

**Abstract for presentation at the CIRIEC Social Economy Conference held in
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**Contributions of volunteering in outdoor recreation to the social economy in
Whitehorse, Yukon.**

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This research project will focus on volunteers in outdoor recreational activities and how their experiences influence themselves and contribute to their community. The purpose of this research is to examine the role that volunteering for outdoor recreation activities plays in the health and well-being of the community, and how these experiences contribute to the social economy in Whitehorse. Research has shown that social enterprises within the social economy generate social capital by *using* social capital. The many different understandings of social capital and social economy leave us with questions regarding the role of volunteerism within these explanations. This project provides information that helps to demonstrate the extent and creation of social capital in the voluntary sector by focusing on outdoor recreation volunteering.

Given that Whitehorse was host to the 2007 Canada Winter Games, this study provides a timely exploration of the topic of community processes through involvement with volunteering with outdoor recreational activities. A longitudinal study being conducted by a team of researchers at Lakehead University with Whitehorse partners is examining the outcomes of hosting the event for the community of Whitehorse. My research allows to me to further that understanding by looking at how volunteers in outdoor recreational activities feel connected to their community through their volunteer work.

Data was collected from more than a dozen qualitative, exploratory interviews conducted in the community of Whitehorse, Yukon. These interviews were designed to be non-directional and allow participants the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings regarding their volunteer contributions. A snowball sampling technique was easily applied through a connection with the Yukon Volunteer Bureau and community referrals. Adult volunteers with *outdoor recreational* activities *only* were selected to participate.

Results from this project will be discussed during a presentation and may surround the following four areas of investigation: volunteer experiences, volunteer motivations, volunteer work relationship to personal well-being, and volunteer work relationship to community well-being. The investigation of volunteers in outdoor recreational activities will allow for a greater understanding of this aspect of social capital and narrow the focus of social economy as applicable to a community. This research will help to comprehend how outdoor recreation volunteers fit into this range of definitions of social economy.