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**Insight Grant 2018 *Major Sport Events and Parasport Participation: Investigating Post-Event Opportunities and Experiences***

*Do sport events matter for parasport participation? Lessons and opportunities in event leveraging*

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The use of major parasport events to address social and structural inequities that exclude people from participating in sport and physical activity has been an ongoing debate. Yet, research that examines these claims of positive long-term impacts on sport participation after hosting a major event is almost non-existent (Misener et al., 2018; Taks et al., 2018). The focus of our SSHRC funded project is on this debate. We consider the post-event experiences of the people and places that were the focus of event-related improvements. In particular, we sought to understand individual lived experiences and changes or institutional structures which were developed to support ongoing participation from people with disabilities.

Scholars have demonstrated that sport events do not automatically produce positive participation impacts (Misener et al., 2018). It is only through intentional efforts that sport participation outcomes can be realized (Chalip et al., 2017). Continuing our longitudinal study which commenced in 2013, we situated our research on two previously hosted events/cities: 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and 2015 Toronto ParaPan American Games. We focused on understanding the experiences and challenges of parasport participation post-event, particularly the suitability of the institutional structures in place to facilitate or inhibit participation. We used an accessible web-platform, [Project Echo](#) to host asynchronous focus group discussions designed to enable a multiplicity of voices from Glasgow and Toronto to share their experiences and stories. Further, we conducted reflective interviews with diverse experiences of participation in each city. We also conducted interviews with members of legacy networks formed around the events to consider how institutional structures and partnerships can facilitate participation opportunities.

In this presentation, we highlight some of the key findings that demonstrate the complexity associated with using parasport events to support participation of people with disabilities. Firstly, we describe the multiplicity of experiences of access and parasport participation in each of the event locations, which really preclude a singular legacy plan for any event. While the coronavirus pandemic has changed the sport landscape and exacerbated many of the existing inequities for people with disabilities, there remain important opportunities from what the events can do to support increased access, awareness, and institutional structures that enhance participation opportunities. The challenge for many who want to participate is finding 'safe'

spaces that offer accessible and tailored programming that meets their specific needs. The institutional partnerships formed pre-event have also struggled to remain relevant post event, stretched to meet the unique needs of diverse participants, particularly in the absence of another focusing event to support their mission (Lu & Misener, 2022). Further, with no event to focus their efforts we found that partnerships experience mission drift where individual organizations faction off to pursue activities and opportunities that may not necessarily align with the overall partnership goals (Misener et al., 2020). Our work highlights the need for ongoing strategic plans that foreground safe, accessible sport participation opportunities before and after hosting parasport events.

## References

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