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PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON RURAL RECREATION IN THE YUKON TERRITORY

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University of Otago

Dunedin, New Zealand





Land Acknowledgement

This research was conducted on the traditional territories of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, White River First Nation, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.



The Research

This study focused on understanding how the pandemic impacted the delivery of rural recreation services in the Yukon and explore ways rural recreation can help individuals and communities recover from the pandemic.



The Government of Yukon funded this project under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.



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This project was a collaboration between the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at VIU and the Parks & Recreation Association of the Yukon

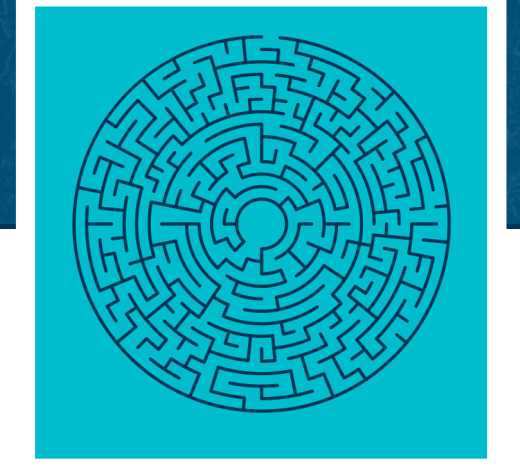
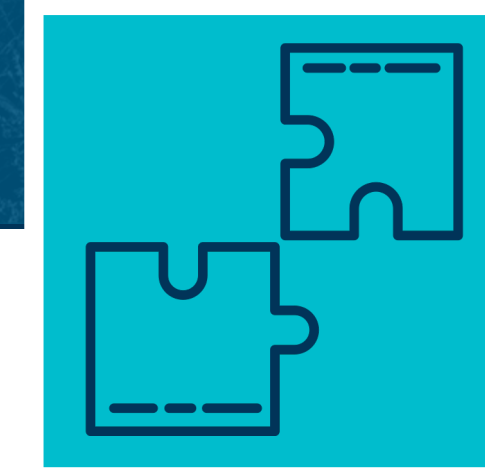
Study BACKGROUND

01 Limited Understanding of Rural Recreation

Academic research on rural recreation has typically focused on physical activity, economic shocks, or tourism.

02 Rural Governance is Complex in the Yukon

Municipalities & Unincorporated Communities
Local Advisory Councils
Self-Governing First Nations
First Nations - INAC



03 Rural Recreation Delivery is Complex

Recreation Act
Municipalities
Local Authorities for Recreation



Aim of Research

This research aimed to understand how the pandemic impacted the delivery of rural recreation services in the Yukon and explore how rural recreation could help individuals and communities recover from the pandemic.



Research Questions

1. How did the pandemic impact Yukoners' participation in recreation?
2. In what ways did recreation providers adapt their service delivery during the pandemic?
3. How can recreation and physical activity assist residents and communities in recovering from the impacts of the pandemic?

Methods & Analysis

This study required consultation with and endorsement from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, and White River First Nation. A Yukon science permit was also required.



Approach
Participatory
Rural Appraisal

Qualitative
Description



Sample
5 Rural
Communities



Data Collection
8 Modified
World Cafes

28 People
Interviewed



Data Analysis
Deductive - based
on questions.

Thematic - within
defined categories

Rural Communities

Recreation Authorities/Directors were asked if they wanted to participate in the study.

Five communities were included (the original plan was 3).

YG Sport & Recreation Branch encouraged participation in Carcross and Pelly Crossing.

Beaver Creek

Unincorporated + WRFN

Population 105

Local Authority for Recreation =
White River First Nation



Dawson City

Municipality

Population 2342

Local Authority for Recreation =
City of Dawson Parks & Recreation



Carcross

Unincorporated + CTFN

Population 460

Local Authority for Recreation =
Carcross Recreation Board



Rural Communities

Pelly Crossing, Beaver Creek, Carcross, and Tagish were all working toward community recreation plans.

Tagish and Carcross were weekend playground communities for Whitehorse.

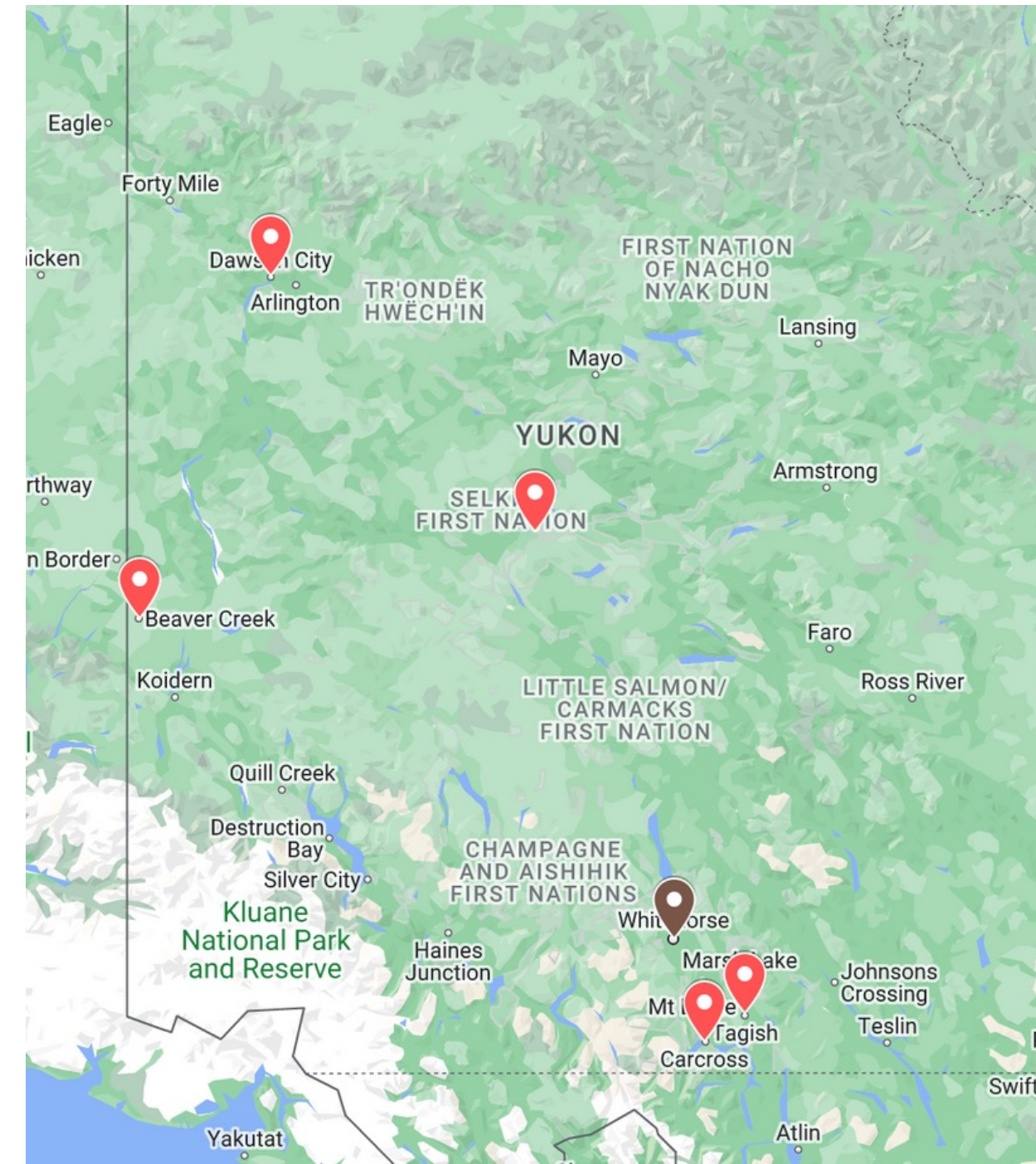
Pelly Crossing

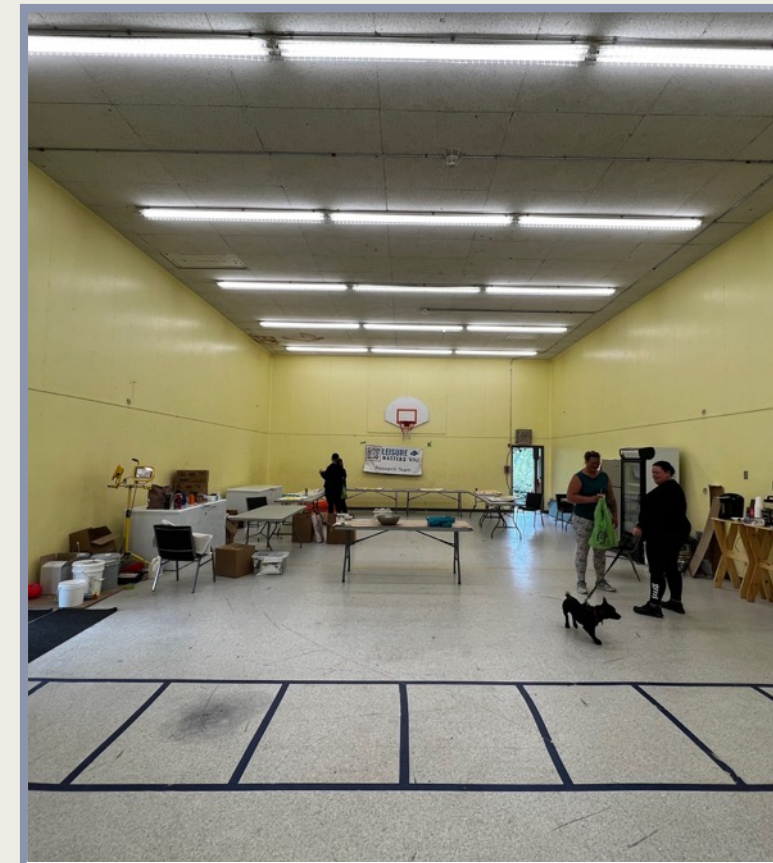
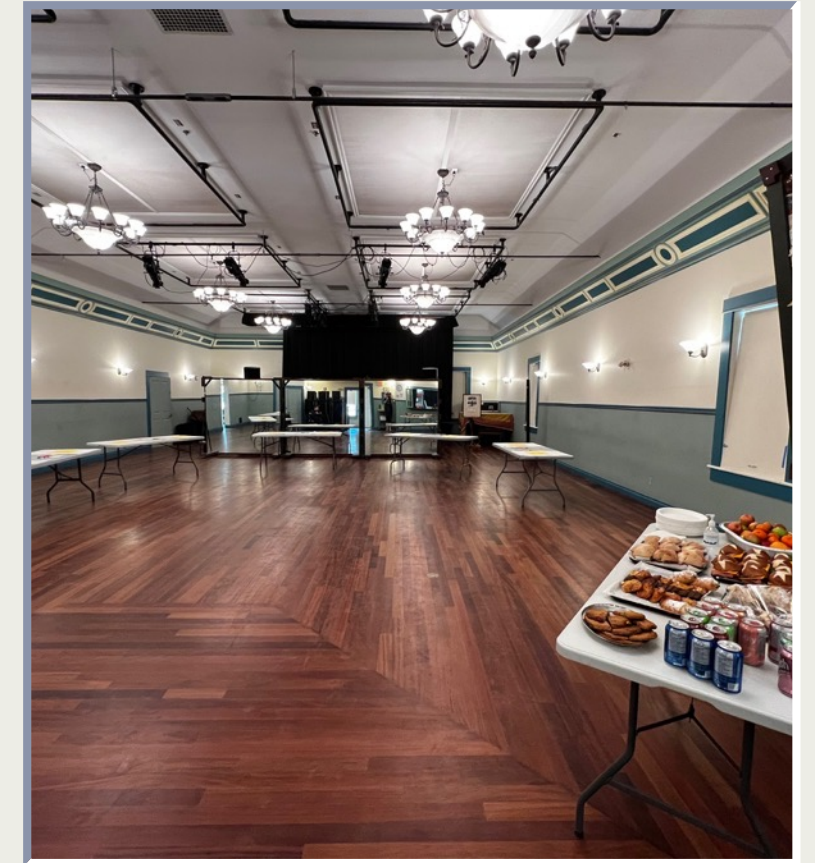
Selkirk First Nation (Self-Governing)
Population 371
Local Authority for Recreation = Selkirk First Nation



Tagish

Unincorporated + CTFN
Population 381
Local Authority for Recreation = Tagish Community Association







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Findings Themes

Findings were sorted into three areas based on the research questions.



Impact on Participation



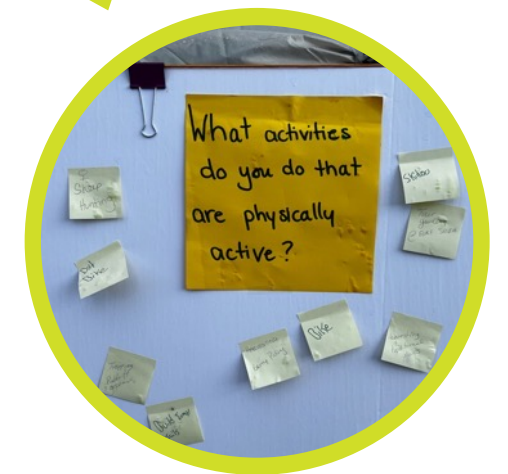
Service Delivery & Adaptation



Recreation & Recovery



Barriers & Supports Needed



Economic Recovery

Findings Key Messages

Recreation Participation

Unstructured outdoor and on-the-land activities were the most identified and resilient leisure activities during the pandemic.

Impact of Pandemic

Social isolation was identified as the most common impact across the lifespan, but most recreation funding was limited to physical activity and youth.

Pandemic Recovery

Recreation professionals noted that there was always money to build indoor facilities but never to maintain or operate them.



“Recreation is fundamental for happiness, physical activity, a healthy lifestyle, and being able to get back to it has been very, very fundamental in healing”
(Recreation Programmer)

Findings Key Messages

Recreation Recovery

Outdoor recreation infrastructure allowed continued participation during the pandemic and facilitated unstructured, self-led leisure participation.

Meaning of Recreation

Government and funder priorities have resulted in recreation being defined as physical activity and sport.

Facility Focus

The focus on indoor recreation facilities is inconsistent with the recreation preferences of rural Yukoners and is not economically or ecologically sustainable.



Programs “are targeting mostly youth. How many youth have we got? We don’t have to focus on that [but] there’s money there” (Recreation Coordinator)

Recommendations

Organized into 4 categories, there were 10 broad and 25 detailed recommendations.

Decision-Makers (First Nation, municipal, and territorial governments)	Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the complexity of recreation service delivery within the Yukon Government. • Align government support and funding with rural community priorities. • Recognize the essential nature of recreation to the health and well-being of Yukoners and rural communities. 	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the engagement of Yukoners in recreation leadership and volunteering. • Reduce the complexity of applying for and reporting on funding for recreation. • Enhance access to self-led recreation through infrastructure development and equipment access. 	Service Providers (NGOs, community groups, recreation departments)
	Places <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable recreation infrastructure development in rural communities. • Develop Territorial plans for the development of rural outdoor facilities and infrastructure. 	Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize on outdoor recreation and on-the-land activities to promote active recreation across the lifespan. • Prioritize recreation programming that encourages social connections and reduces isolation. 	



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON RURAL RECREATION IN THE YUKON TERRITORY



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Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in the Yukon

Research Team
Dr. Aggie Weighill, Amber Underwood, Spencer Godlonton, & Vanessa Moraes

Background

- Volunteers and under-trained employees often do rural recreation delivery in the Yukon.
- Leisure service providers are generally reliant on grants to offer programs.
- In the Yukon, there is a focus on viewing recreation as physical activity.
- Youth are the primary focus of funders and, thus, community programs.

Research Questions

- How did the pandemic impact the recreation participation of rural Yukoners?
- How did the pandemic impact rural recreation delivery in rural Yukon?
- How can recreation and leisure assist with individual and community recovery post-pandemic?

Rural Communities

This study focused on five communities with different governance and recreation delivery models:

- Beaver Creek - INAC First Nation
- Carcross - Local Advisory Council + Self-governing First Nation
- Dawson City - Municipality
- Pelly Crossing - Self-governing First Nation
- Tagish - Local Advisory Council



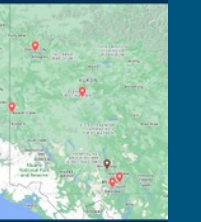
Outdoor recreation infrastructure proved to be **more resilient** during the pandemic. It is also **cheaper to build and maintain** than traditional indoor recreation facilities.



The Government of Yukon funded this project under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program

Methods

- Participatory Rural Appraisal using a qualitative description approach.
- Modified World cafe
- Semistructured key-stakeholder interviews
- Deductive analysis



Findings

- Social isolation and poor mental health were the most profound impacts.
- Rural Yukoners loved being outdoors and spent more time doing unstructured outdoor & on-the-land activities.
- Funders privilege youth and physical activity over other users and activity types.
- Communities are burdened with recreation infrastructure they can't afford to operate or maintain.
- Governance and funding models negatively impact rural recreation.

Recommendations

- The Recreation Act should be reviewed to expand the definition of community recreation and revise how rural recreation is delivered.
- Funding programs need greater flexibility to allow communities to meet the needs of their community members.
- Rural Yukoners are physically active through outdoor and on-the-land activities, but more opportunities for social recreation are needed.
- Cost-benefit analysis and new funding models are needed for any new facilities.

This research was conducted on the traditional territories of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, White River First Nation, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in Beaver Creek, Yukon



This research was conducted on the traditional territory of the White River First Nation in the community of Beaver Creek by the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University in collaboration with the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon over the Summer of 2022.



This project was funded by the Government of Yukon under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.

Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in Carcross, Yukon



This research was conducted on the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the community of Carcross by the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University in collaboration with the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon over the Summer of 2022.



This project was funded by the Government of Yukon under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.

Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in Dawson City, Yukon



This research was conducted on the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation in the community of Dawson City by the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University in collaboration with the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon over the Summer of 2022.



This project was funded by the Government of Yukon under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.

Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in Pelly Crossing, Yukon



This research was conducted on the Territory of the Selkirk First Nation by the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University in collaboration with the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon over the Summer of 2022.



This project was funded by the Government of Yukon under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.

Pandemic Impacts on Rural Recreation in Tagish, Yukon



This research was conducted on the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the community of Tagish by the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University in collaboration with the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon over the Summer of 2022.



This project was funded by the Government of Yukon under the Yukon COVID-19 Recovery Research Program.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

“

Thanks for the report. It feels “spot on” and I think you discovered the essence of our challenges. I especially appreciate the emphasis on the need for social gathering spaces for all ages and the cautions regarding tourism and its potential to alienate residents from their local areas.

”

“

I also realize how important your findings are in terms of the need for social spaces to counter social isolation, and its consequence of harmful substance use in rural Yukon. This information could also contribute to the substance use strategy currently in development in HSS.

”

For More Information

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FULL REPORT



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