

# **YOUTH LEISURE IN A NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNITY: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY**

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## **Abstract / Résumé**

America's Native peoples have a rich history that includes a variety of recreational and leisure activities. An understanding of this history is vital to helping recreational providers understand how best to serve this important and neglected sub-culture. The purpose of this research is to examine historical accounts of Native North American recreation and to provide a current picture of the development of recreational pursuits for youth in a remote Native North American community in northern Ontario, Canada. Specifically, the research questions of the study examine if the youth of Wapakeka (part of the First Nation of northwestern Ontario), were involved in traditional Native North American forms of play, forms of play that represent a blend of European and Native North American games, or in similar activities found in any North American community.

Les peuples autochtones de l'Amérique ont une riche histoire qui comprend une variété d'activités de loisirs et de sports. Il est vital de comprendre cette histoire afin d'aider les fournisseurs d'activités à mieux comprendre comment ils peuvent desservir le mieux possible cette sous-culture importante, mais négligée. La présente recherche a pour objectif d'examiner les comptes rendus historiques des activités de loisirs et de sports des Amérindiens et de proposer une image courante du développement des activités récréatives pour les jeunes dans une collectivité autochtone éloignée du nord de l'Ontario au Canada. En particulier, la recherche a examiné si les jeunes de Wapakeka (partie d'une Première nation du nord-ouest de l'Ontario) participaient à des jeux amérindiens traditionnels, à des activités où des jeux européens sont mélangés à des jeux amérindiens ou à des activités semblables à celles que l'on trouve dans toute collectivité nord-américaine.

## **Introduction**

Native Americans are an under-served population that has been historically marginalized within the United States (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997); however, very few investigations have been conducted with this population. Researching Native Americans has numerous benefits for expanding current leisure theory and research as well as for recreation practitioners. Within many present-day Native North American communities, leisure is integrated within one's life (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997; Mrozek, 1983). "Recreation as a separate free-time opportunity for self-expression has little meaning to the Indian who lives on a marginal subsistence level as do many natives in Canada" (Malloy, Nilson, & Yoshioka, 1993: 117). For example, in a study of the Cree, researchers found the Cree's view of leisure included the pursuit of freedom and extrinsic motivation, and that this view was in response to a love for the outdoors (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997).

This study examined if the youth of Wapakeka, a remote Native North American community, were involved in (a) traditional Native North American forms of play, (b) forms of play that represent a blend of European and Native North American games, (c) or in the same activities found within North American communities. This investigation examined historical accounts of Native North American leisure and systematic observations from a specific Native North American community. To answer the research questions, the researchers identified current leisure activities of the youth and described the type and condition of leisure resources in Wapakeka. In addition, this research assisted in addressing a problem that exists in the study of cross-cultural research: the lack of information pertaining to the leisure of Native Americans.

Stodolska (2000: 158) noted that minority groups "differ at least in some aspects of the leisure from what we observe on an everyday basis among Anglo-Saxon whites." However, the study of populations such as Native Americans can provide an opportunity for expanding theories of human leisure experiences. For example, Cheska (1979: 241) suggested that certain recreational activities among Native Americans operate as a mechanism for cultural maintenance "by reinforcing the social processes of sex role differentiation, group identity, decision-making models, and symbolic identification." Therefore, a volleyball game may be more for socialization and loyalty to a community than for competition. The understanding of culture, in this case the recreational pursuits of Native Americans, allows the researcher a better understanding of constraints that may be faced by this particular group (Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2008).

## **Review of Literature**

### **Historical Account of Native North American Leisure and Recreation**

Recent interest in cross-cultural research has yielded little attention to Native North Americans (Ewert, Chavez, & Magill, 1993; Kraus, 1994; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). Flood and McAvoy (2007) noted that although there is an increase in the attention given to Native Americans by leisure researchers, additional studies are needed. Secondly, research has examined this ethnic group as a whole rather than understanding the differences within the Native North American culture. Therefore, it is important that the researcher becomes thoroughly familiar with the Native North American culture and the diversity of the populations within this ethnic group. This historical examination will focus on one specific community in an effort to contribute to a detailed cultural perspective within the Native American ethnic group. In addition, there are very few Native American authors or specific documentation that address traditional versus contemporary recreation activities. Prior research has been predominantly recorded by Euro-American historians and missionaries (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). The authors of this current study are not Native Americans; however, both authors desired to promote empirical research on this population, which will lead to future investigations authored by Native American researchers.

Mrozek (1983) and McDonald and McAvoy (1997) suggested that it is difficult to make a distinction between work and leisure among present-day Native North American communities. The following accounts of historical activities are referred to as leisure; however, scholars are uncertain whether Native North Americans defined these activities as leisure. Furthermore, there is very little conceptual or empirical information available to interpret the meanings of these historical accounts by Native Americans.

Early historical reports provide a very positive account of Native North Americans and their physical stature. In 1602, Native North Americans were viewed as tall, robust, vigorous, assured, strong, sound of body, well fed, without blemish, and inured to hardship (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). The Native North American way of life resulted in physical fitness due to a very physically active lifestyle, which included dancing, playing games, and running after game animals. While twentieth century media has often portrayed a negative view of the Native North American, a positive historical view of the Native North American is now accepted as the more accurate view (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994; Hollinshead, 1992; Kraus, 1994).

**Dances & Ceremonies**

Traditional activities in Native North American communities included dance, ceremonies, and various types of games. Dances were often performed for fertility, war, crop growth, hunting, death, and rebirth (Mrozek, 1983; Welch & Lerch, 1981). The main purpose for dance revolved around an intrinsic reward rather than theatrical or aesthetic intent. The movements in a dance originated from inner compulsions revealing the soul, a comparison often drawn to modern dance. The dance was passed from generation to generation through active participation. Unfortunately, the American government saw dance as war-like behavior and put a ban on dance until 1937 (Mrozek, 1983). Banning dance stifled the aspects of social, political, and religious life of Native North Americans. Currently, there is a resurgence of dance by Native North American communities throughout North America (Mrozek, 1983).

Ceremonies were held for various reasons that included securing fertility, bringing rain, giving and prolonging life, expelling demons, curing sickness, and pleasing the gods (Cole, 1993; Sando & Scholer, 1976). Today the "pow wow," one common ceremony, plays a large part in the socialization of Native North Americans. At pow wows, various bands come together and exchange ideas, crafts, and arts (drawing, paintings, beadwork), as well as share in the feeling of community through rich and colorful dances.

**Games**

Games were another form of leisure for Native North American communities. Native North American games have been historically divided into two categories: chance and dexterity (Culin, 1975; Densmore, 1979; Welch & Lerch, 1981). Games of chance included an extensive list of dice games and guessing games. Dice games depended on the random fall of the dice and guessing games involved a guess or choice. Guessing games included four types of games in which participants guessed the number of hidden objects. Games of dexterity included archery, ball games, racing games, shooting at moving targets, and javelin or darts. Traditionally, the lifestyle of the Native American was viewed as full of danger and many of their games were seen as aggressive in order to imitate the reality of life and death (Culin, 1975; Densmore, 1979; Welch & Lerch, 1981).

One of the more popular Native North American ball games was "little brother of war," or what became modern day lacrosse (Cheska, 1979; Culin, 1975; Kraus, 1994; Welch & Lerch, 1981). Lacrosse was one occasion when violence during the game was forgiven. On one occa-

sion lacrosse was used as a contest to determine ownership of an area between the Choctaw and the Crees, which unfortunately ended in a conflict. Interestingly, the elderly men of the villages acted as mediators and did not consider a game worth fighting over. For women, there was a game similar to field hockey, called Shinny or Double Ball, which was played with a ball or piece of wood and a stick with a curved end (Welch & Lerch, 1981).

### **Gambling**

Gambling was a very important part of Native North American leisure and was common at athletic contests and other games of dexterity. Gambling was, however, a source of conflict with Euro-Americans who saw gambling as evil and an activity to be avoided (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). Various missionaries felt that gambling was not only unlawful but harmful to the body and soul; therefore, the missionaries spent a great deal of energy trying to convince Native North Americans to rid themselves of this part of their heritage. Even Native North Americans admitted that gambling was almost the sole cause of assault and murder in their culture (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). In addition, Eisen and Wiggins (1994) noted that many Native North Americans were addicted to gambling and would continue to the point where they would walk away from an event naked having already lost their possessions and spouse.

### **Children's Games**

Games of amusement were generally games enjoyed by children (Culin, 1975; Densmore, 1979; Jones, 1971; Welch & Lerch, 1981). Children enjoyed spinning tops, mimicking fights, and other imitative sports. Imitative games played by children resembled our concept of children playing house, in which girls would set up the tepee and boys might imitate war, hunting, and providing food (Cheska, 1979; Sando & Scholer, 1976). The Native North American belief system played an important role in their view of games. Since the Native North American believed in harmony and that their life was part of a cycle, the focus of games was not on winning or losing, which was the will of the Spirit (Jones, 1971). In addition, group identity was an important aspect of the game for the Native North Americans (Cheska, 1979). Therefore, as the history of the Native North American is examined, dance and the various forms of games would today be defined as leisure activities among this population.

## **Historical Comparison of Euro- and Native North American Recreation**

The Euro-North American impact on the leisure of Native North Americans has been largely negative (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). Facial painting, which was sometimes part of the Native North American game, was misunderstood by Euro-North Americans to be an aggressive action. Unfortunately, early Euro-North Americans did not understand that “the game itself carried religious and magical medicinal significance in Indian culture,” and therefore, sometimes included facial paintings (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994: 4). Additionally, early settlers did not understand Native North Americans’ dance, ceremonies, and games (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994; Sando & Scholer, 1976). The settlers were predominately guided by the Protestant work ethic, and most Euro-North Americans did not perceive the importance for play or artistic endeavors. The Protestant work ethic placed substantial emphasis on hard work and evidence of success. Moreover, the early settlers expected the Native North Americans to adhere to the same way of life and Protestant belief system (Sando & Scholer, 1976). Furthermore, Protestant missionaries desired to convert Native North Americans to Christianity (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). Native North Americans were healthy, strong, happy, and content prior to the arrival of the Euro-North American; however, Euro-North American settlers viewed Native North Americans as people who would rather starve than work. Euro-North American settlers did not understand that sport in traditional Native North American cultures was inseparable from personal concerns and social interests, such as religion (Cheska, 1979; Ewert, et al., 1993). The missionaries saw the superstitiousness of games (i.e., using games to heal the sick) as absurd and would often try to convince the Native North Americans that participation in such activities was foolish (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994).

Early accounts (from eighteenth and early nineteenth century) noted that Native North Americans played fair, loved the fun of sport, and would not allow cheating as any part of competition (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). For example, unlike Euro-North American sport, the taking of revenge for an injury was extremely uncommon, and Native North Americans rarely quarreled about the game. Injuries were simply attributed to circumstances of bad luck and not to vengeful play by the opposition. Unlike most early Euro-North Americans, the Quakers were a sect that did not impose their religious convictions and strict moral code on others (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). To the Quakers, Native North Americans were viewed as deserving respect, because they were God’s children. William Penn, for example, was helpful in creating harmony between the

two cultures and would participate in Native North American games when provided with the opportunity (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994).

### **A Blending of Culture**

Euro-North Americans did adapt some leisure activities from the Native North Americans. Early settlers adopted lacrosse, the use of canoes, toboggans, sledges, snowshoes, wrestling, running, and participation in gambling games (Eisen & Wiggins, 1994). In addition, there was an impact of Native North Americans on the Euro-North Americans' pursuit of hunting, fishing, forest survival, and woodcraft (Kraus, 1994). However, there were other activities that were not adopted. For example, the sweat bath, although later shown to be a healthy activity, was originally only adopted by the French. According to McDonald and McAvoy (1997), early research indicates that Native North American games were blended with Euro-North American games of skill as early as 1937. In addition, Native North Americans' present form of leisure (basketball, volleyball, horse racing, etc.) was adapted from the Euro-North Americans (Cole, 1993; Kraus, 1994; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). Therefore, an understanding of Native North American leisure pursuits and how they were influenced by the Euro-North American's concept of leisure is vital to researching present day communities. Additionally, investigating the leisure of an under-researched population will contribute not only to the emerging research regarding Native Americans, but also this research offers crucial knowledge for recreation practitioners who serve Native American populations.

### **Current Recreation for the First Nations of Ontario**

Reid (1993) suggested that members of the First Nations of Ontario viewed social development (including leisure activities) as community cohesion, self-esteem, cultural awareness, and career and leadership development. Twenty-three communities were represented in his study, including a resident of Wapakeka, Ontario. Reid's investigation specifically focused on the issues faced by youth. In many First Nation communities, those under the age of eighteen comprise about half of the population. Furthermore his results suggested that Ojibway respondents saw a "need for an increased focus on traditional activities and outdoor recreation opportunities to reintroduce Native young people to their heritage and traditions" (94). Recreation was viewed as a tool to build self and ethnic-identity, inter-community contact, and inter-community exchange. In addition, Reid (1993: 96) maintained that Ojibway respondents utilized recreation as a methodology to encourage youth to participate in more positive, creative, and traditional activities. However,

“the magnitude with which the First Nation communities are inundated with social problems has caused major shifts in the balance of focus from recreation as purely participation, to recreation as a social development activity.”

Many of the Ojibway communities responded by building recreation facilities. Unfortunately, the facilities were under-utilized and not maintained due to lack of administration and organization issues within the community (Reid, 1993). Management and leadership were major needs within the First Nation communities; therefore, business and management training were necessary before organized recreation could be conducted in these communities. The Ontario Government directly responded to First Nation communities by providing financial incentives to encourage the development of community recreation committees.

The location of First Nation communities also presented constraints in developing organized recreation (Reid, 1993; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). Many of the villages, such as Wapakeka, were located in remote areas which made competitions against other villages difficult. For example, Wapakeka had several hockey and volleyball players who desired to participate in league competition against other villages; however, only one village (Big Trout) was accessible to Wapakeka by snowmobile during the winter months and by boat during the summer months. Transportation to other villages required expensive air travel, which was beyond the financial capabilities of many youth leagues.

Another issue that impacted the lives of individuals living within remote areas was boredom and the availability of adult influence. Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1990: 4) defined leisure boredom as “A negative mood or state of mind that reflects a mismatch between optimal experiences that are perceptually available to an individual.” A sense of leisure boredom can be developed by having meaningless leisure, not having leisure skills, not being able to manage leisure time, lacking adequate resources (income, etc.), and adolescence substance abuse (Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1990). These types of negative influences and distractions can also undermine the development of initiative among youth (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Adults and parents can encourage the development of initiative and competence by allowing youth to fail and helping them process failure when it occurs. Furthermore, supportive and structured environments allow the youth a sense of autonomy, competence, and social connectedness.

## **Methodology**

While there has been an increasing interest in cross-cultural leisure research, there continues to be a need for more attention given to Na-

tive American communities (Flood & McAvoy, 2007). Specifically, there is very little research on Native North American outdoor recreation behaviors and values in addition to a need for research focusing on the recreational use of tribal land, resource management, and Native North American leisure. Numerous urban and rural recreation agencies are trying to offer programs aimed at Native North American youth and are seeking research to aid in bridging the gap between the Euro-North American and Native North American communities (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997).

The present study focused on an Ojibway community that is part of the First Nation of Ontario known as Wapakeka (or Angling Lake). Wapakeka was chosen because it is a remote community that has only been in existence for about half a century. Prior to that time, many of the community members lived in the “bush” (wooded undeveloped areas apart from any community). In addition, the first author, through previous contacts with the Ojibway community, had a good relationship with the chief of Wapakeka, thus affording him access into the community to observe and record information.

The first author made solo observations of the recreational activities among the people of Wapakeka. The purpose of these observations was to understand the recreation participation among the youth of Wapakeka during non-school days. Specifically, the research examined if the youth of Wapakeka were involved in traditional Native North American forms of play, forms of play that represent a blend of Euro- and Native North American games, or in the same activities typical of North American communities. To answer this question, the researchers set out to identify current leisure/free/play-time activities of the youth and describe the type and condition of leisure resources/facilities in Wapakeka. Therefore, the goal was to find a remote Native American community that would allow for an increased opportunity to discover historical uses of leisure. Moreover, this investigation would also provide a unique chance for the observation of community activity, including leisure. The ability to observe individuals in a cross-cultural setting is a problem often associated with these particular investigations.

## **Description of the Community**

### **Residents of Wapakeka**

According to Statistics Canada (2006), Wapakeka is a community in Northern Ontario near Big Trout Lake and has approximately 350 residents. There were about 180 males and 170 females and the median income of all households in Wapakeka is \$19,008. Most residents in this community were not formally educated. Specifically, about two-thirds

of the citizens had not received a certificate, diploma, or degree in any educational institution. Many individuals living in Wapakeka speak English; however, many also speak a synthesis of the Cree and Ojibway languages called Oji-Cree (Shibogama First Nations Council, n.d.).

### **Methodological Framework**

An ethnographic approach was utilized as the framework for collecting and interpreting the findings of this investigation. Culture and leisure are complex in nature and require in-depth and detailed study in order to fully grasp the meaning they have for Native North Americans' lives. Ethnography is an in-depth investigation of a specific group, such as a cultural group, using methodologies such as interviewing and observation (Fetterman, 1989; Vogt, 1999). Ethnographers seek to discover patterns in the daily lives of study participants as well as to understand their own roles as researchers. The process of ethnography is holistic in nature and involves investigation of many facets of the phenomenon, such as the history as well as the political and environmental factors that affect people who are under investigation. Ethnographic research seeks to comprehend the symbols and meanings within a particular culture or religious group. By identifying symbols and their essence, the ethnographer can pair these interpretations with participant observations to provide a multi-layered interpretation of meanings and culture.

In this particular research project, the first author entered into the lives of residents of Wapakeka. Moreover, he interacted with individuals within the Native North American community and became familiar with the knowledge of symbols and rituals, which would be difficult to understand outside of the natural setting (Fetterman, 1989). Furthermore, the first author utilized participant observations as the methodology in this investigation. Participant observation is one of the most commonly utilized methods in ethnographic research (Fetterman, 1989). Researchers who utilize participant observation can learn more about social patterns and activities as well as interpret symbols used by participants. Patton (1980) suggested that in a participant observation the researcher can choose the object of focus. For instance, the entire community can be observed from a distance or specific aspects of the culture can be observed in-depth. Some researchers have discussed what degree of participation or involvement is appropriate when conducting ethnographic observation. Specifically, Henderson (1991) argued that it might be difficult for the researcher to negotiate a role in which he or she is a "part of the group" and an objective observer. She suggested that the investigator should maintain both participant and inquirer roles and to move between them. In this investigation, the first author chose to observe the

entire community of Wapakeka and interacted with the residents as a participant observer.

The first author collected the data and both authors were involved in data analysis. The data collection can be divided into two major sections: 1) the first author's informal experiences with the community as a faith-based representative; and 2) the directed observations conducted during two solo visits (lasting seven days and five-days) to Wapakeka. In all cases the first author had permission from the chief and the Wapakekan Council to enter the community. The first author had extensive informal experience working with this community as a faith-based leisure practitioner. These interactions were approximately a month long over the span of three years. These experiences gave the first author a rich in-depth picture of life, including leisure and recreation, in the Wapakeka community.

Directed observations took place during a seven-day visit in July and a five-day visit in December. Each observation lasted daily between one and three hours. The dates were chosen based on the Chiefs' schedule and on when he could provide housing to the researcher. On a daily basis, for one-hour time blocks during the morning, afternoon, and evening, the researcher recorded observations in a journal at each play area and throughout the community. Observations of leisure activities were recorded and the approximate age of users and the type of activity being experienced were indicated. When possible, the researcher made interpretive journal notations of observed activities. For example, was the snowmobiling observed as fun or as a means of transportation for business? Information was compiled in the evenings and later charted by time of day and type of activity (see Appendix A). A form (Appendix B) was created to accurately record all observations and for the purpose of comparing the observation by the day of the week and the time of the day. Discussions with various residents and the chief also took place where contextual information was obtained regarding the understanding of the activities observed and competitions with other communities. The purpose of these conversations was to "member check" with the community to ensure the accuracy of the observations. As noted above, the researcher recorded all participant observations (including recreation behaviors) in a journal including detailed information about the observed events, social interactions, as well as thoughts and initial interpretations. Following each observation, the researchers re-read the notes several times to validate their understanding and interpretation of the observations. In addition, the researchers highlighted observed activities that correlated with information obtained from the review of literature.

## **Major Findings and Discussion**

### **Qualitative Description of Wapakeka From the First Author's Experience**

When one first arrives at Wapakeka the small size of the village is very apparent. Forty to fifty years prior, the residents of this small Canadian village lived in the "bush." There were a few buildings that made up the downtown area: the council building, a community store, school building, and the community center. An additional water pumping station/building was prominent within the village. Surrounding these buildings were modest sized houses. Many of the houses were worn down and in need of repair; however, due to cultural traditions surrounding the home, the floors of all homes were immaculate and one did not enter the home with one's shoes on. Residents and visitors were required to leave their shoes outside. Despite the small community atmosphere there were outside media outlets that were often used by the community members. A large satellite dish located in the center of the town broadcasted television stations from Canada and Detroit. Additionally, many of the residents in Wapakeka had television sets in their homes and the town also contained a radio tower that was used on occasion.

Due to the remote location of Wapakeka, many service personnel, such as nurses, construction workers, and teachers, had to be brought to the town to meet the needs of the community. Many of the service professionals were present in the community during particular seasons (e.g. the teachers worked during the school year and the construction personnel were present in the summer months). Additionally, outside personnel/programs were necessary for other community services. For example, if children wanted to attend school past the eighth grade, they had to fly to Thunder Bay to finish their education. Thunder Bay was approximately a three hour flight from Wapakeka and students had to live in school housing in an unfamiliar town with unknown people. The enormity of this commitment usually deterred many students from continuing their education and most stopped attending school at the eighth grade. Other services that were occasionally brought to Wapakeka were faith-based organizations whose primary mission was to provide recreation and leisure programming in a spiritual context, which was the first author's entry point into the Wapakekan community. Specifically, the first author participated in frequent faith-based missions to Wapakeka.

The first author found the residents of Wapakeka to be semi-friendly; however, the residents became more trusting of his presence within the community after the chief had welcomed him in their faith-based group. Additionally, the residents of Wapakeka also grew familiar to the first author's group after yearly summer visits over a three year span. Younger

individuals were quicker to show support and trust to non-community members; however, older adults were more skeptical and less conversational with visitors with trust being earned after repeat visits. Outsiders were very obvious within the small village. One of the most striking differences between the residents and the outsiders was skin color. Many of the outside service personnel were Caucasian Canadians or Americans. As a Caucasian American, the first author had a personal experience of being physically different than the residents. While visiting Wapakeka for one of the first trips, a number of pre-teens would touch, and sometimes, pull on his arm hair and ask questions regarding why he had hair on his arms. Most of the residents spoke English and most of the younger generation knew English as well or better than their Native language. In some instances, the first author observed that younger individuals frequently struggled to understand elderly community members and would have to have an adult translate. In some cases, the first author observed that the community members would talk in their Native tongue Oji-Cree when they wanted to keep a conversation private.

Both the chief and a community council organized the governmental functions of Wapakeka. Wapakeka was a dry village, meaning that no alcohol was permitted within the village limits. The rationale for banning alcohol was a response to the issues linked to alcohol consumption (e.g. depression, abuse, suicides) experienced by the community. Enforcement of the laws was mainly the responsibility of the chief and the council members. Two police officers would visit the community on occasion; however, there were no officers stationed in Wapakeka.

### **Directed Observations**

During both the informal experience and the two solo visits to Wapakeka in July and December, the researcher made several observations during day and evening programs and activities (see Appendix A). Many winter activities revolved around snowmobiling, hockey, volleyball, basketball, and almost daily square dances held in the community center. The winter was extremely cold and snowy in this small Northern community. Winters were typically 30 to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, which led the residents to adopt certain strategies regarding day-to-day living. For example, many people would leave their car running while going into the village store to get supplies. Many residents stayed inside and created arts and crafts (e.g. knitting and embroidery); however, most residents were used to the extremely cold temperatures and would participate in outdoor leisure. Also, winter roads were plowed between Wapakeka and other communities; however, the road would frequently be impassable and snowmobiles would be utilized to travel

to Big Trout. Snowmobiling was a favorite recreational activity as well as a means of transportation during the winter months. Snowmobiles were commonplace and used for travel around the community (socializing, work, tasks such as shopping) and travel to Big Trout (a large neighboring community) to acquire additional supplies. While the month of December is extremely cold in Wapakeka, many residents appeared to enjoy a chance to leave town. Sometimes sleds would be attached to the back of the snowmobiles, which would create a fun leisure activity for the children in the community as well as a means to haul supplies. Snowmobiling was a popular activity for all ages and occurred frequently; however, the availability of gasoline and maintenance issues often constrained participation.

Hockey represented one of two opportunities (along with volleyball) the youth and adults are able to partake of and included competition against other communities. Wapakeka had multiple hockey teams including female, young male teens, and adult male teams. While the rink was outdoors, and in need of repair, there was a desire among community leaders to erect an indoor ice arena for the youth and adults of Wapakeka.

A second very popular winter activity in Wapakeka was square dancing, which was held almost nightly in the winter. Square dancing and potluck dinners brought together community members of all ages. Participants displayed an energy and excitement about being able to come together for this event which was held in the community center. Often potlucks were held before the square dancing and sometimes the event only included dancing. The researcher also observed a wide range of skill level and many smiles and laughter. The researcher counted approximately 100 people (sixty percent youth) participating in several of these evening activities. These dances provided the community with the inter-community (about one-third of the community would attend) contact that was mentioned by Reid (1993) as being valued by other Ojibway communities. The community center was a vital aspect of the Wapakeka community during the winter months. The center contained almost a full size basketball court, which was used for square dancing and other sporting activities. The community center had other features, such as a weight room, stage, empty rooms, kitchen, and bathrooms. Unfortunately, the community center did not have regular maintenance and the weight room and the bathrooms often fell into disrepair. The lack of maintenance is consistent with findings in other Ojibway communities as mentioned by Reid's (1993) study regarding the use of recreation facilities within Native North American communities. The community center did not have a building manager to organize the use and

upkeep of the facilities. Moreover, the community center was not regularly open to the community members. Outside of volleyball and other major community events, such as square dances, the community center was closed. If one wanted to use the facilities, he or she had to visit the chief and obtain permission. Interestingly, other facilities within the Wapakekan community were very well maintained. For example, the school and the teacher's homes were in very good condition. Despite the meticulous care and attention placed upon the educational facilities, little to no recreation took place within the school buildings.

Despite the lack of facility maintenance in the community center, youth enjoyed playing volleyball on a regular basis during the winter and summer months. Wapakeka had one or two male teams consisting of roughly fourteen to thirty members and one female team of roughly fifteen to twenty-five members who travel to other communities for competition. Five male players were witnessed on three occasions during the July observation practicing in the community center for an upcoming volleyball tournament. The participants were focused on the practices and commented on their desire to beat their upcoming opponent. The researcher did not witness uniforms worn during practice although the researcher heard one player mention the availability of uniforms during one of the competitions. There is a large financial commitment involved in league competitions amongst youth in remote villages. During the informal observations with the Wapakekan community, the first author noticed that the volleyball team was a valued entity. The team would commonly fly to other villages for competitions and received a great deal of support from the community. Frequently the community would contribute to the expenses generated by the volleyball team. For example, when the team would travel to another town, airfare and lodging were paid by the community. This finding is similar to Reid (1993), who indicated the difficulties of league participation in remote communities. The chief indicated that the community consistently provided financial resources to support youth recreation. Interestingly, intense competitions in volleyball and hockey games were present within this community. Participants were seeking to improve their skills in an effort to compete in an upcoming community tournament. Traditional Native North American pastimes, such as pow wows and arts and crafts, were not present in the observations taken in Wapakeka. Among the male and female youth of Wapakeka there was a strong desire to defeat neighboring communities in all sporting events. These competitive activities represented activities found in other Native North American and Euro-American communities and did not reflect the games and activities of early Native tribes.

The hockey rink also served as a play area during the summer months. One hundred youth (approximately sixty percent children and forty percent teens) were observed at various times using the rink as a playground (activities included chasing each other around, playing with various game balls, and games such as soccer). The community also had a modern playground adjacent to the school, which was used by twenty-six students during the week of observation. About seventy percent of the youth utilized the playground, with the remainder using it as a place to hang out and socialize. The majority of users were female (ninety percent) and under the age of seven. Similar to the community center, the hockey rink has fallen into disrepair. In addition, the neighboring softball field was overgrown and no longer used for softball.

The lake adjoining the community served many functions, including the source of drinking water, fishing, bathing, and swimming. Approximately twenty-eight percent (109 total) of individuals observed near, and in the water, used the lake for play and fishing. The remaining community members used the lake for swimming and bathing. In addition, there was a slight difference between how men and women used the swimming areas. Approximately sixty percent of men observed at the water side used the area for swimming/bathing while ninety percent of the women used the area for swimming/bathing. The first author observed that fishing was a common activity amongst male community members, which may account for the difference in usage patterns among men and women residing in Wapakeka. Since the majority of the community did not have running water at the time of these observations (the community is working towards running water in the homes), the swimming area served two primary purposes: swimming and bathing. This dual use of the water area seems to be a norm and there were no witnessed conflicts over use of the area. As with other areas in the community, the water area was in poor condition. Littering was rampant and the researcher observed trash and large items, such as strollers and bikes, near the water area. During the first author's informal experience, the youth had few outlets for recreation during the day, especially during the summer. Due to the lack of structured opportunities, the youth in Wapakeka would engage in destructive behavior and throw bottles, old bicycles, and random junk into the lake. The chief actively engaged in assisting the youth with finding employment and meaningful activities; however, due to the limited community resources, this was an ongoing challenge. Currently, scholarship regarding Native North Americans does not include historical accounts of water-based activities. One can assume, from oral traditions present in Wapakeka, that water use (drinking water, bathing, fishing, and recreation) is historically similar.

Despite the trash and large items thrown into the lake, many residents of Wapakeka would utilize the lakefront in the summer time. The lake was large enough for some families to build homes or cottages on both sides of the water. Although the first author did not specifically visit the homes on the other side of the lake, the residents suggested that the cottages were very rustic and they were mainly used for summer trips. The lake was also used as a landing strip for water planes. In the wintertime the lake would freeze over and the residents would use the lake to ice-fish.

The first author overheard and observed evidence of participation in various outdoor recreation activities, such as hunting, fishing and camping. Residents shared stories of trips taken to remote and secluded areas to camp and hunt. While fishing was available in the lake bordering Wapakeka, most residents would take a boat to the other side of the lake or an adjoining lake to fish. This is consistent with research by Flood and McAvoy (2007) who found that members of the Salish and Kootenai tribes in Montana participated in hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, camping, and hiking.

Overall, the types of activities pursued by this Native North American community represent a blend of Euro-American recreational activities. Although snowmobiling, volleyball, baseball, playground activities, square dancing, and hockey are considered Euro-American activities, swimming and hiking on trails could be considered traditional activities. Second, although not witnessed, there was evidence that there were community members involved in beadwork and drawing, which are similar to traditional Native North American arts and crafts. In addition, while not witnessed, the community hosted pow wows for the purpose of exposing members (including youth) to traditional activities. Youth snowmobiled on their own and with their families; however, it was more for transportation than pleasure. Sports, such as volleyball, baseball and hockey were limited to the community's youth during the observations. Young adults also participated in volleyball, baseball, and hockey; however, younger children engaged in these sports more frequently. Although not observed, beadwork and drawing were activities primarily done by older members and children as evidenced by gifts the first author of this investigation received from older and younger members as he left the community. Specifically, he received a student patrol jacket with a hand crafted design on the back, mittens, *muc lucs* (winter boots), slippers, gloves, and a hat made of moose hide and beaver fur. Interestingly, the only two events that garnered multigenerational participants were square dancing and pow wows.

Boredom among the children in this community also seems to be

the cause of several forms of destructive free-time and/or leisure activities as witnessed. Negative activities, included playing on the roof of a new building (pulling up the tar paper), playing in abandoned cars and trucks, playing in empty buildings, and graffiti were observed. Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1990) suggest that this boredom can be a result of meaningless leisure, not having leisure skills, adolescent substance abuse, and/or not being able to manage leisure. Anti-social forms of leisure were observed and heard amongst the children of Wapakeka. The youth typically wandered the community until the early morning, vandalized property, and often engaged in self-destructive behaviors, such as huffing (gas, bleach, or other substance), and cigarette smoking. This finding was consistent with Reid's (1993) study of First Nation communities, which also suggested that the youth in these areas engage in at-risk behavior. Adults in the Wapakeka community indicated that the creative use of recreation was seen as a way to redirect the youth from negative behaviors to more positive activities. In response to this vandalism, the community set up a youth patrol in 1997 to deter this form of negative behavior. In addition, in recent years there appeared (according to the Chief) to be more teens staying in school and working in the community. The school in the community terminated at the eighth grade level, which led to a greater number of youth who spent idle time within the Wapakeka community. The increased opportunity for teens to engage in after-school jobs provided an alternative to boredom and idle time. There were, however, some teens that did not desire to work or go to school, which led to an increased amount of idle time. The members of the Wapakeka community made efforts to counteract the negative forms of leisure, such as vandalism, that occurred during unobligated time. Community leaders indicated to the researcher a strong desire to offer youth-targeted programs. Additionally, the programs began to be youth-directed starting in 1997. Interestingly, the youth patrol reported observing a rise in self-esteem over the years they were engaged within the Wapakeka community. Additionally, the community members observed a decrease in the amount of negative behavior. Reid (1993) observed similar patterns in his research. Unfortunately, a continued sense of boredom is still present among those in Wapakeka, especially for those individuals who do not work or attend school. Additionally, this evidence was supported by the observations of numerous youth who appeared to wander idly around the community.

### **Implications**

Results from this research suggested that the type of play and recreation activity of the Native American children and youth of the remote

community of Wapakeka represent those of most North American communities and not the traditional Native American pursuits. Common activities amongst youth included volleyball, hockey, swimming, and use of the playground. Therefore, professionals programming recreational activities in Native American communities should consider common recreation activities present in mainstream North American communities. In addition, providing a wide array of programs and having an awareness of activity differences based on gender would reduce the opportunity for leisure boredom (Hickerson & Beggs, 2007). Additionally, recreation professionals working with Native North American populations should also consider the cultural and tribal norms surrounding communities such as Wapakeka. Furthermore, service providers need to spend a significant amount of time understanding the meanings ascribed to activities, such as arts and crafts or other traditional Native American pursuits, in order to gain a better understanding of traditional activities. Interestingly, traditional Native American leisure pursuits were not present in the community studied for this investigation; therefore, research should be performed during the presence of a traditional activity such as a powwow to determine participation, or lack thereof, in these types of activities.

Children and youth observed in this study were interested in mainstream American activities and competition with other communities as found in most North American communities. A follow-up investigation on comparing the similarities between Native American and North American communities is suggested. Specifically, the motivation, satisfaction, and barriers to leisure pursuits would add to the information presented in this current investigation. Additionally, a comparison of the type of recreation, and levels of competitions, between Native American and North American communities would also contribute to this much needed area of inquiry. Moreover, a further analysis of negative forms of recreation (i.e. vandalism on play areas etc.), constraints to leisure participation, and the influence of family on leisure choices and behaviors are future areas of inquiry which would increase the cross-cultural understanding of Native American communities.

### **Limitations**

Language was a barrier to communicating with the residents of Wapakeka; therefore, observational research was the optimal choice for conducting research with this population. The challenges experienced in this investigation were similar to other researchers' experience with Native North American populations (e.g., McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). First, Wapakeka was a remote community where the adults primarily

communicate to one another in their Native tongue. This was especially true of individuals who did not interact with Euro-American individuals or communities. While communication is possible with the majority of the community, the first author experienced, at times, a language barrier. Moreover, the same barrier would be magnified if other methodologies, such as surveys, were utilized to investigate the leisure practices of the Wapakeka community.

McDonald & McAvoy (1997) cited trust and access to the community as major limitations to conducting research with Native American populations. The first author established close connections with the studied community, which made the residents more willing to interpret the residents' language and culture. Additionally, the first author visited and interacted with this community three summers prior to conducting this empirical investigation. Moreover, this author was well known within the Wapakeka community, and was even given a nickname ("Big Bear") by the local residents. According to Baxter and Eyles (1997), prolonged interactions with the studied population increases the trustworthiness of the information collected.

A second challenge to overcome is obtaining permission from the community's council. It was vital to have the permission and full support of the chief before observing the community for this research. While the first author had the permission of the chief, he experienced resistance from certain community leaders, such as the religious leader who had ongoing disputes with the chief. Community leaders are a tremendous resource for information but their support seems to be contingent on the support of the chief.

Finally, this study was performed on an isolated community in northern Ontario, which limits the generalizability to other Native American groups (Flood & McAvoy, 2007). Wapakeka is unique to many Native American communities because it has not been in existence for a long period of time and many older residents grew up in the bush. Moreover, many of the community members were not familiar with Euro-American populations.

## **Summary**

Activities that were observed echo the blend of Euro-American and Native North American games of skill. The primary activities enjoyed in this community are volleyball, hockey, swimming, fishing, and snowmobiling. There were no observations made of any traditional forms of Native North American recreational activities (other than swimming and fishing) although the community held pow wows at other times during the year. While facing many obstacles (e.g., location) in providing a vari-

ety of recreational activities, Wapakeka has made efforts to use recreation as a tool in working with their youth. This particular community is striving to provide multiple opportunities for recreational activities for their youth. This investigation has numerous implications for practice and scholarship. For example, the findings of this study add to the emerging knowledge of Native North Americans within leisure scholarship. Additionally, the information presented in this study also informs recreation practice. Specifically, the information presented in this study will assist recreation professionals in understanding how to effectively utilize and blend both Native North American and mainstream North American recreation preferences for successful programs.

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**Appendix A**

Totals for Wapakeka, Ontario:

Before 5 p.m. (Total observations = 11)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Weather</b>	<b>Major Activities</b>
6-27	Sat.	1:30	sunny 93	2 & 3
6-28	Sun.	2:00	sunny 85	2, 3, & 4
6-29	Mon.	11:30	sunny 82	2 & 3
6-29	Mon.	1:45	sunny 85	2, 3, & 4
6-30	Tues.	11:15	sunny 75	2 & 3
6-30	Tues.	1:15	sunny 85	2, 3, & 4
6-30	Tues.	3:30	sunny 85	1, 2, 3, & 4
7-1	Wed.	2	PC 85	3
7-1	Wed.	4	cloudy 75	1 & 3
7-2	Thurs.	1	PC 70	3
7-2	Thurs.	3	PC 75	1, 3, & 4

After 5 p.m. (Total observations = 5)

6-28	Sun.	5:50	PC 78	1, 2, 3, & 4
6-29	Mon.	6	sunny 83	1, 2, 3, & 4
6-29	Mon.	8:15	cloudy 70	1, 3, & 4
7-1	Wed.	6:15	sunny 75	1, 2, 3, & 4
7-1	Wed.	8:15	PC 70	1, 3, & 4

December (Total observations = 7)

12-26	Wed.	6:00 pm	PC 20	5
12-27	Thurs.	11:00 am	PC 15	1 & 5
12-27	Thurs.	9:00 pm	PC 10	5 & 6
12-28	Fri.	10 am	PC 10	5
12-28	Fri.	8 pm	PC 15	5 & 6
12-29	Sat.	3 pm	PC 25	5
12-30	Sun.	2 pm	Sunny 18	1 & 5

Code for Major Activities:

- 1 = Volleyball and Basketball in the Community Center
- 2 = Swimming
- 3 = Open Play such as games and biking
- 4 = Negative behavior
- 5 = Snowmobiling
- 6 = Square Dancing

**Appendix B**

LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

WEATHER CONDITIONS \_\_\_\_\_

TIME OF DAY \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF AREA \_\_\_\_\_ SIZE: Small \_\_\_\_\_ Medium \_\_\_\_\_ Large \_\_\_\_\_

Description of activities:

Equipment brought by participants for recreation:

Estimated age and quantity of participants:

AGE: ESTIMATED NUMBERS:

0-7 years: \_\_\_\_\_

8-14 years: \_\_\_\_\_

15-21 years: \_\_\_\_\_

Adults: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender and cultures represented (estimated percentages):

Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Females \_\_\_\_\_

Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ African American \_\_\_\_\_

Asian \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_

Native \_\_\_\_\_

Description of existing facilities (and equipment) and the estimated purpose of said facilities:

How are the facilities and equipment provided being used:

Usage of facilities other than what the facility was designed for:

