteer work in outdoor recreation benefits the community and other people. This theme explores the services and opportunities for participation and involvement provided to the community by volunteers, as well as the fulfillment of community needs, increases in community education, awareness, health and well-being, and more abstract concepts such as the 'goodness' of volunteer work and how volunteer efforts are spread out into the community. The fourth theme, *Pressure*, encompasses participants' descriptions of a more somber side of their volunteer involvement such as fighting burnout, time management issues, and organisational politics. Finally, the topics regarding funding, financial relief, and the nature of volunteering are explored under the theme *The Influence of Money*.



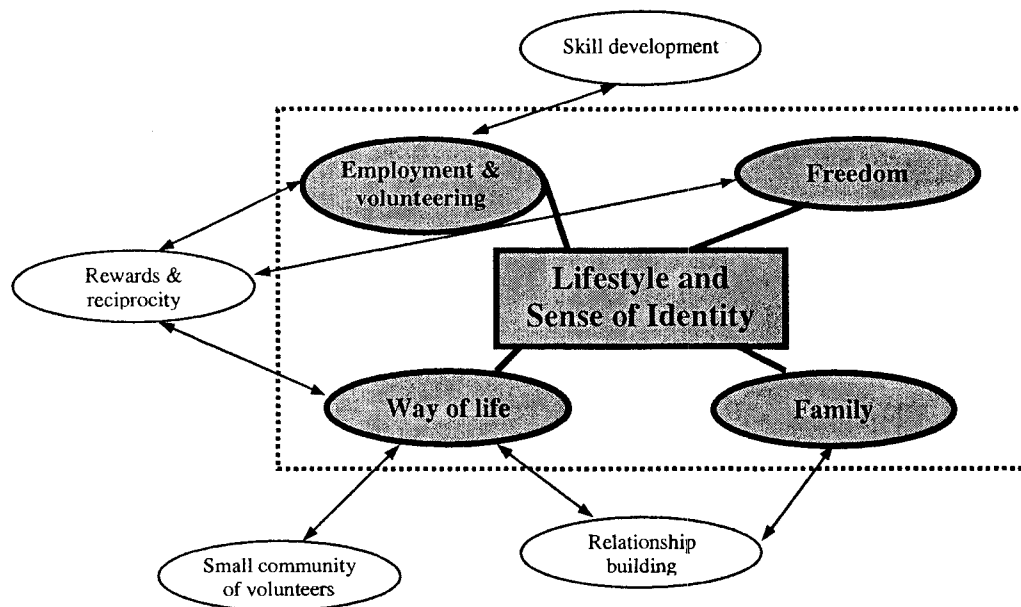
**Figure 4.1** Web of findings of various elements of volunteering

Figure 4.1 is one way in which the data from this study can be represented. The exploratory nature of the research revealed a large variety of views regarding volunteering in outdoor recreation. Splitting these five themes into a number of sub-

categories provides an accurate representation of the views of study participants on their volunteer contributions. The following descriptions of each theme are inherently linear, but the diagrams should help us understand that all of these elements are complex and interconnected, and have been separated to help the analysis of the data.

#### 4.1 Lifestyle and Sense of Identity

Volunteering, whether for an outdoor recreation activity or not, was often a key aspect in the lives of many participants. Being involved as volunteers had become a way of life and gave them a sense of identity. Many people commented that it was simply a lifestyle they chose to maintain and they would always incorporate volunteering into their lives. Figure 4.2 illustrates areas of volunteering that relate to the lifestyle and sense of identity described by study participants. These areas are often connected to the personal benefits received by volunteers but warranted specific exploration because of their



**Figure 4.2** Connection of *Lifestyle and Sense of Identity* theme to other elements.

influence on the overall mentality and lifestyle of volunteering. This theme encompasses findings on how volunteering has become a part of people's lives and also how it has

influenced or is influenced by their families. Also, some participants mentioned a connection between their volunteer work and place of employment; therefore, those findings are discussed in this section as well.

### *Way of life*

For many of the study participants, volunteering had become an integral part of their lives. Susie explained that dogsledding “was sort of a family event, then I got caught up into it...” Many participants explained that volunteering had become part of their lifestyles and that it was natural to step in and help out with different activities. As seen in Table 4.1, many volunteers are involved in several different activities; these people had found a balance in their lives of which volunteering was an important component. When people ask Mike how he manages to find the time to volunteer so much: “...I just say: well, this is how I live. But if you’re already living that way it’s not a big deal.” Judy also described volunteering as being a “lifelong framework” and gives her “a sense of identity.” She remembers volunteering as a youth and continues to work in the community with her own daughter now. Volunteering is something she will always incorporate into her lifestyle: “Volunteering is volunteering. I will do it and it’s just one of those things...I will die as a volunteer” (Judy).

Some people were very passionate about volunteering and explained that they would continue to be involved even if the type of volunteer work changed. They all said they would miss volunteering for that *particular* activity, but would probably find another activity or role to fill that gap in their lives. As their involvement in the activity evolves they can see themselves getting involved in different ways. Bob said “I think that a lot of people think that I can’t stop!”

### *Family*

While some volunteers were raised by parents who were involved in various activities, others began their involvement when their partners or children became participants. For example, Sherry joked “When my husband decided to start running I figured it would be the only way I would get to spend some time with him...” Now Sherry continues her involvement even when he does not run. Similarly, many parents got involved when their children were participating in an activity. Mike explained “It was becoming a parent that really drew into the coaching. Being a parent is like being a coach, a life coach.” Jane also valued her involvement because “children benefit when their parents are involved and are seen to be supporting their interests. It’s given me a lot of time with our children and I wouldn’t have had that if I just drove them to their activity and dropped them off.”

Eight of the study participants were parents and some mentioned that their interest or enthusiasm has waned slightly since their children have grown and stopped participating. “Now I’m almost without kids so it’s affected some of the outdoor activities I’ve been involved with” (Sandra). Jane volunteers with cross-country skiing but now “...as I didn’t have any children who were in town last winter it wasn’t as much fun being involved...[In the future] there may be less motivation to be involved even though I definitely support the sport.” Likewise, some study participants felt their volunteer involvement was important because they participated as a family and it was an activity they could all share together. Judy explained “It’s easier to commit to that one

because the whole family is involved...We're skiing X number of days, we're all out there together and it's a lot easier to slide in a volunteer job."

Conversely, a couple of volunteers said that their passion for the activity was not contingent on the participation of their children or family. Jane's children are grown but she still volunteers with orienteering: "I just love the sport myself too so I know that my volunteering for this sport will not drop off." Bob explained that he continues to volunteer even though his sons no longer participate: "It's nice to have that experience with your own son and share that together, but it wasn't because they were there that I did it." However, this perspective is far less common within the results and most other participants were strongly drawn to particular outdoor recreation activities because of the influence of family interests.

#### *Employment and volunteering*

Four study participants described aspects of their volunteer involvement that were related to their employment. Some became involved with an outdoor recreation organisation through work and decided to continue contributing as a volunteer after they changed employment or responsibilities. "I was working for a nonprofit agency...once I wasn't doing that anymore I just continued as a volunteer" (Sally). Others managed to incorporate aspects of their volunteer work into their jobs. Also, Susie explained that she could use her position at work to support her volunteer position. She said "I still kept that going in the classroom with the kids and getting involved."

However, for two study participants, it was important that their volunteer work not be like their employment. They mentioned that an appealing aspect of being a volunteer was that they had the freedom to decide the extent to which they wished to be

involved. While they may have had the qualifications to become a paid coach or staff member, being a volunteer meant they could decide when and how they contributed and were not strictly governed by the organisation. As Susie pointed out “I enjoy it but I don’t miss having to do it all the time.” Judy also mentioned she appreciated the freedom of being a volunteer: “I like to have that freedom and just come out there and do it and then I really feel like I’m doing a good job.”

In summary, volunteering was often a foundation upon which various aspects and activities of the lives of study participants were based. They explained that volunteering is a valuable component and something they will continue to incorporate into their daily lifestyles. Oftentimes study participants said their volunteer involvement was based around the participation of their children or spouses and they valued the tradition of volunteering as a family. For others, volunteer involvement was not contingent on the participation of their children though they still valued that experience to share with their families. Some study participants also mentioned that their formal employment can influence and is influenced by their volunteer work through skill transfer and provision of new opportunities within the volunteer community. However, having the freedom to decide the terms of their involvement was also important.

#### *4.2 Personal Benefits*

Volunteering in outdoor recreation has been shown to hold some direct benefits for individual volunteers in a variety of areas. All participants described skills, connections or knowledge they gained from their volunteer work, as well as less tangible benefits such as feelings of importance and belonging. Some people developed technical skills in the specific activity or sport while others said their participation bettered their



lives in some way. Volunteer involvement also provided a venue for personal knowledge development and learning skills that can be applicable to a variety of settings. Furthermore, many people developed or reinforced social relationships with their volunteer work. The findings from this area of investigation are organised into four categories: *Increased awareness and learning*; *Skill development*; *Rewards and reciprocity*; and *Relationship building*.

Figure 4.3 is a representation of the topics that have been grouped under the theme 'Personal Benefits' and it demonstrates some of their connections to the other areas related to volunteering in outdoor recreation. The views of study participants have been organised this way in order to effectively describe volunteer comments that relate to our exploration of the social economy. These categories organise the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation around the benefits they feel they personally gain from their involvement.

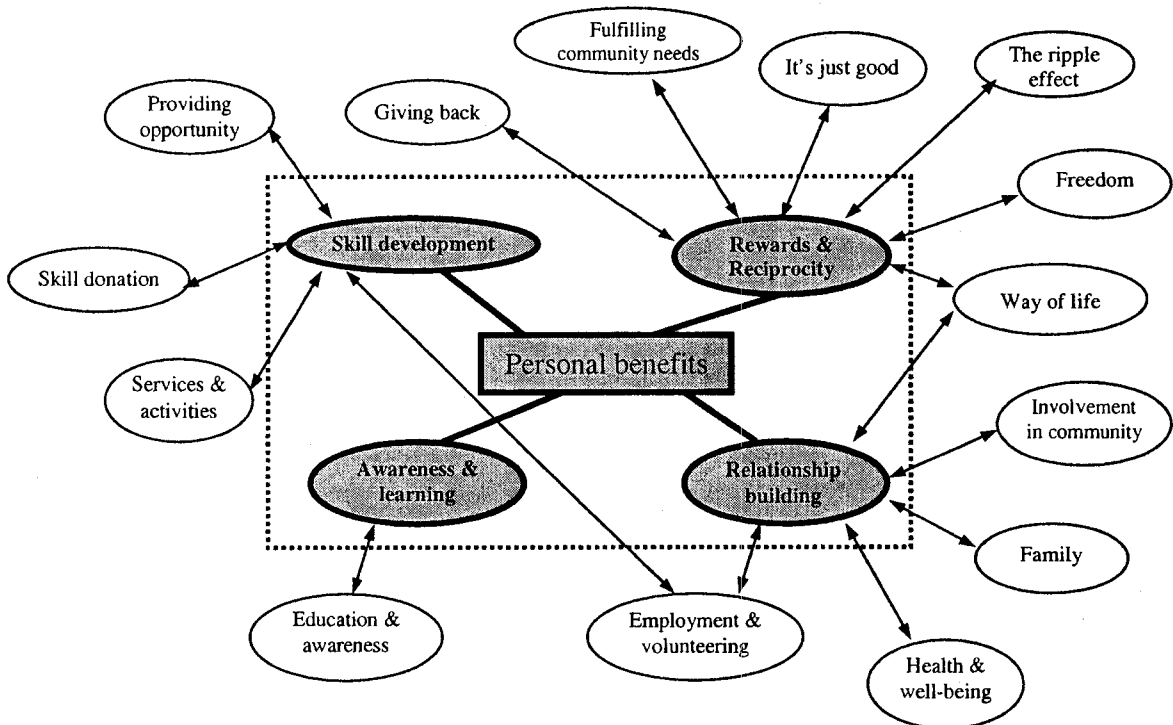


Figure 4.3 Connection of *Personal Benefits* theme to other elements

### *Increased awareness and learning*

When asked how they benefited from their involvement, study participants explained that volunteering exposed them to a variety of learning experiences. Volunteer experiences in outdoor recreation activities enabled many of them to gain awareness about other people and their surrounding community. Participants commented about exposure to new activities and new possibilities through volunteer work as well as broadened perspectives and the ability to try something new. Bob commented “There’s always something to learn from the kids and the parents, different situations. If I wasn’t learning more things I wouldn’t be doing it.” Sandra particularly valued the knowledge she gained regarding her community: “You feel you’re not only improving your quality of life and your awareness and understanding of other people”. “It’s something that really helps you understand what makes your community” (Mike). Hayley also said that trying new recreation activities as a volunteer had been beneficial: “I just wouldn’t have been exposed to it at home. It’s opened my eyes to what is possible or what you think is possible.”

Similarly, Chuck found that getting involved as a volunteer with snowmobiling really helped him and his family when they were new to Whitehorse. He found that it helped to get him into the outdoors doing things that he would not otherwise do. Likewise, Judy found that volunteering in different recreation activities had increased her interest in new things and would find “Hey I might like to try this!” John said that volunteering with an activity offered him the chance to do something different for a while. Study participants indicated that their volunteer work has opened many doors that

have affected their lives and benefited them personally. Sandra valued her volunteer experiences with canoeing because of “that window that it gave me on that race and sort of the push to do it, that whole experience was a big milestone in my life.”

### *Skill development*

Eleven of the participants interviewed mentioned that they benefited from their volunteer work in that they were able to add to or improve their own personal skill base. By continuing to be involved with the activity volunteers increased their knowledge and technique as a recreation participant. For example, Judy said “I work with the kids, I gain a skill all the time. I learn to be a better skier by working with the kids.” Sally also valued this connection with her volunteer work saying “It’s good for me to be around the horses and be learning more about them...I’ve learned a lot about Western tack...I learned I can ride with a [different] saddle...I never would have felt that I could do that before so this has opened my mind, broadened by horizons.” Similarly, many volunteers have taken courses to improve their skills as instructors and spend time volunteering as coaches or officials. It was during this time they gained a lot of experience and really developed within their activity. When referring to his growth and development as a coach Bob said “I’m always learning things and I’m still taking courses...” Sally took advantage of an instructor’s course because she intends to teach lessons at her own place in the future: “It is good for me to keep getting more experience instructing and keep my foot in the door in terms of working with horses.”

Additionally, participants felt that they gained skills from their volunteer work that apply to other aspects of their lives. Many developed leadership and managerial skills that have helped them in their communities and in the work place. Learning to

delegate and learning effective communication skills were also credited to volunteer work. Hayley said that she has developed project management skills that she uses in her job and John was impressed with his funding application and grant writing skills he would not have otherwise gained. Bob strongly felt that his work as a successful soccer coach gave him transferable skills for his job: "At work it might be the same because we have a lot of young men and women who are apprenticing. You have to deal with them and try to get the best out of them." Sandra commented "I like experiencing things in life; that's sort of my way of learning and living." Richard also pointed out that his volunteering work was a learning process and that working through it has taught him how to logistically organise certain things and manage expectations: "I didn't start [this activity] because I said I wanted to learn about managing a sport; I just started doing it and have stumbled along the way. You know, learn from mistakes and from experience." Overall, volunteer work was seen to provide some form of personal skill development that proved useful to individual participants either within their activity or life in general. "I think people really should go out and contribute a little bit just to get experience" (Mike).

#### *Rewards and reciprocity*

Though study participants were able to easily identify skill development as a benefit of volunteering, when asked about what motivated them to volunteer all study participants felt that they were rewarded in less tangible ways as well. Many felt that they received satisfaction and growth from working as a volunteer, or that it was healthy, stimulating, and rewarding to participate, though they rarely explained exactly how or why during their interviews. Others saw that their volunteer work had improved their

outlook on life or that it has made them a more positive person. Hayley said “That is really rewarding, seeing people make that connection and build activity into their life.” Sally strongly felt that “therapeutic riding is therapeutic even for the volunteers!” and Bob explained “you have to keep yourself stimulated as well. It’s a challenge all the time and that’s what you go for...” Mike viewed volunteer work in general as important because it allows people to “...realise their own potential and to get anything out of the world you have to give to it and it’ll give back.”

Another reward that all participants felt they gained from their volunteer work was the enjoyment they received in being involved. Some people felt that volunteering was another way to participate in an activity to which they feel connected. Others were happy to be involved and found it fun to volunteer in a managerial capacity behind the scenes. Jane commented “It’s just an amazing sport; I like the philosophy of orienteering.” Richard volunteered “because it’s fun to get involved.” Stephanie, who is not a paddler, helps with canoeing: “I like to organise and I do that kind of stuff, coordinate. It was just really great right from the beginning.”

A number of participants mentioned that they liked to work with children and teach the activity to new people, while others commented that they valued the chance to get into the outdoors and work outside. “I’m not out trying to prove anything. I’m just doing this because I love the kids” (Mike). “I was coaching because I enjoy coaching, I enjoy kids” (Bob). “It’s nice to spend some time outside and with the horses” (Sally). “I used to volunteer in that respect because I just loved to be outdoors” (Judy). Chuck mentioned that working on snowmobile trails for the club provided him with the opportunity to be active outdoors: “I’d rather put some time into volunteering, get out

into the country.” Other people said they appreciated the people with whom they got to work in the organisation. Sherry mentioned that her extensive involvement in an organisational capacity was gratifying: “I enjoy the people, enjoy being out there, meeting new people. It’s a lot of fun!” All study participants continue to volunteer because there is some aspect of the activity they find enjoyable. For example, Mike commented, “You just get that feeling and that gets addictive too.” Stephanie also enjoyed her volunteer work because “you get this adrenaline and it’s so exciting!”

Also, some participants felt that the element of reciprocity was a valuable trait of their volunteer work. They believe that the volunteer effort they contributed to their recreational activity would be returned to them in some way at another time. “You get out of it what you put into it; I really believe that” (Sandra). “So you can sort of see that if you do things for other people it comes back around” (Mike). Susie strongly valued her involvement with dog sledding as her own personal time and thought of it as “a two-way street: you get what you put into it.”

Though study participants had fewer examples and less to say about the abstract benefits of volunteering, they all agreed that their volunteer work was personally rewarding and valuable to them. They valued the growth they have experienced and the gratification they feel from working in outdoor recreation.

#### *Relationship building*

Almost all study participants mentioned that they have developed new contacts, friendships, met new people, or created lasting relationships through their volunteer work. Some people felt that their volunteer work helped support other relationships with friends or family by providing an opportunity for them to participate together and

develop bonds. Many people valued the opportunity to reach out from their small community and meet new people whether recreation participants or fellow volunteers. Richard commented “It’s very social. I’ve met a lot of people and we’ve done a lot of fun things.” As mentioned earlier, Chuck also gained new friends through snowmobiling and Mike reconnected with old ones through cross-country skiing. Hayley was also happy to connect with people: “It’s amazing how many interactions...there’s so many different connections that way.”

Meeting new people and interacting with them through a recreation activity also provided a medium for experience sharing and knowledge building. Sherry said “The people you meet are the best part of it and you get to share your experience with them and they get to share their experiences with you.” This aspect helped Chuck get to know the snowmobiling area and stay involved in his activity: “For yourself to do it it’s not really a safe environment, but if you know the right people they’ll show you the trails.” Getting to know other members of her community through her volunteer work helped Susie feel more comfortable when she sought out specialised medical care. Stephanie appreciated working with a different group of people outside of her regular social circle and that opportunity would not have been there were she not a volunteer.

Similarly, some participants mentioned social networking as a valuable aspect of their volunteer involvement. As volunteers meet new people the connections carry through to other areas of their lives. Judy said “You’re a face in the community and that’s good for me. You’re recognised, you know, and it’s networking!” “You get all of those insights too, you get a whole other group of people you can connect with...you’ll find [with] the size of a community like this, I think, a lot of networking” (Sherry).

However, Sally said that while she was happy to get to know other volunteers she did not feel this connection was more than social: “As far as the networking component, that’s not really a factor there.” Stephanie also appreciates the people with whom she volunteers but does not interact with them outside of the organisation: “They’re the people I see then and there but it’s not like I would go out for a beer with them any other time of the year.”

Another aspect of relationship building mentioned by participants highlighted the value of the team of volunteers with whom they worked and how they felt connected to those people. Also, many people said their volunteer involvement allowed them to feel part of a community and valued among its members. They really appreciated working with people who share similar values and beliefs and felt that their participation created a healthy space for them. “It’s like this big team comes together and I enjoy that” (Stephanie). “I count myself as very fortunate that I have been able to work with them” (Jane). Mike added “We’re all valuable. We need to feel that about ourselves though and the only way we’re going to do that is if we go in and we accomplish things and teach ourselves to care for ourselves.” Feelings of inclusion and importance were valuable aspects of working with a group of volunteers.

Regardless of whether people said they would gain something from their social interactions with other volunteers or even activity participants, all study participants felt that they made connections and met people through their volunteer work. Whether it was the development and practice of a personal skill, the sheer enjoyment of being involved, or the creation of personal relationships, all study participants had personal gains from volunteering in outdoor recreation. Sometimes the benefits of volunteering in outdoor



recreation activities were not always obvious or tangible, but participants still acknowledge that volunteer work plays an important role in their personal lives. For some, the idea of personal benefits is motivating and keeps them involved. One person said “I think have to see something in it that I can benefit from personally. I’m not just volunteering for the sake of it’s a good thing.”

#### *4.3 Community Benefits*

The third theme in this study is composed of interview responses related to the general community. In addition to their own personal benefits, participants were asked how they felt the community benefited. Figure 4.4 shows the ten sub-categories of topics that have been grouped under this theme: *Services and activities; Providing an opportunity; Skill donation; Giving back; Fulfilling community needs; Education and awareness; Health and well-being; Inclusion and involvement; It’s just good; and The ripple effect.* Most participants immediately pointed to the services or the activity that was provided to the community because of volunteers. Dozens of activities are available within the community of Whitehorse because of volunteers who come together to “make it happen.” There are opportunities that would not be present without the hard work of many volunteers. Volunteers possess skill sets that fulfill specific community needs. Fulfilling a gap in available services can create awareness and provide educational opportunities for community members regarding other participants and the community at large. Many study participants felt that involvement in outdoor recreation bettered the physical health of participants and also helped build self-confidence and mental well-being of individuals. Outdoor recreation activities allowed community members to become involved in a variety of ways and feel included and part of something special

within the community. Additionally, many study participants felt that what they did was just “good” and while they could not articulate it necessarily, they recognised that their volunteer efforts were important and valuable, and perhaps most importantly that these

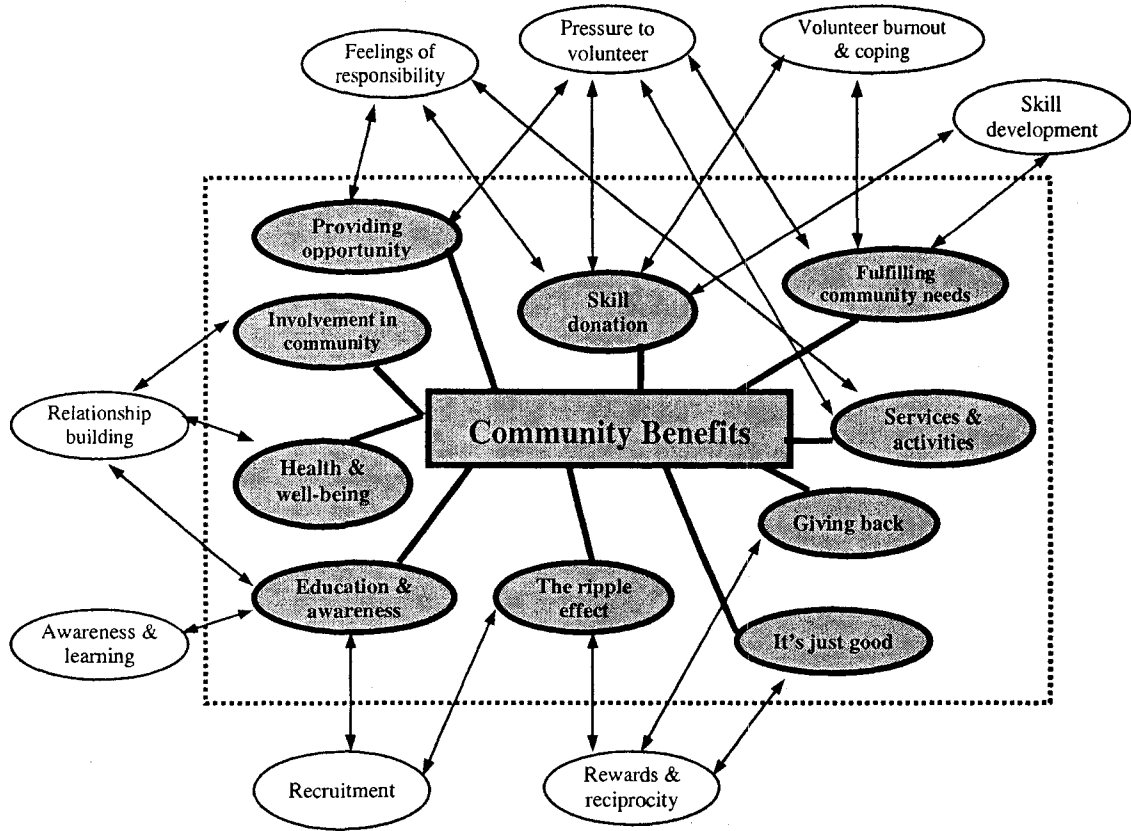


Figure 4.4 Connection of *Community Benefits* theme to other elements

acts of generosity and donation would often spread out into other areas of the community.

#### *Services and activities*

During his interview Mike explained quite simply: “Volunteers make it happen.” This is never more evident than in the number and types of services that are provided by people generously giving to the community. Study participants described a number of outdoor recreation services available because of their efforts. This included things such as being able to operate effectively in serving community members, to specific

workshops, training classes, competitions, tournaments, events, and facilities available to Yukoners. Table 4.2 outlines the services provided by study participants within the organisations for which they volunteer. Sally explained “I provide support for people who are participants as riders in a therapeutic riding programme...specifically for people with disabilities.” Hayley volunteered for the Yukon River Quest at the finish line when she lived in Dawson “because then it was easier for them if there’s somebody actually local there, organising it.” With the help of many volunteers outdoor recreation organisations have been able to increase the accessibility of their services to different parts of the Yukon as well as different age groups and skill levels.

#### *Providing opportunity*

The outdoor recreation services provided by volunteers in Whitehorse sometimes offered unique opportunities to Yukoners. Almost all study participants emphasized this point when describing how the community benefits from their volunteer work. Hayley helped with an adventure race and explained “We wanted to provide local people with a chance to try it.” Sally also strongly supported horseback riding because “having the opportunity for them to go and participate in the programme is really a great thing.” Jane emphasized that orienteering was inclusive to many different skill levels and Richard pointed out that new people could feel comfortable trying mountain biking because the trails created by volunteers were of varied difficulty levels. Sherry and Bob said that people had the chance to experience something different and Hayley pointed out the importance of having these choices during the Yukon’s long, dark winters.

Activities	Roles/tasks fulfilled
Adventure racing	Organiser
Aerobics	Instructor
Alpine skiing	Board member; volunteer; gate setter; coach
Athletics Yukon	Executive
Broomball Association	Executive, facility development and maintenance; marketing; team rep; Expansion committee
Cross-country skiing	Coach; instructor; Executive; volunteer recruitment and training; race planning;
Curling	Major official
Disc Golf	Course maintenance; tournament organiser
Horseback riding	Side-walker (support); instructor; administrative support
Klondike Road Relay	Timing; checkpoint manager
Klondike Snowmobiling Association	Executive; trail maintenance
Kluane-Chilkat Bike Relay	Checkpoint volunteer
Martial Arts	Instructor, programme organiser
Minor hockey	Coach
Mountain biking	Organiser; race organiser; trail construction
Outdoor education	Canoeing & hiking leader
Snowboarding	Volunteer
Soccer	Children's coach; competitive coach
Softball	Team rep; executive
Speed skating	Timing
Sport Yukon	Executive
Swimming	Instructor
Trail Marathon	Timing
Ultimate Frisbee	League organiser
Wheelchair basketball	Coach
Whitehorse Triathlon	Timing; Board member
Yukon Bird Club	Field trip leader; Executive
Yukon Orienteering Association	Race assistant; meet organiser; coaching children and adults; executive position; president
Yukon Quest (dogsledding)	Checkpoint manager; supervisor/coordinator; volunteer
Yukon River Quest (River Marathon)	Coordinator; Race Marshall; volunteer; support personnel; Checkpoint volunteer; Board member; volunteer coordination

Not only were the new and different activities important themselves, but also they could lead to other opportunities, as explained by Mike: “It’s like skiing is the main door that opens up to all the other doors that would have otherwise remained unopened. It got us through the front door. And all of the sudden all of these things have opened up.” Bob also mentioned that some of his soccer players have stayed out of trouble and gone to play for university teams. Sandra believed that through outdoor recreation activities “people have opportunities to connect with each other and connect with the land, and in some cases their culture is supported in those things.”

Furthermore, John and Richard pointed out facilities that have been created through the efforts of volunteers groups. Facilities such as the outdoor broomball rink, the disc golf course, and the mountain biking trails are available to anyone who would like to use them. These locations provide community members with the chance to try things on their own without any pressure. When explaining how different community members sometimes use the broomball rink John said “It doesn’t really benefit the league but it’s good to see people using the facility and enjoying it...because you can’t get that experience with your children in a city run facility.” Chuck also spoke about how the snowmobile association maintains the trails that can then be used by other activities such as dogsledding, hiking, and biking. In many cases volunteers are responsible for the variety of opportunities available in a relatively small community. People are offered a relatively “cheap”, “simple”, “positive”, and “inclusive” opportunity to get outside and be active.

### *Skill donation*

Many participants felt that the community benefited from their volunteer work because they had a particular skill-set that was needed for an activity. This included things such as experience as an instructor or facilitator, organisational and management skills, certifications and licenses, and a maturity of experience to share with other volunteers. Many volunteers felt they had acquired experience through their own participation and other life experiences and that to share that knowledge is advantageous to the community. Bob explained that he volunteers “where I can use certain things that I know because of my background...It’s the experience I bring to the team. I’ve been there myself...” Sherry also brings a maturity of experience to different sport governing boards: “I’m familiar enough with other things that the input I can bring to the board helps.” Judy enjoys sharing her experience with others while giving people of different skill levels the chance to participate.

Some people mentioned they almost felt obligated to volunteer because they possessed certain skill sets that were useless if they were no longer using them. “With all the acquired experience I have and coaching credentials I have as well, I’m thinking what good is having all that if you can’t share it and pass it on?” (Mike). Another volunteer mentioned she had received an instructor’s certification through her organisation and said “I can’t just do that and not volunteer any more right?”

### *Giving back*

A couple of study participants outlined that they were returning a service to the community from which they once benefited. The individual aspect of this concept was previously explored yet some participants pointed to ways in which the community

benefited from this reciprocity. Participants mentioned things like “I’ve done it enough times, let me volunteer this time”, or “I just decided to give something back to the sport.” Bob said that when he is coaching, “I think of all the people who had given me their time when I was a kid to teach me certain things.” Many people share Mike’s perspective: “It’s nice...to be able to give back to the greater community of Whitehorse.”

#### *Fulfilling community needs*

As mentioned under *Skill donation*, many participants felt their volunteer work fulfilled a niche or responded to a need for a service in the community. Sometimes organisations required a local volunteer who would be around in the area to help, or they were in need of people with previous experience in the activity to be able to effectively run the event. Other times it was the individual volunteers who noticed a gap in the services and they felt it needed to be fulfilled. Mike said “I realised that there was a need for good land based activities that could keep the kids busy.” Many volunteers recognised that there was a lot of work to be done and so became involved to help out. Stephanie wondered if “maybe I gravitated toward it naturally because I saw the gap.” Others felt that it was important for a job to be done well so they stepped in because they knew they could improve the situation and contribute to the activity.

While not all of the organisations being supported by study participants found themselves short volunteer numbers, study participants emphasized that more help was welcome and in some cases desperately needed. Richard explained that whenever he wants to get involved in something people say to him: “Yeah great! We can always use the help! We’re happy to have new people involved.” Both John and Chuck said about the Broomball Association and the Klondike Snowmobiling Association respectively that

they were currently short on volunteers. Conversely, when asked if the Yukon Quest had ever run short of volunteers Susie replied “I haven’t yet and it’s amazing because it’s so even.” Jane explained “It doesn’t take long to become involved if you want to. There’s always a need; that’s probably a common thing you’ve seen with your research.” Sometimes this shortage intensified individual involvement because they felt the activity would suffer should they chose to leave. John explained “The more you get out there the more you realise there’s more work to be done.” Since they recognised the need for that service in the community they would continue to help out in many ways.

#### *Education and awareness*

Almost all of the participants studied saw their volunteer work contributing to the education of community members and increased levels of awareness within the community. One person had developed programmes through her volunteer work that had been incorporated into classrooms and were then used as platforms for other educational programmes. Sandra pointed out that people who participate in these recreation activities have the chance to learn about the environment as well as different cultures and traditions. Mike said “A lot of teachings fall into place. You learn about all the plants and all the animals and you learn about how they all coexist and connect together, and it’s opened the door to many other things.” Sandra also felt that people benefit from participating in volunteer-led recreation because they have “opportunities to create more understanding from different perspectives. So much is about the connections, how much people learn.”

Some study participants found themselves acting as role models, mentoring behaviour and skills to fellow volunteers and participants. Often this stemmed from the



increased awareness and knowledge they could provide to the community. Richard said “I think if you set a good example up front then people will aspire to maintain that kind of standard if they have to do it.” Sally added “I feel that I actually bring skills that I can role model for other people...”

Sandra felt that outdoor recreation programmes also help people to learn about different communities and neighbourhoods. If concerns or issues should arise in those areas then more people would be aware of how it will affect them. She adds “So it creates more of a shared understanding of protection in their area. It helps in the overall appreciation of an area and developing an understanding of other people’s areas.” Study participants see the value in setting a high standard and that engaging community members was important for increasing awareness of community issues and the outdoor world. As Mike explained, “We’re not there to counsel, we’re there to give them an opportunity and listen to them and encourage them to speak up and learn how to have a voice.”

#### *Health and well-being*

Since outdoor recreation involves physical activity it seems natural that participants should point to the obvious benefits to physical health as a result of participation. Many participants felt that volunteer run activities provided outlets for activity and encouraged people to be more active. Richard found that the activities for which he volunteered “probably attracted people who would not normally play that kind of thing...” Hayley commented “It’s sort of like one Yukoner at a time as far as getting people physically active...I think that’s one of the benefits you can’t necessarily quantify.” Several study participants said that outlets for activity and the challenge to

participate often encouraged community members to take on healthier lifestyles. They explained that this mentality has spread out into the community making people more aware of their body's exercise and nutritional requirements. Mike believed that providing opportunities for healthy physical activity may help the community battle social issues such as substance abuse and malnutrition: "There's no greater feeling than feeling good because you've exercised. And with all the drugs and alcohol going around as I said, if you want to get addicted to something, get addicted to this."

Additionally, some participants also described some of the psychological benefits to participation in these volunteer-led activities. While it was more difficult for volunteers to articulate how exactly participants mentally benefited from the activity, they often pointed to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and other emotional benefits. Mike described teaching a young girl to ski: "Her self-esteem went right through the roof after one year." Similarly, Sally felt that horseback riding for people with disabilities was extremely beneficial on many levels: "Therapeutic riding is about self-esteem, freedom...it's the combination of exercise, emotional benefits, and physiotherapy in some cases." Providing this outlet for physical and emotional health is a valuable aspect of these outdoor recreation opportunities provided by volunteers. Mike said "Take the work 'recreation': I defined it as re-creation...you can create all the economy opportunities you want but if we don't have healthy people we're never going to get the results."

#### *Inclusion and involvement*

Participants also said their activities provided a healthy place in which community members can become involved. Whitehorse is a very welcoming community and

becoming involved in community events is relatively easy. There's often an emphasis on sharing experiences with other people and including others in events. That feeling of inclusion, as mentioned in the section under the theme of *Personal Benefits*, is extremely important for building a healthy community and keeping volunteers engaged. Stephanie learned that "your volunteers need to feel valued and be on the team...I think that there's a place for everybody." Some activities have a particular focus on involving commonly marginalised or special populations such as First Nations, women, and people with disabilities, and outdoor recreation activities provide a unique setting for bringing people together. Sandra said "I think that's an important aspect to it that everyone contributes to it." Hayley also described some of the great volunteers with whom she has worked: "it's kind of cool that way for people who may not necessarily want to do the event but...be part of something too. There's just so much great energy that I think people like being a part of that." Study participants also pointed to the great community support they received from local businesses and volunteers.

*It's just good*

Many of the study participants had some difficulty explaining how exactly some of their volunteer efforts supported the community. It was commonly agreed that the community benefits from their services in some way though they could not always articulate how. "They see the merit in it and they like it"; "It's all leading to a good place"; "Something really good there that they really enjoyed that works for community"; "These are good things to have in your community or for your family". Comments such as these were grouped under this category emphasizing that volunteering in outdoor

recreation is simply 'good'. Bob described how being a dedicated soccer coach influenced the development of his players:

With a little bit of pressure by me, I kept an eye on them, and I know pretty much everybody in town so if they do something I'll know. So we'll have a talk. But I know that these guys have become good guys and they would have been in jail by now or worse if they didn't keep up with soccer. But soccer gave them the strength to focus on something and the discipline... Sometimes governments don't understand that sports are important.

Jane also stated simply "I think it's important for people to volunteer within their community" and Sherry claimed that outdoor recreation activities acted as "a great community builder." Without any further details participants have determined that, regardless of the tangible results, volunteering in outdoor recreation is a valuable component of community health.

#### *The ripple effect*

The ripple effect is used to summarise how volunteers saw their efforts spread out into the community. When discussing community benefits they often pointed to the spin-offs and chain reactions within the community caused by volunteer involvement. Regardless of the specific service provided or the task fulfilled, their efforts as volunteers have expanded into the community with the potential to impact other areas of life. For example, Stephanie felt that some of these things "could be used as an important tool in politics in the city and how you develop your community." Hayley considered her volunteer efforts as helping people "who may touch someone else that we don't necessarily know of but maybe he inspired somebody else." Mike felt strongly about this responsibility as a volunteer: "It spills over into all kinds of things. What I'd really like to see are just these good solid people who just radiate out into the community and when

they spread out in the greater community we're sending forward good people who will make the world a better place.”

During the interviews, study participants all thought that their efforts benefited the community in a variety of ways, yet perhaps most importantly that these efforts would be magnified as they spread out into the community and impacted other people. Volunteers are able to provide many services to the community and share valuable experience to contribute the skill based and knowledge resources. Study participants said that volunteer-run facilities relieve pressure from city services and provide relatively cheap, simple, and easily accessible venues for recreation. Volunteers who donate skills are often fulfilling a community need and help provide opportunities for involvement and build community.

#### *4.4 Pressure*

Though all study participants viewed their volunteer experiences with a positive light, they all mentioned some of the difficult areas that accompany the job. This theme incorporates topics that are not related to personal or community benefits, but warrant consideration in investigating volunteerism in outdoor recreation. Figure 4.5 demonstrates how the elements included under pressure relate to other areas of volunteerism. Clearly, many of these elements connect to the community benefits expressed by study participants. Some people mentioned feelings of pressure and that they would feel guilty should they decide to no longer volunteer. This pressure sometimes stemmed from community expectations, but also came from the individual's feelings of obligation to the community. Volunteering was sometimes difficult because it was often the same people working and those people were getting burnt out. As

volunteers attempted to manage their time effectively and find a balance between volunteer endeavours and their personal lives, they were forced to cut back and step away from some volunteer responsibilities. However, these volunteers sometimes found they were expected to help out and that they are 'told' what they will be doing rather than actually volunteering. As a result they often pulled family and friends in to volunteer as well. Finally, there was some discussion regarding organisational politics and how it affects volunteer choices. This theme explores comments regarding a less positive side of volunteering and its impact on volunteer involvement. The following sections discuss *Pressure to volunteer*, *Feelings of responsibility*, *Small community of volunteers*, *Volunteer burnout and coping*, *Time management*, *Recruitment*, and *Organisational Politics*.

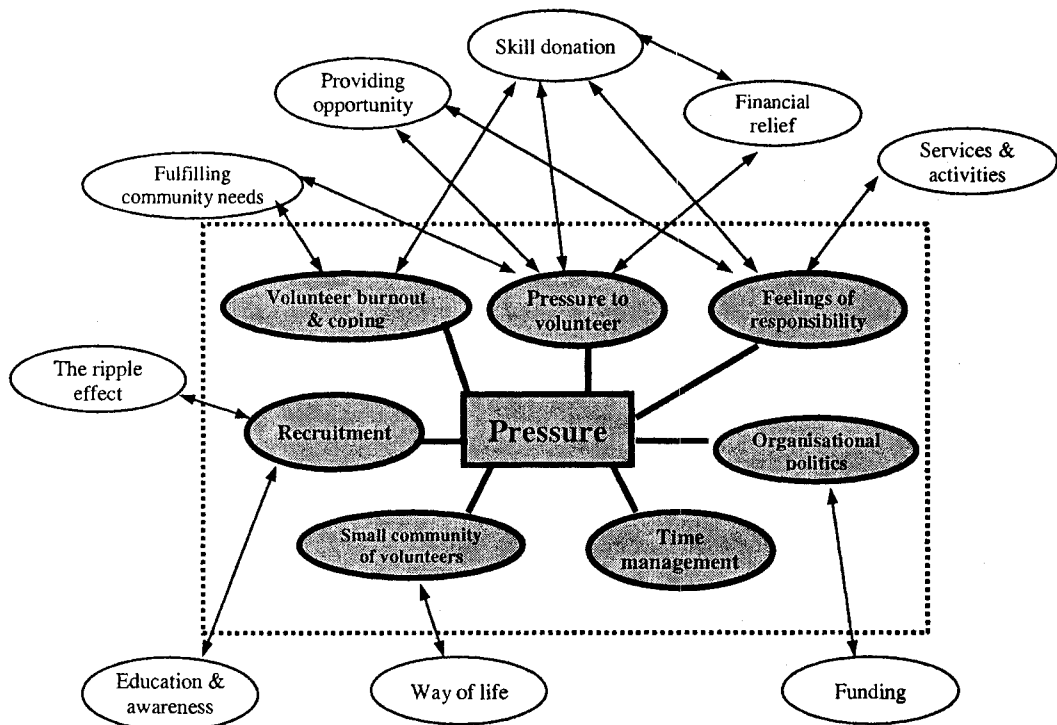


Figure 4.5 Connections of *Pressure* theme to other elements

### *Pressure to volunteer*

When directly asked if they felt any pressure to volunteer, study participants were hesitant to answer one way or another. While some said that they felt obligated or relied on to volunteer they also acknowledged that they had the freedom to step back or volunteer on their own terms. Some participants would feel guilty if they did not volunteer because they knew that the community benefited from their help. "You feel like you're letting people down." "There's always pressure on people who have a lot of experience because there aren't that many of us around." People also felt pressure because they feared that no one would step in and fill the gap should they choose to stop. "I do feel that maybe we're going to have to fix them because maybe nobody else will." Conversely, a couple of people described it as internal pressure rather than pressure from the community. However, some study participants appeared to contradict themselves by saying while they do not feel pressured, they sometimes feel obligated to participate. Overall, people felt pressure to volunteer as they acknowledged the lack of options for organisations with a small population base from which to draw additional resources.

### *Feelings of responsibility*

Volunteers offering outdoor recreation services to the community developed a sense of responsibility and ownership of that activity. It was important to maintain a standard and they did not want to disappoint community members. Many people wanted to improve options and were intrinsically pressured to do a good job. Chuck said "Be part of it. Don't expect other people to do everything for you." Jane felt that her only pressure was "my own expectation that if I've said I'll do something I'm going to do it to the best of my ability." John also valued a good job: "I think it's important for it to be

done properly if it's going to run." This sense of responsibility to the community was echoed by a sense of ownership of the tasks they had undertaken. Richard described "...I think that if you're really, really closely linked to sometimes you think: that's my baby!" Moreover, people stated that activity participants would be disappointed should they choose to step back. Mike said "my worst fear when I started was not being able to do it and I didn't ever want to let the kids down." This mentality also resulted in feelings that "somebody's got to do it." This sense of responsibility to the community often meant that participants felt pressured to volunteer and obligated to do a good job.

#### *Small community of volunteers*

Participants commented on the perpetual shortage of volunteers emphasizing that many individuals volunteer for many different organisations and have several different responsibilities within those groups. Eleven of the thirteen participants volunteer with more than one recreation activity, seven of whom volunteer with three or more recreation activities. Several study participants commented that if the responsibilities were distributed more evenly then there would be less pressure on each volunteer. Richard said "I'll always help but I don't want to be the only guy..." Several people mentioned that one would often see the same few people contributing a lot of time and energy to activities. Sherry said "I think a lot of people think that we're going to do it all the time so they don't come forward." Participants wondered if this was partly a result of the small population base from which to draw volunteers. Many of their organisations have difficulty recruiting people and are often short volunteers. Jane pointed out "You certainly see the same people volunteering for more than one sport. If you volunteer for one thing it's for sure you're probably on the list for three or four things." The low



numbers of volunteers meant that participants felt they needed to continue their involvement or the organisation would not be able to sustain itself.

In addition to the pressure on this smaller group of residents, some participants also felt that having the same people volunteer resulted in a sort of closed network that can make it difficult for new volunteers to step in. For example, really dedicated volunteers may plan events or activities that demand volunteers to take time off of work or expend large amounts of time and energy. Stephanie pointed out that calling for volunteers in the middle of the workday was “not fair to people who want to help out.” Sally mentioned that her organisation “asks its volunteers to also participate in fundraising activities, which I hate...” Study participants did not expand on these thoughts beyond their own involvement, nor wonder at the larger repercussions this effect may have on volunteer rates. However, when questioned about the potentially exclusive nature of volunteering for some activities, Sherry replied:

If anyone is interested...it's up to them too. I think the way the Volunteer Bureau does it, like puts out the call for volunteers, I think that's the way for new people...they have to make an effort to become involved. Otherwise they wouldn't know what their interests are. Like if you got somebody that's brand new...I think it's a two way street. It's who you know...

#### *Volunteer burnout and coping*

With heavy responsibility placed on few people, volunteers were often battling high rates of burnout. Many people were worried about meeting their responsibilities because they were over-extended. They pointed out that volunteering in outdoor recreation takes a lot of effort and sometimes they feel overused and overwhelmed with the task at hand. However, they also explained that after some time as volunteers they have adapted coping mechanisms to cut down on stress and avoid burnout. Judy

described "...that whole bit just exhausted me...I was a burnt out basket case because I was looking at it so globally. But when I started looking at it selfishly, for *me* reasons, then I could switch it around." Richard has also learned from his experience as a volunteer, saying "we sort of know what we can or can't do and we've learned that over time so we don't over-extend ourselves." While it is good that these volunteers have developed coping mechanisms to avoid burnout, they still feel the pressure of their responsibilities to the activities.

Volunteers often feel the most pressure when they choose to step back or change how they will volunteer. Some people choose carefully how they will participate and limit themselves to activities in which they are particularly interested or passionate. However, once a person is involved it can be difficult for him or her to refuse requests for help. Hayley said "We enjoy doing it and the plan is to do it again but at some point it may just be that we don't want to do to it." Other people feel that in order to encourage others to take on more responsibility they need to step back and create space. Sherry explained that "It's just time for other people to help along too because some of us will not be around all the time..." Many participants felt they had contributed enough and that it was time to start "un-complicating" their lives. While it has been challenging, some realised that they "don't have to do everything" and that it was acceptable for them to say no. It was hinted that being in a small community makes it difficult to step away, but Sherry pointed out that she needed to be firm in her decision to cut back on her volunteer involvement to force other people to step up.

### *Time management*

As many study participants were heavily involved in community activities they described some of the time management techniques they experienced. Judy said “I have volunteered when it’s only been my activity and it’s hard. It’s very, very hard. And you have to find time.” Because some people were so passionate about an activity it was easy for them to take on what they considered “another full time job.” John commented “It’s ongoing; you don’t get time off from it.” Other people found volunteering easier when it was an intense commitment for a short period of time. That way they were able to choose carefully when and where they could donate some time to different outdoor recreation activities. Sherry commented “It’s an important task, but it’s not eating up a lot time.”

One aspect of time management that many participants discussed was the need for them to take time off of their paid employment to volunteer. Nine of the participants mentioned they had taken personal holiday time to volunteer. Stephanie commented that it can be difficult to recruit volunteers and they would have to find someone “who’s willing to spend time and take their holidays and take it on like a job really, because it is.” Others have had challenges as a volunteer because meetings and events sometimes conflict with their work schedule. This can be a major drawback to increasing accessibility of volunteer opportunities for community members. Sandra commented:

I think outdoor recreation is very important to the community although a lot of people who participate...are generally, I’d say, well educated and are upper-middle class people with a good income so they can afford to recreate. They have free time, time available on weekends and evenings when you know there are some people who work in areas such as the service sector who don’t.

### *Recruitment*

Most organisations are constantly in search of new volunteers and many study participants have pulled in other members of their community. Former participants of the activity are often targeted as people who potentially could take up management roles and help to keep the activity going. Also, volunteers typically asked friends and coworkers if they would like to help out. Sherry explained “We ended up just calling friends. So we ended up with people we knew and we hand picked the people we wanted.” Eventually a network can be established of people who are willing to help out if needed. Jane said “I’ve also introduced other people to the sport and then seen them develop as volunteers too. That’s always fun.” Additionally, many children of volunteers who have grown up with the activity have later become volunteers themselves.

However, most of these volunteers have also felt unwanted pressure when they are directly asked to contribute and are therefore conscious of that fact when they are recruiting others. One person uses a mass-email network to let friends know of volunteer opportunities and that she was looking for help instead of asking them directly. Richard explained “I’m kind of sensitive to the fact that not everybody really enjoys doing it. I don’t aggressively hound people to help out with things.”

Five people mentioned that the pressure to volunteer came from community members and organisations specifically asking for help. A group may discover someone who has some experience in a certain area and then ask him or her to help with the activity. Sherry joked that this was called “voluntelling” people: while you are still considered a volunteer you were really pulled in by the organisation. Richard found that after helping with the Canada Winter Games people would call him and say: “Well you

have to come because you're the guy who knows the most about this or that." The study participants do not really consider being 'voluntold' a major problem but it can put people in a difficult position when they are hesitant about volunteering.

### *Organisational Politics*

The issue of organisational politics arose in 8 of the 13 interviews. These findings were placed under the theme of *Pressure* because they are often referring to a darker, more difficult aspect of volunteering that is sometimes ignored or glossed over. Some people were motivated by the politics of an organisation in that they saw a flaw and wanted to act to correct it. Susie commented "...that just really irritated me and I thought there's no way, and I'm really going to do this." Others simply put the politics aside and focused on the task at hand. Stephanie said "I don't play games and for me it's about the race, it's not personal." Sherry had been heavily involved in organisational politics but found that volunteering was much more enjoyable if she did not worry about it: "You can worry about the politics at another time. Try to separate the two. It's not easy, but it's there."

Conversely, the issue of political debate had caused others to step back from their volunteer positions on boards or formal organisation. John said "I don't like getting pulled in between the political directions that can happen as a volunteer." Mike eventually took a small leave from cross-country skiing after becoming frustrated in organisational politics. He explained "I was probably in danger of losing my love of the sport so I decided that there was a lot of other things in the world I'd like to do, too." Some people have avoided the difficulties that come with organisational politics by avoiding formal organisation and official status as a club or group. Richard said "Soon as

you start getting ultra-organised sometimes it becomes very bureaucratic and becomes controversial.” Most participants acknowledged the frustrations with organisational politics and that it can detract from the volunteer experience, though none said it had resulted in their withdrawal from volunteering.

The topic of community pressure was brought up in the interviews during an investigation of volunteer motivations. Though many study participants said that they did feel some pressure from the community they also acknowledged that they had the power to control their involvement if they did choose to change their involvement. The feelings of obligation and responsibility were intrinsically centered but often resulted in the same people volunteering for many activities. This can increase rates of volunteer burnout and many volunteers were forced to carefully manage their time in order to be able to continue to serve. Pressure to volunteer could also be present in the recruitment of volunteers and encouraging new people to help out.

#### *4.5 The Influence of Money*

The final theme of findings surrounds the issue of money and its place in the volunteering community. Money is a very controversial topic with participants expressing viewpoints from many different angles. Figure 4.6 connects topics relating to money that were mentioned by study participants with other elements of volunteering. This theme has particular relevance in our exploration of volunteering in terms of social economy because of the complex influence of money in a community.

Some people saw volunteer-run organisations as quite beneficial to the community because events brought in tourists and outside money to help out local businesses and the economy. Volunteers from such organisations in particular argued in

favour of including paid positions on their boards so that they could expand their operations and better serve community needs. However, others argued that the true value of volunteer-based organisations was that they were *voluntary* and that people were not separated by a hierarchical pay scale. This theme will discuss topics regarding *Funding*, *Financial relief*, and *The nature of volunteering*.

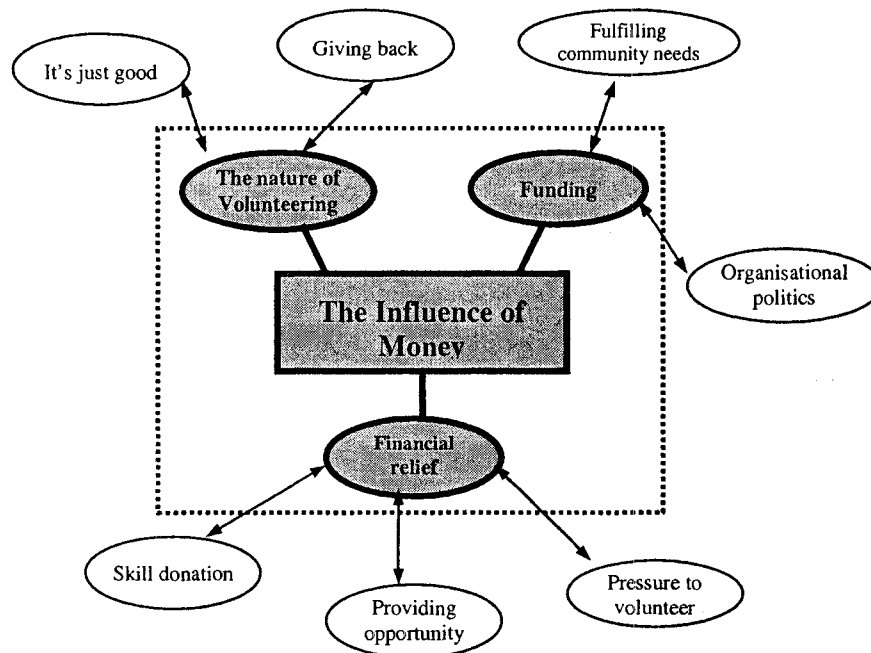


Figure 4.6 Web of findings demonstrating how topics related to money are also connected to other elements of volunteering.

### *Funding*

All participants agreed that money has its place in outdoor recreation to be used as a tool for providing quality services to the community. Many of the recreation organisations for which the study participants volunteer had successfully been granted funding from the government to help offset the costs of expenses such as equipment, supplies, and staff positions. Bob felt that “It does so much good that I think that more money should be put into amateur sports.” Some study participants thought that

volunteers could not support the weight of the organisation because of time commitments and requirements such as taking time off of work. Jane explained “We’re trying to get a bit of funding for a technical director who could act as a head coach too. We’re finding that our sport can’t grow.” However, some organisations have faced public criticism because the government gives them money. John explained “Well, it’s all taxpayers’ money that paid to develop that facility and build it so what are you going to do? You have to let people use it.” However, Susie pointed out “The race has been criticised because the government has given them money but at the same time...to me it’s a two-way street: you get what you put into it.”

#### *Financial relief*

Some people mentioned that the community benefits financially from volunteer-led outdoor recreation organisations. Where a nonprofit organisation would normally have a paid position, volunteers with appropriate qualifications can fill those roles and provide some financial relief. Sally explained “They usually have a paid position for that...so that helps the organisation because then they don’t have to pay me.” At the same time, the individual volunteer can benefit from organisation perks such as free passes or funding to attend coaching seminars to increase their qualifications. Also, some volunteer-based organisations provide services to a community that could not otherwise afford to do so. Chuck described how Whitehorse benefited from the quality trail maintenance provided by the snowmobiling association: “They have to be kept up and the City can’t do that because they don’t have the right equipment...this way it’s done by volunteers so you’re not paying high wages for it.”



### *The nature of volunteering*

The principal argument against including paid positions within voluntary organisations surrounded the essence and nature of volunteering as being *voluntary*. A few people were quite upset that community members (government employees in particular) were given “company time” to volunteer. People were not comfortable with the idea that this was being considered ‘volunteer’ time when they were still being paid. Sally mentioned “I have a bit of an issue with people referring to it as volunteering because it’s not volunteering, it’s being paid. If you come in on your own time and do it, then that’s volunteering.” John actually refrained from volunteering for the Canada Winter Games altogether: “The thought of people getting paid time off for the ‘volunteer’ job didn’t sit well with me so I opted out.”

Similarly, a couple of people had a particular issue with incorporating a paid position into their voluntary organisation. Have paid positions contradicted the “spirit” of volunteering and others mentioned they might stop volunteering should this become a factor.

It would really change things if money got involved...because it’s a different motivation and I want to be involved with people who really want [it] to happen for its own sake and not about the money...I believe the strength of volunteers comes from not being paid to do it...the goodwill of people giving back to their community needs to be in that spirit and being valued (Stephanie).

Others commented that money could not replace the rewards they receive in its stead. Mike said “You get paid in ways that money can’t buy” and Sherry added “Some people want gains but monetary gains don’t mean anything...thank yous [mean something].”

The issue of payment is difficult to assess because of some of the financial requirements of outdoor recreation organisations. Some organisations are faced with the

problem that they cannot develop any further unless they have paid staff and yet they are being pressured by the government to expand their programmes to incorporate more people and other communities in the territory. Jane explained “The government has actually told us that they want us to expand our programme but we can’t do it with only volunteers...to present workshops in the communities so that they may continue to develop the sport is beyond our ability.” They might argue as Mike did: “Money has its place, right? Money is just a tool to me.”

### *Summary*

In summary, I have used the five themes of findings to organise participant responses into important areas of focus when investigating volunteers in outdoor recreation. The open interview format allowed participants the freedom to explore areas they felt were pertinent to their volunteer work but still provided focus to the discussion. The elements collected under the themes of *Personal Benefits* as well as *Community Benefits* are of particular interest in our exploration of social capital and social economy. Aspects of these areas such as skill development, fulfillment of community needs, the provision of new opportunities, the potential for reciprocity, and a setting for relationship building demonstrate ways in which volunteers in outdoor recreation are involved in social economy. Study participants also provided some interesting thoughts regarding funding, finances, and the value of volunteering that may help in an investigation of the influence of money its place within this broad third sector. Finally, the concept of pressuring community members to participate or volunteer indicates that relying on volunteers to provide services may not be as straightforward as it appears. Having the same people volunteer creates closed networks and volunteer burnout may cause people

to remove themselves from the system and become disengaged. The findings set the stage for a discussion of social capital and social economy in a variety of areas. The themes of volunteer involvement in outdoor recreation organise many different aspects of volunteer involvement that will aid in our discussion of this topic.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study was designed to explore the views of volunteers in outdoor recreation regarding both personal well-being and contributions to the community. These areas can be situated within a social economy framework in order to better understand how a service such as outdoor recreation contributes to social and community development. Since this research interviewed volunteers at work within the social economy, it utilises a bottom-up approach to exploring the significance of volunteer-based organisations for both individuals and the greater community. Rather than using the social economy as a base for exploring volunteering, this study describes the views of study participants regarding volunteering in their community then relates these perspectives to elements within the social economy. In other words, this research is centered on the volunteer and his or her perspectives and connects these views to the social economy.

The findings from this research can provide us with insight into a variety of areas of interest regarding the relationship between volunteers and the community. In order to focus the variety of topics that were explained under the five themes of findings, this chapter is going to look at four areas: *Contributions to community goals*, *Knowledge and skill development*, *Relationship building as a catalyst for individual benefits*, and *Volunteering motivations and lifestyle choices*. Though there are many ways of focusing the various different aspects of the findings, organising discussion around these four areas will help to make sense of the data by concentrating on volunteer comments and providing connections to the social economy. Furthermore, this organisation will help to highlight the importance of this research in developing our understanding of outdoor recreation and volunteering in relation to the social economy.

### *5.1 Contributions to community goals*

Volunteers provide a variety of outdoor recreation activities and increase the opportunities for activity in Whitehorse (see Table 4.1 and 4.2). Study participants described many workshops, training classes, competitions, tournaments, events, and facilities that have been developed and are maintained by volunteers. The contributions to the community by outdoor recreation organisations can be easily seen through the number of activities and services that are provided by volunteers. In fact, two of the major sport governing bodies in the Territory, *Recreation and Parks Association Yukon* and *Sport Yukon* are founded and operated by a volunteer board of directors (RPAY, 2005; Sport Yukon, n.d.). The number and variety of services provided by Whitehorse's outdoor recreation volunteers is not surprising when considering that in Canada the largest percentage of volunteer hours is directed towards sports and recreation (Statistics Canada, 2006). In a relatively isolated community such as Whitehorse, it can be difficult for public services to provide the variety of recreation options one might find in a city with a larger population.

However, the findings from this study demonstrate that volunteer-based outdoor recreation activities do support community goals and fulfill many community needs and services. Whitehorse's small population base can make it difficult for the government and other organisations to provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities for community residents. Furthermore, the great distance between Whitehorse and other major Canadian centres prevents residents from easily travelling to take advantage of these services elsewhere. As a result, the community of Whitehorse benefits from the support of volunteers whose service allows for the provision of a variety of opportunities

for their fellow Yukoners. The City of Whitehorse recognises the value of offering a wide range of activity choices to its residents, but also that it cannot provide all of these services itself (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). It is here that Neamtam (2005) emphasizes the role of social economy since she believes governments can no longer adequately serve communities with broad reaching, generalised programmes.

Through social economic organisations such as volunteer-based outdoor recreation, the community of Whitehorse is able to provide a broad range of opportunities to its residents by bringing volunteers together to donate skills and services. The organisation and utilisation of the human capital present within the community allows for the relatively small population base to offer recreation opportunities with minimal social resources. In this way, volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations in Whitehorse are working within the social economy, as described by Evans (2006), by utilising alternative solutions to address local problems; for example, the difficulties of being relatively small, isolated community. Since the City of Whitehorse cannot be the sole provider of all recreation services to the community it is likely that many of the activities supported by participants from this study could not be sustained without the input of volunteer efforts. This point reflects the research by Silverberg et al. (2000) who found that recreation services rely heavily on volunteers to maintain their programmes. Through volunteer efforts, outdoor recreation organisations in Whitehorse are able to provide a chance for local people to try something new. Furthermore, study participants indicated that it is important for residents to have options and opportunities for activity during Yukon's cold, dark winter.

The response of volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations to the need for community members to have access to a variety of services is one of the ways in which these activities contribute to the social economy. As Mouleart and Nussbaumer (2005) argue, activities within the social economy must be grounded within community dynamics and in tune with its needs. Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations work at the grassroots level through utilisation of community members' skills and knowledge to provide these activities. Study participants described their roles as filling gaps in services and making important contributions to the collective knowledge or skill base of the organisation. By donating skills to the community, these people could be considered 'techno volunteers' and are motivated by their ability to contribute to the organisation rather than to broader community issues (Arai, 2000). Furthermore, study participants as techno volunteers are inputting human capital through the skills and knowledge they bring to the organisation (see Sharpe, 2006). However, the findings from this study indicate that while many people choose to volunteer because their skills are needed by the organisation, they are also conscious of the ways in which the larger community can benefit from the input of human capital.

However, this demand for skill donation places a lot of pressure on the small population base of a community such as Whitehorse. Study participants expressed feelings of obligation or responsibility to volunteer because there was no one else to do it. This echoes the work of Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) who found this sense of obligation to be strong factor in motivating people to volunteer in sport. Furthermore, the increased knowledge and awareness of community issues, as discussed earlier, further pressures volunteers to give to the community (see Glover, 2004). Feelings of

responsibility are often underlined with a sense of ownership over a unique programme developed by an individual volunteer. Study participants mentioned they feared letting people down should the programme fall to the wayside, particularly considering the limited options in the community. These findings suggest that people take great pride in their volunteer projects and that emphasizing the importance of their contribution to the community could be a key element in retaining volunteers. This reiterates the findings of Caldwell & Andereck (1994) who suggest that highlighting the contributions volunteers make to the community could increase volunteer service within a recreation organisation.

Some study participants mentioned that the pressure to volunteer can also result in the same people continuously volunteering. An example of this can be seen in the number of organisations, both outdoor recreation-based and not, in which study participants are involved. This is congruent with the report from Statistics Canada (2006) that found one quarter of volunteers in Canada donated 77% of volunteer hours. When it is the same people volunteering it is possible for the activities and groups to become exclusionary as suggested by Putnam's (2000) social capital bonding theory. This form of social capital could negatively affect a community because it would consistently call on the same people to volunteer rather than opening the opportunity up to other community members. However, none the study participants saw the same people volunteering as exclusionary, but rather they voiced the point that community members needed to seek out volunteer opportunities themselves to become involved. Many people pointed out that getting involved in events was not difficult but that people need to take the initiative to volunteer.



Additionally, study participants sometimes felt that the community was consistently relying on the same group of volunteers resulting in burnout in this small volunteer base. It is, therefore, easy to understand why volunteers get worn down and are forced to limit how much they volunteer, thereby constraining certain resources in those volunteer networks. Therefore, while the pressure to donate skills to fulfill community needs does increase one's motivation to volunteer, it can also lead to a loss of human capital from certain organisations and their related social networks. That being said, it is evident from the comments of study participants that the pressure to volunteer has increased service from some people to the community as they recognise the importance of volunteering to support community needs.

Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations can also contribute to the social economy by supporting community goals for service and recreation. In the *2007 City of Whitehorse Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, a benefits-based approach has been taken to evaluate recreation and leisure services in the community (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). This approach was chosen to respect individual leisure needs as well as “the collective role recreation and leisure choices play in overall community health and well-being” (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. i). The City's philosophy towards recreation reflects the sentiments of study participants in that the City understands recreation to be an integral part of personal and community wellness and that there are indirect benefits to community members other than the service users (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

However, the local government also acknowledges that it *should* not necessarily be the sole recreation provider to community members (Inukshuk Planning &

Development Ltd. et al., 2007). As the findings from this study indicate, the fact that many of the outdoor recreation organisations are volunteer-based adds to their value as contributors to the social economy. Moreover, comments from study participants indicate that many of the outdoor recreation activities in Whitehorse support the City's recreation objectives by fostering a sense of community and enabling individual growth (see Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

The community of Whitehorse also benefits from volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations because of their contributions to physical health and psychological well-being. Increasingly, the Whitehorse government is looking for leisure opportunities that fulfill their desire to pursue healthier lifestyles (see Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007). Many outdoor recreation organisations in Whitehorse provide activity outlets and challenge residents to become more physically active. Furthermore, the comments from study participants demonstrate how outdoor recreation activities work to support a key objective of the City's benefits-based approach to recreation planning: to promote fitness and overall well-being.

This objective refers to a holistic wellness of the mental, the emotional and the physical – the whole person; the City's role is to provide a range of leisure opportunities that appeal to all residents enabling them to achieve a minimum level of wellness no matter what their financial resources, skill or disability levels are (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. 22).

A number of study participants saw their outdoor recreation activities as large contributors to physical health fitness. Not only are people more physically fit, putting less of a strain on public health care systems (see Pronk, Tan, & O'Connor, 1999), but study participants also believe physical activity makes people feel better about themselves. Volunteers observed that this attitude would spread out to other people,

supporting Veenstra's (2001) conclusions that exchanges in social capital between individuals leads to increased knowledge regarding healthy lifestyles and resources. Moreover, volunteers felt that participation in outdoor recreation can help individuals gain confidence and build self-esteem. Outdoor activities provide a valuable setting for community members to join together in providing and participating in both formally and informally organised recreation. These activities can provide important physical outlets that encourage goals related to health, fitness, and participation. The benefits received by the community from volunteer-based outdoor recreation allow for these activities to play a meaningful role in the development and maintenance of the local social economy. It is evident from the interviews that volunteers feel their outdoor recreation services contribute to the well-being of the community, thus matching many objectives of the City's parks and recreation plan.

Though both volunteers and city planners recognise the value and importance of providing adequate and accessible recreation opportunities for community members, the *2007 City of Whitehorse Parks and Recreation Master Plan* acknowledges that there are "limited financial resources available and there is a point when the department can no longer 'do more with less'" (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. iii). For this reason, the place of money, both as funding for organisations and as payment for an individual's service, can have an interesting influence on our understanding of outdoor recreation organisations in a social economy framework. Though volunteers recognise the necessity of money to provide supplies and services through their organisations, the intrusion of money and paid positions can potentially reduce the benefits of volunteer-based organisations for both individuals and the community.

Many of the outdoor recreation organisations represented by volunteers in this study depend on government funding to offset the expenses of their operation. Study participants explained that their activities were unable to expand with their limited resources and they needed funding to pay staff where volunteers could not meet the demands of the community. However, as part of the social economy between the public and private market sectors, the independence of social economy organisations is questionable when they receive government funding (Quarter, 1992). If an outdoor recreation organisation relies on government funding for support, does it then become a government sector programme and is it not then tied to the ebb and flow of public economics instead of remaining independently sustainable within the social economy? It is perhaps for this reason that Susie commented that the Yukon Quest International Dog Sled race was heavily criticised by some because it received substantial government funding.

Yet from a different perspective, the Yukon Quest can be seen to benefit the community's economy because of the influence of tourists, competitors, and business into Whitehorse during the race. Lavarie and MacDonald (2007) suggest that commercialising an event can be good for a community because it leads to greater community income from the multiplier effect. Therefore, it could be that outdoor recreation activities such as the Yukon Quest are actually prime examples of social economy organisations because they appropriately blend government influence with private sector business (see Restakis, 2006).

Nevertheless, governments cannot adequately support the financial needs of every outdoor recreation organisation present in a community. Volunteers understand that their

labours bring financial relief to organisations that could not afford to pay someone for their skills. Study participants also indicated that volunteer-based recreation increases the variety of available activities both in terms of numbers and in the provision of a range of levels of difficulty to allow beginners to become involved in an activity and experts to practice their skills. These findings reflect the work of Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) who recognise that volunteers allow organisations to maintain their programmes and expand their services within the agency's budget. To this point some study participants said that volunteer-based organisations provide services, such as trail maintenance, that the community itself could not afford to adequately sustain. Many of these organisations fundraise and provide these services without any connection to government monies.

This separation from monetary influence such as payment was also of great importance in terms of the social value of outdoor recreation organisations. Volunteers emphasized that their organisations were particularly important to the community because they were *voluntary*. Some argued against the inclusion of paid positions in their organisations because it would contradict the spirit of giving that creates an important atmosphere in the activity. The strength of outdoor recreation activities in the social economy is founded in the collection of volunteers who are *giving* to the community. These sentiments reiterate the findings of Fassenfest et al. (1997) who argue that the social economy measures community benefits based on values, rather than monetary remuneration. Sharpe (2007) also said that professionalisation of recreation activities diminishes the significance of volunteering thereby decreasing the value of that experience.

Sharpe's findings, as well as those from this study, are similar to the findings of Mackinnon (2006) who concluded that the community empowerment felt by people coming together and volunteering to create a service is an important part of the social economy. Community empowerment is also enhanced by the knowledge and awareness of community issues (Arai, 1997) and it appears that the same thing could be happening in Whitehorse. Study participants said that by volunteering they were able to expand their familiarity with local issues and learn about the challenges affecting the greater community, following on from Arai (1997), Jones (2006), and Omoto and Snyder (2002). This deeper understanding is beneficial for both the community, since socially aware individuals are more likely to take action, and for the individual by contributing to his or her own personal development.

### *5.2 Knowledge and skill development*

The findings from this study indicate that participating in volunteer-based outdoor recreation activities creates educational venues and increases awareness regarding community issues. Study participants believe that the community benefits as volunteers become more aware of common concerns and are therefore motivated to participate in public matters. Through interactions with other volunteers and activity participants, residents learn about concerns and problems afflicting other areas of the community and can become more engaged in those issues. Furthermore, study participants explained that recreating in different neighbourhoods increases awareness of the environmental and social concerns of that area of town, thus increasing communal participation in problem solving strategies. The increase in volunteer education and awareness described by participants in this study can result in increased participation in public issues and promote

civic competence as outlined by Hemingway (2006). These findings are also similar to those of Jones (2006), who saw volunteering expose citizens to a greater variety of shared problems and encourage collective action and engagement in public discussion. This shared understanding throughout a community can be beneficial as residents work together to bring about change and address common issues.

Clearly, the community profits when its citizens are more knowledgeable and empowered to take action, but study participants also indicated that they personally value the knowledge and skills they develop from volunteering as well. This point highlights Braun and Caster's (2001) conclusion that volunteers within social economy organisations value their ability to influence social norms and decision-making, but also that they can pursue individual interests while acting for benefit of the common good. The interaction between volunteers working to provide an outdoor recreation service facilitates individual learning and growth as they are exposed to new possibilities. Furthermore, people who volunteer together share experience that can contribute to an individual's skill in that activity as well as stimulate growth and development of skills transferable to other environments, such as managerial or organisational techniques. These findings are consistent with those of Arai (2000), and of Clary et al. (1996), in that volunteers will seek out opportunities to increase knowledge and skills. Seippel (2006) also found that social relations as social capital within voluntary organisations work by facilitating the channels of communication and transfer of information between members.

In the volunteer setting, community residents interact and develop relationships that facilitate the transfer of information and skills regarding community issues. These findings reflect those of Coleman (1988) who highlights social relations as an important

form of social capital that provides the information needed for people to take action. Sandefur and Laumann (1998) also emphasize the use of social capital in the transfer of information between network members. What is significant about the arguments of Coleman and of Sandefur and Laumann is the role of social networks and interactions between community members. It is evident from the interviews that individuals can benefit in numerous ways from the social setting provided by volunteering with outdoor recreation activities.

### *5.3 Relationship building as a catalyst for individual benefits*

Volunteers with outdoor recreation found their involvement fun and enjoyable, as well as personally beneficial because it allowed for individual development. As a result, outdoor recreation activities should be seen as a valuable venue for interpersonal relationship building that contributes to such things as volunteer knowledge and skill enhancement, family bonding, and feelings of inclusion and importance within the community.

Individuals benefit greatly from the social interactions that are part of outdoor recreation. For example, the personal benefits of knowledge sharing are contingent on the social relationships that form between volunteers and with activity participants. Moreover, many of the benefits experienced by community members through outdoor recreation are also dependent on meeting and interacting with fellow residents. Volunteers who became involved through family connections or to support the development of relationships with friends often support outdoor recreation activities in Whitehorse.



In fulfilling this social function volunteers participate in networking and the development of trusting relationships. Herein lies the significance of Putnam's (2000) argument of the difference between volunteering with others and volunteering for others: by volunteering together individuals are able to interact thus contributing to and withdrawing from social capital stocks. Some study participants emphasized the role that volunteering in outdoor recreation plays in allowing them to network within the community and develop new contacts. The interactions that then take place within these networks involve valuable exchanges of social capital rather than easily measurable monetary transfers (i.e. payment). Fasenfest et al. (1997) argue that a social economy framework can recognise the value of these social exchanges that have no price. Therefore, it is clear that the social relationships developed between volunteers in outdoor recreation have benefited, or have the potential to benefit, individual network members.

Though many study participants valued their relationships with other volunteers, few people provided specific examples of how they have benefited from membership in this social network. As Putnam (2000) explained with social capital bridging theory, loose connections with network members can benefit individuals with increased access to resources and information. However, few participants from this study believed social networking to be an important factor in their volunteer work. The possibility of networking with community members was a recognised benefit by some volunteers, while others felt it was not significant because they volunteered with people who were not associated with other parts of their lives. It is conceivable, though, that study participants do not recognise the possibilities of social networks because they have not

yet needed to utilise those relationships. By working with people outside of their usual social circle, volunteers are automatically diversifying their connections with other community members. As Hemingway (2006) notes, the potential benefits to social connections may be unknown to network members until those resources are needed.

On a more personal level, many study participants appreciated that volunteering in outdoor recreation allowed them to develop a close bond with a spouse or their children. Many of the volunteers interviewed indicated that they became involved in certain outdoor recreation activities to support their children or stay connected with family members. Accordingly, 8 of the 13 study participants were parents supporting more than 60% of the recreation organisations listed in Table 4.1. These findings are congruent with those of Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) and Silverberg et al. (2000) who found that many people volunteer in sport or recreation to support their children. Some parents also explained that volunteering helped build a strong connection for them with certain aspects of their children's lives. This could be compared to the type of inter-familial social capital described by Coleman (1988) and with the conclusions of Sandefur and Laumann (1998) who suggest that parents who volunteer with their children's activities have greater access to information and are more aware of what is going on. Because this volunteer commitment is centered on reinforcing a connection with their children, it is not surprising that some parents' interests in volunteering wane after their children have left the activity.

However, other parents became quite engrossed in the activity and continue to volunteer after their children have moved on. Across Canada, the tendency to volunteer increases when there are children at home (Statistics Canada, 2006). However,

Canadians with no children at home contribute on average more volunteer hours in total (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is interesting that volunteering with one's children is such a strong motivation to volunteer but is not addressed by Clary et al.'s (1996) functional approach to volunteer motivation. As previously discussed, studies indicate that volunteering with children's interests serves parents in connecting and developing a strong bond with their children. It could be argued that volunteering serves an important function of linking family members together both in a volunteer-participant relationship but also as a good bonding time when volunteering together as a group.

Outside of the family, people volunteer in outdoor recreation to meet new people, develop friendships, and support lasting relationships with community members. It is evident from the interviews that these connections provide a forum for experience sharing and exchanges of information that are beneficial for members of that social network. However, volunteers also indicated that the social relationships with other volunteers were inherently important regardless of the possibility of gaining something through the connection. For some, volunteering with outdoor recreation helps them fit in and get along with others, thus serving the social function described by Clary et al. (1996). Volunteering in outdoor recreation also supports social connections by allowing people to stay involved in an enjoyable activity with their friends.

The significance of affiliation and inclusion on a team of volunteers is of particular interest to this investigation of volunteering. Many study participants valued their volunteer work in outdoor recreation because they were part of a team sharing common values and working towards a common goal. Lavarie and MacDonald (2007) describe a sense of identity that people gain from volunteering which could be compared

to the feelings of inclusion described by participants in this study. Through outdoor recreation, residents are able to make valuable contributions to the community, and Janoski et al. (1998) suggest that people become attached to their volunteer activity.

The idea that outdoor recreation activities can provide community members with an important sense of belonging and purpose also has a place within a social economy framework, as it is consistent with community goals. The social interactions described by study participants demonstrate the achievement of these goals through volunteering in outdoor recreation. City planners recognise the value of social relationships and aim to facilitate opportunities for social interaction through recreation services. They state, “social functions are a key way in which community identity and cohesion are developed in all cultures” (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007, p. 21). As mentioned earlier, study participants also highlighted the value of volunteering with activities in which their children are involved and how it developed a bond between family members. Therefore, volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations further supported the City’s philosophy that recreation should, among other things, facilitate social interaction and support such areas as family leisure (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

The sense of belonging described by study participants echoes the work of both Stebbins (1982) and Glover (2004) and is fostered by the development of social relationships between volunteers within the activity. This ties in with the social solidarity created through such relationships that are founded on social capital, as suggested by Sandefur and Laumann (1998). The social relationships created through volunteering make people feel included and important in providing a community service. The findings

that people need to feel valued and useful in the community are reinforced by Arai's (2000) conclusions that through volunteering people have an opportunity to work together to make a contribution.

#### *5.4 Volunteer motivations and lifestyle choices*

Throughout this research study participants have mentioned the various elements that motivate them to volunteer. Their comments have provided insight into how volunteering has influenced their lifestyle choices. For some of them, volunteering has become a way a life. As Susie said simply, "It's what I do." Through volunteering, individuals have the freedom to choose how and where they will contribute to the community while gaining a sense of purpose and responsibility within that social structure. Yet study participants also described more abstract ways in which they saw the community benefiting from their services. Many of volunteers said "it's just good" to have these services and that they acted as "great community builders". Bob even described how keeping boys involved in recreation kept them out of trouble with the law. Their efforts as volunteers in outdoor recreation spread out into the community and impacted other areas of life. The idea that networks developed in outdoor recreation activities may influence other areas of a volunteer's life supports the findings of Stokowski & Lee (1991) regarding recreation and leisure networks. Clearly outdoor recreation activities provide a valuable contribution to the community not only through the services they provide, but also through opportunities for active engagement and participation in the social economy.

It is, however, interesting that study participants did not focus greatly on their volunteer involvement in the Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games, completed just a

few months prior to interviews. While 10 of the 13 study participants mentioned they had been involved as a volunteer with the Games, the experience did not appear to have a great impact on their comments regarding volunteering in recreation or the outdoors. Perhaps, it could be concluded that devoting extensive time and energy into the Canada Winter Games was not unusual for Whitehorse residents since volunteering is well integrated into their approach to recreation and provides a framework for their lifestyles.

The comments from study participants regarding how volunteering has become part of their lifestyles also provides insight to the variety of factors that influence a person's motivation to volunteer. Through outdoor recreation volunteers are able to fulfill a community demand for certain skills while enjoying their continued involvement with a fun activity. Much of the volunteer activity for these study participants relates to our understanding of volunteering as serious leisure. The motivations to volunteer described by study participants are congruent with Stebbins' (1982) characteristics of serious leisure in that volunteers may gain personal benefits through their work but that helping the organisation or the community is the principal goal. Furthermore, the volunteer activities of participants from this study are congruent with many of the qualities of serious leisure as described by Stebbins (1982) such as perseverance, careerism, specialized skills, durable benefits, and identification with the pursuit. This research demonstrates how volunteering in outdoor recreation can be a form of serious leisure. Though research participants volunteered during their leisure time with an activity that they find enjoyable, they provide dedicated and significant support to their activity. Volunteers in outdoor recreation are able to utilise their skills and knowledge in an enjoyable setting to fulfill the community's need for those resources. Since Sharpe

(2006) found that social capital functions were greatly compromised by a lack of human capital input, it is particularly important that outdoor recreation volunteers continue to return their skills to the community.

Much of the volunteer activity in outdoor recreation could be considered serious leisure because of the multiple factors that have influenced study participants' motivations to volunteer. If we refer back to Han's (2007) model to measure volunteer motivations (Figure 2.1), we can see how many of the comments from study participants relate to either egoistic or altruistic factors of their volunteer involvement. As previously discussed, volunteers gain knowledge and have the opportunity for individual development through volunteering, but they are also conscious of the impact that their work has on the greater community. They have demonstrated organisational attachment through their pride and sense of ownership of the activities and programmes to which they have contributed, and volunteer attachment through their concern for providing opportunities to their community and their continued involvement because they fear their would be no one else to do the job. Study participants appreciate the rewards they receive through volunteering, such as access to equipment and facilities, but more so the knowledge and connections they gain from being involved. The findings from this study provide an excellent example of how Han's (2007) framework covers the range of motivations to volunteer and organises them simply and accurately between egoistic and altruistic elements.

The balance between meeting community needs and individual development also reflects how volunteer motivations cannot be isolated from each other but rather are overlapping and interchanging. None of the participants in this study indicated that they

volunteered for simply one reason or another, but rather that there were many factors that influenced their commitment to outdoor recreation and that they benefited from their involvement in multiple ways. Some people might start by volunteering to support their children and then become passionate about the activity and expand their involvement to other areas. Others volunteer because they recognise a community need but also really enjoy working with people with similar values and the friendships they support through their work. The lack of a single motivation influencing a person's behaviour is reflective of Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's (1991) findings that volunteer motivations are not distinct but overlapping. Indeed the comments from participants in this study are prime examples of Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's conclusion that "volunteers act not from a single motive... but from a combination of motives that can be described overall as a 'rewarding experience'" (1991, p. 281). It is evident through the findings that the combination of elements that motivate people to volunteer have had a great influence on their approach to volunteering, resulting in the use of volunteering in outdoor recreation as serious leisure as a major part of their lives.

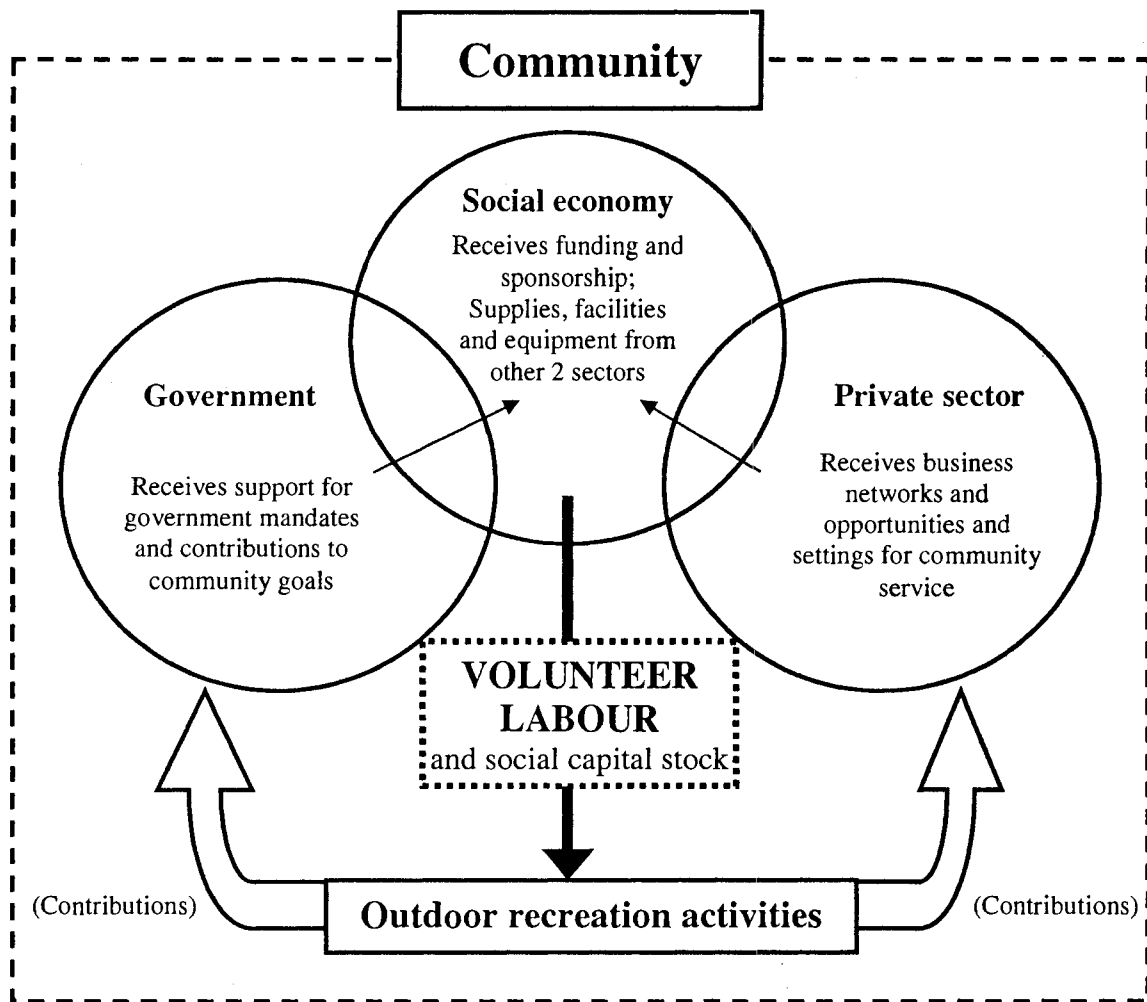
### *Summary*

The interviews with volunteers from the community of Whitehorse explored a variety of topics surrounding their services in the field of outdoor recreation and these areas can be related to social capital and social economy. Of particular interest are the ways in which volunteers see outdoor recreation activities benefiting the greater community. Through the provision of skills and services, volunteer-based outdoor recreation activities contribute to community development and the achievement of community goals. The increase in knowledge base and skill development in both



volunteers and activity participants provides community members with greater access to information and resources to become engaged in community issues and address local concerns. The increase in civic engagement is further enhanced by the social relationships and connections developed between volunteers and with participants in outdoor recreation.

Findings from this research contribute to our understanding of the relationship between the social economy, the government, and the private sector at work within the community. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the provision of outdoor recreation activities through volunteer labour that arises from the social economy. This model presents a holistic approach to understanding how volunteering supports community projects in outdoor recreation; all three of these sectors are connected and therefore must cooperate to fulfill their functions. This research suggests that governments need to remember the contributions of social economic organisations such as outdoor recreation in supporting community goals and fulfilling community needs. Social economic organisations are sometimes supported by government initiatives but the social economy also has its own responsibility to stay grounded in community dynamics while supporting the interests of individuals. Also, being placed between the government and the private sector, the social economy bridges the gap between these two sectors and overlaps areas of both. Not only is the social economy influenced by government policies and funding, but it is also influenced by goods and services from the private sector. While using the support from these two sectors, through volunteer labour the social economy is able to provide outdoor recreation services for the community.



**Figure 5.1** The provision of outdoor recreation through the social economy and volunteer labour

The overlap between the government and the social economy also means that governments and for-profit businesses can also look at the economic benefits of supporting volunteer-based outdoor recreation in their communities. Being supported by volunteer labour, these activities and events bring visitors and business to the community at no extra cost. Businesses can benefit from philanthropic opportunities and the recognition they may receive from this service as well as increases in business transactions from social economic organisations. Furthermore, increased levels of fitness and exchanges of social capital resources between volunteer and participants encourages healthy living and reduces the strain on public health care systems (see Veenstra, 2001;

and Pronk, Tan, & O'Connor, 1999). Communities can also greatly benefit from increases in participation public issues that occur as a result of increases in education and awareness gained through volunteering with community-based activities.

Individual volunteers should not ignore the important role they play in contributing the common good. By volunteering with a social economic organisation they are also supporting government initiatives and possibly the private economy of their community. Although they may receive personal benefits through volunteering, their efforts in the field of outdoor recreation help the organisations they serve, and the governments of the communities in which they live, provide quality opportunities for their fellow community members. Furthermore, the benefits that many volunteers feel they receive are congruent with the growth objectives outlined by the City of Whitehorse's recreation plan: promote skill development and educate individuals about leisure opportunities (Inukshuk Planning & Development Ltd. et al., 2007).

Additionally, the City hopes to encourage volunteerism through recreation, an objective that is visibly being fulfilled by outdoor recreation. Many of the outdoor recreation organisations are entirely dependent on the skills and labour provided by volunteers. Clearly, though government policies and the services of organisations supply the foundation for the provision of outdoor recreation activities, it is the volunteers that make it happen. This sentiment was echoed more than once during interviews with volunteers from this study.

Outdoor recreation activities create a setting for relationship building and social networking that is beneficial to both the individual and the greater community. Through these social relationships volunteers are able to exchange resources and information that

allow for individual development and community enhancement. Therefore, in many ways, volunteers with outdoor recreation are able to provide services to the community while gaining personal benefits such as skills, knowledge, and stock in social capital. Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations contribute to the social economy by fulfilling many community goals while providing opportunities for individual growth and development.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

The findings from this research indicate that volunteers recognise the value of outdoor recreation organisations and their impact on the community and individuals. Clearly, outdoor recreation is an important area of leisure not only because it provides opportunities for such things as fitness, health, teamwork, and individual sport, but also because of the indirect benefits associated with the volunteer-based organisations. In many ways, the findings from this research support much of the literature regarding volunteerism and social economy.

The purpose of this research was to explore the views of volunteers regarding how their contributions benefit themselves personally as well as the greater community. It is evident from the interviews that study participants feel they themselves, as well as the community, benefit from the volunteer work they do in the field of outdoor recreation. The themes *Personal Benefits* and *Community Benefits* discussed a number of topics that describe how volunteers and the community profit from volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations from skill development and knowledge sharing, to increased physical and psychological well-being and civic engagement. Furthermore, these benefits were never isolated outcomes but rather were intricately connected to other elements of volunteering such as pressure and financial concerns. For this reason, the exploratory nature of this research was particularly valuable because it could consider the relationships between different factors and the influence they have on each other. In addition to exploring the benefits received from volunteer-based outdoor recreation, this study also furthers our knowledge regarding volunteerism, social economy, and outdoor recreation.

Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations bring people together in support of local ventures and can create a level of social solidarity within the community. As the findings from this study suggest, volunteering not only works to fill gaps in community services, but also it has value in individual and community development. Volunteer-based organisations provide individuals with a venue for meaningful involvement and give them a sense of purpose and belonging in the community. These organisations increase the variety of activities available to a community with a small population base, providing services that governments cannot feasibly sustain and that profit-oriented business would not pursue. Moreover, as previously discussed, volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations provide numerous intangible benefits to the community that may not necessarily result from a government-based programme. Therefore, governments should consider that they should not necessarily be the sole providers of recreation opportunities in the community but must also provide support for community-based recreation initiatives.

The intangible value of volunteer-based organisations also contributes to our understanding of the social economy at the community level. While much of the research focuses on the larger market impacts and influences in the social economy, this research remains focused on the individuals who work to support social economy organisations. Study participants have articulated many different benefits resulting from their volunteer work that are not necessarily quantifiable in a traditional market paradigm. It is evident, though, that elements such as giving back and developing social relationships are important in meeting social needs and sustainable community development. Therefore, through a social economy paradigm, this research demonstrates that there are many

activities at work in a community that we know are inherently valuable, but that cannot necessarily be measured.

Finally, this research provides us with insight into the importance of the outdoor setting in the volunteer experience and the further influence it has on community and individual benefits. Clearly the outdoors are highly valued by many study participants and Whitehorse's unique setting provides residents with easy access to a wide variety of outdoor recreation possibilities. Volunteers appreciated that their work provided them with the opportunity to get outside and enjoy their surrounding environment. Although their motivations to volunteer were often congruent with the findings from other recreation related research, the focus of this study on outdoor recreation has demonstrated that the natural environment has a unique influence on volunteer participation. The natural spaces are appreciated by a variety of users and can thus increase public knowledge regarding environmental impacts and issues.

This research has provided interesting insight into the outdoor recreation community of Whitehorse. By approaching the topic of volunteerism and social economy from an exploratory perspective, I was able to consider the many different factors that influence individual and community well-being. This research study allowed me to describe many attributes of service and volunteering that many of us recognise but have difficulty articulating. The exploratory nature of this research has uncovered a variety of topics that individuals, organisations, and communities need to consider when working with volunteer groups.

Throughout this research my understanding of volunteering and community has evolved and upon reflection there were some findings that surprised me. While reading

the background literature, speaking with study participants, and living in a completely different community from my own I came to realise how volunteering can provide an excellent forum for social networking. Previously I understood volunteering to be a simple necessity in providing a service but now I appreciate how the individual volunteer can also greatly benefit from taking the time to help out in the community. My own experiences as a stranger to Whitehorse and the connections I made by volunteering in only a couple of activities are a prime example of this fact. Another finding that is of significant interest to me is the value of the “spirit of giving” described by study participants. The idea that it is the voluntary nature of service that contributes to its worth is important and I reflect upon it when I volunteer or contribute to various nonprofit groups.

However, it was also interesting that certain topics were *not* discussed in more detail in this study. For example, many of the participants from this study were heavily involved in several volunteer activities yet they never complained that it was too much work or that they were tired of being relied upon. Though they spoke about some areas of frustration with their volunteer work they seemed to accept that things like organisational politics, feelings of responsibility, and pressure as part of the job. They were not deterred by the less than positive aspects of volunteering and were extremely dedicated to their volunteer work.

It was also interesting that study participants did not discuss more their involvement in the recent Canada Winter Games. This event required immense support from the city and nine of the 13 participants volunteered. However, only a couple of people brought up the Games and had little to say other than what their responsibilities



had been. Before speaking with community members, I wondered whether experiences with the Games would have an impact on the results of this study, for example through volunteer burn out stemming from the intense commitment the Games required or perhaps through introducing people to volunteering. None of the study participants spoke of the Games as having a significant influence on their volunteering behaviour. The most interesting comments regarding volunteering for the Games showed some resentment of people who were given paid time off to volunteer. Some study participants shared strong opinions that volunteering should come from the act of giving during one's free time. These comments led me to consider the possibility that volunteering is also valuable because it places community members on the same level: no volunteer is paid more or less than another and there can therefore be no division in social structure or class.

Finally, upon reflecting on the entire focus of the project I wonder how the results may have varied had I engaged study participants in a discussion regarding social economy prior to their interviews. After one particular interview the study participant asked me about my project and the social economy and we talked about it casually. She then had some interesting insights into how she thought her volunteering might fit into the social economy. If I had explained the social economy to all of my study participants would their interviews have led in different directions? It is possible that this could have constrained discussion and so I believe that it would have compromised the exploratory nature of this research. Because study participants did not know the larger focus of the project they were able to speak openly about volunteering without having to limit their answers to support a certain type of answer. Though it would be interesting to speak to

volunteers about their views of the social economy, this research project is valuable because it explores experiences as a volunteer as the primary focus.

The findings from this research indicate some interesting points to be considered regarding social capital and the social economy at the individual, organisational, and governmental levels. As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, the social economy receives support from the government and the private sectors while filling the space between these two areas. The social economy in turn provides volunteer labour and social capital stock within the community and, in this case, the resulting outdoor recreation activities return service to the government and private sectors through such things as supporting government goals and providing business opportunities.

The comments from study participants regarding personal benefits indicate that all community members should consider volunteering in an enjoyable activity in order to stay connected and engaged in the community. New residents in a community can particularly profit from volunteering through the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their new home and meet new people. Through participation in social economy organisations, community residents gain awareness of public issues and are more likely to be engaged in community affairs. Individuals contribute to the social economy by supporting the organisations providing goods and services to the community. Volunteers with outdoor recreation influence the social economy through the many benefits the community receives from this service.

Individuals might also consider that volunteering allows them to build social capital stock that potentially can assist them in other areas of their lives. Volunteering increases access to community resources for individuals through social contacts,

networking, and education about community issues. The overlap of social economy with the government and private sectors illustrates how involvement in one sector can facilitate movements in the others. By working together with other community members, volunteers develop a level of trust within their social relationships that provides them with the assurance that their efforts may one day be returned to them when needed. Much of the literature regarding social capital highlights the possibility of services to be reciprocated as critical in determining the effectiveness of social capital stock. However, many of the participants from the study did not expect anything in return for their service. For this reason, further research is needed regarding the role of reciprocity within social networks in recreation volunteering, and its importance in the creation, distribution and use of social capital.

Findings from this study also indicate points for outdoor recreation organisations to consider regarding their contributions to social capital and social economy. Volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations serve an important role in the social economy by providing a setting for individuals to become engaged in the community. Research shows that people become attached to organisations and the sense of purpose they receive from working within the community. Organisations could increase public support by providing opportunities for volunteers to connect with their work and incorporate it into their lifestyle. Moreover, recreation volunteers greatly value the opportunity to serve community needs and many feel a sense of responsibility to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly in a smaller community such as Whitehorse. That is not to say that organisations should pressure people into volunteering, but that people may be more inclined to help out if they understand the ways in which the community can benefit from

their services. People are often looking for meaningful engagement and can find this through volunteering in the field of outdoor recreation. Again, organisations should emphasize that outdoor recreation is an important venue for community involvement and civic engagement thus contributing to sustainable community development through the social economy.

Organisations need to remember that volunteer motivations are not separate from each other but often overlapping, as described by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991). Comments from study participants demonstrate that there are many different elements that influence the decision to volunteer and though they value the personal rewards they may receive, volunteers are conscious of the importance of the contributions to the community. Not only does volunteering contribute to the greater well-being of the community through the social economy, but also exchanges in social capital stock between volunteers can assist individuals with their own pursuits. Organisations should consider both altruistic and egoistic motivations to volunteer, as the success of the activity is ultimately dependent on individual volunteer efforts.

Accordingly, it is critical for volunteer-based outdoor recreation organisations to maintain a democratic administration of service. How outdoor recreation services are provided is just as important as what these activities are because outdoor recreation is an important venue for local residents to become engaged with the community. As Hemingway (1991) suggests, social capital emerges from activities that are appropriately managed to allow for active participation in the provision of the leisure service. Volunteers from this study often emphasized the importance of being part of a team and providing meaningful contributions to the community; therefore, the benefits of being a

volunteer-based organisation may be lost if people do not feel valued and included in the service delivery process. For this reason outdoor recreation organisations should be wary of becoming too reliant on monetary support and paid positions. Though the inclusion of paid personnel may become necessary for the appropriate maintenance and expansion of services, organisations must consider the possibility that this shift in focus could change the spirit of the activity which many of their volunteers value.

The spirit of giving that makes volunteer-based organisations so valuable also provides some interesting points regarding outdoor recreation in the social economy for governments to consider. The findings from this study suggest that governments should not interfere with the movements of individuals and organisations within the social economy since the voluntary nature of many of these ventures is a key feature of outdoor recreation activities. However, governments and policy makers should still remember to support volunteer-based initiatives through such things as appropriate levels of funding, access to physical resources, and logistical support. As some of the participants from this study commented, it is sometimes difficult to meet the demands of community members regarding recreation opportunities without adequate support for such things as training volunteers, acquiring supplies, and even hiring personnel.

Finally, more research is recommended to investigate the significance of the outdoor setting of the volunteer experience and the specific benefits this provides in comparison to other volunteer experiences in recreation. Residents of Whitehorse greatly value the wilderness setting of their community and many enjoy taking part in outdoor activities. It would be of interest to see whether many of the same values of volunteering in outdoor recreation are congruent with the views of volunteers with recreation activities

that do not utilise the surrounding outdoors or wilderness. Are the views of volunteers regarding community and individual benefits of outdoor recreation transferable to other recreation settings? It is safe to say that there are some variables, such as the development of an appreciation for environmental concerns or the ability to spend time outdoors through volunteering, that inherently cannot be applied to indoor recreation settings. However, many of the ways in which outdoor recreation organisations contribute to individual and community well-being do not appear to be contingent on the outdoors. Future research should examine the possibility of differences in contributions to social economy that relate to the settings of volunteering experiences.

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Appendix A: Cover Letter

[Printed on Lakehead University letterhead]

## **Contributions of volunteering in outdoor recreation to the social economy in Whitehorse**

Dear Volunteer:

I would like to invite you to participate in a study regarding volunteers and community well-being. I am particularly interested in your participation because of your volunteer work with outdoor recreational activities within this community.

The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of volunteering in outdoor recreational activities on the individual as well as on the community. I will be asking about your volunteering experiences with outdoor recreational activities and how you feel about them.

Your participation in this study will consist of a face-to-face interview up to an hour in length. With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview in order to make a transcript, which I will gladly send to you. Once you receive this, you may send me further comments or clarification of the transcript within two weeks.

As a Masters of Environmental Studies student at Lakehead University, I am carrying out this project in connection with the Yukon Volunteer Bureau. The information collected during this research will be analysed by me to form the basis of my thesis and will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years following Lakehead University Policy.

A report will be presented to the Yukon Volunteer Bureau and other interested agencies. No individual participants will be identified and personal information will be kept completely confidential. Any identifiable personal information will be removed or disguised so as to maintain confidentiality when the research is presented to the community or submitted for publication. During the interview you are entitled to refuse to answer any question or terminate your involvement at any time. There does not appear to be any risk of harm for you should you choose to participate.

Though you might not directly benefit from your participation, this research will provide community organisations such as the Yukon Volunteer Bureau with information to improve services and provide the Whitehorse community with a greater understanding of the outcomes of contributions from volunteers. In the spring of 2008 I will be returning to Whitehorse to present the findings. You will also have access to a summary of the results via the Yukon Volunteer Bureau website.

If you have any additional questions please contact me at (807) 343-8882 or my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Johnston, at Lakehead University at (807) 343-8377 or contact the Research Ethics Board at (807) 343-8283.

Thank you for participating in this study!

Sincerely,  
Carrie McClelland



Appendix B: Consent form

[Printed on Lakehead University letterhead]

## Contributions of volunteering in outdoor recreation to the social economy in Whitehorse

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), am a volunteer with a recreational activity or organisation and have agreed to participate in this research study. I have read and understand the covering letter of the research study entitled, "Contributions of volunteering in outdoor recreation to the social economy in Whitehorse" by Carrie McClelland. I do agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I will be involved in an audio-recorded, hour-long interview but can refuse to answer any question I wish. I understand that when my transcript is returned to me I have the opportunity to provide further comment or clarification within 2 weeks and I give my consent to use all information in that transcript.

I have volunteered for this study and I may withdraw from participating at any time.

I am aware that there does not appear to be any risk of harm to myself because of my participation in this study.

I understand that the information will be made available to me through a presentation in the spring of 2008 and through the Yukon Volunteer Bureau website. I am also aware that the research findings may be published through a number of peer-reviewed academic journals, but that all participants will remain anonymous within all dissemination of the results. The information collected during this research will be analysed by Carrie McClelland to form the basis of her thesis and will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years following Lakehead University Policy.

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Signature of Participant

Date

## Appendix C: Interview Framework

# Interview Framework

During the interview I provided participants with the space to discuss topics they feel are important and relevant to their experiences as a volunteer in outdoor recreation activities. If people had difficulty understanding I would rephrase the question but I did not want to lead the interviews in a certain direction. The following are the themes we explored:

## Volunteer Experiences:

### Sample questions:

- Can you tell me a bit about your experiences as a volunteer in outdoor recreational activities?
- What kind of volunteer work do you do in regards to outdoor recreational activities?
- What are your responsibilities as a volunteer with this outdoor recreational activity?

## Volunteer Motivations:

### Sample questions:

- Why is it that you volunteer for this activity?
- What motivates you to work as a volunteer for this activity?
- Do you feel any outside pressure to volunteer for this activity?

## Volunteer work relationship to personal well-being:

### Sample questions:

- How do you think your volunteer work relates to your personal well-being?
- What do you gain, if anything, from your work as a volunteer with this activity?
- How do you feel your volunteer work has impacted you as a person?

## Volunteer work relationship to community well-being:

### Sample questions:

- How do you think your volunteer work relates to the well-being of the community?
- In what ways do you feel your work contributes to your community?
- What do you think would happen if you were not involved with this activity?