



RURAL CHILDREN AND THEIR COMMUNITIES LEADING THE WAY TOWARD THE ENHANCEMENT OF SPORTS AND RECREATION

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WHAT WE DID

- We conducted focus groups with children in two rural communities in Saskatchewan to better understand the children’s experiences in sport and factors influencing their sport participation.
- Following the analysis of the data, we returned to the communities to meet with the children to confirm the findings.

WHAT WE FOUND

- **Motivation for sport participation:** Children reported that having fun and feeling happy were major reasons for starting and sticking with sports. Being with friends was a key factor in their enjoyment of sports, and having pets and living in rural areas were seen as advantages for staying active.
- **Feelings experienced during sport participation:** Children felt happy and proud when family supported them, but sad and anxious when faced with negative feedback from coaches or players. Developing skills like teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship was important to them, and their confidence influenced their participation
- **Balancing sport participation with other activities:** Finding a balance between sports, playing with friends, and family time was crucial. Too many organized sports activities had the possibility to affect family time and finances, as well as lead to missing other important events.
- **The path to sport participation:** Children described the path to participation as “I see it, I try it, and I do it”. Children reported that seeing activities, either on TV, through print or social media, seeing other children’s activities, or other forms of advertisement can put the “idea in their heads” that they should try the activity. Children also reported that trying the activity before committing to participation would be beneficial.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Children are interested in **helping other children get involved in sport**. For example, involve local children in creating a comic book aimed at providing information about the activities in their communities.
- Children want to **try new activities** before they commit to participating. For example, offer a “try-it” day for local children with short demonstrations and opportunities to try many different activities.
- Children want to **have fun and spend time with their friends**. Sport activities for children should emphasis **fun and enjoyment** over winning, and provide opportunities for participants to build social connections.

