

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

RECREATION FACILITIES PLANNING  
FOR NORTHERN RESOURCE COMMUNITIES  
IN ALBERTA

by

Douglas Joseph Kalcsics

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Preface

This thesis is a direct result of the author's work as a municipal planner with the Provincial Planning Branch, Alberta Department of Municipal Affairs. Responsibilities included the provision of planning services to resource communities in the northern areas of Alberta.

Perhaps the major problem consistently identified in these northern communities was the lack of sufficient financial resources for municipal development. As a first step towards streamlining budgets, recreation projects were regularly cut or pared by municipalities. Over the long term, recreation facilities were extremely deficient if not absent.

Upon searching for literature on northern resource communities and specifically recreation development, the discovery was made that little published material was available. At a time when petroleum and forest products were increasing in demand, and northern areas of Alberta were quickly developing, the lack of published material was surprising. The preparation of this thesis was therefore initiated for two reasons; in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of City Planning Degree, but also as a response to the seeming lack of background material which would benefit those involved in northern resource community development.

The document is not intended to propose final solutions to the problems, nor is it intended to be scientifically correct. The art of planning has been stressed rather than the science. The major aim has been to provide a forum for further discussions and documentation by professional recreationalists and designers, municipal and provincial administrators, elected officials, and citizens.



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# Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

Northern resource communities are a relatively new form of urban habitation in Canada. These communities, located in what is perhaps the last frontier in North America, are a result of society's need for certain resources vital to the economy and way of life.

Because of the nature of exploitation of such scarce and vital resources, these communities are located in areas which were virtually inaccessible thirty years ago. The influences of terrain, weather and physical distances on the resident become more important than on a southern counterpart.

At present, recreation facilities have been slow in developing as a direct consequence of limited funds at the local level. External assistance has been meagre and disjointed, resulting in ineffectiveness and subsequent disenchantment on the part of residents.

If northern resource communities are to play an effective role in the development of the north and ultimately of Canada, then their social viability must be guaranteed. Recreation facilities are a major component within the urban amenities inventory. They are probably what residents consider to be most important after a comfortable home and a stable job. Northern resource communities are not a passing phenomenon and require a special understanding of their development and requirements.

As the title clearly indicates, the major theme in this thesis is the analysis of recreation facilities planning for northern resource communities in Alberta. Several other themes, some more

general and others more specific are included, but only to place the main theme into a proper context.

The content of Chapter I is quite general as compared to the central theme of the thesis. A broad philosophy of leisure and recreation is defined to serve as a base for further analysis. The concepts presented have a universal applicability.

The content of Chapter III, on the other hand, is essentially specific and detailed. The case studies of Fox Creek and Slave Lake not only verify, through concrete evidence, the observations made regarding northern resource communities, but also illustrate the exceptions or peculiarities in two existing communities.

Chapter II, then, clearly reflects the central theme of the thesis. Leisure and recreation are discussed in the context of northern resource communities in Alberta. By positioning the central theme between the general scope of Chapter I and the specific scope of Chapter III, a clearer understanding should follow.

The concluding chapter, Chapter IV, is a logical extension of the central theme. The recommendations are related to the situation in northern resource communities as described in Chapter II, and are not addressed to specific problems of a particular community. Reference to the case studies, Fox Creek and Slave Lake, is made for the purpose of clarity only. Specific problems in specific communities can only be resolved through further detailed analysis, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

# **Chapter One**

## **The Concepts of Leisure and Recreation**

CHAPTER 1 THE CONCEPTS OF LEISURE AND RECREATION

A. GENERAL

The concepts of leisure and recreation have been subject to divergent opinions regarding their definition. A varied group of social scientists and more recently a new researcher, namely the recreation planner have studied the concepts. The orientation of the particular discipline manifests itself in the conclusions derived by these specialists. The recreation planner's main orientation should be to assimilate the conclusions of other specialists as well as to contribute a planning consideration into the definition. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a set of definitions for the two concepts which can be considered workable within the recreation planning process. Therefore, the definitions will be brief and somewhat elementary, derived eclectically by gleaning the work of previous authors. With this set of definitions established, they can be related to a more immediate subject of this thesis, that is, a concept of recreation as held by the resident of a northern resource community.

B. LIFE COMES FIRST

Since man has been on earth, his primary task has been to sustain his life. Stone Age man's major motivation was survival, therefore all activities were directed toward this goal. The concepts of leisure and recreation were not explicitly established within this period since time did not have to be formally allocated to tasks or activities. However, man has adapted to such an extent that he has been able to overcome the majority of the natural forces confronting him. He has learned to cultivate crops for food; raise animals for meat, utensils and labour; make fire for warmth and cooking; and to basically keep himself comfortable. With the sustaining, nourishing, and protecting of the body achieved, man has turned

to achieve something more. The attainment of an improved life, balanced both physically and spiritually, has tended to become the primary goal of contemporary man.

This rather complex goal is concerned not only with the previously stated physiological needs. Sustenance of the body may be the ultimate satisfaction of the human mechanism, but not of the human being. An improved life (also called a better life or full life) includes as part of it the fulfillment of psychological and social needs. Brightbill calls this integral constituent happiness. This happiness is not the narrow kind of being careful or gleeful. Instead it is the "abundant rewarding, and enriching life, the full expressive existence which brings with it a great personal satisfaction."<sup>1</sup>

A number of common components characterize the achievement of happiness.

- 1) Health - few people can reject the idea that good health is one of the first steps towards happiness.
- 2) Freedom - by this it is not implied absolute freedom but instead is the freedom in a democratic sense, freedom is enjoyed until other persons are impaired.
- 3) Self-discovery - in the sense that we are striving to establish and maintain our individuality within the group.
- 4) Social Interaction - the desire for affection and brotherhood.
- 5) Purposefulness - the establishment of a purpose for life.
- 6) Context - to understand man's place in the total system of the universe.

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<sup>1</sup>C.K. Brightbill, Man and Leisure, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1961), p. 18.

The kind of happiness resulting from the fulfillment of these needs forms the foundation for recreative life, especially within our society.

### C. LEISURE AS TIME

Although the term leisure has been open to divergent opinion by recreation researchers, one point commonly identified among the various sources is that leisure is essentially a block of time. Without a time element being integrated into any definition of leisure, the definition has no meaning. Any further clarification of the concept by authors essentially varies according to what is done in that time period, not the time period itself.

Perhaps as a starting point, the forms of time that leisure does not include should be stated. It excludes existence time, that is, time taken up by sleeping, eating and maintaining a minimum level of personal hygiene. It also excludes time taken up "by group or socially determined activities in which the individual would prefer not to participate."<sup>1</sup>

Leisure time is not synonymous with free time. Free time can be described as the "amount of time which an individual does not sell for money".<sup>2</sup> But part of one's free time may be used to fulfill group and socially determined obligations. The distinction between free time and leisure is founded on the lack of any form of commitment or obligation in leisure time.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Clawson, J. L. Knetch, The Economics of Outdoor Recreation, (Baltimore: Resources for the Future, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan J. Thomas, J. Trevor Roberts, Tyne Recreation Study, (Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Manchester, 1959), p. 3.



D. LEISURE AS A STATE OF MIND: A HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS

Historically, the concept of leisure of today is a product of a synthesis of two approaches to life. In North American society, the work ethic or Protestant ethic has pervaded the value system for many centuries. This work ethic sternly pronounces work as good for its own sake with the Lord favouring the industrious. Subsequently, leisure has tended to be regarded as time left over, that is, time to be squandered. Also related to this notion is that leisure is not productive time since quite often no appreciable physical product of leisure is perceptible. As Pieper states, "Man seems to mistrust everything that is effortless, he can only enjoy, with a good conscience, what he has acquired with toil and trouble; he refuses to have anything as a gift".<sup>1</sup>

This notion is in contrast to the classical concept of leisure as an elementary foundation of a relevant and lasting culture. The word "leisure" is derived from the Latin root licere meaning "to be allowed"<sup>2</sup> and from this is indicated an attitude toward leisure. Leisure was not time left over to be squandered, but was an important time to be spent for the development of the individual within the social process. The Greeks believed that the purpose of work was to attain leisure and without leisure their culture could not exist. As such, leisure was considered a goal in itself with all its implications, while work was considered a means to an end and not an end in itself.

What has presently evolved within our society is a combination of the values associated with the Roman and Greek cultures with the values

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<sup>1</sup> J. Pieper, Leisure: The Basis of Culture, (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1952), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Fifth Edition, (Oxford University Press, 1966).

inherent in the Protestant ethic. Quite often where the two sets of values are diametrically opposed; no consensus, even toward a generalization, can be identified. The ambivalence of our society towards leisure is a product of this historical fusion. Still, the following generalizations are an attempt to describe the contemporary meaning of leisure in North American society.

- 1) leisure is made possible by work, leisure is the goal and work is the means. Work for one man can be leisure for another.
- 2) leisure and work, including work related time, are in dichotomous relation where one cannot be part of the other.
- 3) leisure and work are competitors for time. The amount of time taken up by each is determined by two factors; what the individual accepts as necessities, and the circumstances in which those necessities are to be provided.
- 4) for time to be leisure, an interest on the part of the individual to use it as leisure is necessary.
- 5) for time to be leisure, an ability to make use of this time is necessary on the part of the individual.
- 6) for time to be leisure, conditions must be such that favour the use of this time.
- 7) for time to be leisure, facilities must be available to make possible the use of this time.
- 8) leisure time should be used for activities which are beneficial in themselves, an end product is not necessary within leisure.
- 9) leisure time contributes to a certain degree to achievement of a well-rounded life.

Because the essence of leisure is the rejection of compulsion and freedom of choice; a consensus as to its meaning can only be buried in vagaries and generalities. Leisure is a concept based on individuality. Therefore, to attempt to pin down a common set of characteristics is a self-defeating task.

The trend in most Western societies is that the amount of leisure time to be increasing. Such a situation is not only a benefit but has the potential of being a curse as well. By definition, if constructive activities are not carried out, only socially undesirable ones remain. If leisure is a threat to society the reason is not because there is too much of it. Instead, the reason is ignorance on the part of the individual and society as to its constructive uses. Too many use leisure to escape from reality rather than using it to enrich their lives. With increasing prosperity and affluence the amount of leisure proportionately increases, and, as De Grazia states, "a citizenry unprepared for leisure will degenerate in prosperous times."<sup>1</sup>

#### E. RECREATION AS AN ACTIVITY

What is obvious to most people is that recreation and leisure are related, in fact, some feel that they are one in the same. Actually, leisure and recreation are not synonymous since they represent two separate concepts of time and activity respectively. For the purpose of this presentation, the following can best describe the distinction. As stated:

Recreation, as we use the term, is the activity or activities (including inactivity if freely chosen) engaged in during leisure time. Leisure is time, recreation is activity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. De Grazia, Of Time, Work and Leisure, (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Clawson, Knetch, The Economics of Outdoor Recreation, p. 27.

The activity identified as recreation is not required to be totally physical. Instead, it can also involve an emotional or mental action. A distinction is made in the general sense; that is, an action as opposed to rest (or inactivity) is required.

Perhaps, the basic relation between leisure and recreation is that both are inherently tied to the concept of choice. Just as the individual must have a choice in the use of leisure, so must he have a choice in the recreational activities in which he wishes to participate. A variety of alternatives should be readily available, conditioned by normal physical and economic limitations.

Although an activity per se is required within recreation, the motivation underlying the participation in that activity is the important factor for identifying recreation. An activity can be recreation for one man and work for another. The underlying motivation in recreation is to achieve personal enjoyment and satisfaction.

#### F. RECREATION VERSUS WORK

The elements which constitute happiness, i.e., health, freedom, self-discovery, social interaction, purposefulness and context, are component goals which can be met through a variety of activities. These activities do not necessarily have to be recreation activities but can involve other forms. For example, labour of the medieval period based on the guild system could fulfill most of these component goals. The guild system contributed to the development of a proud, professional class which protected the integrity of craft of the guild through apprenticeship and high standards.

Contemporary North American society is founded on technological innovation as the vanguard of progress. Efficiency, the product, and cost ratios

are terms commonly associated with this development. The accent on technology has tended to subordinate the goal of development of the individual. Labour has been replaced by the job where the individual is considered as an operating unit, not necessarily a creative human being. Such business techniques as automation, chain of command, unity of direction and specialization have contributed to this dehumanized situation. Therefore few jobs provide the stimulation necessary to fulfill all of these component goals of happiness.

No longer is the industrial worker responsible for a finished product. His occupational fate today is one of stultifying and monotonous sameness in his work. Although long hours may have prevented the worker from leisure time activity in the past, he was saved from boredom by the recognizable creativity of his work. The reverse obtains today, and thus the fruitful utilization of his leisure becomes for him of paramount importance.<sup>1</sup>

When men cannot satisfy their needs through work, they satisfy them through recreation. Recreation is not implied to be escapism, but is instead purposeful and relevant. As an activity, recreation has a fascinating way of accommodating both reality and fantasy by simultaneously releasing and disciplining the imagination.

As Brightbill states:

Recreation is the only known way of running away from and toward life at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore recreation is taken seriously since it fills a vital gap within our society by tending to balance the dehumanizing affects of work and urban living. Recreation is a physiological and psychological necessity which aids the human being to grow and maintain himself. It has become the major force in providing full emotional stability as well as an outlet for self-expression.

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Charlesworth, Leisure in America: Blessing or Curse, (Philadelphia: Monograph 4, American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1964). p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Brightbill, Man and Leisure, p. 38.